

# Child & Family

Caring for our Rhode Island Community since 1866

## Child & Family Policy and Legislative Priorities for 2022

The health and well-being of families throughout Rhode Island has been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The ensuing workforce crisis now limits Child & Family's ability to respond to the increased need in the communities we serve. We have waiting lists in many of our programs due to staff shortages and structural flaws in contract rate setting that has not recognized the increase in expenses due to COVID. Our clients need:

- quality, early childhood education for working parents at our Sandpipers Early Learning Center,
- a range of preventative programs that enable families to be resilient in the face of mental health crises,
- support to children and youth in foster care and residential treatment programs,
- and, on the other end of the lifespan, case management support to low-income seniors so that they can remain in their homes with dignity.

### Public policy and legislative priorities:

- Decrease the gap between the public's awareness of the needs of our communities and knowledge of the impact that human service and mental health community-based providers have in addressing these needs. Educate the public on the immediate consequences of inadequate leadership and funding.
- Immediate release of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Nearly one year ago, Rhode Island received Federal emergency funds of \$1.3 million. Although there was legislative approval to release these funds, the lack of streamlined processes and state agency capacity has created a bottleneck. The longer government waits, the deeper the workforce crisis grows.
- Immediate short-term rate relief from the State so that Child & Family can reduce our operating deficit and make new investments in much-needed child welfare programming such as foster care and residential treatment. Absent this short-term rate relief, the placement crisis will continue for DCYF youth and families with 132 youth awaiting placement in a treatment, congregate-care setting and record high numbers of children and youth in psychiatric settings in out-of-state facilities.
- Support of the human-services rate-review legislation sponsored by Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Little Compton, Newport, Tiverton) and Rep. Julie A. Casimiro (D-Dist. 31, North Kingstown, Exeter). This is a very important, long-term solution to the state's funding of human services. As important as rate setting is, the immediate priority is increased funding in the proposed FY 2023 budget. The Governor's proposed budget is inadequate with no increases in foster care and community-based services contracted by DCYF. General Assembly bills: [2022 -- S 2200](#) and [2022 -- S 2311](#).
- Our over-arching public policy priority will be to establish a comprehensive strategic plan and vision for a children's behavioral health plan and the state's child welfare system. State spending in areas such as psychiatric hospitals and out-of-state placements is evidence that our child welfare system is broken. What we need is a comprehensive multiyear plan that will guide the General Assembly, DCYF, community providers and foundations on where to make the right investments on a sustainable system of care which achieves the right outcomes for children and families.

**Reach out to your legislators TODAY to support these changes:**

[The State of Rhode Island General Assembly \(rilegislature.gov\)](https://rilegislature.gov)

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