



Junior Leagues of New York State:

Junior League of Binghamton
31 Front Street - Binghamton 13905

Junior League of Bronxville
P.O. Box 430 - Bronxville 10708

Junior League of Brooklyn
55 Pierrepont Street - Brooklyn 11201

Junior League of Buffalo
45 Elmwood Avenue - Buffalo 14201

Junior League of Central Westchester
1039 Post Road - Scarsdale 10583

Junior League of Elmira-Corning
P.O. Box 3150 - Elmira 14905

Junior League of Kingston
P.O. Box 1214 - Kingston 12402

Junior League of Long Island
1395 Old Northern Blvd - Roslyn 11576

Junior League of the City of New York
130 East 80th Street - New York 10021

Junior League of Northern Westchester
222 East Main Street - Mt. Kisco 10549

Junior League of Orange County
P.O. Box 515 - Middletown 10940

Junior League of Pelham
901 Pelhamdale Avenue - Pelham
Manor 10803

Junior League of Poughkeepsie
794 Main Street - Poughkeepsie 12603

Junior League of Rochester
110 Linden Oaks, Suite A - Rochester 14625

Junior League of Schenectady
P.O. Box 857 - Schenectady 12301

Junior League of Syracuse
930 James Street - Syracuse 13203

Junior League of Troy
P.O. Box 1161 - Troy 12180

Junior League of Westchester on Hudson
35 South Broadway - Tarrytown 10591

Junior League of Westchester on the Sound
149 Larchmont Avenue - Larchmont 10538

**For more information, contact
the Junior League nearest you.**

SUPPORTING CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

*Bills: A.01984 / S.3160 (sponsored by Assemblywoman Robinson, Senator Montgomery)
A.04136 / S.3155 (sponsored by Assemblyman Scarborough, Senator Montgomery)*

NYSPAC Position: SUPPORT

The New York State Public Affairs Committee (NYSPAC) of the Junior League supports the enactment of legislation that would reform the foster care system and improve the lives of children within it. The current system is in dire need of change. Caseworkers are overloaded, and every year children who age out of the State's foster care system lose access to medical care, including many who require medications that enable them to stay healthy and have a better chance at functioning in society. NYSPAC supports the following two initiatives:

A.01984/S.3160 – New York State should proactively limit the caseload of foster care workers to 16. Recent tragedies have brought the failings of an overburdened child welfare system to the public eye, and have focused national attention on the urgent need for greater oversight and involvement in the cases of foster children. The GAO has indicated that understaffing in the child welfare system makes it more difficult to achieve safety, permanency and well-being for these children. Excessive caseloads contribute to inadequate supervision of children suffering from, or at risk of, abuse; delays in reunifying children with birth parents or permanent placements with adoptive parents; high caseworker turn-over (averaging 40% in New York, per the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies); and a perception that our state has improperly prioritized the welfare of its children. Indeed, class-action lawsuits have forced nine other states to implement caseload limits, although the mandated restrictions vary considerably.

Caseload limits would immediately benefit foster children by enabling workers to visit children more often, carry out more thorough investigations, respond more quickly to suspicions of abuse or neglect, provide children and their caregivers more support, and expedite the permanent placement of foster children, while improving caseworker morale and reducing turnover. Caseworker departures sever vital bonds of trust and remove sources of consistency for children already enduring the trauma of separation from their families, and as more experienced workers leave the profession, the quality of care diminishes and the cost of training new workers grow. A caseload of 16 foster children seems reasonable, would avoid court-imposed restrictions and closely reflects the recommendations of the National Association of Social Workers, Council on Accreditation, and the Child Welfare League of America.

A.04136/S. 3155 – New York State should provide Medicaid to children “aging out” of the foster care system. Each year, about 25,000 youths nationwide “age out” of the foster care system. Within two to four years, 25% become homeless, 40% are on public assistance and 50% are unemployed. And, between 30% and 62% have trouble obtaining health care because they lack insurance or funds to pay for health care. Medically speaking, compared to other children from the same socioeconomic background, children in foster care have far higher rates of serious emotional and behavior problems, chronic physical disabilities, birth defects, developmental delays, exposure to physical or sexual abuse, HIV, hepatitis, incomplete immunizations, and other complex illnesses. Further, research shows that 50% of adults who were placed in foster care as children have serious mental health problems as adults, with 25% of these adults suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder – problems that could have been avoided had they had access to Medicaid when they aged out of the foster care system.

Given the severity of this situation, we support granting automatic Medicaid to independent foster care adolescents under 21 years old who were in foster care on their 18th birthday. The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 gives states the authority to allocate resources such as Medicaid to young adults ages 18 to 21 who are transitioning from foster care to independent living. The Federal Government will pay a full 50% of the cost of adding these young adults to the Medicaid system in New York State. Eighteen states including Connecticut and New Jersey have already put such programs into place – New York should join them now.

On behalf of the more than 7,000 women represented by the 19 Junior Leagues of New York, **we urge the New York Assembly and Senate to reform New York's foster care system and enact A.01984 / S.3160 and A.04136 / S.3155 – two bills that will ultimately be key steps towards providing superior services and enhanced support to children in foster care.**

For more information, please contact Cristina Abella: cristina.abella@verizon.net.

