



Office of Children and Family Services

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Commissioner

Local Commissioners Memorandum

Transmittal:	21-OCFS-LCM-05
To:	Local District Commissioners Local District Director of Services Foster Care Supervisors
Issuing Division/Office:	Child Welfare and Community Services Administration
Date:	March 11, 2021
Subject:	Use of Foster Care Block Grant for Funding the Fostering Futures New York Program
Contact Person(s):	See page 3.
Attachments:	None

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Local Commissioners Memorandum (LCM) is to advise local departments social services (LDSSs) of the authority to use their Foster Care Block Grant (FCBG) allocations to purchase the Fostering Futures New York (FFNY) program.

II. Background

Providing support to foster boarding homes (FBHs) has proven to be effective in the retention of FBHs. FFNY grew out of the well-established need for robust supports for foster families. In 2012, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) sought innovative approaches for improving the retention of FBHs and improving stability for children in foster care. OCFS identified a novel program in Colorado, which was showing promising results by matching teams of volunteers who provided practical support to foster parents. With initial funding from OCFS, Welfare Research, Inc. (WRI) piloted this model in New York State, adapting it for the Capital Region.

WRI, a statewide nonprofit agency based in Albany, New York, administered the local program from 2014 to 2019. In 2019, the program that served the greater Capital Region was moved to the Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Capital Region. With a long history of providing program management and technical assistance to the human services field, WRI now supports the program by providing guidance and initial training on the model to counties and organizations interested in replication.

FFNY recruits, screens, and trains teams of volunteers from community organizations to assist foster parents, including kinship foster parents. FFNY teams serve as "extended families" for foster parents and children. Team members support foster parents when they seek assistance with everyday tasks, affirming the value of what foster parents do and encouraging them to keep doing it. Team members may provide a sympathetic ear, assist with household maintenance and meal preparation, or offer respite care so foster parents can have time out of the house. The types of support are tailored to each family and are based on the needs expressed by the foster parents. To date, FFNY is the only program of its kind in New York State.

FFNY has produced positive results for the foster parents served by the program, such as improving satisfaction with fostering, reducing stress and isolation, and increasing a sense of social connectedness and support. These outcomes ultimately benefit the foster care system by helping retain more foster parents, both non-relative and relative, as caregivers who then may be available to foster other children and/or adopt the children in their care.

Positive outcomes also occur for FFNY volunteers as they derive a sense of purpose from making a difference in the lives of the children and families they serve. Organizations from which teams are recruited also benefit by contributing to a program that often aligns with their mission and drives a sense that the organization is also making a difference.

Replication of the model beyond the Capital District in upstate counties has taken different forms. Some counties have partnered with a local not-for-profit organization for program administration, and others have managed the program within their LDSS, often expanding their home finder role. WRI is available to assist an LDSS in implementing FFNY by contracting to provide program and volunteer materials, initial training, and technical assistance as the program is implemented.

III. Program Implications

As noted in the 20-OCFS-LCM-11 *State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2020-21 Foster Care Block Grant Allocation*, the FCBG promotes a reduction in the use of foster care placements and lists the foster care services that can be reimbursed by the state. This LCM now informs LDSSs that funds can now be used to pay for the FFNY program. Those LDSSs seeking to provide the FFNY program are encouraged to reach out to WRI Director Darlene Ward by email at dward@welfareresearch.org or by telephone at 518-210-7546 (cell).

IV. Claiming

For claiming instructions, please refer to the annual Foster Care Block Grant LCM 20-OCFS-LCM-11. It is OCFS's intention to continue the FFNY program in future state fiscal years.

V. Contacts

Please see the chart below to determine how to direct your FCBG questions:

Topic	LDSS Region	Contact Person	Contact Phone	Contact Email Address
Allocations	All	Shonna Clinton	(518) 474-1361	Shonna.Clinton@ocfs.ny.gov
Program	Buffalo	Amanda Darling	(716) 847-3145	Amanda.Darling@ocfs.ny.gov
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	Syracuse	Sara Simon	(315) 423-1200	Sara.Simon@ocfs.ny.gov
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	New York City	Ronni Fuchs	(212) 383-1676	Ronni.Fuchs@ocfs.ny.gov
FFFS	All	Susanne Haag	(518) 486-6291	Susanne.Haag@otda.ny.gov
Automated Claiming System	Regions 1-5	Lauren Horn	(518) 474-7549	Field_Ops.I-IV@otda.ny.gov
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