REVIEW OF THE PROPOSED 2020 MONROE COUNTY BUDGET

TheChildren’sAgenda

Smart Choices. Bold Voices.

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TheChildrensAgenda.org
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary............................................................................................................. 3

Proposed 2020 Monroe County budget – Full Findings and Recommendations ............ 5

Department of Human Services ......................................................................................... 5

Department of Public Health ............................................................................................... 10

Appendix A: Department of Human Services Appropriations by Division..................... 12

Appendix B: Long-Term Trends in County Programs Impacting Children and Youth ...... 13
Executive Summary: Analysis of the Proposed 2020 Monroe County Budget

The Children’s Agenda offers this review of the proposed 2020 County budget and its impact on children and youth with two audiences in mind: County legislators who will vote on its proposals, and the new County administration who will have the opportunity to make changes in County policy and funding beyond 2020.

In this report, we provide priority recommendations for Monroe County’s 2020 Proposed Budget and for the County as it enters a new decade. We hope this review will move us toward our community’s shared goal of making Monroe County the best place in the state of New York to raise a family.

Priority Recommendations for Immediate Action

1) Develop new recruitment and retention strategies to increase Child Protective Services (CPS) staffing until the average caseload ratio is 12:1.
2) Collaboratively engage community partners and learn from cutting-edge CPS districts across the country to institute new, best-practice protocols to strengthen CPS-involved families and prevent future child maltreatment.
3) Ensure preventive dollars are spent on the most effective programs and services by evaluating current spending.
4) Pilot a study of child maltreatment cases in Monroe County to determine root causes that can be addressed by new and re-directed public and private investments.
5) Adopt new policies and practices to strengthen the child care program. (see p.8)
6) Increase Preschool Special Education rates by an additional 15% to retain current providers and recruit more.
7) Hire an additional four Service Coordinators for the County's Early Intervention program.

Priority Findings in the Proposed 2020 Budget

The proposed 2020 Monroe County budget includes:

- **An increase in state child care funding and a decrease in County spending results in net total increase of $541,791.** This results from a rise of $1.67 million in combined federal and state funding and a reduction of $1.13 million in County funds. The higher appropriation will be needed to cover an increase in market rates paid to providers that was effective as of May 1, 2019 and a reduction in parent co-payments. $200,000 is allocated out of URI child care dollars to support a new emergency child care opportunity created in partnership with the Center for Youth Services. The County projects a slight increase in the number of subsidies provided.

- **More support for children with special needs:** An increase in total spending of $720,324 (4%) for Special Children’s Services, which includes the Preschool Special Education (PSE) and Early Intervention (EI) programs. This will fund the 15% rate increase in the PSE program approved in March 2019 and six additional service coordinators for the EI program.

- **Rising foster care placements:** New foster care placements have risen 24% since 2017, despite 2 years of significant expansion in programs to prevent these placements.

- **Child Protective Services reports are expected to reach 11,000 – averaging 30 reports every day in 2020:** This upward trend, persistent despite recent reforms, is alarming and merits a close examination of alternative strategies. Previous experience shows that after investigation, about 25% of these reports (2,750 in 2020) will be “founded”, indicating that children have experienced neglect, physical or sexual abuse.
The Children’s Agenda’s Recommendations for the Decade Ahead

We offer these recommendations to the new County administration as overarching themes to guide their work in 2020 and beyond.

1. **IMPROVE** collaborative problem-solving, service delivery and cross-sector planning through increased public transparency. Effective partnerships work best when trust and transparency are present. The County has a seat at many community tables but too often has been a reluctant participant. The Children’s Agenda believes it is important for the Bello administration to be pro-active in sharing data and information, to establish benchmarks and lead collaborative action for change.

2. **MAXIMIZE County spending to leverage federal, state and private dollars.** Instead of viewing federal and state program funding as mandates, view them as opportunities to bring additional dollars into our community long-term. We urge exploration and deeper investments in programs like Community Optional Preventive Services, the Child & Adult Care Food Program, NYS Education Department Community Schools, etc.

3. **FOCUS on prevention, not remediation.** The best use of County taxpayers’ dollars is to prevent children’s problems from developing into bigger and more expensive problems down the road. Monroe County Department of Human Services spends $20+ million on preventive services but only half of those dollars are used to deliver programs with a proven track record of success. Toward that end, getting evidence-based, front-end programs up to scale and integrated with others (such as home visiting with early intervention screening and services, early intervention with child care, etc.) will save the high costs of remediation in the years ahead.

4. **LEAD inter-municipal and public/private partnerships.** There are many “tables” in our community to split County focus, time and attention on children and family issues, and our community has many programs and organizations to help children — one by one, or year by year. The Children’s Agenda suggests that Monroe County create what other state and local governments have successfully used: a high-level body to synthesize siloed efforts and focus on helping to change the system for all children, particularly the most vulnerable. Initiatives such an inter-municipal and public/private partnership could include data-sharing agreements between the County, City, Rochester City School District and service providers; an annual “State of Our Children” address co-led by the County Executive, Mayor, Town Supervisors, and School Superintendents; or creating a Children’s Cabinet.

5. **REFORM decades of inequitable policy, starting with a thorough racial equity impact analysis of County spending.** County government has implementation authority in systems that have historically inflicted much harm on children of color through implicit bias and racism, e.g. Juvenile Justice and Child Protective Services. The County has taken some steps to address this in recent years, such as Disproportionate Minority Representation (DMR) staff training and a 2016 pilot of a Blind Removal Process with CPS teams to assess their disproportionate impact on minority families. But those efforts are isolated, episodic examples that need the reinforcement of a broader, systematic, and consistent approach such as an annual racial equity impact assessment.
2020 Proposed County Budget – Full Findings and Recommendations

Overall budget
The County’s projected 2020 operating budget is $1.234 billion, up 4.9 million (0.4%) from 2019. The property tax rate decreases from $8.89 per $1000 Full Value to $8.79 and the tax levy of $403,932,230 is an increase of $9.5 million (2.4%) from 2019.

Total authorized positions increase by 5.5 positions with increases in Human Services, Information Services, Public Health, District Attorney, Public Safety, and Veterans Service Agency; there are decreases in Environmental Services, Sheriff, and Parks.

Department of Human Services
The Department of Human Services (DHS) is the County’s primary institution serving children and families, now constituting approximately one-half of the County's total budget. The Department’s 2020 appropriation of $537.795 million is less than 1% more than its 2019 budget.

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Child Protective Services recommendations:
- Develop new recruitment and retention strategies to increase Child Protective Services (CPS) staffing until the average caseload ratio is 12:1.
- Collaboratively engage community partners and learn from cutting-edge CPS districts across the country to institute new, best-practice protocols to strengthen CPS-involved families and prevent future child maltreatment.
- Pilot a study of child maltreatment cases in Monroe County to determine root causes that can be addressed by new and re-directed public and private investments.
The projected number of Child Protective Services reports continues to rise, with the total number expected to reach 11,000 in 2020. Consistent with previous years, 94% of indicated cases involve child neglect (the failure of a parent or other person with responsibility for the child to provide needed food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision), 5% involve sexual abuse and 1% involve physical abuse. After investigation, approximately 25% of reports are “founded” or “indicated”, revealing confirmed child abuse or neglect.

After alarming reports about Monroe County’s struggling and understaffed Child Protective Services program, a reform plan began implementation in October 2017. Progress has been made – notably a salary upgrade for caseworkers and additional recruitment and staff support efforts – but the current average CPS caseload size of 23 is still far above the industry’s recommended 12 cases per worker. There are currently 222 caseworkers in place. The County estimates that to reach their goal of 15 CPS cases per worker, they need an additional 17 workers. Given this gap and the high turnover rates, the County must change its recruitment and retention strategies.

### CPS Reports Received

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Reports Received</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>6,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>7,422</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>7,692</td>
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<td>2018</td>
<td>7,641</td>
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<tr>
<td>2019 est</td>
<td>10,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020 est</td>
<td>11,000</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**PREVENTIVE SERVICES**

**Preventive services recommendation:**
- Ensure preventive dollars are spent on the most effective programs and services by evaluating current spending.

Preventive Services are provided to children identified as being at risk of foster care placement, to children whose length of time in foster care can be shortened with this assistance and to children recently returned home from foster care to prevent their replacement into care. The recent increase in funding for services to prevent child maltreatment and foster care placement has not resulted in a lower foster care population. Only half of preventive services have research supporting their effectiveness.

The number of families and children receiving preventive services increased sharply (52%) in 2019 and will slightly increase in 2020.

Funding for contracts with community agencies to provide preventive services increase by $948,000 in 2020. The County plans for a new evidence-based support service for troubled youth designed to reduce the need for Persons...
in Need of Supervisions (PINS) petitions and placements, a new school-based primary prevention program to reduce CPS incidents, and increased contract amounts to expand existing services.

**Family First Prevention Services Act:**
Monroe County is planning for implementation of the federal *Family First Prevention Services Act* (FFPSA) of 2018, enacted in February 2018, that brings a critical shift in child welfare funding toward prevention. Under FFPSA, the funding prioritizes the “least restrictive” environment for the child, promoting family-based foster care over residential care by limiting federal reimbursement for certain residential placements. In the 2019-20 New York state budget, $3 million was allocated to help counties support, recruit and retain current and prospective foster families, including kinship caregivers. Monroe County’s allocation was $117,901. Between now and December 31, 2021, Monroe County plans to reduce its congregate care placements, increase its kinship foster care placements, enhance support for foster parents, and assist kinship foster parents in meeting approval/certification requirements.

**FOSTER CARE**
Temporary residential care for children is provided in foster family homes, group homes and residences, and in institutions. Over half of the placements are child abuse or neglect-related. New foster care placements of children are projected to rise, increasing 2% in 2020 over 2019 after growing 24% from 2017 to 2020. This is concerning given the increase in dollars appropriated and number of children and families engaged in services to prevent out-of-home placements.
CHILD CARE:

**Child Care Recommendations:**

- Establish a waiting list for child care applications, so that families who apply and are denied due to inadequate funding can be notified when funding becomes available.
- Pay for a reasonable number of absences for all child care subsidy recipients. It is currently restricted to children who must attend an appointment or court appearance related to preventive programming, CPS or adoption.
- Pay for child care while a parent pursues a 4-year degree, an option that is available to NYS counties but Monroe County has not chosen to adopt it.
- Workforce development for early childhood workers (repeat City budget recommendations) perhaps through Entrepreneurs Network.
- Provide support and incentives for Legally Exempt providers who want to become registered Family and Group Family providers.
- Adopt a differential rate above the required 5% rate for programs offering non-traditional hours of care.
- Establish quarterly meetings of a Child Care Advisory Council made up of providers (including center-based, Family, Group Family and legally exempt), parents, advocates and local early childhood experts to regularly address problems with the child care application or payment processes, opportunities to improve quality of care, barriers to access, and coordinate state and federal advocacy and other topics.

Monroe County receives state and federal funding and then adds County funds to provide child care assistance to parents receiving public assistance or transitioning off of it, to low income working parents, to parents involved in specified training programs, and to children involved in a Protective or Preventive case. New in 2020 is a $200,000 appropriation for an emergency child care program created in partnership with the Center for Youth Services.

The 2020 net child care appropriation increases by $541,791 over 2019. This results from a $1.67 million increase in combined federal and state funding and a decrease of $1.13 million in County funds. 2020 spending increases will support an increase in market rates paid to providers that was effective as of May 1, 2019 and a reduction in parent co-payments. The County projects a slight increase in the number of subsidies provided.
CHILDREN’S CENTER AND RAISE THE AGE

The Monroe County Children’s Center in Rush, NY has undergone significant changes due to enactment of the New York State Raise the Age (RTA) law in 2017 (as have Probation, PINS and other County programs). The intent of the law was to change the way children ages 16 and 17 are treated in the criminal justice system. Until Raise the Age, 16- and 17-year-old youth were treated as adults. New York State set aside funds to reimburse counties for any “incremental costs” associated with RTA.

Research shows that adolescents who are involved with the Juvenile Justice system, where age-appropriate services are provided, are less likely to commit suicide and suffer abuse while incarcerated and are less likely to re-offend or return to prison than youth who are handled in the adult system.

With RTA came a new category for 16 and 17-year old youth – Adolescent Offenders - a new court, the Youth Part of criminal court, and a new type of detention facility, Specialized Secure Detention. Under RTA, all felony cases involving 16- and 17-year old youth start in the Youth Part of the adult criminal court. All non-violent felonies are transferred from the Youth Part to the Family Court, where they proceed just as a Juvenile Delinquency case would, unless the
District Attorney (DA) determines that it should stay in Youth Part. When appropriate, it is best for cases involving a 16- or 17-year-old youth to be transferred or “removed” from Youth Part to Family Court because youth are more likely to receive age-appropriate treatment and services in the latter.

The Children’s Center has undergone construction to create a 10-bed RTA facility, with more beds expected to be added in the future.

**Youth Bureau**

**RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH**

Runaway and Homeless dollars provide for the coordination and oversight of services targeted to vulnerable youth. The County provides crisis counseling, shelter, support and transitional services, primarily through contracts with community agencies. In 2020, state aid decreases by $45,118 and Monroe County is increasing its appropriation by $39,629 for a total appropriation of $299,216 to serve approximately 900 youth (duplicated).

![Runaway and Homeless Youth Served (duplicated count) 2014-2020](chart)

**SAFE HARBOR**

The Safe Harbor program is a collaboration between Monroe County’s Youth Bureau and the Center for Youth Services created to reduce sexual exploitation of children. Safe Harbor provides short-term, safe housing that offers 24-hour crisis intervention, medical care, advocacy, and other services to young victims of human trafficking within Monroe County. Funding continued beyond the initial 5-year grant period; 2020 will be its 9th year of operation. The 2020 allocation is $43,350.

**Department of Public Health**

**SPECIAL CHILDREN’S SERVICES**

**Special Children’s Services recommendations:**

- Increase Preschool Special Education (PSE) rates by an additional 15% to retain current providers and recruit more.
- Hire an additional four Service Coordinators for the County’s Early Intervention (EI) program.

The County Department of Health oversees Special Children’s Services which includes 2 programs serving children with special needs: Early Intervention (ages birth through age 2) and Preschool Special Education (ages 3 – 5). Both programs are currently experiencing a critical shortage of providers and teachers which is resulting in children waiting weeks or months for services.
In 2019 the County adopted a mid-year increase in County-controlled reimbursement rates for PSE providers. Because EI rates are set by the state, the County made Early Intervention funding a priority in its lobbying efforts with New York State.

In 2020, the County plans to add 6 new full-time Service Coordinator positions and increase County spending by $720,324. Preschool Special Education is projected to serve 3,400 with an appropriation is $35,522,060. Early Intervention is projected to serve 2,670 with an appropriation of $8,590,678.

**Special Children's Services Appropriations 2015-2020**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Appropriation</th>
<th>Number served-projected</th>
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<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>$1,086,820</td>
<td>800</td>
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<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>$1,059,257</td>
<td>780</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>$847,408</td>
<td>685</td>
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NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP
Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) is an evidence-based home visiting and parent support program that began in upstate New York and has been implemented around the world. Numerous evaluations have shown it to be an evidence-based program with proven outcomes, linking NFP participation to healthier births, improved academic and social-emotional outcomes for the child, higher income for the family, and other positive outcomes for parents and babies.

NFP is funded largely through state and federal dollars, combined with County and United Way of Greater Rochester funds. The proposed 2020 appropriation is $964,640 and it is projected to serve 289 clients.

Monroe County’s NFP program had the following 2019 outcomes:
- Breastfeeding initiation rate, 2019: 94%
- Breastfeeding at 6 months, 2019: 28.2%
- Preterm birth rate, 2019: 7.8% (down from 15.4% in 2018)
- Childhood injury rate, 2019: 27/1000 (down from 51/1000 in 2018)
- Enrolled clients: 320
- New clients: 120

STARLIGHT PEDIATRICS
Starlight Pediatric Clinic provides comprehensive primary medical care for children in foster care homes in Monroe County.
### Appendix A: Department of Human Services – Appropriations by Department

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>($ million)</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019 amend</th>
<th>2020 Prop</th>
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<tr>
<td>Central Administration</td>
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<td>4.447</td>
<td>4.737</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child &amp; Family Services</td>
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<td>35.986</td>
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<td>48.175</td>
<td>47.845</td>
<td>48.985</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operations</td>
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<td>2.263</td>
<td>2.268</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff development</td>
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<td>0.79</td>
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<td>Children’s Center</td>
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<td>Welfare Management System</td>
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<td>1.089</td>
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<tr>
<td>Safety Net</td>
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<td>50.972</td>
<td>45.032</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fam Assistance</td>
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<td>46.391</td>
<td>44.489</td>
<td>39.918</td>
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<tr>
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<td>176.164</td>
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<td>Day Care</td>
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<td>45.72</td>
<td>47.835</td>
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<td>Adolescent Care</td>
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<td>Purchase of Service</td>
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<td>Aging</td>
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<td>Mental Health</td>
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<td>47.775</td>
<td>45.443</td>
<td>44.839</td>
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Appendix B: Long-term Trends in County programs impacting children and youth

Tax revenues: Despite three County Tax Rate reductions, local tax revenue has increased year-to-year since 2005.

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Child abuse and neglect

**Monroe County Indicated** CPS Reports*
1995 - 2018

**“Indicated” means that CPS found enough evidence to support the claim that a child has been abused or neglected.**
*NOTE: These CPS data are taken from the NYS Office of Children and Families “Reports and Data” webpage, which counts CPS reports differently than Monroe County does. The County counts each CPS report, even if there are several reports on a single incident. NYS OCFS counts each incident. OCFS data may reflect several incidents involving the same child in a year. The most recent data available from OCFS is from 2018.

**Child care**

In 2001, Monroe County served an average of 13,950 children monthly with child care subsidies. Since the early 2000s, the number of County families accessing subsidies has gradually declined. Monroe County’s child poverty rates have grown from 16% in 2000 to 22% in 2017.
Child care appropriations, 2010 - 2020

Total appropriation
Net County Support

$ millions


49.015 44.019 44.391 44.698 41.793 42.309 42.17 44.11 45.72 47.835 48.377