



## Office of Children and Family Services

KATHY HOCHUL  
Governor

SHEILA J. POOLE  
Commissioner

May 24, 2022

Dear Commissioners:

As you are aware, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) has identified mobile response units as a strategy to develop and operate coordinated programs of community-based family support and family preservation services. These services are intended to prevent child maltreatment among families at risk, assure children's safety within the home, and preserve integrity of the family unit in which children have been maltreated, when the family's needs can be safely addressed effectively in the home. As we've discussed in our monthly collaboratives, to build the most effective and responsive team for the mobile response vans, Family Peer Advocates (FPAs) have been identified as integral members of the mobile response teams. This letter provides specific instructions and guidance on the availability of funds to support the inclusion of FPAs as part of the mobile response teams.

OCFS will leverage Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) for funding. CAPTA funds are geared towards support and improvement of state child protective services (CPS) systems. Applicable areas identified for the use of these funds include case management and delivery of services provided to children and families, and developing and enhancing the capacity of community-based programs to integrate shared leadership strategies between parents and professionals to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect at the neighborhood level. It is within this space that the inclusion of FPAs bridges the work of child welfare professionals and parental representation, advocacy, and efficacy.

We certainly recognize the value FPAs will bring to the mobile response teams. They are trained and credentialed individuals with lived experience navigating specific systems. FPAs assist parents coping with crises such as a child protective services (CPS) investigations or family separation by providing empathic understanding from individuals who have faced similar circumstances. FPAs can mentor and cultivate a parent's confidence in system literacy, understanding of parental rights, service navigation, and advocacy to local departments of social services (LDSSs), provider agencies, the court system and other system actors. The supportive and trusting relationship between a parent and their advocate can help educate the parent to navigate the system and access the tools they need to hold self-determination for their families throughout the process.

As you incorporate FPAs into the continuum of services of the mobile response teams, please note they will need to meet the following qualifications:

- Personal lived/life experience accessing and using services within the child welfare system
- Ability to promote parent/caregiver involvement and advocacy across child serving systems
- Ability to engage with diverse groups and populations
- Demonstrate an approach of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in interfacing with families
- Be a proactive and contributing member of the mobile response team in decision-making

- Adhere to all statutory, regulatory, confidentiality and policy requirements that govern child welfare
- Ability and the flexibility to work as part of the mobile response pilot. This may require co-location of the individual.
- Willingness to travel throughout the region covered by the mobile response team

It is important that FPAs are seamlessly incorporated into the mobile response team. At a minimum, FPAs can assist with the following:

- Outreach and information
- Engagement, bridging and transition support
- Self-advocacy, self-efficacy, and empowerment
- Parent skill development
- Promoting effective family-driven practice

It is essential that FPAs participate in any required training and credentialing and receive ongoing supervision and professional development to support them in being effective in their role.

Funding provided must be utilized for the hiring of a full-time FPA. Funds can also be used for the cost of related salaries, fringe benefits, and travel expenditures.

To receive the allocated funds, please complete and submit *Attachment B, Attestation of Use* to: [FamilyFirstNY@ocfs.ny.gov](mailto:FamilyFirstNY@ocfs.ny.gov) by **May 31, 2022**. The following section provides specific guidance regarding claiming for the funds.

### **Claiming Requirements**

Claims for these funds must be submitted as described below. These funds are to be used only to reimburse expenditures beginning May 1, 2022, and ending April 30, 2023, and final accepted in the Automated Claiming System (ACS) by July 31, 2023.

Expenditures for the Family Peer Advocate project should be claimed through the RF17 claim package for special project claiming. These costs are first identified on the RF2A claim package as F17 functional costs and reported in the F17 column on the LDSS-923 *Cost Allocation Schedule of Payments Administrative Expenses Other Than Salaries* and the LDSS-2347 Schedule D, *DSS Administrative Expenses Allocation and Distribution by Function and Program*. After final accepting the RF2A claim package, the individual project costs are then reported under the project label "Family Peer Support Services" on the LDSS-4975A, RF17 Worksheet, *Distribution of Allocated Costs to Other Reimbursable Programs*.

Salaries, fringe benefits, staff counts, and central services costs are directly entered on the LDSS-4975A RF17 Worksheet, *Distribution of Allocated Costs to Other Reimbursable Programs* while overhead costs are automatically brought over from the RF2A, Schedule D and distributed based upon the proportion of the number of staff assigned to this project. Employees not working all their time on the Family Peer Advocate project must maintain time studies to support the salary and fringe benefit costs allocated to the program.

Non-salary administrative costs are reported with the appropriate object of expense(s) on the LDSS-923B, Summary-Administrative (page 1), *Schedule of Payments for Expenses Other Than Salaries for Other Reimbursable Programs*. Program costs should be reported as object of expense 37 - Special Project Program Expense on the LDSS-923B, Summary - Program (page 2), *Schedule of Payments for Expenses Other Than Salaries for Other Reimbursable Programs*.

## Attachment A

### Family Peer Advocate Allocations

District	Allocation
Albany	\$120,000
Monroe	\$120,000
Onondaga	\$120,000
Westchester	\$120,000
<b>Statewide Total</b>	<b>\$480,000</b>

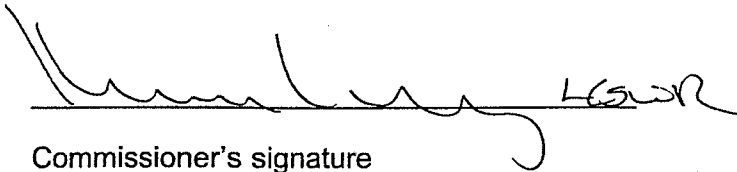
## Attachment B

### Attestation of Use

This is to certify that the Albany Co. DCYF department of social services will use the allocation of these funds authorized in the amount of \$ 120,000 to Contract for a FPA (insert brief description of use of funds) \_\_\_\_\_. Such funds will not be used to supplant any other state or local funds. Claims for reimbursement under this appropriation will not be submitted for the same type and level of funding covered by any other state or locally authorized appropriation.

### Plan for use of funds – check all that apply:

- ☐ Funds will be used by the LDSS
- ☒ Funds will be used to contract with a service provider
- ☒ Hire a full-time Family Peer Advocate

  
Commissioner's signature

5/24/22  
Date

Email completed **Attachment B** to Gail Geohagen-Pratt at Gail.Geohagen-Pratt@ocfs.ny.gov by **May 31, 2022**.