



**New York State
Office of
Children & Family
Services**

Report to the Legislature Quality Enhancement Fund

State Fiscal Year 2008-09

**David A. Paterson
Governor**

**Gladys Carrión
Commissioner**

Report to the Legislature

Quality Enhancement Fund State Fiscal Year 2008-09

New York's Child Welfare Financing structure promotes safety, well-being and permanency for children, with the following three components:

1. Chapter 53 of the Laws of 2008 revised reimbursement to 63.7 percent/36.3 percent State/local funding for all child welfare services except foster care services after applying available Federal funds;
2. A Foster Care Block Grant capping State reimbursement to social services districts for foster care services to the annual amounts appropriated; and
3. A Quality Enhancement Fund (QEF) administered by the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to increase the availability and quality of children and family services programs.

Chapters 53 and 83 of the Laws of 2002, and Section 97-yyy of the State Finance Law require that OCFS submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature annually that describes the disbursements from the QEF and the status of the projects financed by the fund.

In State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2008-09, \$3,592,680 in Local Assistance General Funds was available for the QEF. This funding supports services and expenses related to improving the quality of child welfare services that include, but are not limited to: training to mandated reporters regarding the proper identification of and response to signs of child abuse and neglect; public information programs and services that advance a zero tolerance campaign of child abuse and neglect; and demonstration projects to test models for new or targeted expansion of services beyond the level currently funded by local social services districts.

The following initiatives are supported by the SFY 2008-09 QEF:

Center for Family Representation

\$218,900

This initiative reduced the length-of-stay for children in foster care and/or enhanced permanency for adolescents in foster care with a goal of independent living. This project supports the goals of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR).

The Center for Family Representation, in collaboration with the Legal Aid Society and the Office of Court Administration OCA, work with families in the pre-court phase. A team of social workers, attorneys and parent advocates provide intensive children and family services at the front of a case to determine whether a family can engage in services and if a child can safely remain or return home. This initiative also utilizes dispute resolution as a means to divert court involvement or achieve early settlement of Article 10 (child abuse and neglect) proceedings.

Ready by 21 Quality Counts Initiative (QCI)

\$200,000

The Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) was selected to participate in the Ready by 21 Quality Counts Initiative sponsored by the Forum for Youth Investment, High Scope Educational Foundation, and the National Training Institute for Community Youth Work. It is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Atlantic Philanthropies. The award included \$100,000 in funding, as well as training and technical assistance valued at \$150,000 from the three sponsoring organizations over two years. This award granted to OCFS to be an intermediary, in partnership with Cornell University ACT for Youth, to work with four counties (Broome, Onondaga, Orange and Rockland), and to support broader dissemination. In order for OCFS to receive the funds, a \$200,000 match is required. The QEF supported the required match for the second year of the project for four counties at \$50,000 per year. The counties included Broome, Onondaga, Orange, and Rockland, which were targeted based on their readiness and existing efforts in the area of collaborative planning, program assessment and youth worker training. Counties were selected based on regional considerations in close proximity to facilitate technical assistance provided by the national sponsors.

The three national partners bring resources to help OCFS and counties move forward on their agenda to improve outcomes for all youth. This included resources from:

- Forum for Youth Investment – This focuses on improving outcomes for all youth so that they are ready for life, work, college and other independent activities. It supports a cross systems approach to outcomes, aligning resources, engaging stakeholders and a data driven quality improvement process.
- High Scope Educational Foundation – This foundation has developed the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) tool that provides a mechanism for program monitoring/assessment. This research-based instrument assesses programs particularly on the engagement and relationship between staff and youth. This instrument incorporates research on effective positive developmental settings. Characteristics of effective programs include: Physical and Psychological Safety; Appropriate Structure; Supportive Relationships; Opportunities to Belong; Positive Social Norms; Support for Efficacy and Mattering; Opportunities for Skill Building; and Integration of Family, School, and Community Efforts.
- National Training Institute for Community Youth Work – Supports the Advancing Youth Development training for youth workers.

The outcomes of this project improve county capacity to achieve cross systems outcomes for youth and families by increasing the use of a data driven decision making process (planning); interagency alignment of resources across systems that contribute to long term outcomes such as reduction of child abuse or increase in self-sufficiency; assessment of program quality as it contributes to achievement of outcomes; and assessment of a provider's capacity to deliver quality services.

Hillside Children’s Center – Cross Systems Services

\$90,500

Hillside Children’s Center Cross Systems Services is designed to screen, evaluate and develop a treatment package that will allow a child to remain at home or provide for placement of the child in the least restrictive environment. Hillside Children’s Center currently operates a Cross Systems residential program as one of New York State’s authorized voluntary agencies serving children with severe disabilities. Youth under the age of 18 and diagnosed as seriously emotionally challenged and at high risk of out-of-home placement are served in this program. There are nine counties (Chemung, Livingston, Ontario, Monroe, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Wayne and Yates) who participate in the Cross Systems Services project.

This year of funding is supported by four State agencies. They are as follows: Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD), Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS), and Department of Health (DOH).

Getting to Outcomes (GTO)

\$480,000

Part H of Chapter 57 of the Laws of 2007 required performance or outcome based provisions beginning January 1, 2008 for preventive services provided in accordance with Social Services Law (SSL) §409-a. The Office of Children and Family Services has been providing guidance and technical assistance to nine counties to assist in the implementation of these requirements. The SFY 2008-09 QEF spending plan has expanded this program by providing regional training and technical assistance to counties to build their capacity to improve the implementation and use of performance or outcome based provisions. The training helped aligned the counties’ preventive services efforts with the federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR)

Training associated with planning and contracting for outcomes promoted fiscal and programmatic accountability and improved the quality of programs. The training assisted counties to design and use a system to monitor contracts based on performance measures and quality improvement efforts.

Child Welfare Indicator Data and National Data Center

\$60,000

The QEF were used to continue OCFS’s contract with the University of Chicago’s Chapin Hall Center for Children, which allows OCFS access to their information system and research tools to assist OCFS to improve outcomes for children and families served in the child welfare system. Chapin Hall is a research and development center that provides resources to policymakers and service providers in the area of child safety and permanency. The Center for State Foster Care and Adoption Data, a partnership with the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) and Chapin Hall, provides child welfare agencies advanced information technology for performance measurement. Chapin Hall provides governmental entities access to these research and data tools.

Under this contractual agreement, OCFS had access to Chapin Hall's computer programs and Internet based tools to make available child welfare indicator data. This activity included the production of State and county data profiles based on New York State indicators of child safety and permanency. The contractor worked with OCFS to identify different ways of measuring time towards permanency and produced reports that were transmitted to counties. In addition, the contractor worked with OCFS to transfer this knowledge to continue State-level work on child safety and permanency indicators. OCFS received the following technical assistance:

- Access to a sophisticated database to track state child welfare outcomes and agency performance over time.
- Access to multi-state data for benchmarking New York State's progress.
- Technical assistance to OCFS on the installation and use of the database and the strategic use of data for program evaluation, policy analysis, and compliance reporting.

Through access and use of the data, OCFS continued to develop the capacity to:

- Analyze key child welfare outcomes related to time to reunification, time to adoption, placement stability, and re-entry into foster care.
- Compare outcomes for different entities within New York State and other states.
- Project future service patterns based on state and national historical trends and indicators.

In addition, funding supported and expanded OCFS membership in Chapin Hall's Data Center so that voluntary agencies had access to the data. This improved the joint effort between OCFS and the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA) to advance the agencies' access to and effective use of data.

**Center for State Foster Care and Adoption Data
Training and Technical Assistance**

\$47,725

OCFS continued its second year of a contract with the University of Chicago's Chapin Hall Center for Children (Chapin Hall). The contract provided training and technical support to OCFS staff that are using the Center for State Foster Care and Adoption Data (State Data Center). The training and technical assistance included hands on experience regarding the web-based Data Center website and the ability to create Foster Care Profiles that assist OCFS to use longitudinal analysis to understand child welfare services and core outcomes. OCFS staff received training on ways to use the child welfare administrative data provided by the Data Center, and the use of the data for program planning, evaluations and budgets. In addition to the training, Chapin Hall staff participated in meetings and discussions about strategies for continuing to use the best information available to guide policy and resource discussion for New York's child welfare programs.

Diligent Recruitment of Families for Children in Foster Care

\$44,444

OCFS was awarded \$2 million in federal grant funds through the Parent for Every Child-Adoption Opportunity Program for a period of five years to promote the diligent recruitment of permanent families for children in foster care that have been freed for adoption. Both State and national data indicate that children in facilities with serious mental health, mental retardation or criminal justice histories have little or no permanency work done on their behalf even though 90% of these children have been in care for 11 years or more. The project recruits families willing to adopt youth with special needs and provides training to assist parents to learn the special parenting requirements for meeting the needs of these youth.

The federal Children's Bureau requires that the grant activities include a rigorous evaluation component. Chapin Hall is well-known for its high quality research in the area of child permanency and was approved by the federal Children's Bureau to be the program evaluator. Chapin Hall oversaw the development and implementation of a multi-year randomized control trial impact evaluation of the Parent for Every Child-Adoption Opportunities Grant. Chapin Hall researchers manage the evaluation, design data collection tools, develop and manage a web-based case management and evaluation system, compile and analyze data, and prepare reports.

Under the direction of the Chapin Hall evaluator, three service provider partners geographically dispersed across the State carry out a randomized control study of innovative efforts to find permanent homes for foster youth with special needs who have been freed for adoption who reside in facilities operated by the OMH, OMRDD and OCFS. This project provided a scientifically valid determination of the best, most successful recruiting practices for the targeted population. The key elements of the evaluation included:

- Child specific recruitment through Family Search and Engagement (FSE) as well as through the media and other activities that feature "Waiting Children" and providing permanency specialist and team to facilitate the permanency process for each child.
- Families recruited with the skills and desire to meet the needs of the targeted children and youth.
- Adoption Navigators (experienced adoptive parents) to help potential adoptive parents navigate the system and overcome barriers.
- Public awareness to dispel misconceptions about adoption of youth who are disabled.

The federal award requires a 10 percent state match. OCFS used the federal funds for the program operation; the state match component to be supported from the QEF of \$44,444 per year supports the required evaluation. The State match over the five years is \$222,220. This is the second year of a five year commitment.

**Service Outcomes Action Research Project (SOAR)
\$132,000**

OCFS continued to contract with the State University of New York Professional Development Program (PDP) to support the SOAR initiative. The Center for Human Services Research (CHSR) collaborated with researchers at the State University at Albany and policymakers and practitioners at St. Anne's Institute and LaSalle School. The long-range goal for this work is to develop a system of measurement, data analysis, and administrative and clinical decision making process that provide Residential Treatment Centers (RTCs) with a capacity to assess what interventions should be used and how the clients responses to the practice being used in the RTCs will lead to better client outcomes, including the reduction of recidivism (which will increase community safety) and improved performances to help youth stay safe and find permanent homes.

Differential Response Evaluation and Wraparound Services \$215,000

In the fall of 2008, six counties launched New York State's pilot of a differential response model regarding the investigation of certain child protective services reports. The counties participating in the pilot were Erie, Onondaga, Chautauqua, Tompkins, Albany and Westchester.

This family assessment approach, currently known as "differential response", requires an initial assessment of child safety. If the child is assessed as being safe, the selected district can use the differential response approach. This approach is foreseen by OCFS and other states as an appropriate method for engaging families because it is viewed as less threatening by the family and allows the family to have a larger role in determining the services that will benefit their children. Consequently, the county is more likely to be viewed by the family as a helping entity in the future, should the family related issues arise that create a risk to the child(ren).

The QEF funds supported the evaluation of the differential response at a cost of \$80,000 annually. The evaluation includes three components – a process evaluation, an impact study, and a web-based database that collected information that is essential to the evaluation. The process study is evaluating:

- What types of services the caseworkers arrange for the family on the family assessment track, and how closely the services matched the family's needs and preferences.
- How families assigned to the family assessment track perceive the way they are treated by caseworkers and how satisfied they are with the help they received.

The impact study involves a randomized controlled trial (RCT) in Onondaga County. Families that meet the differential response criteria established by the county are randomly assigned to either the differential response track or the investigation track.

The evaluators evaluate both tracks and the impact on the families for both control groups. The web-based application records:

- The results of the family needs and strengths assessment that several counties are conducting for families on the family assessment track.
- Information on the activities of the caseworkers on behalf of families on the family assessment track, including the types of services provided directly to the families or through referrals to community agencies.
- The information on the families' involvement in service planning and their engagement in services.
- The web-based application also includes an algorithm for conducting the random assignment of families to treatment in control groups in Onondaga.

Of the funds, \$135,000 is being used to continue wraparound funding to support services to families served on the differential response track.

Evidenced Based Parenting – Incredible Years \$50,000

The Incredible Years is a research-based course which helps parents increase their parenting skills, learn how to influence their children's behavior, and build positive child-parent relationships. The program also teaches parents how to set limits, use praise for good behavior, and to engage children in constructive play. The goals of the Incredible Years program include reducing child abuse and neglect and improving parenting skills. The Incredible Years curriculum was initiated four years ago by the Family Resource Centers of Crestwood Children's Center and five other agencies. In 2008-2009, the program was provided in Rochester and surrounding areas.

Self-Sufficiency Standards – NYS Community Action/Empire Justice \$75,000

The Self-Sufficiency Standards (SSS) project is a report design to provide important information about wage adequacy. This report provides the state level policymakers and local social services districts with important information regarding various family compositions. In addition, it provides a detailed, yet standardized, analysis of their cost-of-living and how much working parents need to meet basic food, shelter and health care needs. This information is useful when gathering CFSR data that measures well-being and stability in the household. The SSS is used in a variety of settings, ranging from a welfare family choosing the best options to move from poverty to self-sufficiency, to organizations weighing investments in services and training opportunities, to state-level policymakers facing critical policy choices on human service programs, tax policy, and economic development. OCFS contracted with New York State Community Action Association (NYSCAA) to update the New York Self-Sufficiency Standards for 2009.

NYS Partnership for Family Recovery Practice Guidance Document \$50,000

The NYS Partnership for Family Recovery project is a joint initiative with OCFS, OASAS and the OCA. It is directed by a core team that consists of staff from each of the partnering state agencies. Stakeholders from each of these systems provide input into planning and implementation of the project through the NY Partnership for Family Recovery Advisory Group. The NYS Partnership for Family Recovery Project has been incorporated into the OCFS CFPSR Program Improvement Plan (PIP) and is intended to improve common child welfare outcomes. The project uses data from the three systems to measure the outcomes and effectiveness of the project.

The NYS Partnership for Family Recovery project has a holistic approach to working with families at the county level. The project brings representatives from the three systems together to collaborate on local issues by adopting common protocols and conducting integrated case planning. Each of these systems and their partners recognize the need to engage families more effectively, to accurately assess the needs of family members, and to incorporate the family's input into a comprehensive service plan. The members of the local partnership will work together using strengths-based practices to support the family in achieving child safety and sustained recovery.

The project has already developed the document "Gearing Up to Improve Outcomes for Families: New York State Collaborative Practice Guide for Managers and Supervisors in Child Welfare, Chemical Dependency Services and Court Systems". The project will include multiple trainings in three to five counties with significant foster care populations.

The training includes:

- Cross-systems Foundational Training – Standardized training modules that relate to each of the three systems. The modules have been developed for courts, substance abuse providers, child welfare workers and temporary assistance workers. They provide foundation information on each system's core values, regulations and practices so that each system has a working knowledge of the other systems.
- Statewide Meeting – this is one-day meeting in which participants in the counties network regarding current programs and new approaches. County staff from the child welfare, court and chemical dependency systems collaborate to better understand the elements of each system in order to improve their ability to assist families.

Transforming Juvenile Justice Task Force

\$150,000

The Governor's Task Force on Transforming the New York State Juvenile Justice System was established to examine how New York State can serve the delinquent youth who are placed in OCFS custody and develop a strategic blueprint for reform. OCFS recognizes that the State's juvenile correctional model must be reformed and new strategies must be developed to address delinquent behavior. The Task Force

developed and designed a strategic plan for transforming the system, including examining alternatives to institutional placements; ways to assist children's re-entry into the community; and the conditions of confinement for juveniles across the State. In addition, the Task Force studied ways to improve treatment for juveniles in the area of mental health and substance abuse, and addressed the disproportionate number of minority youth in the juvenile justice system. Through a contract with the Vera Institute of Justice, the following activities were accomplished:

- Used quantitative and qualitative data to diagnose gaps in the current system and opportunities for change.
- Presented to Task Force members and key OCFS staff best practices, eliciting input from experts in the field, and organizing model site visits.
- Structured and facilitated a reform process that prompted meaningful recommendations for change in a short window of time.

Resiliency Project

\$75,000

OCFS expanded on the work first developed by Mt. Sinai and the New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS), which focused on burnout among child welfare caseworkers. The goal of this project was to reduce the amount of trauma that led to burnout among child welfare caseworkers, which resulted in greater turnover and poor work performance. The project conducted at ACS demonstrated that caseworkers who received interventions to promote resiliency had fewer overdue cases, reported less stress, and had a greater sense of job satisfaction. The result of the study reported that caseworkers have a greater ability to manage the challenges of the job.

OCFS expanded the project to include another large district where turnover and practice are an issue. This project was an extension and outgrowth of the "Caseworkers Make a Difference" outreach program that OCFS initiated as a result of the most recent federal CFSR. One of the primary goals was to increase the stability and competency of the child welfare workforce as a means of improving safety, permanency and well-being outcomes for children and families.

Disproportionate Minority Representation (DMR) Project

\$200,000

OCFS commenced a comprehensive initiative to identify and reduce racial and ethnic disparities associated with accessing treatment and services to children of color and their families. New York State has a disproportionate number of children of color in its child welfare and juvenile justice systems. There is an extreme disparity at every decision making point to place a child in either system. The outcomes for children of color, and especially Black children and families are disproportionate to the current population in both systems. The goals of the project are to:

- Reduce the disproportionate numbers of children of color in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, and eliminate racial disparities in provision of services and treatment. This is particularly true for Black children and families who are most overrepresented and have the most disproportionate outcomes.
- Promote cultural competence in practice and policies.

This initiative includes staff development and training to address DMR issues and cultural competence. The comprehensive approach includes the following elements:

- Collection, analysis and dissemination of data at the county and local level to inform staff of both systems.
- Target interventions where the greatest disparities exist.
- Staff training in cultural competence.
- Technical assistance and support to include all relevant stakeholders and customers at the regional level.
- Technical assistance from national experts to advise and support the effort.

Sanctuary Model Training

\$775,000

OCFS has begun a major and complex initiative to change the manner in which young people in residential care are treated by implementing the nationally-recognized and evidenced-based Sanctuary Model of treatment. The Sanctuary Model represents a trauma-informed method of creating or changing an organizational culture in order to more effectively provide a cohesive context within which healing from psychological and social traumatic experience can be addressed. This initiative involves a new environment of treatment and a shift in philosophy designed to reduce the use of physical restraints and injuries sustained by youth and staff. It provides all levels of staff with new techniques and an understanding of the behaviors of the youth in their care.

The Sanctuary Model has been designed to facilitate the development of structures, processes and behaviors for change by staff, children and the community. Rehabilitative programs will be more focused on treatment and individualized approaches, with the special recognition of trauma experienced by residents and its impact on their growth and development. Since most children who enter residential care have been exposed to overwhelming experiences related to some form of trauma and disruption, trauma-informed methods of care integrated into standard treatment practices are important for achieving residential treatment goals. The advancement of these child and youth development treatment goals is also aimed at preventing a multitude of problems as clients enter adulthood.

Using the Sanctuary Model, and moving towards full implementation of the Sanctuary Model, is a three-year change process that moves OCFS towards a trauma-specific treatment approach. In 2006, five voluntary agencies and two OCFS facilities began this training. Currently, eight voluntary agencies and twelve OCFS facilities participate in this treatment model. QEF were used to continue OCFS's support for this initiative.

Sanctuary Model Training Evaluation

\$202,100

The OCFS Bureau of Evaluation and Research is overseeing the development and implementation of a multi-year process and outcome evaluation of the Sanctuary Model of Treatment. This is a joint initiative of the Division of Juvenile Justice and Opportunities for Youth and the Division of Child Welfare and Community Services. The process evaluation activities focus on monitoring changes in institutional culture and practices over time. Additionally it assesses the extent to which Sanctuary ideals and tools are being implemented with fidelity to the Sanctuary Model. Outcome evaluation activities examine whether adoption of the Sanctuary Model is associated with anticipated changes in youth and staff behavior.

Performance Based Standards – NYS Community Action/Empire Justice \$100,000

Performance-based standards (PbS) for Youth Correction Facilities was launched by the U.S. Department of Justice as a system for agencies and facilities to identify, monitor and improve conditions and treatment services provided to incarcerated youths and the work environment using national standards and outcome measures. Benefits of participating include the ability to measure and track key indicators of facility performance; comparison with similar participating facilities across the country; definition of measureable goals and development of strategies to achieve them; access to resources and assistance to make improvements; and accountability measures.

Directed by the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators (CJCA) PbS helps juvenile justice facilities and community residential programs establish and sustain systems for continuous improvement and accountability. It provides a blueprint of best practices for facilities based on national standards, regular data collection, and review of outcomes for tracking performance.

The PbS Learning Institute implemented the program at eight DJJOY residential facilities, two of which are community-based facilities. PbS :

- Provides ongoing support and technical assistance for all New York DJJOY sites through their website.
 - Provides each participating New York site with a Performance Profile Report following each semi-annual data collection period.
 - Provides on-line tools for facility improvement planning and links to resources.
 - Provides deliverables and services including draft site reports with data collection review/analysis; downloadable outcomes measure reports; bi-annual site reports; jurisdictional profile reports; summary report of youth; staff and family climate surveys; aggregate analysis reports; and critical outcome reports.
 - Visits each New York site one time each contract year for consultation and technical support.
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Mandated Reporter and Public Information Activities

\$427,011

The QEF continued to support training for mandated reporters. This training serves to improve the ability of mandated reporters to identify and report effectively on suspected instances of child abuse. These funds support continuous updates to the curriculum and allow this training to be accessible on an ongoing basis.

Public information materials continue to be made available to raise awareness about child abuse among the general public and the caseworkers who investigate allegations of abuse. The purpose is to increase awareness of the importance of reporting suspicions of abuse and maltreatment to protect children in the community. OCFS continued to educate New Yorkers about the dangers of co-sleeping with their infant children and raised awareness about child abuse among the general public. In addition, OCFS continued to develop informational materials to improve outcomes for children in foster care and advance permanency options for children. OCFS is developing and producing materials, such as videos, manuals, fact sheets and posters to support children and families in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. These materials are intended to help engage families in services to improve the lives of children and youth. OCFS also publicizes the QualitystarsNY program, a quality improvement and recognition system designed to recognize child care programs that demonstrate excellence in meeting New York's regulatory standards.
