

Westchester County 2019 Budget Comments and Recommendations

The Westchester Children's Association (WCA) is a 104-year-old independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization. The Campaign for Kids is a coalition of 50+ organizations and individuals concerned with increasing opportunities and supports for young people in our County. In order to better support the well-being of children, teens and families in Westchester County, we offer the following recommendations for the 2019 Operating Budget.

Invest in Kids:

- **Maintain current funding of all 49 Invest in Kids programs, totaling \$2,014,077.**
- **Re-establish an Invest in Kids workgroup to revisit the RFP, application, evaluation, and award process.** This work should be completed in time for a new RFP to be distributed in summer 2019, for a new round of funding to begin in January 2020.
- **Develop a transparent and accountable award process.**
- **Establish best practices for quality youth development programs** that should be adhered to, regardless of funding stream.

Why is this important?

All 48 Invest in Kids programs keep kids safe, support working families, and foster academic success. They fill a critical need in communities and warrant continued funding into 2019.

The 2017 Invest in Kids RFP initially funded 41 programs under the previous administration's 2018 budget, for a total of \$1,769,077. However, WCA's analysis revealed significant discrepancies in the award process. The current administration restored funding for 7 of the 13 programs. Invest in Kids currently funds 48 programs for a total of \$2,014,077.

Established youth development program best practices would improve the accuracy of assessments on quality, and support simpler evaluative components in applications for funding.

Child Care:

- **Increase the DSS reimbursement rate** for contracted providers.
- **Increase the number of new Title XX slots**, which have been frozen for some time.

Why is this important?

Quality early childhood education has a critical impact on kindergarten readiness, high school graduation, employment rates, and adult income.

In NYS, 3 in 5 children ages 1-2 have working mothers.

“We want a Westchester where safe, affordable, quality early care and education is available to ALL children from the day they’re born, because the **first 5 years of brain development is the key to everything.**” - CCCW

Child care as an industry can be an economic driver. In New York, industry revenue combined with spillover effects (additional spending in the community) has a \$6.8 billion impact on the economy.

Employment:

- **Increase investments in employment, training and mentoring opportunities particularly for youth at highest risk of disconnection.**
- **Create a Blue Ribbon panel of stakeholders, from different sectors to investigate current opportunities to improve youth employment in the county.**
- **Expand usage of the READI curriculum ensuring all youth involved in county funded/sponsored employment programs are trained.**

Why is this important?

Entering the labor force is one of the most significant role transitions of young adulthood.

The road to employment readiness **starts at birth.** Childhood and youth development efforts all play a role in further preparing children and youth for employment readiness. The County’s READI (Respect, Enthusiasm, Articulate, Dependable, and Initiative) program addresses youth job readiness at the local level.

Employment readiness is **shaped by opportunities available** to children and youth. Children and youth with fewer opportunities are at critical developmental and employment readiness disadvantages; as too young adult’s ages 16-24 disconnected from school, work and community.

Non-Profit Contracts:

CFK supports the agendas of *Nonprofit Westchester and Westchester Women’s Agenda.* We appreciate and support the 1.5% proposed increase to non-profit contracts in County Executive Latimer’s proposed 2019 budget.
