



# COUNTY OF ERIE

**MARK C. POLONCARZ**  
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

June 3, 2014

Erie County Legislature  
92 Franklin Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Buffalo, New York 14202

**Re: Department of Social Services  
Child Protective Services Adjustments  
IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION REQUESTED**

Dear Honorable Members:

The Department of Social Services is seeking approval of a resolution creating three (3) new child protective services teams, twelve new protective services investigator positions, and additional funding for Children's Services contracts. These adjustments are necessary in order to reduce and sustain caseload levels to the level recommended by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services.

Should your Honorable Body require further information, I encourage you to contact Commissioner Carol Dankert-Maurer at the Department of Social Services. Thank you for your immediate consideration on this matter.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Poloncarz".

Mark C. Poloncarz, Esq.  
Erie County Executive

MCP/bb  
Enclosure

cc: Carol Dankert-Maurer, Commissioner, Department of Social Services

## **MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Honorable Members of the Erie County Legislature  
**From:** Department of Social Services  
**Re:** Child Protective Services Adjustments  
**Date:** June 3, 2014

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### **SUMMARY**

The Department of Social Services is seeking approval of a resolution creating three (3) new child protective services teams, twelve new special investigator positions, and additional funding for Children's Services contracts.

This proposed resolution authorizes the Department of Social Services to create:

- Three (3) new Child Protective Services (CPS) teams, totaling:
  - Eighteen (18) Child Protective Worker positions
  - Three (3) Child Protective Team Leaders
  - Three (3) Social Services Team Workers
  - One (1) Child Protective Coordinator
- Twelve (12) special investigators consisting of:
  - Three (3) RPT Senior Protective Services Investigators
  - Three (3) RPT Protective Services Investigators
  - Six (6) PT Protective Services Investigators

In addition, the resolution would increase funding for community based children services by \$200,000 which will provide funds for contract agencies such as, but not limited to Catholic Charities and Baker Victory Services.

In addition, authorization is requested to temporarily duplicate-fill some Child Protective Worker positions for no more than 180 days for training purposes and to provide critical CPS functions while new employees are canvassed, hired and trained due to the recent establishment of a civil service list for this title.

### **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

Total 2014 expense is estimated at \$1,227,232 with offsetting State and Federal revenue of \$726,832. Due to the adopted 2014-2015 State budget, the County has available funds from the reduction in the 2014 Medicaid-MMIS account which will be utilized in the amount of \$500,400 to fund the county share portion for this CPS purpose.

### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

Erie County child protection workers currently have caseloads well above the recommended levels. Additional resources are needed to reduce and sustain manageable caseload sizes. The resources requested in this resolution should provide the adequate amount and type of resources.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Since the 2013 audit of Erie County CPS by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (“OCFS”), CPS workers have experienced an increase in caseloads. This was caused by a significantly reduced closing rate during the audit period, creating a backlog. The backlog has become self-perpetuating because additional work is needed to be done on each case the longer it remains open. This backlog causes CPS workers to be less effective because their time and attention is severely diluted. In order to maintain high-quality work, caseloads must be reduced. To increase capacity within CPS, the administration has reallocated its existing resources, created new CPS positions (both with legislative approval and through the reclassification process), and increased access to overtime. These measures have not been enough and additional resources are needed.

OCFS recommends each CPS worker have (at most) fifteen (15) cases. Erie County receives approximately 1,000 reports from the statewide central register each month. Each case remains open approximately sixty (60) days. There should therefore be approximately 2,000 cases being investigated at any one moment. If all cases were closed after sixty (60) days and caseloads are 15, there would need to be 133 workers at full capacity (i.e., experienced, non-trainee). However, due to a salary lower than similar positions and high-stress, turnover occurs frequently in CPS. It is estimated that 151 positions would be necessary in order to ensure there are 133 trained and experienced workers able to take cases.

Due to the prolonged training time for CPS workers, these additions will not have an immediate impact. Law enforcement officers have skills needed to perform some CPS/PSA work immediately, and have other skills that will improve CPS/PSA investigations and enhance the safety of CPS/PSA workers. The Administration for Children’s Services (New York City) has successfully used retired law enforcement officers in its child welfare response for several years and is a model Erie County wishes to utilize.

Many cases get referred to Children’s Services from CPS for services. Due to more rigorous work being done on CPS cases, more investigations result in services being needed. Children’s Services is at capacity. This creates a logjam as CPS cases are not able to move forward and must remain open. Additional funding is necessary to increase capacity at agencies that provide children’s services.

## **CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION**

In the short-run, Erie County CPS would have difficulty reducing its caseloads. As a result, investigations will take longer than needed. It is unlikely Erie County CPS could ever bring caseloads down to fifteen (15) cases per worker.

## **STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL**

Steps would be taken to hire individuals into these positions as quickly as possible. Contracts with service providers would be negotiated to increase capacity in Children’s Services.

A RESOLUTION SUBMITTED BY:  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

RE: Child Protective Services Adjustments

WHEREAS, Erie County child protective services (“CPS”) investigates reports alleging child abuse or neglect; and

WHEREAS, since the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (“OCFS”) audit in 2013, there has been a significant increase in caseloads caused by a significantly reduced closing rate during the audit period; and

WHEREAS, the backlog has caused CPS workers to be less effective because their time and attention is severely diluted; and

WHEREAS, in order to maintain and sustain high-quality work, caseloads must be reduced; and

WHEREAS, in order to bring caseloads down, the administration has reallocated its existing resources, created new CPS positions (both with legislative approval and through the reclassification process), and increased access to overtime; and

WHEREAS, these measures have not been as impactful as expected and additional resources are needed; and

WHEREAS, OCFS recommends each CPS worker have (at most) fifteen (15) cases; and

WHEREAS, Erie County receives approximately 1,000 reports from the statewide central register each month; and

WHEREAS, if all cases were closed after sixty (60) days and caseloads were on average 15 per worker, there would need to be 133 workers at full capacity (i.e., experienced, non-trainee); and

WHEREAS, due to a salary lower than similar positions and high-stress, turnover occurs frequently in CPS; and

WHEREAS, it is estimated that 151 positions would be necessary in order to ensure there are 133 trained and experienced workers able to take cases; and

WHEREAS, due to the prolonged training time for CPS workers, adding additional CPS workers will not have an immediate impact; and

WHEREAS, law enforcement and probation officers have skills needed to perform some CPS work immediately, and have other skills that will improve CPS investigations and enhance the safety of CPS workers; and

WHEREAS, the Administration for Children's Services (New York City) has successfully used retired law enforcement officers in its child welfare response for several years and is a model Erie County wishes to utilize; and

WHEREAS, many cases get referred to Children's Services from CPS for services; and

WHEREAS, due to more rigorous work being during CPS investigations, more services are needed by families at risk; and

WHEREAS, Children's Services is at capacity, creating a logjam at CPS because cases are not able to move forward and must remain open; and

WHEREAS, additional funding is necessary to increase capacity at community agencies that are contracted by Children's Services.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT

RESOLVED, that the Erie County Legislature does hereby approve the creation of the following new positions in the 2014 Budget of the Department of Social Services in Fund Center 120, Cost Center 1208030, to be effective July 1, 2014:

Eighteen (18) Child Protective Worker positions (JG 8)  
Three (3) Child Protective Team Leaders (JG 11)  
Three (3) Social Services Team Workers (JG 5)  
One (1) Child Protective Coordinator (JG 12)  
Three (3) RPT Senior Protective Services Investigators (JG 14)  
Three (3) RPT Protective Services Investigators (JG 12)  
Six (6) PT Protective Services Investigators (JG 12)

and be it further

RESOLVED, that authorization is hereby granted to temporarily duplicate-fill Child Protective Worker positions for no more than 180 days for training purposes and to provide critical CPS functions while new employees are canvassed, hired and trained due to the recent establishment of a civil service list for this title; and be it further

RESOLVED, that authorization is hereby provided to make the following budgetary changes in the 2014 Budget of the department of Social Services:

**Fund Center 12080 Social Services Child Protection**

<u>Revenue</u>	<u>Increase</u>
407540 State Aid SS Admin	275,478
407680 State Aid Srvs. for Recipients	117,800
411540 Federal Aid SS Admin	115,398
411490 Federal Aid TANF FFFS	160,776
411640 Federal Aid Day Care Block Grants	<u>57,380</u>
<b>Total Revenue</b>	726,832

  

<u>Expense</u>	<u>Increase/ (Decrease)</u>
500000 Full Time Salaries	436,780
500010 Part Time	63,948
500020 Regular Part Time	104,766
502000 Fringe Benefits	330,043
510000 Local Mileage	44,400
516400 Title XX Preventive and Protective Srvs.	200,000
516410 Lab and Tech Equipment	36,075
525000 MMIS	(500,400)
980000 ID Billing DISS	<u>11,220</u>
<b>Total Expense DSS</b>	726,832

  

<b>Fund Center 105 Dept. Information and Support Services</b>	
<u>Expense</u>	<u>Increase/ (Decrease)</u>
515000 Utility Charges	11,220
980000 ID Billing DISS	<u>(11,220)</u>
<b>Total Expense DISS</b>	0
<b>Net (Revenue less Expense)</b>	0

and be it further

RESOLVED, that authorization is provided to adjust budgets and contractual agreements based on the increase in Title XX funding, for various community based preventive and protective service agencies as required to expand the availability of services for child protection clients, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Commissioner of Personnel, Director of Budget and Management and Commissioner of Social Services are hereby authorized to make the necessary budgetary and personnel adjustments necessary to facilitate this resolution; and be it further

RESOLVED, that certified copies of this resolution shall be forwarded to the County Executive, the Commissioner of Social Services, the Erie County Comptroller, the Director of the Division of Budget and Management, the Commissioner of Personnel and the Director of Labor Relations.