



Family Peer Advocate (FPA) Credential Information for Applicants Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is a Family Peer Advocate?

Family Peer Advocates (FPA) have 'lived experience' navigating one or more of the systems that serve children and families. They are the parent (biological, foster, adoptive) or primary caregiver* of a child/young person with significant social, emotional, developmental, medical, substance use and/or behavioral needs.

**A parent or caregiver is the person who is primarily responsible for the day-to-day care of a child/youth. For this definition, primary caregivers do NOT include providers. This definition gives the opportunity to be inclusive of non-traditional family arrangements.*

FPA's receive training to develop skills and strategies to empower and support other families. The core required training for this is the Parent Empowerment Program (PEP) training, though advocates receive a wide range of other training, too.

What do Family Peer Advocates do?

Family Peer Advocates provide Family Peer Support Services (FPSS) in a variety of settings including independent community-based family support programs, schools, clinics, residential programs, health homes and HCBS, hospitals, and other community-based organizations. FPA's work in partnership with parents and service providers from all 'systems' including social services, education, mental health, developmental disabilities, juvenile justice, health, and substance abuse. This 'cross-systems' work comes naturally to FPA's because family needs cross all systems. FPA's are skilled at supporting parent-professional partnerships. They can also be a tremendous resource as providers adopt family-driven and youth-guided practices.

For additional information on the work of FPA's, please refer to the **Family Peer Support Services Definition**. This definition was crafted through a consensus process and has been endorsed by the New York State Office of Mental Health.

<https://www.ftnys.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Family-Support-Services-Definition-2020.pdf>

What are the benefits of obtaining a Family Peer Advocate Credential?

There are many benefits to you as a professional, to the field, and to families. These include:

- Having an FPA Credential is increasingly becoming a hiring requirement and/or preference. Employers will know that anyone with an FPA Credential has common core training and that they are engaged in ongoing professional development.
- Families who work with Family Peer Advocates can also be assured that the FPA has met standard requirements and agreed to follow a Code of Ethics.

- Family Peer Support Services will be billable to Medicaid only if provided by a credentialed Family Peer Advocate. Employers will be looking to hire staff with the right credentials to be able to generate sustaining revenue.
- The training and credential pathway provides a structure for a Family Peer Advocate to formally document their experience and training which may lead to career advancement opportunities as the profession continues to mature.
- Credentialing (or a similar process) is a standard practice in most professions. This gives the profession credibility and helps to promote a broader understanding of the FPA role, specific skills set, and value.

Is the Family Peer Advocate Credential required?

There are several changes in Medicaid taking place at state and national levels. These changes will increase the demand for Family Peer Support Services and will require that providers of this service be credentialed. In New York State, the recognized credential for Family Peer Support Service providers is the FPA Credential.

What are the requirements for the Family Peer Advocate Provisional (temporary) Credential?

FPA PROVISIONAL Credential Requirements At-A-Glance*	
Lived Experience	Applicants must be the parent (foster, adoptive, or biological) or primary caregiver of a child or youth with significant social, emotional, behavioral, mental health, medical, substance use or developmental needs with onset prior to the age of 21 (child can be older than 21 at time of application).
Age	Applicants must be at least 18 years of age
Education	HS diploma, HS Equivalency or a State Education Commencement Credential. (In exceptional cases, documentation of comparable skills may be accepted).
Training	Successful completion of FPA (PEP) Training Level One (online self-paced modules)
Letters of Recommendation	2 letters of recommendation in support of the applicant’s qualifications and readiness to maintain high professional standards while working with parents/caregivers for the benefit of the child/youth.
YPA Code of Ethics	Applicants are required to read and understand the FPA Code of Ethics. Applicants will sign an attestation to uphold these ethical standards.
*For complete details, access the FPA Provisional Credential Application on the Families Together in NYS website under the Workforce Development tab: https://www.ftnys.org/workforce/family-peer-advocate-credential/	

Employment as an FPA is **not** required to take FPA (PEP) Training Level One (online self-paced modules) or to apply for the FPA Provisional (temporary) Credential.

What are the requirements for the Family Peer Advocate Professional Credential?

FPA PROFESSIONAL Credential Requirements At-A-Glance*	
YPA Provisional Credential	Applicant must hold a valid FPA Provisional (temporary) Credential
Training	Completion of FPA (PEP) Training Level Two (online self-paced modules) Completion of FPA (PEP) Virtual Live Training Completion of FPA (PEP) Coaching Call Series
Supervisor Recommendation Letter	Applicant's FPA Supervisor must write a letter of recommendation describing the applicant's relevant experience, their capacity to support and empower parents/caregivers, their capacity to work collaboratively with other professionals, and their capacity to work in a manner that is consistent with the principles of Family Peer Support.
Work Experience	1,000 hours of work experience as an FPA (paid or formal volunteer work will be accepted)
YPA Code of Ethics	Applicants are required to read and understand the FPA Code of Ethics. Applicants will sign an attestation to uphold these ethical standards.
Renewal	The FPA Professional Credential must be renewed every two years. 20 hours (including at least 2 hours of DEI education) of continuing education credits are required. See the FPA Professional Renewal and Continuing Education FAQ for more information: https://www.ftnys.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/FPA-Professional-Renewal-CE-FAQ-Final-June-2024-combined.pdf
*For complete details, access the FPA Professional Credential Application on the Families Together in NYS website under the workforce Development tab: https://www.ftnys.org/workforce/family-peer-advocate-credential/	

Am I eligible if I am NOT a parent or primary caregiver of a child with social, emotional, developmental, medical, addiction and/or behavioral challenges?

No. This credential is designed specifically for peers working to provide support, training and advocacy to parents or caregivers experiencing similar challenges.

This is not intended to discount the commitment and expertise of others who provide services to children and families. It is, however, intended to recognize that 'lived experience' (coupled with appropriate training and specific competencies) affords individuals serving in this role a perspective that is invaluable in engaging and empowering others.

Therefore, applicants must be the parent (foster, adoptive, or biological) or primary caregiver (person responsible for the day-to-day care) of a child or youth with significant social, emotional, developmental, medical, addiction and/or behavioral, needs with onset prior to the age of 21. (That child may now be an adult, but the applicant has experience navigating the children's service system and parenting a child with these challenges.)

It is critical that applicants be able to talk about their experience as a parent/caregiver and draw on lived experience as they work with families, providers and policymakers.

What is the process for reviewing applications?

When we receive your application, we will send you an email acknowledging receipt. If your application is complete and in good order it can take up to 4-6 weeks to review and issue your credential. This time period may be shorter when there is a low volume of applicants. This time period may be extended if your application is incomplete and/or requires further review.

Your application will be reviewed by trained FTNYS staff members who will determine whether you meet the criteria to be credentialed. If you do not meet the criteria, your application will be denied. If it is unclear whether you meet the criteria, your application will be referred to the Family Peer Advocate Credential Advisory Committee so that a final determination can be made.

Is a FPA (PEP) Level One Training certificate of completion or transcript the same as the FPA Provisional (temporary) Credential?

No. Successful completion of PEP Training meets the *training requirement* for the Family Peer Advocate Provisional Credential, but it is not the only requirement. We hope that everyone who has completed FPA (PEP) Level One Training will consider applying for the FPA Provisional Credential.

Does the PEP training expire?

No. Regardless of when you completed your PEP training, it will fulfill the training requirement for the FPA Credential. If you have additional questions, please email FPAcredential@ftnys.org. There are other requirements in addition to training, as outlined in both the applications.

Can past hours working as a FPA be used towards the credential?

Yes. The Professional Application requires a supervisor signature verifying that you have fulfilled the required hours providing Family Peer Support Services to parents/caregivers for the benefit of their child/youth with social, emotional, behavioral and developmental challenges. More than one Work Experience Verification Form may be used if necessary.

Will I need to renew my Credential?

Your FPA Provisional (temporary) Credential is valid for 18 months and cannot be renewed. Extensions are available for advocates unable to meet the training and/or work experience requirements during the 18-month period. Email us at FPAcredential@ftnys.org for more information.

Your FPA *Professional* Credential will need to be renewed every two years. See the **FPA Credential Renewal Application FAQ** for more information:

<https://www.ftnys.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/FPA-Professional-Renewal-CE-FAQ-Final-June-2024-combined.pdf>

Are there any fees?

No. There are no fees associated with our FPA Credential Trainings. There are also no fees associated with any of the FPA Credential applications.

Do I need to change my title to ‘Family Peer Advocate’?

No, you do not. Your title is determined by your employer. However, you are a credentialed Family Peer Advocate if you hold a valid credential.

How do I let others know I am credentialed?

Once you are approved for a Family Peer Advocate Credential, you can use the post-nominal letters associated with the credential. Post-nominal letters are the letters placed after a person’s name to indicate that person holds a position, **credential**, academic degree, accreditation and other noteworthy accomplishments.

Credentialed Family Peer Advocate post-nominal letters are as follows:

Provisionally (temporarily) Credentialed Family Peer Advocates = FPA-P

Credentialed Family Peer Advocates (Professionally) = FPA-C

For example: Michael Samuels, FPA-C. Be proud of your accomplishment!

Additionally, FPAs and agencies can check the status of their credentials with the **FPA Credential Verification Tool** available on the Families Together in NYS website under the Workforce Development tab:

<https://ftnys1.gtdsystems.com/advocate?searchname%20>

What other requirements will I have to meet to be hired?

Having a Family Peer Advocate Credential does NOT guarantee you a job - although it may make it easier for you to obtain a position in this field.

The FPA Credential does NOT take the place of other possible employer requirements that might include, but not be limited to:

Standard interviewing and hiring practices	Proof of citizenship/immigration status
Child sexual abuse registry clearance	Criminal background checks
Mandated reporter training	Driving record/insurance
Safety training	Reference checks
Agency required orientation training	Training in evidence-based practices

Additional Questions?

If you have additional questions or if you require assistance with completing your application, please email FPAcredential@ftnys.org or call (518) 432-0333 ext. 18. We look forward to supporting you on your journey to becoming a Credentialed Family Peer Advocate in New York State!