

# CHILDREN, YOUTH and FAMILIES

2960, 4046, 4059, 6071, 6110,  
6119, 6120, 6129, 7310

## MISSION

Albany County Department for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) delivers an integrated, diverse, holistic set of services in collaboration with families and communities to empower families to create a safe, nurturing, environment in which children can grow, thrive and reach their full potential. The Department of Children, Youth and Families is unique within New York State in that services for children are consolidated into an independent agency that focuses on strengthening and supporting families, and not incorporated within the Department of Social Services.

## ABOUT OUR DEPARTMENT

The Children and Family Services Division protects the health and safety of children through intervention and child protective services. The Division strives to ensure that all children live in safe and nurturing environments by providing state mandated Child Protective Services and adolescent, foster care and adoption services.

Caseworkers are the frontline staff directly involved with ensuring the health and safety of children, especially those who are involved with Child Protective Services (CPS), Foster Care or Prevention Services. Caseworkers are responsible for investigation and determination of reports of abuse and maltreatment; on-going assessment of risk and safety of children in these reports; removal of children to foster care when imminent risk is deemed; and initiating, coordinating and monitoring Family Court orders to ensure children's safety and provide rehabilitative services to parents. NYS Social Services Law obliges counties to employ sufficiently qualified staff to perform mandated duties and focus on the safety of children.

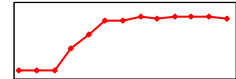
The **Division of Children's Mental Health Services** houses both the Crisis Intake Unit and the Case Management Unit. Children's Mental Health works to stabilize children in crisis and avert disruptive out-of-home placements and hospitalizations by providing a range of services and linking children and families to community-based resources.

- The *Crisis Intake Unit* conducts risk assessments and makes referrals for children and adolescents who exhibit signs of emotional disturbance and are deemed to be a risk to themselves or others.
- The *Mental Health Case Management Unit* serves families with children who have serious emotional disturbances and are at risk of out-of-home placement. They provide crisis, intensive and supportive case management, linkages to community resources and advocacy and support to help maintain children in their homes and communities.

The **Community Based Preventive Services Unit** provides rehabilitative and supportive services to families with children at risk of foster care placement to avoid placements and to shorten placements for those in foster care. The **Youth Bureau** plans and manages a variety of programs for youth under the age of 21, including youth development, recreation, delinquency prevention, services to runaway and homeless youth and substance abuse prevention. The **Healthy Families Home Visiting Program**, a comprehensive prevention program that builds on families' strengths with the goal of creating safe homes for children, will continue to offer services, contingent on continuation of this state grant. In 2011, the Youth Bureau, Prevention Services and Healthy Families will be integrated in one division to better coordinate a continuum of services.

The **Division of Children with Special Needs** provides comprehensive evaluation services and administers the Early Intervention Program, the Preschool Special Education Program and the Physically Handicapped Children's Program to evaluate and serve children who have chronic illnesses, developmental delays and/or disabilities.

## APPROPRIATION HISTORY



1998:	\$0
1999:	\$0
2000:	\$0
2001:	\$30,943,711
2002:	\$49,821,955
2003:	\$69,018,561
2004:	\$70,541,941
2005:	\$73,879,044
2006:	\$73,155,084
2007:	\$75,200,870
2008:	\$75,851,258
2009:	\$74,210,337
2010:	\$73,350,556

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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The **Legal Services Division** represents the Department in Family Court and other judicial proceedings.

## DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS

- The 2011 Executive Budget reinstates five Caseworkers and two Case Supervisor B positions. Given the critical nature of these positions for protecting the health and safety of high risk children as described above, this is the one department in the Executive Budget with a net increase in staffing. The number of positions proposed for the entire Department is still nineteen less than the Department had in 2009.
- Seven individuals in non-critical positions in the Department were offered the Early Retirement Incentive.
- The DCYF budget for 2011 includes an increase of almost 15 percent for payments to State Training Schools as a result of the Office of Children and Family Services increasing rates significantly year over year.
- Funding for prevention programming was reduced overall by 7 percent.

## STRATEGIC INITIATIVES 2011

In 2010, the Children and Family Services Division made great strides towards obtaining permanency for children within their own families, both biological and kinship support. When this type of permanency could not be obtained, foster care and adoption occurred. Over the last five years, the number of children and youth in foster care, detention and/or residential care has steadily decreased to the lowest number of children and youth in foster care overseen by the Department. Between August 2009 and August 2010, the number of children and youth in placement decreased from 245 to 219. At the same time, the number of adoptions remains above average.

This past year, I was proud to preside at the grand opening of The Children's Center. The Center is the new home to both the Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) and Children's Mental Health Services, and provides a diverse and holistic set of services for children who have emotional disorders and those who have been physically or sexually abused.

The CAC convenes under one roof a multi-disciplinary team of medical, legal, law enforcement and social service experts for children who have been sexually or physically abused. The facility provides a safe, child-friendly atmosphere where professionals can interview and evaluate child victims and their non-offending family members about abuse and provide specialized treatment and services either directly at the CAC or through linkages and referrals to community services. The collaborative model of the CAC has many benefits including reducing trauma for children, promoting successful legal intervention and linking families with appropriate services.

DCYF has developed specific services to assist the highest need children and youth within the County. In 2010, respite services were offered for the first time for children and youth receiving services. The service is targeted at children and youth remaining in the Department's care and custody for three or more years, youth who are placed out of New York State, youth who are 14 years of age working towards independent living skill development and children and youth who are considered "hard to place" due to mental health, substance abuse, or developmental disabilities. DCYF has worked diligently with community providers to configure service delivery to these children and youth with the goal of decreasing placement days and placement disruptions. These youth will be better placed when necessary without disconnecting them from their parents, extended family members and natural support systems.