



2018 Joint Mental Hygiene Hearing February 13th, 2018

Families Together in New York State is a family-run organization that represents families of children with social, emotional, behavioral and cross-systems challenges. Our goal is to ensure that *ALL* children and youth have the support they need in order to succeed. We represent thousands of families from across the state whose children have been involved in many systems including mental health, substance abuse, special education, juvenile justice, and foster care. Our board and staff are made up primarily of family members and youth who have been involved in these systems.

The Families Together 2018 Policy Priorities are created by families of children and youth with social, emotional, behavioral and cross-systems challenges.

This should have been the year that the state budget put children first. This should have been an opportunity to invest in services that strengthen families and help young people reach their potential. In a growing body of research, evidence is clear that exposure to childhood traumas, known as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), can lead to poor health, mental health and socio-economic outcomes later in life. While the state acknowledges that policy should reflect this understanding of adolescent development through the First 1000 days on Medicaid Initiative, somehow, when it comes to actually ensuring a strong children's service system is in place to prevent serious problems in adulthood for all of New York's children, this budget not only falls short, but chooses to delay new services and cut funding for existing services for children. If not addressed, New York State will be paying for this short-sightedness for the next 20 years.

NO DELAYS; INVEST IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES TODAY

Back in 2011, when the Medicaid Redesign Team was launched, the central premise was that New York could rein in costs by investing in better, more creative, preventive health care strategies. For children—unlike every other aspect of Medicaid, it was acknowledged that the children's behavioral health system was under-resourced and had insufficient capacity. Unlike every other aspect of Redesign, the commitment was for more and new investments.

After many delays, the expansion was to begin in July 2018. New services would allow providers to treat kids up to age 21 with services designed specifically for children and delivered in their homes and communities. The designation of providers who could offer the services had begun and providers hired workers to be ready.

Now, the proposal is delayed for 2 more years, despite \$7.5 million being earmarked in previous State spending plans and \$10 million in start-up funding being included but not released.

The delay is irresponsible and puts too many children at risk of continuing without access to mental health services. We are asking for your assistance on a temporary response to this unacceptable delay!

- 1) An immediate \$15 million investment in home-based services for children and families, similar to those that would have been available if the Governor were not proposing a 2-year delay for the Medicaid Redesign plan; and
- 2) Adding \$14 million to the Governor's proposed \$250,000 for Mental Health Support in Community Schools and also making the 57 Small City School districts eligible for the funding.

THE FAMILY PEER SUPPORT AND YOUTH PEER SUPPORT WORKFORCE:

Expand and integrate Family Peer Support Services (FPSS) and Youth Peer Support Services (YPSS) into all children's services, including the child welfare system.

- Family Peer Support Services and Youth Peer Support Service programs are effective because they are family-driven, youth-guided, cross-systems, and community-based services that utilize the lived experience of families and youth to support other children and their families.
- Research has shown that children's services that integrate Family and Youth Peer Support professionals into their programs are more engaging, increase overall satisfaction, and ultimately create better outcomes for children and families.
- New York State created a network of over 200 separate family support programs and approximately 400 professional trained and credentialed family peer advocates.
- State funding should be made available to support, expand, integrate and maintain these programs, and the agencies that utilize them, as children's behavioral health services transition into Medicaid Managed Care and the State launches Health Homes.

The First 1000 Days on Medicaid Workgroup has submitted a proposal to the Executive Budget to pilot and evaluate Family Peer Navigators in multiple settings for at-risk families with young children. We support this proposal, and want it to build upon the existing infrastructure.