



# STATEWIDE SYSTEM REFORM PROGRAM NEW YORK

## LEAD AGENCY

**New York State Unified Court System**

## TOTAL NUMBER OF FTCs:

**35**

## TOTAL NUMBER OF ADULTS SERVED IN 2013

**460**

## STATE DEMOGRAPHICS<sup>1</sup>

**Population:** 19,651,127

**Children under 18:**  
4,263,154

**Persons below poverty level:** 3,006,622

## CHILD WELFARE NUMBERS<sup>2</sup>

**Children who received a CPS response for an allegation of maltreatment:** 273,270

**Child Maltreatment victims:** 68,375

**Number of children entering Foster Care:**  
10,149

**Number of children of substance abusers (60% estimate):** 6,089

## BACKGROUND AND PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Parental substance abuse frequently requires the intervention of child welfare, treatment, and court systems. Family Treatment Courts (FTC) encourages these entities to work in tandem to better serve children and families affected by substance use disorders.

New York is now enhancing the effectiveness of its FTC programs by participating in the Statewide System Reform Program (SSRP), which will allow effective and collaborative local-level practices to be infused into a systemic, statewide initiative.

New York State was the first state to implement FTCs as a statewide strategy for improving outcomes for children in out-of-home care. In 2000, an additional 51 FTCs were implemented. Although these courts received high-level institutional support, they struggled to develop significant caseloads. In, 2006, New York State was selected to receive in-depth technical assistance (IDTA) from the National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare (NCSACW). At that time, judicial and child welfare agencies engaged in the difficult work of identifying shared values and joint goals that would improve their FTC programs. In 2011, FTCs suffered a setback when New York State experienced a serious fiscal crisis that resulted in layoffs of over 500 court workers statewide, forcing staffing levels to be reduced to sustaining core functions only. FTCs were hit particularly hard. Eighteen FTCs were completely closed down during the workforce reduction.

As of June 2014, there were 581 participants in FTCs statewide. This limited reach is a tremendous problem because the majority of families affected by parental substance abuse and involved in multiple systems are not receiving adequate services to support their successful recovery.

<sup>1</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2013). State and County Quick Facts. Retrieved from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36000.html>

<sup>2</sup> Children's Bureau. (2012). Child Welfare Outcomes Report Data. Retrieved from [http://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/data/tables/demo\\_stats?year=2012&viz=table&states\[\]=33&state=&region=](http://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/data/tables/demo_stats?year=2012&viz=table&states[]=33&state=&region=)

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The need to provide holistic and sustainable interventions to families is evident. The SSRP will allow New York to explore alternative program models that incorporate effective principles of FTC into statewide processes and expand the scope and scale of FTCs.

## PROGRAM GOALS

The primary goal of the New York SSRP is to increase the number of families that can be served as a result of their appearances in court for reasons of child abuse or neglect when substance use disorder is also a factor. The goal focuses on families who can be effectively engaged in treatment services to support parent recovery while simultaneously achieving child permanency, safety, and wellbeing.

The primary objective of the New York SSRP is to identify the most effective hallmarks of successful treatment courts and then tailor specific practices than can be used to serve all families involved in the child welfare system affected by substance use disorders.

A second objective is to institutionalize the swift and urgent delivery of an appropriate and collaborative spectrum of services to children and families who enter the family court. Expediently and locally engaging the family with treatment services can immediately place the family in a holistic, comprehensive, supportive, and professional environment that fosters parent recovery and child permanency within ASFA timelines. The second objective builds on a foundation laid by the first objective because it institutionalizes the process validated in first objective for use in day-to-day courtroom operations statewide.

Success will be measured by significantly raising the current baseline of 35 jurisdictions and jurists who use the effective practices of FTCs. Ensuring that the culture of FTCs (or practitioner's perception of the culture) is not narrowly focused on reunification, but focused on achieving timely permanency by any means, is a philosophical shift that will require thought, planning and targeted training.

## SSRP DESCRIPTION



***The Statewide System Reform Program (SSRP) helps states infuse effective and collaborative local-level practices into a systemic, statewide initiative. SSRP is designed to increase effective service to all families in the child welfare system affected by parental substance use disorders. The project enhances and expands successful local-level programs and increases cooperation between state-level court, child welfare, and substance abuse treatment agencies. SSRP is funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).***

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## PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Establishing a successful collaborative often takes significant time and resources. New York State, because of various initiatives like the In-depth Technical Assistance (IDTA), already possesses a strong collaborative structure within which it can continue the work of infusing FTC policies and practices into the larger child welfare system.

The Child Welfare Court Improvement Project (CWCIP), a unit of the OCA, will act as lead coordinating entity. FTC reform goals will be supported at the local level by the existing CWCIP staff with the support of the additional staff and technical assistance resources as mentioned.

To implement the SSRP, the State of New York will:

1. Convene a high-level steering committee to guide the planning and initial implementation process;
2. Create two staff positions with primary responsibilities to coordinate cross-system FTC reform efforts;
3. Support peer-to-peer learning; and
4. Introduce the expanded use of FTC processes in pilot counties and prepare a long-range plan to broadly implement these practices in family courts throughout the state.

Building on the previous IDTA process, New York is uniquely poised assemble a steering committee for this project that can tackle the issues at hand without first spending time establishing trust and developing productive working relationships among members. In addition to the former members of the IDTA collaborative, invitations to participate will be given to Center for Court Innovation staff and practitioners representing local family court, child welfare, and substance abuse systems.

Subsequent to an assessment and analysis phase, the steering committee will promulgate a plan to implement new practices, procedures, and protocols to enable the court system to expand the scope and scale of FTCs. This work will take its cues from the existing work of the local FTC teams and the CWCIP collaborative counties.

## KEY PARTNERS & AGENCIES

New York State currently has two parallel structures for supporting FTCs and broader child welfare court system improvement efforts: the Office of Policy and Planning (OP&P) and the Child Welfare Court Improvement Project (CWCIP).

The OP&P develops policy and procedures for the problem-solving courts, including FTCs; oversees special projects of the Chief Judge; assists in the implementation of new legislation; and participates in numerous committees and commissions addressing court system and justice system issues. The OP&P supports the planning, implementation and operation of drug courts statewide.

The Child Welfare Court Improvement Project (CWCIP) promotes court improvement efforts in the child welfare and court systems. CWCIP, in collaboration with the state Offices of Children and Family Services (OCFS), is supporting structured implementation of improvement strategies and activities in New York City and the 15 largest counties outside the city.

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An alignment of the CWCIP and OP&P's equally important structures for supporting child welfare system improvement is necessary to bring the FTC reform strategy to scale. The project will promote a close working relationship between the staff of the CWCIP, with its robust infrastructure dedicated to child welfare system improvement, and the staff of the OP&P, the unit within the court system responsible for supporting drug treatment courts, including FTCs.

Other key partners include the Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) and the non-profit Center for Court Innovation (CCI). Additionally, planning groups will generally include the commissioner of the Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) and other key system participants including court managers, attorneys for children, respondent parents' counsel, LDSS attorneys, Court Appointed Special Advocates program managers, mediation program administrators, foster care agency staff, and other service providers.

## STATE COURT SYSTEM

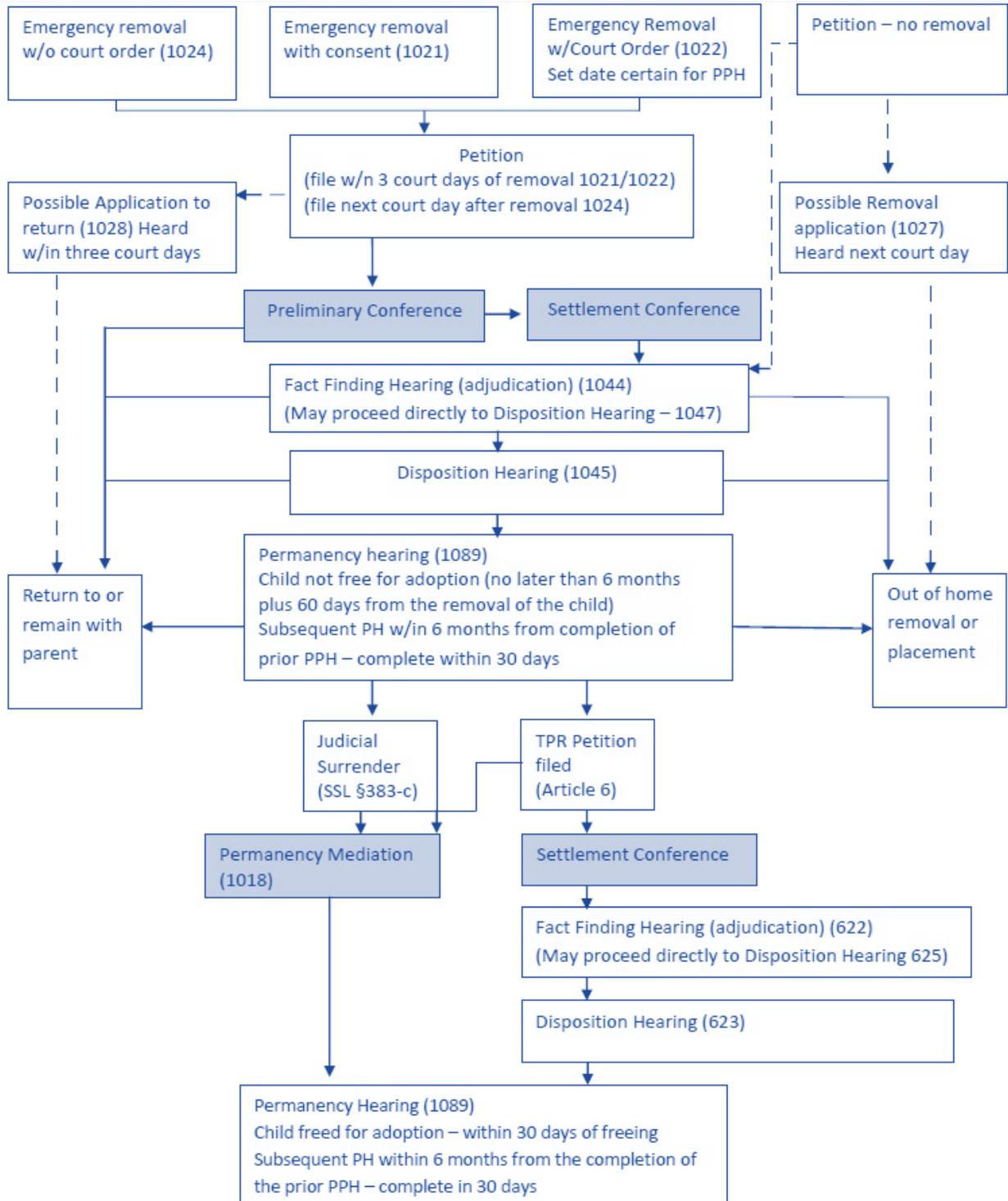
The New York State Unified Court System (UCS) is the judicial branch of the Government of the State of New York. Hon. Jonathan Lippman is the Chief Judge of the State. In that role, he serves as the Chief Judicial Officer of the State court system and the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals. The Chief Judge establishes statewide standards and administrative policies after consultation with the Administrative Board and with the approval of the Court of Appeals.

Hon. A. Gail Prudenti is the Chief Administrative Judge of the Courts. On behalf of the Chief Judge, the Chief Administrative Judge supervises the administration and operation of the State's trial courts. The sixty-two counties that make up the State are divided into thirteen Judicial Districts. Administrative Judges are responsible for the on-site management of the trial courts in their respective districts. The Office of Court Administration (OCA) operates under the direction of the Chief Administrative Judge with the assistance of the First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge, the Executive Director, and the Director of Operations.

To provide statewide coordination for the Family Courts, four judges have been assigned by the Chief Administrative Judge to serve as a Family Court Leadership Team. This team is comprised of Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Courts outside New York City Michael Coccoma, Administrative Judge of the New York City Family Court Edwina Richardson-Mendelson, Supervising Judge of the Family Courts in the 9th Judicial District Kathie Davidson, and Justice of the Supreme Court and Vice Dean for Family and Matrimonial Matters for the State Judicial Institute Sharon Townsend. The leadership team meets regularly with the leadership of our executive branch partners in government to discuss issues of mutual concern and to provide policy guidance to jointly implemented projects and initiatives. On behalf of the Chief Administrative Judge and the First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge, the Family Court Leadership team will play a key oversight role in the implementation of this initiative.

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## CHILD WELFARE COURT PROCEEDING – FLOW CHART



Numerical References are to the Family Court Act section unless otherwise referenced. Item shaded with grey are not statutorily mandated but are best practices that are encouraged. Permanency Mediation can be used at any stage of the proceedings.

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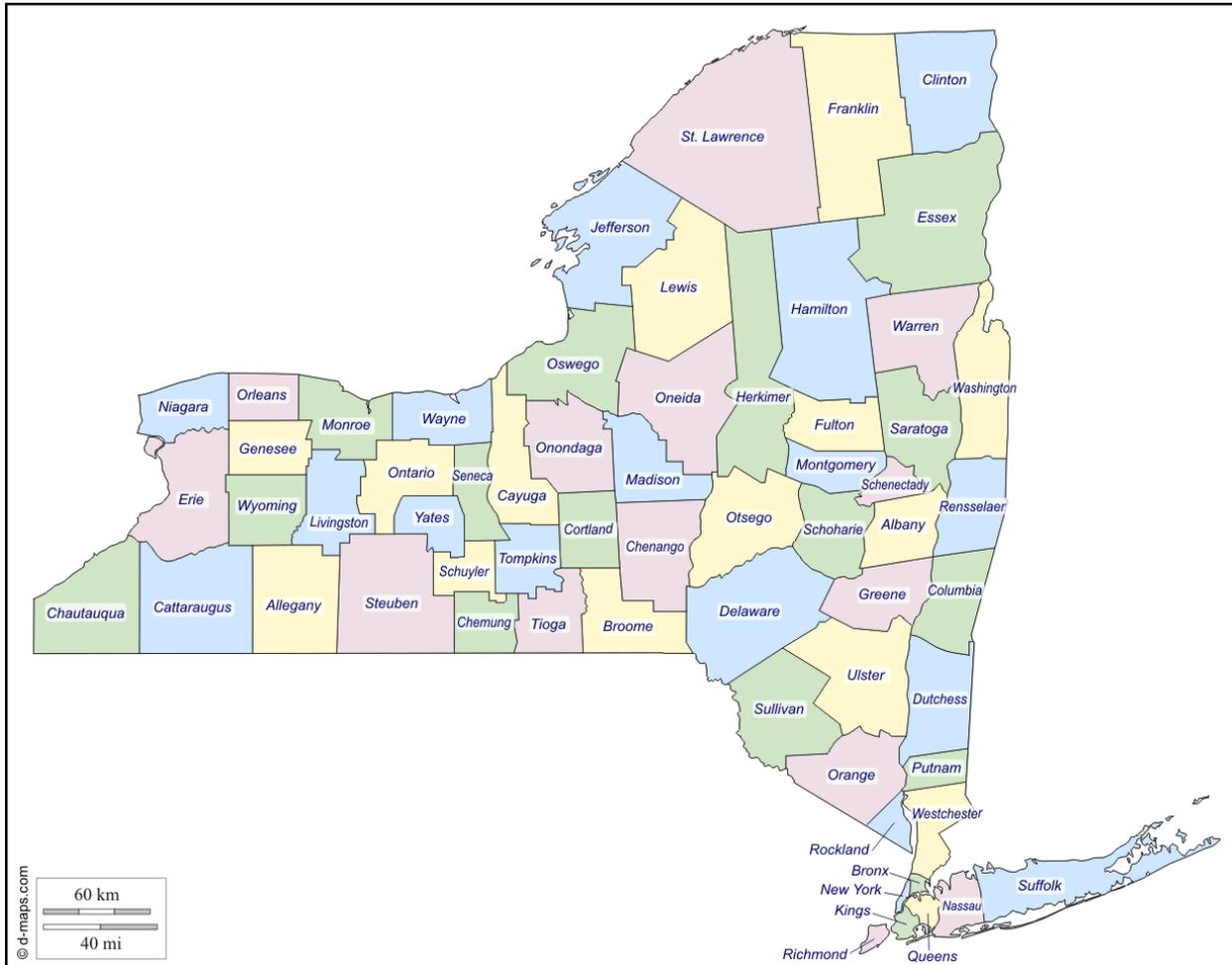
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***This project is supported by Award No. 2013-DC-BX-K002 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs***