



COFCCA

COFCCA Budget Priorities 2011-12

The Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA) is the membership organization for most of the not-for-profit agencies that provide child welfare, special education, and juvenile justice services across New York State. Our 110-member agencies are committed to providing high quality services and achieving good outcomes for children and families.

In one of the worst budget years in history, we thank the Governor for budget provisions that retain level funding for the foster care block grant, uncapped preventive services with 62% state reimbursement to counties, and full funding for the Bridges to Health (B2H) Medicaid Waiver for children in foster care.

While reductions in other areas of child welfare were anticipated, there are several cuts in the OCFS budget that are of serious concern to our member agencies and the families they serve.

1. Eliminate Primary Prevention Incentive Program (PIIP):

- The State is stepping away from primary prevention services that prevent children and families from reaching the point where they are at risk of out-of-home placement, including delinquency prevention, home visiting, runaway and homeless youth services, and settlement houses,
- PIIP reduces, by at least half, the State funds available for primary prevention services and a new local share is added to many programs, like home visiting, despite its proven results.
- Counties are unlikely to have the 38% share, given the many millions in cost shifts to counties, including adoption subsidies, Title XX and detention.
- PIIP funds will be awarded competitively and no county is guaranteed an award. Will the best grant writer win? And if the “better” performers are rewarded with funds, the counties with some of the neediest communities may be left behind without funds for services.

We Ask For:

- Elimination of the PIIP with restoration of 90% of State funding for these, especially Home Visiting so NYS can draw down newly available federal funds (estimated to be \$25 - \$30 million).
- Allow use of donated and in-kind funds for preventive services and COPS for part of the local match in all counties.

2. Restore Community Optional Preventive Services (COPS)

- The word optional does not mean unimportant! COPS are less rigid, community-based services that help families avoid crises that would otherwise require more extensive – and more expensive – child welfare services, including potential foster care or juvenile justice placement.
- COPS programs include a wide range of services designed at the local level to address the needs of their children and families in an informal manner that helps connect them with inexpensive, community services.

- The budget would eliminate COPS funding retroactive to 10/1/10 with no new funding available until 7/1/11 – a 9-month gap, half of which is already over!

We Ask For:

- Restoration of COPS as a standalone program with 90% of last year's State share of COPS funding. Continue existing rules so **all** counties can seek funding, with OCFS' approval.

3. Committee on Special Education (CSE) Residential Placements by School Districts

- The budget proposes to eliminate the full State share of the maintenance costs for CSE residential placements, shifting these costs to school districts while leaving the county Department of Social Services' share at 43.2%.

We Ask For:

- The cost of in-state CSE placements to be shared equally among county, State and school districts outside of NYC. In NYC, retain the current State so costs to NYC do not increase.
- Elimination of a State share and a reduced county share for out-of-state CSE placements over which the NYS Board of Regents has little oversight authority. This would align costs with the entity that makes this placement decision – the school district.

4. Juvenile Justice

- We support the closure of unneeded beds in OCFS facilities and the reinvestment in savings in preventing juvenile justice.
- However, reinvestment funds are currently proposed to more than 400 new staff for OCFS facilities and no new resources for private agencies caring for juvenile delinquents; all placed youth should benefit from the reinvestment strategy.

We Ask For:

- Reinvestment funds should benefit juvenile delinquents placed in private agencies and not just those placed in OCFS facilities; don't leave any child behind!
- The new Performance Based Supervision and Treatment Services for Juveniles program funds should be allocated to counties based on population and not on a competitive basis that rewards good grant writing or worse yet, leaves counties most in need unable to access funds.

5. State Central Register (SCR) Clearance fee increase

- The proposal to increase SCR clearance fees from \$5 to \$60 is a 1200% increase! This is a job killing tax for our agencies that must pay to clear thousands of prospective employees. Most will not be able to absorb this level of increase without hiring fewer staff.
- We question whether \$60 is the actual cost of a clearance to OCFS, or if it would be used to subsidize clearances for individuals not required to pay a fee.
- We cannot support this fee increase because OCFS has recently automated the clearance process, which requires more work by applicant agencies and a significantly reduced workload by OCFS. This fee increase means the State reaps the benefits while agencies do the work of submitting a clearance.

We Ask For:

- Reduction in the increase in SCR fees to a reasonable level; we support a fee of up to \$10, a 100% increase over current fees.

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