

Request for Legislative Action to Enter into Contractual Agreements with Various Providers for the Provision of Foster Care Services

In accordance with the mandates articulated in Social Services Law 371 and 383, local districts are required to provide and pay for foster care services for youth in need of such services. The Department for Children, Youth and Families respectfully requests legislative authorization to enter into contractual arrangements with New York State approved foster care providers for the provision of foster care services for a term of two years starting January 1, 2025 and ending December 31, 2026. When children are placed in foster care with a particular provider, Albany County will pay no more than the Maximum State Aid Rate (MSAR) as mandated by New York State. If children are placed out of state, Albany County will pay no more than the Approved agency rate by the corresponding state.

The primary objective of Foster care is to reconcile children with the biological parents. However, if the parents are unable or unwilling to care for the child, or if the child is an orphan, then the first choice of adoptive parents is a relative known as kinship care. Most kinship care is done informally, without the involvement of a court or public organization. If no related family member is willing or able to adopt, the next preference is for the child to be adopted by foster parents or by someone else involved in the child's life.

If these options are not viable, the plan for the minor may be to enter other planned permanent living arrangements. This option allows the child to stay in custody of the state and the child can stay placed in a foster home, with a relative or a long-term care facility, such as a residential child care community or, for children with development disabilities, physical disabilities or mental disabilities, a treatment center.

Authorization is requested to enter into an agreement with providers that have a current or recent placement for foster care services through Albany County or New York State licensure and approval to receive such placements. Given the fluid and dynamic nature of foster care, there are times in which children, based on their individual needs and circumstances, may be placed in a foster care setting for which the County does not have a contract. Should such a situation arise, the Department will complete the necessary paperwork to contract with these approved providers retroactively.