

The Families Together 2023 Policy Agenda is created by families and young people with social, emotional, behavioral and cross-systems challenges.

This is a youth behavioral health crisis. Families need a workforce, not waitlists.

Comprehensive Rate Reform for CFTSS, HCBS, Clinics, and Residential Treatment Facilities and Workforce Investments so that rates cover the costs of providing services and support the full range of activities a clinic provides and addresses the worsening youth mental health crisis.

Ensure every Family has a Family and Youth Peer Advocate:

- **Expand Non-Medicaid funding for Family and Youth Peer Support by at least \$5.5 million.** Flexible funding allows advocates to meet people where they are—outside of booked appointments, non-regular office hours, in homes and communities. Traditional billing and documentation procedures required by public and private insurance can create barriers to accessing critical support and inhibit authentic and meaningful engagement.
- **Maintain the 25% CFTSS and HCBS Rate Enhancement and** set sustainable rates based on the actual cost of delivering services.
- **Create cross-systems funding for cross-systems work** by ensuring all child-serving systems are funding the use of Family and Youth Peer Support.

Require commercial insurance to cover CFTSS and pay at least Medicaid APG rates.

Pass a 8.5% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) and an additional \$500M in flexible funding for human service agencies that includes Family and Youth Peer Support Services.

Support loan forgiveness, scholarship programs, and tuition remission for individuals pursuing a career in children's behavioral health, with particular enhancements for bilingual students, BIPOC students, and other underrepresented and highly-valued practitioners.

Ramp up enforcement of behavioral health parity by ensuring individuals have the private right of action to sue insurers (A7704).

Create a permanent funding model to ensure at least one Youth Clubhouse exists in each county.

Youth are more likely to access mental health programs in schools. Protect students' right to learn with resources.

Expand the use of Family and Youth Peer Advocates in school systems to help young people achieve their potential and protect their right to a free, appropriate public education. Peer Advocates can help families:

- Secure specialized support in schools through Individualized Education Plans or 504 plans,
- Provide mentorship and partner with schools to create safe spaces for students and parents to discuss their mental health challenges and support each other
- Help overcome challenges like truancy and suspensions.

Increase Flexible Funding for School-Based Mental Health (SBMH) Clinics. The current Medicaid funding model for SBMH clinics does not cover service and administrative costs, especially with the increased collaboration requirements with school personnel. In addition, the lack of commercial insurance payment results in most students being unable to access SBMH services, even when a clinic is right in their school.

Pass the Solutions Not Suspensions Act (A5197/S7198) and embrace youth, parent, and educator-led solutions that center restorative justice in place of policing infrastructure, practice, and culture from New York State public schools.

Set appropriate Student to Mental Health Professional Staff Ratio (S1969) to ensure that all elementary, intermediate, middle, junior and senior high schools throughout New York State have a full-time licensed social worker and a full-time licensed psychologist on staff to meet the needs of their students.

Support the NYS School Mental Health Resource Training Center to promote school climate, schoolwide approaches to social-emotional learning, and professional development of faculty.

Develop multiple pathways to a high school diploma beyond high stakes testing.

Families living in poverty are more likely to experience child welfare involvement. Family needs must come first.

Adopt the broad use of Family Peer Advocates (FPAs) and Youth Peer Advocates (YPAs) in the Child Welfare system.

Pass the Children and Families Reinvestment Act to:

- **Create the Child and Family Well-Being Fund** to establish a funding stream dedicated to community resources outside of the CPS system,
- **Expand the existing prevention continuum, including improved housing subsidies** for youth and families involved in child welfare.
- **Invest in the child care workforce to ensure Universal Child Care for all New Yorkers,** and;
- **Expand and strengthen New York's child tax credit (CTC)** to put financial resources in the hands of families.

Expand access to timely and high quality parental legal representation statewide by adding \$9M to the Office of Indigent Legal Services budget.

Narrow the front door of child protective services:

- **End anonymous retaliatory Child Protective Services calls** by passing the Anti-Harassment in Reporting Act (A.7879-A/ S.7326-A).
- **Pass a "Miranda Bill of Rights for parents under CPS investigation"** to require caseworkers investigating child maltreatment to notify parents and caretakers of their rights (S5484-A / A6792).
- **Protect Informed Consent** by requiring healthcare providers to obtain informed consent before testing pregnant and perinatal people and their newborns in medical settings (S4821 / A4285).
- **Transition from a system of mandatory reports to mandatory support.**

Young people need connections, resources and family, not institutions.

- **Pass the Families Over Facilities Act** to restrict the placement of children under 13 in congregate care and incentivize family-based care for children of all ages through enhanced foster boarding home rates, kin, and reunification with parents.
- **Merge the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program with the open-ended funding adoption subsidy** to establish parity between the two permanency options.
- **Create a unified statewide kinship navigator service** that consolidates existing local programs, includes legal assistance, and funds it at \$10 million dollars.
- **Support youth aging out of foster care** with housing, mentorship, employment, education and other resources needed to transition into adulthood.

Young people are not their worst mistakes. New York must defend and advance youth justice.

Expand sealing protections for youth age 25 and younger who face the threat of permanent criminal convictions and adult prison sentences with the Youth Justice & Opportunities Act (A3536A/S5749A)

Pass the Right 2 Remain Silent bill (S2800) to protect juveniles during police interrogations.

Protect historic 'Raise the Age' youth justice reforms from any rollbacks that would weaken the intended effect of the law.

Embrace a Public Health Response to Gun Violence that includes:

- community-based violence intervention,
- high-quality youth engagement programs, including credible messengers
- youth employment programs
- comprehensive civil legal services for young people facing barriers to employment, housing, accessing public benefits, or any other legal need,
- Investments in green spaces, affordable housing, and safe public spaces.

Reinvest funding from juvenile justice facility closures and expand Supervision/Treatment Services for Juvenile Program funding.

Prohibit the Use of Chemical Agents by Police Against Minors (S4002A/5449A).

Establish a comprehensive community mental health emergencies response that does not rely on police.