



CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH COALITION OF WNY, INC.

Children's Mental Health Coalition of Western New York, Inc.

POLICY PRIORITIES

- **Fund Family and Youth Peer Support**

Expand and integrate Family and Youth Peer Support Services into all children's services.

Family and Youth Peer Support Service programs are effective because they are family-driven, youth-guided, cross-systems, and community-based services that utilize the lived experience of families and youth to support other children and their families. Research has shown that children's services that integrate Family and Youth Peer Support professionals into their programs are more engaging, increase overall recipient satisfaction, and ultimately create better outcomes for children and families. New York State created a network of over 200 separate family support programs and approximately 400 professional, trained and credentialed family peer advocates. State funding should be made available to support, expand, integrate and maintain these programs and agencies that utilize them as children's services transition into integrated Medicaid Managed Care.

Cross-systems funding for cross-systems work. Family Youth, and Adult Peer Support Services need funding from the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, Department of Health, and Office of Children and Families Services that reflect the true cross-systems nature of Family, Youth and Adult Peer Support Services. Family-run agencies and other providers of Family and Youth Peer Support Services understand that a child's complex needs cannot always be met by one system. Family Peer Support workers support and advocate for families in many child-serving systems yet there are no cross-systems funding streams outside the Office of Mental Health to support them.

What you as legislators can do: Work with the Department of Budget to create additional funding streams to expand and integrate Family, Youth and Adult Peer Support services into as many service programs as possible and ensure 1650 funding continues as a budget item for families not eligible for Medicaid.

- **Provide Quality Education for All:**

We urge the creation of multiple pathways to a diploma in New York State, each of which holds all students to high expectations, provides them with quality instruction, and opens doors to career and post-secondary education opportunities. We believe that measuring college- and career-readiness requires valuing multiple and equally valid ways to assess the skills needed for

success in the workplace and higher education and supports a diversity of learning styles and goals.

Core Principles

We believe that any alternate pathway must:

- 1. Be available to all students, not just students with disabilities**
- 2. Not depend on the passing of high-stakes tests**
- 3. Lead to a regular high school diploma recognized and valued by colleges and employers which allows students to specialize, including Career and Technical Education (CTE), and should not be one-size-fits-all.**
- 4. Build upon and encourage development of individual student strengths**
- 5. Respect student and family choice.**

What you as legislators can do: Work with other legislators to urge the New York State Regents Board to adopt more changes moving forward including reducing number of Regents exams required to earn a Regents diploma, utilizing performance-based assessments as an option for all students, and amending recent changes by making the local diploma option available to all students, not exclusively to students with disabilities, as this effectively forces students to disclose their disability.

- **Mental Health Stigma:**

We strongly advocate for RESEARCH and SERVICES in response to disorders that affect the brain. We condemn all acts of stigma and discrimination directed against persons with mental illnesses and developmental disabilities whether by intent, ignorance, or insensitivity.

In accordance with current scientific evidence, persons who are receiving appropriate treatment and services for a mental illness are no more violent than the population at large. The truth is that persons with serious mental illnesses are more often the victims of violence.

What you, as legislators can do:

- **Behavioral Health Insurance Parity – Support legislation (S7988) to require insurers and health plans to submit certain data to the Department of Financial Services and the Commissioner of Health, as a way of measuring compliance with federal and state mental health and substance abuse parity laws. The data will be used by the Department of Financial Services to prepare an annual Mental Health Parity report as part of the annual Consumer Guide.**

- **Mental Health Education in Schools: Advocate for the inclusion of mental health education as part of the health education curriculum in schools. Encourage the Governor to sign A.3887-A and S.6046 into law. If you supported this legislation – THANK YOU!**
- **Mental Health Education for Teachers: Teachers lack resources and knowledge about the signs, symptoms and treatments for mental health disorders. They need information on how to respond to a mental health crisis. Teachers should be better equipped to recognize and respond helpfully to these signs and to have the knowledge necessary to teach students about mental health. We urge the Legislature to pass S.6234 and A.9299.**
- **Funding Mental Health Literacy: Advocate for additional funding for training in Mental Health First Aid, Youth Mental Health First Aid and other versions of MHFA tailored for special populations such as older adults.**
- **Encourage substantial resources for mental health research and community education through public anti-stigma campaigns.**
- **Ensure resources for appropriate services so all who need treatment will be able to access those services.**
- **Raise the Age:**

New York is one of only two states, North Carolina being the other, that automatically treat 16 and 17-year-olds as adults in the criminal justice system. Raising the Age will reduce crime and increase public safety. That's because the juvenile system is much better than the adult system at offering an opportunity for rehabilitation. Youth who go through the adult system are much more likely to be victims of violence. Youth in the adult criminal justice system are 50% more likely to be attacked with a weapon, and twice as likely to report being beaten by staff. Youth in adult facilities are 36% more likely to commit suicide than those in a juvenile facility. New York has failed to recognize what research and science have confirmed – adolescents are children, and prosecuting and placing them in the adult criminal justice system doesn't work for them and doesn't work for public safety. Children who go through the adult system are more likely to reoffend and less likely to go on to a productive life. Youth in the adult criminal justice system have approximately 34% more re-arrests for felony crimes than youth in the juvenile system. Lastly, around 80% of youth released from adult prisons reoffend, often going on to commit more serious crimes. For more information, visit <http://www.ftnys.org/raise-the-age/>.

What you, as legislators can do: We ask that you make a comprehensive 'Raise the Age' policy a high priority on your legislative agenda and speak directly to your leadership about the need to pass this as part of session this year.

What we need in a comprehensive Raise the Age Policy:

- * Raise the overall age of juvenile jurisdiction to 18, which is consistent with other states.**
 - * Ensure no youth who is 16 or 17 years old is placed in an adult jail or prison.**
 - * Amend the law to ensure parental notification upon the arrest of a 16 or 17 year old and ensure 16 and 17 year olds are interviewed using practices employed for youth, including parental involvement prior to waiving Miranda rights.**
 - * Better address the collateral consequences of court involvement and help youth become successful adults by sealing records and expanding YO status to age 21 and to additional non-violent crimes.**
 - * Increase investments in the front-end diversion services that keep youth in their communities rather than incarceration. These alternative to detention, placement and incarceration services are less expensive and more effective at reducing recidivism.**
 - * Originate as many cases of 16 and 17 year olds in Family court as possible; create Youth Parts in adult court for remaining cases, and apply the Family Court Act to as many as possible, regardless of which courthouse in which the case is heard.**
 - * Raise the lower age of juvenile delinquency from age 7 to age 12 (except for homicide offenses, which should be raised to 10).**
- Read the information in your legislative packet.**

Support Part J of S.2006/a.3006 of last year's budget proposal.