

Department for Children, Youth and Families

Justification for Amending the 2024 Albany County Budget for Overtime in the Department for Children, Youth and Families

The Department for Children, Youth and Families is seeking legislative authorization to amend the 2024 Albany County Adopted Budget by increasing the overtime line by \$56,377 with funding available in a vacant Staff Social Worker line. The Department has expended \$766,877 in overtime funding and the line had been budgeted for \$710,500.

Due to having to staff a youth in foster care around the clock with two caseworkers for the past two months as well as the implementation of Family Assessment Response, the agency overtime is higher than anticipated.

Youth who remain in foster care for more than two years are often youth with multi-faceted needs. These youth are also youth in need of a higher level of care than what a foster home can provide. As a result, we rely on our voluntary agencies to program for these youth. However, Voluntary Agencies statewide have been less accepting of these youth into their programs leaving counties without any placements while we seek placements out of state. The youth that we have been faced with staffing around the clock for the past two months has been in foster care for more than 10 years and has complex mental health needs.

Also, the Department implemented Family Assessment Response as an alternative response to Child Protective reports in June of this year. The Family Assessment Response is a whole family approach that is strength-based and solution focused. Since the Family Assessment Response involves scheduling a time to meet with the family at a time that works for the entire family to participate, these visits often occur after hours when children are home from school and caretakers are home from work. Family Assessment Response has been a positive shift in our engagement with the families we serve that contributed to placing fewer children in foster care this year. However, to ensure successful implementation, it is necessary to focus on reducing caseload sizes to ensure caseworkers have the time to devote to working with families.

The State has not provided support to help districts to find appropriate placements for youth in foster care with high needs. We continue to strive to meet the State mandates and regulations, all which require additional casework time and staff to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children in Albany County.