

Family First Readiness Initiative: Year One Update

In April 2019, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo signed into law the Family First Transition Fund, a public-private partnership with Redlich Horwitz Foundation, to provide \$3 million in state funding and \$400k in private funding to help local districts achieve two goals:

- 🎯 a maximum of 12 percent of children in foster care placed in congregate care; and
- 🎯 a minimum of 30 percent of children in foster care in approved kinship homes.

The Approach

In alignment with the Transition Fund, RHF has partnered with the New York Office of Children and Family Services to provide local child welfare offices in 19 counties with individualized consultation and capacity-building support from a team of child welfare experts. Additionally, 7 other counties have been receiving longer-term technical assistance from RHF to meet similar goals to reduce congregate care, bringing the total to 27 counties receiving one-on-one strategy consultation. The counties are working together with their consultants to select and implement strategies to decrease congregate care and increase certified kinship care.



27 counties
9 consultants
75+ site visits

Family First Readiness Roadmap



Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use data to identify key issues •Determine if process mapping or forecasting is needed and begin work •Ensure stakeholder engagement and alignment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Complete process mapping or forecasting •Identify, select and prioritize strategies to address key issues •Develop financing plan for Transition Fund allocation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Develop county work plan for next six months •Develop high-level implementation and financing plan through 2021
Consulting Support Available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Process mapping and/or forecasting •Foster home pool analysis •Kinship process visioning •Foster family utilization review •Child-specific placement review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Policy review and analysis •Process mapping and/or forecasting •Information sharing on evidence-informed strategies related to key issues •Fiscal analysis and completing placement savings forecast •Provider contract review •Draft contract amendment language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Plan and roadmap development •Smartsheet work plan template •RACI matrix development
Project Management and Facilitation			

In addition, OCFS is providing all counties with congregate care and foster care data packets, office hours, training for county Data Leaders, a webinar series designed to support effective planning and implementation, and ongoing technical assistance.

Our Progress

Since the Family First Readiness Kick-Off in late July 2019, participating counties have achieved the following successes:

- Nineteen counties have selected one or more Family First Readiness strategies.
- Five counties are implementing new foster parent services and supports.
- Three counties are hiring a new kinship specialist.
- Three counties are changing their placement process to ensure kinship families understand all the options available to them.
- Two counties are providing new kinship certification training.
- Three counties are starting case review processes to step down or discharge youth from congregate care.

Next Steps

By the conclusion of Year One of the Family First Readiness initiative, 19 counties will complete a two-year work plan to guide the implementation of their strategies. RHF is currently designing Year Two of the initiative to continue progress toward the Transition Fund goals and to support counties in reinvesting their congregate care savings into continued support for families.

