

Department for Children, Youth and Families

Backup Material for Authorization for Grant Acceptance from the New York State Office of Children and Family Services for funding the Children's Advocacy Center, to amend the 2022 Adopted Budget, and to obtain Contract Authorization with the Albany County Crime Victims & Sexual Violence Center and Albany Police Department

The Department respectfully requests Legislative authorization to accept grant funding from the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (NYSOCFS) for the Children's Advocacy Center (CAC). The grant award is \$ 140,399, for the term October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023.

In addition, the Department respectfully requests authorization to renew agreements with Albany County Crime Victims and Sexual Violence Center, and the Albany Police Department in conjunction with this grant. The amount of the proposed renewal will be \$27,333 for Crime Victims and \$18,000 for Albany Police Department for the period of February 1, 2022 to September 30, 2022 (8 Months).

In November 2010, the Department for Children, Youth and Families – Children's Advocacy Center was awarded funding from NYSOCFS specifically for Children's Advocacy Centers. Since that time, this funding has been utilized to offset salary and fringe of the clerical support person located at the CAC and a Family Advocate position that is staffed by the Albany County Crime Victims and Sexual Violence Center (CVSVC), as well as training for staff, and offsetting the County's cost for office supplies and general services expenditures. In 2022, the Department will utilize this funding in a similar manner to offset salary and fringe of staff persons for the CAC, including Case Supervisor A, Account Clerk III, CSEC Coordinator, Clerical staff and Family Advocate positions. Funding will also continue to be utilized for training of staff, County costs for office supplies and telephone, as well as to continue to support a collaborative community education and outreach campaign regarding the promotion of healthy relationships and the prevention of child abuse and maltreatment.

The Mission of the Albany County Children's Advocacy Center is to minimize trauma to children while providing a coordinated approach to the investigation, prosecution and treatment of child sexual abuse and physical abuse cases and to maximize the effects of interventions for children and their families.

The Family Advocate's primary role is to offer support to non-offending caregivers in cases of alleged sexual and/physical abuse so that they can act responsibly to protect and support the alleged victim. According to the National Children's Advocacy Center, the non-offending caregiver is often overwhelmed by a wide range of emotions and pressures. If the child is to be protected and remain in their home, the non-offending caregiver must often choose to support the child in the face of their own denial, that of the alleged abuser, and the denial of family and friends. Combined with the emotional stress is the financial impact caused by sudden separations and the loneliness and isolation often resulting from them. Crime Victim Sexual Violence Center is a community partner with the CAC and this collaboration has enhanced the working relationship that previously existed.

The Albany County Multi-Disciplinary Team is a collaboration of professionals from the various disciplines who investigate, prosecute and treat child victims of sexual and physical abuse in Albany County. The partners include Albany County Department for Children Youth and Families, Albany County District Attorney's Office, Albany Police Department, Albany County Sheriff's Office, Altamont Police Department, Bethlehem Police Department, Cohoes Police Department, Colonie Police Department, Green Island Police Department, Guilderland Police Department, Menands Police Department, New York State Police Troop G, Ravena-Coeymans Police Department, Watervliet Police Department, Albany County Crime Victims and Sexual Violence Center, St. Anne Institute, Albany County District Attorney Victim/Witness Specialist Program, Northeast Health, Forensic Nurse Practitioners of Schenectady, and Albany Medical Center.

The Albany County MDT provides coordinated investigations, medical examinations, forensic interviews, advocacy services and therapeutic services to sexually/physically abused children and their families. The Nurse Practitioner works within a team of Multi-Disciplinary professionals and conducts non-emergent medical examinations of children served by the ACDCYF Children's Advocacy Center, where sexual abuse is suspected, as directed solely by the COUNTY. The medical examination will be conducted in accordance with medically acceptable protocols, Department of Health guidelines and requirements of New York State Law.

The Family Advocate assists families to navigate the various systems involved during this crisis in their lives and assists in successful linkages to necessary services and supports. The Albany County MDT partners are involved in the investigation, legal aspects and delivery of services to child sexual/physical abuse victims and their families.

A part-time Law Enforcement Coordinator from Albany Police Department is co-located at the Children's Advocacy Center and is the liaison between the ACDCYF CAC and the multiple Law Enforcement Agencies in Albany County and those outside of Albany County that may also be investigating cross-district cases, including the FBI and Homeland Security. The duties of the part-time Law Enforcement Coordinator will include, but are not limited to: serve as the point person for law enforcement agencies with questions about proper procedures related to the investigation of MDT cases; assist as necessary and appropriate in the investigation coordination of a MDT case; assist in engaging other law enforcement agencies in the collaborative CAC model investigation process; and work with partner agencies to resolve barriers involving the criminal aspect of a MDT case. As the Albany County Safe Harbour initiative involving the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) also falls under the Albany County CAC, the co-located part-time Law Enforcement Coordinator may also assist in such cases for a coordinated investigation and response and will work closely with the CAC Coordinator and CSEC Coordinator.