

# The Children's Agenda

Smart Choices. Bold Voices.

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## Analysis of the Proposed 2018 Monroe County Budget



The proposed 2018 Monroe County budget includes notable progress for children and youth:

- The budget contains funding and plans for implementation of the **8-point Child Protective Services (CPS) reform plan** announced in October 2017.
- **Increased appropriations for preventive services** designed to avoid child welfare system entry and foster care placement will support more at-risk children and families in 2018.
- **A change that advances accountability and transparency** is a new section of the budget document that summarizes expenditures and number of individuals served for all County programs that touch the lives of children and families.

In this report, we provide recommendations and commendations for the County and important findings from our review of the 2018 Proposed budget.

### Priority Recommendations

**INNOVATE AND DEDICATE:** The growing needs among Monroe County children are surpassing current resources. The County should explore new revenue streams that can be directed solely toward evidence-based programs and services for its youngest residents. Examples include a soda tax, a carve-out of economic development or COMIDA dollars (like the NYS Upstate Revitalization

Initiative's \$3 M support for child care subsidies), or a small fee attached to certain transactions.

**INCENTIVIZE EARLY SUPPORTS:** The County Dept. of Health should increase rates for "Related Services" for Preschool Special Education to recruit and retain more providers. There is a critical lack of qualified providers to deliver special education services to preschool children (ages 3-5), forcing hundreds of children throughout our community to

wait months for needed services. A key barrier to recruiting more providers is low reimbursement rates for occupational and physical therapy, speech-language pathology, and other interventions that help children reach their potential.

**ADVOCATE AND COLLABORATE:** Join with The Children’s Agenda and other children’s advocates across New York State advocating in Albany for:

- a) Increased State funding to counties for child care subsidies by \$31 million in order to restore the child care subsidy program to the funding level established in 2016;
- b) Directing a portion of Economic Development funding to child care, e.g., our local allocation of Upstate Revitalization Initiative (URI) dollars;
- c) Additional increases in State funding to stabilize the child care workforce and infrastructure, and to ensure equitable access to quality care;
- d) Expanding and adjusting the child and dependent care tax credit for maximum benefit for more families.

**LEAD AND ALIGN:** The County should provide more leadership in local collective impact initiatives such as ROC the Future and Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative, to create more powerful systemic change to benefit children. Examples include an inter-municipal agreement for the annual State of Our Children address and the City of Rochester’s decision to organize its “Children and Families” budget section by ROC the Future goal areas.

### Priority Commendations

**CPS Reform:** We commend the County for taking important and meaningful steps forward in addressing the crisis of our community’s rising reports of child abuse and neglect. The 8-Point CPS reform, including the creation and funding of 30 new caseworker positions, a salary increase for CPS caseworkers, and improved resources, training

and mentoring for CPS staff, will result in an improved child welfare system.

**Prevention Investments:** We commend the County for increasing funding for crucial prevention programming that reaches children before major problems develop, saving County tax dollars that would otherwise be spent on remedial services later, and changing the trajectory of a child’s life.

### **A focus on children and families in County budget:**

We commend the County for including a new “Summary of major programs annually funded by Monroe County benefitting children and families” section of the proposed budget, including a notable “Why This Is Important” description for each program. This will increase transparency and understanding of County-funded services, and will allow County residents to more easily track these programs and services.

**Keeping homeless youth out of hotels:** We commend the County for eliminating hotel placements for homeless youth in 2016.<sup>i</sup>

### Further Recommendations

**Continue and expand** the “Summary of major programs annually funded by Monroe County benefitting children and families” section of the budget document by linking County programs and expenditures to outcome indicators, perhaps starting with the County’s existing Performance Measures. Additionally, the use of County tax dollars to fund evidence-based services or strategies should be highlighted in this section.

We urge the County to **begin reversing the trend toward placing homeless youth in adult shelters.** While it is commendable that the County did not place any youth in hotels in 2016, more than half were inappropriately placed in adult shelters.

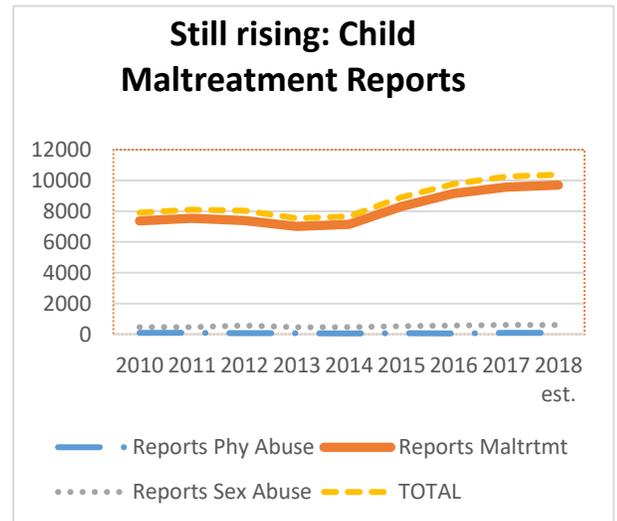
**Expand and deepen inter-municipal agreements for data sharing.** The success of new initiatives and strategies designed to improve outcomes for children is necessarily measured across agencies and governmental entities. We must overcome fragmentation and share child-level data - with appropriate protections - to improve service coordination and allow stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of these efforts.

**Participate in the "All Kids Thrive" effort** to leverage new and repurpose existing NYS Medicaid, Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) and State Education Dept. funding to make strides toward creating a seamless, comprehensive public/private continuum of supports for young children.

## 2018 Proposed County Budget Findings

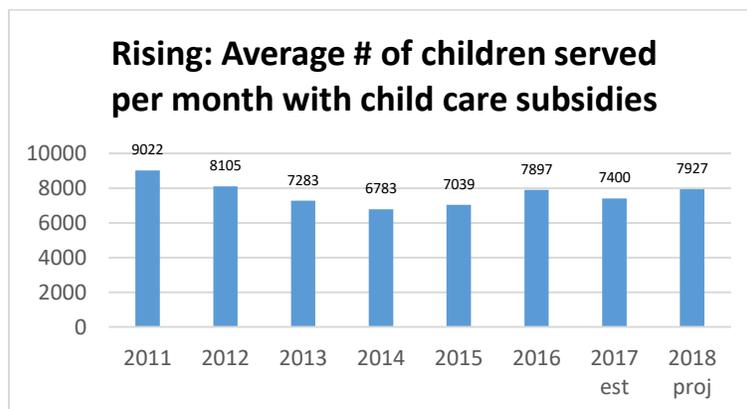
### CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES AND FOSTER CARE

1. CPS reform plan implementation in 2018:
  - Authorized DHS caseworker positions increase by 30, and caseworker salary levels are upgraded.
  - DHS plans to contract with a vendor to conduct a recruitment campaign to fill the new caseworker positions.
  - Tablets for CPS caseworkers are funded in 2018.
2. CPS reports are projected to increase slightly to 10,380.
3. The number of children in foster care and the average length of time children spend in foster care are unchanged in 2018, after sharp declines over the past decade.
4. The number of children served with preventive services is projected to increase by 397, a 13% increase from 2017, and County spending on prevention increases \$1.7 M.



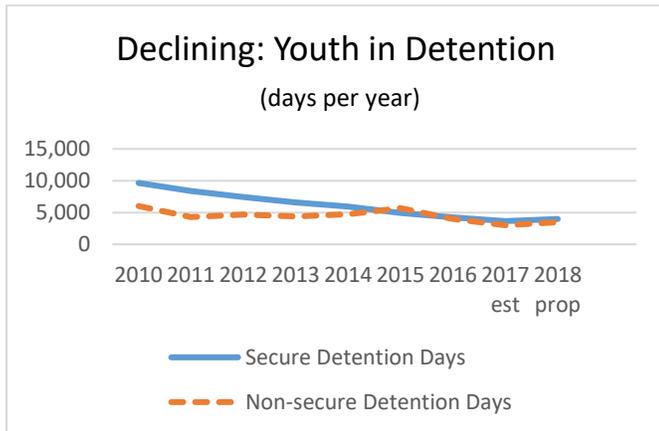
### CHILD CARE

The number of children served by child care subsidies is projected to increase by 527 (7%). 300 of these additional slots are funded with \$950,000 from the Upstate Revitalization Initiative’s allocation in response to the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative’s request for funding for early childhood supports. The County’s contribution, once over \$8 M, declined in recent years and is now stabilized at its mandated amount.



## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

1. The number of Nurse-Family Partnership home visits, new clients, and total number served is projected to increase slightly in 2018.
2. The Department of Health has re-constituted the Maternal Child Health Division, including Women, Infants and Children's nutrition program (WIC), Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) and Starlight Pediatric clinic.
3. The number of foster children served by the County's Starlight Pediatric Clinic is projected to increase by 500 (26%) to 2400, due in part to extending the length of time children stay under Starlight's care.



## JUVENILE JUSTICE

1. Despite state-mandated changes due to begin in October 2018, which will require that 16-year-olds be treated as juveniles in the criminal justice system, there are no allocations designated specifically for Raise the Age implementation.
2. Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS) placements and petitions fell significantly from 2016 to 2017, but are projected to rise slightly in 2018.
3. After several years of decline, youth detention days are projected to increase in 2018.

## RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH

As reported in the 2016 Homeless/Housing Report, in 2016 479 youths (ages 16-21, unduplicated) were assisted by the County in finding temporary housing. The total number of youth placements into temporary housing for 2016 was 845, because some youths experienced more than one episode of homelessness. In 2016, 56% placements were made in the adult shelter system and 44% were made in the youth shelter system. No youth were placed in hotels, a positive change from previous years.

### Monroe county children face significant challenges:

**Structural Racism:** ACT Rochester and the Rochester Area Community Foundation's report, "Hard Facts: Race and Ethnicity in the Nine-County Greater Rochester Area", pointed to widespread disparity among area children. Compared to White peers, Black and Latino children living in Monroe County have a substantially higher likelihood of:

- Dying during the first year of life
- Living in poverty
- Performing below competency levels on NYS math and reading tests
- Graduating from high school

**Poverty:** The most recent Census data shows that the child poverty rate in Monroe County is 23%, up 20% since 2010; more than 10,000 children live in poverty in Monroe County suburbs.

**Trauma:** Two-thirds of students report that they have experienced one or more adverse childhood experience (trauma), and 24% have experienced 3 or more.<sup>ii</sup>

**Social-Emotional Health:** Between 2007 and 2017 there were increases in the proportion of youth who reported a) not going to school on one or more days in the past month, because they felt unsafe, b) feeling sad or hopeless, and c) seriously considering suicide.<sup>iii</sup>

<sup>i</sup> Monroe County Department of Human Services Housing/Homeless Services Annual Report for 2016, file:///C:/Users/Owner/Documents/AA%20Budget%20analysis/Monroe%20County%20budget/County%202018/2016%20Annual%20Housing%20Report%20.pdf

<sup>ii</sup> Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2017, <https://www2.monroecounty.gov/files/health/DataReports/MC%20YRBS%202017.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid.