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Local Commissioners Memorandum

Transmittal:	08-OCFS-LCM-09
To:	Local District Commissioners
Issuing Division/Office:	Strategic Planning and Policy Development Administration
Date:	June 6, 2008 (Rev. 6/9/08)
Subject:	SFY 2008-09 Foster Care Block Grant Allocations
Suggested Distribution:	Accounting Supervisors Directors of Social Services
Contact Person(s):	See page 7
Attachments:	A. Allocation of \$436,002,000
Attachment Available On – Line:	Yes

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Local Commissioners Memorandum (LCM) is to provide social services districts with their Foster Care Block Grant allocations for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2008–09 and the corresponding program implications as authorized by Chapters 53 of the Laws of 2008.

II. Background

Chapter 57 of the Laws of 2007 extended the Child Welfare Financing Law to June 30, 2009. The Child Welfare Financing Law promotes a reduction in the use of foster care placements through three components:

1. A Foster Care Block Grant capping State reimbursement to social services districts for foster care services and administration at the annual amounts appropriated.
2. Uncapped State reimbursement after applying available Federal funds for all child welfare services except foster care services and administration.

3. A Quality Enhancement Fund administered by the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to increase the availability and quality of children and family services programs.

The SFY 2008-09 State appropriations for the Foster Care Block Grant is \$436,002,000. This includes funding to support the continuation of the required Maximum State Aid Rates (MSAR) for congregate care programs and the applicable administrative/services rates for therapeutic, special needs and emergency foster home programs; and the State's reimbursement for the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for foster parents and foster care providers effective April 1, 2008. Section III in this LCM provides additional details on the MSAR payment requirements and the COLA. The appropriation also includes funding for the cost of continuing the Worker Recruitment and Retention Add-On to the Maximum State Aid Rates (MSARs) for programs located in New York State set by OCFS in December 2002, which continues to be incorporated directly into the MSARs. Of the \$436,002,000, a major portion of the Block Grant, or \$399,552,000, is allocated based on historical claims; \$36,450,000 is set aside for districts that have reduced their use of foster care days. The SFY 2008-09 Foster Care Block Grant allocations also includes the first of three annual \$9,166,970 adjustments. Section III in this LCM provides additional details on these adjustments.

III. Program Implications

The Foster Care Block Grant includes State reimbursement for foster care services as follows:

- Care and maintenance, including clothing and special payments; supervision; administrative costs claimed on Schedule D, Schedule D-2 and Schedule K; including all tuition for foster children placed in OMH-licensed residential treatment facilities, as well as in OCFS-licensed child care institutions.
- Supervision of foster care children in federally funded job corps programs.
- Care, maintenance, supervision and tuition of adjudicated juvenile delinquents or persons in need of supervision placed in residential programs operated by authorized agencies and in out-of-state residential programs.

The Foster Care Block Grant does **not** include Federal reimbursement for foster care costs or State reimbursement for the following claims:

- Committee on Special Education (CSE) payments.
- Dormitory Authority payments in excess of the Foster Care Block Grant (for more information see Fiscal Reference Manual Volume 2 Chapter 4).
- State reimbursement for foster care services for Indian tribes.
- Medical Assistance payments for children in foster care.
- Independent Living Services (except for those districts that have funds left over from their Foster Care Block Grant allocations for SFY 2007-08 – See V. Fiscal Claiming below).

Separate appropriations are available for these expenditures.

The Block Grant contains only those State funds that are available for reimbursement of a district's expenditures for the services included in the Foster Care Block Grant. District claims that are eligible to receive Federal reimbursement under Title IV-E foster care, Independent Living and TANF-EAF [up to the amount of the district's Flexible Fund for Family Services (FFFS) allocation that it has indicated that it wants to use for TANF EAF JD/PINS and/or TANF-EAF NYC Tuition – See Section IV below] will be submitted for Federal reimbursement even if the district's claims exceed its Foster Care Block Grant allocation for the current SFY.

As previously stated in 03-OCFS-LCM-06 and 05-OCFS-LCM-04, beginning with services provided on or after July 1, 2004, the Worker Recruitment and Retention Add-On Rate is no longer claimed and paid separately. Rather, the annual value of the approved Add-On Rate for each program is included in the applicable OCFS-approved MSARs and Committee on Special Education (CSE) Maintenance Rates. Each local district's Foster Care Block Grant allocation reflects the cost of the Add-On Rates.

Chapter 57 of the Laws of 2005 amended Section 398-a of the Social Services Law to add a new subdivision 2-a that prohibits social services districts from paying less than the MSARs established by OCFS. As of July 1, 2006, local social services districts are now required to pay 100 percent of the applicable MSAR established by the OCFS for congregate care programs and for each administrative/services rate for therapeutic, special needs, or emergency foster home programs operated by a voluntary agency. The exception to the requirement is regular foster boarding home programs and pass-through payments to foster parents. In addition, districts that were paying at or above the MSARs for applicable programs as of January 1, 2005, are required to continue to pay at least 100 percent of the MSAR in the 2007-08 MSAR rate cycle, as well as for all subsequent rate cycles.

The Foster Care Block Grant does not include State expenditures made on behalf of youth placed in Office of Children and Family Services operated facilities.

This Block Grant can be used only for foster care expenditures during SFY 2008-09. If a local social services district claims less than its allocation, unexpended funds may be used by the district in the next SFY, up to the amount remaining from the district's Foster Care Block Grant allocation, for the district's expenditures on preventive services (including reunification services), independent living services and aftercare services.

Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA)

Chapter 57 of the Laws of 2008 amended the existing Human Services COLA and mandates a 3.2 percent COLA effective April 1, 2008. The COLA affects all in-state programs for which OCFS establishes MSARs including Committee on Special Education (CSE) maintenance rates. The COLA is also applicable to MSARs for foster parent and adoption subsidy payments. Local districts will be required to pay the increase even for those rates that are currently exempt from the MSAR minimum payment requirement as specified in Section 398-a (2-a) of Social Services Law. Therefore, in addition to local districts being required by statute to pay no less than the established rates for specified programs, local districts and voluntary agencies will also be required to increase their payment schedules by 3.2 percent effective April 1, 2008. This will

affect all administrative/services rates applicable to regular foster boarding home programs; for all pass-through rates applicable to foster parent payments and adoption subsidies; and for replacement clothing allowances paid to foster parents. Funding has been provided in the Foster Care Block Grant to support the COLA for foster parents and foster care providers effective April 1, 2008.

Allocation Methodology

The methodology used to allocate the Foster Care Block Grant funding is designed to continue the focus on safety, well-being, and permanency for children. It is intended to encourage districts to continue to intensify their efforts to reduce foster care days.

As in the past three State Fiscal Years (SFY 2005-06, SFY 2006-07 and SFY 2007-08), the allocation methodology continues the claims-based approach and the \$36,450,000 set aside incentive to local district. However, in SFY 2008-09 one of three required \$9,166,970 adjustments is applied.

Of the \$436,002,000 appropriation for State reimbursement for foster care services in SFY 2008-09, \$399,552,000 is distributed to districts according to their respective shares of historical claims. In accordance with budget appropriation language, the percentage of funds allocated to each district reflects the district's share of the statewide gross foster care claims (originals and supplemental) for the 12-month period ending June 30, 2007, that were submitted to the State on or before January 2, 2008.

The allocation of the \$36,450,000 set-aside is based on the district's reduction in the utilization of foster care days during two periods: from FFY 2003 to FFY 2005 (\$9,112,500) and from FFY 2005 to FFY 2007 (\$27,337,500). Reductions in care days during the more recent period are weighted more heavily (75 percent) than reductions during the earlier period (25 percent). This methodology recognizes the accomplishments of those districts that have decreased their foster care utilization over the past five years, while providing a more generous incentive to those districts that have achieved more recent reductions in care days.

The \$9,166,970 adjustment is in response to a court ruling regarding the Foster Care Block Grant allocations for SFY 2003-04 and SFY 2004-05. In 2003, the City of New York commenced an Article 78 proceeding challenging the allocations methodology of the Foster Care Block Grant for SFY 2003-04. In 2004, the City of New York brought a separate Article 78 proceeding challenging the allocation methodology of the Foster Care Block Grant for SFY 2004-05 on the basis that the allocation was contrary to law, arbitrary and capricious, and an abuse of discretion because it undercounted historical claims for foster care. The petition requested that OCFS be ordered to allocate the SFY 2004-05 Foster Care Block Grant funds based on all historical claims submitted for the relevant period. In its ruling on the initial case, the court found that OCFS's use of the population-based model to allocate a portion of the Foster Care Block Grant funds was arbitrary and not rationally related to the legislative goal of reducing foster care use. The court separately concluded that OCFS's method of allocating another portion of the Foster Care Block Grant funds based on historical claims submitted by a date determined by OCFS undercounted claims and, therefore, was irrational and contrary to the law. The court ordered the State to

reallocate the SFY 2003-04 Foster Care Block Grant for all social services districts without the population factors and use the historical claims submitted within 22 months (the federal time frame).

In late 2007, the Solicitor General's Office refused to appeal the court's decision regarding the 2003-04 Foster Care Block Grant allocation methodology. Therefore, in order to implement the Court's decision the State will reallocate both the SFY 2003-04 and SFY 2004-05 Foster Care Block Grant amounts. New York City has agreed to allow the adjustments to be made over a three-year period. The \$9,166,970 adjustment to the districts' SFY 2008-09 Foster Care Block Grant allocations is the first of three annual adjustments. Similar adjustments will be made to the SFY 2009-10 and SFY 2010-11 allocations.

District allocations for each component of the SFY 2008-09 Foster Care Block Grant are provided in Attachment A.

IV. Other Related SFY 2008-09 Budget Actions

Flexible Fund for Family Services (FFFS) - The SFY 2008-09 Enacted Budget appropriates \$654,000,000 of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding for FFFS. The FFFS provides districts with the flexibility to determine local funding priorities. Districts can use their FFFS allocation to fund the TANF Emergency Assistance to Families (EAF) Juvenile Delinquents (JD) / Persons In Need of Supervision (PINS), and TANF-EAF NYC Tuition costs, as well as any other eligible TANF purpose. Districts will receive separate guidance on the process for indicating the portion of their FFFS allocations that they choose to use to reimburse expenditures associated with TANF-EAF JD/PINS and TANF-EAF NYC Tuition.

Prior to the establishment of FFFS in SFY 2005-06, 50 percent of Federal TANF-EAF funds were used to offset the Foster Care Block Grant. In SFY 2008-09, as in SFY 2006-07 and 2007-08, no offset is taken against the Foster Care Block Grant appropriation of \$436,002,000. Therefore, the full \$436,002,000 in funding is available to districts under the Foster Care Block Grant, as well as the amounts the districts opt to use out of their FFFS allocations to cover these associated expenditures. The EAF Foster care swap will continue with TANF funds that are separate from these FFFS allocations.

V. Fiscal and Claiming

The Foster Care Block Grant is an annual capped allocation for foster care costs that are ordinarily reimbursed during the SFY. The Foster Care Block Grant payments are generally made on a monthly basis, and there is no State share settlement of the claims filed for State reimbursement. The reimbursement schedule below sets forth the relevant periods for the foster care maintenance, administration and tuition costs covered by this year's allocations.

The scheduled time periods relate to when expenditures are paid. If a social services district exceeds its allocation for a particular SFY, there is no additional funding. Any social services district claims submitted for a particular SFY that do not receive State reimbursement during that

SFY may not be claimed against that district's Block Grant apportionment for the subsequent SFY.

There is no Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirement associated with the Foster Care Block Grant.

Supplemental claims are paid from the Foster Care Block Grant allocation that covers the period when the expenditures are paid by the district for the services or administrative costs, as it pertains to the allowable claiming period.

Federal reimbursement will not be affected by this Block Grant and will be settled in the normal manner subject to the availability of Federal funds. Expenditures for the allocations included in this LCM are claimed as follows:

Foster Care	Schedule K	LDSS - 3479
	Schedule H	LDSS - 4283
	Schedule D-2	LDSS - 2347-B
	Reimbursement Claim for Special Project Form	LDSS - 3922

Please refer to the Fiscal Reference Manual, Volume 2, and Chapter 3 for instructions on completing Schedules K and H, and the Reimbursement Claim for Special Claims Form. The Schedules D and D-2 claiming instructions are in the Fiscal Reference Manual, Volume 3 (or Volume 4 for New York City). The Fiscal Reference Manual is accessible to local districts and sister agencies at the following intranet site address: <http://otda.state.nyenet/bfdm/#>.

Unclaimed Foster Care Block Grant Funds from SFY 2008-09 that an eligible district wishes to use during SFY 2009-10 for eligible preventive, independent living and after care services must be reported on the Reimbursement Claim for Special Projects, (LDSS – 3922) with “Saving FCBG 08-09” indicated in the project name box. Costs should be reported in the non-administrative column for the following time period, October 1, 2008, through September 30, 2009. The reported expenditures are eligible for 100 percent State reimbursement up to the amount of the unclaimed Foster Care Block Grant Funds from SFY 2008-09. Any such claims submitted by a social services district for which there are insufficient unclaimed funds available from the district’s SFY 2008-09 Foster Care Block Grant allocations are subject to 98 percent of 65 percent State reimbursement net of any available Federal funds.

The reimbursement schedule for SFY 2008-09 Foster Care Block Grant is as follows:

- Foster Care Maintenance Claims: January 1, 2008, through December 31, 2008
- Foster Care Administration Claims: October 1, 2007, through September 30, 2008
- Foster Care Tuition EAF Claims: October 1, 2007, through September 30, 2008
- Non-EAF Foster Care Tuition Claims: January 1, 2008, through December 31, 2008
- Special Project Claims Form Claims: January 1, 2008, through December 31, 2008

EAF Foster Care Maintenance, Administration and Tuition other than TANF EAF JD/PINS and TANF EAF NYC Tuition costs are only counted toward the Foster Care Block Grant if the costs are not eligible to be swapped for Public Assistance reimbursement.

Contact Information

Any fiscal questions regarding the Foster Care Block Grant should be directed to:

Deborah Hanor, Director, Bureau of Budget Management at (518) 474-1361.

Andrea Sweda, Assistant Director, Bureau of Budget Management at (518) 402-3324.

Programmatic questions should be directed to the appropriate Regional Office, Division of Development and Prevention Services:

BRO - Mary Miller (716) 847-3145

User ID: Mary.Miller@ocfs.state.ny.us

RRO - Linda Kurtz (585) 238-8201

User ID: Linda.Kurtz@ocfs.state.ny.us

SRO - Jack Klump (315) 423-1200

User ID: Jack.Klump@ocfs.state.ny.us

ARO – Kerri Barber, Acting Director (518)486-7078

User ID: Kerri.Barber@ocfs.state.ny.us

YRO - Pat Sheehy (914) 377-2080

User ID: Patricia.Sheehy@ocfs.state.ny.us

NYCRO Patricia Beresford (212) 383-1788

User ID: Patricia.Beresford@ocfs.state.ny.us

Questions pertaining to the FFFS Plan and Fiscal Claiming may be directed to the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance:

FFFS Plan:

Jane Wagner, (518) 402-3599

Susanne Haag, (518) 486-6291

Fiscal Claiming:

Regions I-IV: James Carroll 1-800-343-8859, ext. 4-7549 or (518) 474-7549

E-mail – James.Carroll@otda.state.ny.us

Region V: Michael Borenstein (631) 854-9704

E-mail – Michael.Borenstein@otda.state.ny.us

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/s/ Nancy W. Martinez

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/s/ Thomas S. Tipple

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Division/Office: Administration

Attachment A**SFY 2008-09 Foster Care Block Grant Allocations**

District	Allocation of \$399,552,000	Allocation of the \$9,112,500 Set-Aside	Allocation of the \$27,337,500 Set- Aside	Prior Year Adjustment	Total Allocation
Albany	6,337,515	115,410	683,410	(183,928)	6,952,407
Allegany	1,454,547	-	-	(22,444)	1,432,103
Broome	5,420,586	14,298	-	(41,269)	5,393,615
Cattaraugus	1,418,917	60,726	359,051	(115,617)	1,723,077
Cayuga	1,244,366	43,075	184,938	(95,188)	1,377,191
Chautauqua	1,764,176	-	116,676	(93,081)	1,787,771
Chemung	2,480,593	72,426	-	(109,754)	2,443,265
Chenango	731,115	7,882	-	(45,794)	693,203
Clinton	1,333,918	-	168,454	(85,441)	1,416,931
Columbia	2,917,150	24,677	-	(77,508)	2,864,319
Cortland	1,181,665	11,254	-	(29,076)	1,163,843
Delaware	623,009	-	101,121	(80,018)	644,112
Dutchess	4,942,623	87,954	-	(32,859)	4,997,718
Erie	15,237,876	347,924	2,369,204	(732,816)	17,222,188
Essex	438,884	-	119,438	(79,689)	478,633
Franklin	982,013	-	94,342	(9,875)	1,066,480
Fulton	1,272,297	18,918	44,041	(152,580)	1,182,676
Genesee	711,333	11,527	37,534	(20,318)	740,076
Greene	1,901,440	11,946	-	(7,622)	1,905,764
Hamilton	46,618	-	-	(586)	46,032
Herkimer	1,323,481	29,333	-	(34,701)	1,318,113
Jefferson	1,554,852	39,913	263,369	(198,759)	1,659,375
Lewis	223,577	2,670	-	(23,204)	203,043
Livingston	1,122,933	15,865	-	(78,644)	1,060,154
Madison	1,130,866	25,943	47,403	-	1,204,212
Monroe	15,800,720	-	1,692,164	(755,315)	16,737,569
Montgomery	979,924	-	-	(173,356)	806,568
Nassau	11,097,574	27,283	427,148	(872,663)	10,679,342
Niagara	2,714,990	10,844	536,608	(332,523)	2,929,919
Oneida	5,424,419	26,335	-	(331,130)	5,119,624
Onondaga	7,825,049	-	912,362	(566,587)	8,170,824

SFY 2008-09 Foster Care Block Grant Allocations

	Allocation of \$399,552,000	Allocation of the \$9,112,500 Set-Aside	Allocation of the \$27,337,500 Set- Aside	Prior Year Adjustment	Total Allocation
Ontario	954,826	-	32,450	(48,671)	938,605
Orange	5,701,288	49,372	319,083	(381,083)	5,688,660
Orleans	394,944	-	234,966	(68,146)	561,764
Oswego	3,281,619	34,728	-	(44,988)	3,271,359
Otsego	1,061,656	19,792	154,211	(51,895)	1,183,764
Putnam	593,208	-	-	(24,212)	568,996
Rensselaer	3,834,422	-	514,464	(291,309)	4,057,577
Rockland	2,798,494	61,929	641,064	(207,122)	3,294,365
St. Lawrence	1,555,104	4,146	-	(55,642)	1,503,608
Saratoga	1,935,808	-	286,032	(73,505)	2,148,335
Schenectady	5,247,360	-	-	(102,499)	5,144,861
Schoharie	496,312	12,958	-	(20,886)	488,384
Schuyler	188,014	10,288	-	(125,620)	72,682
Seneca	625,842	13,696	-	(68,164)	571,374
Steuben	1,886,452	10,124	545,766	(60,744)	2,381,598
Suffolk	15,866,001	73,939	1,985,714	(948,284)	16,977,370
Sullivan	1,692,002	15,154	-	(181,757)	1,525,399
Tioga	561,840	15,273	-	(55,651)	521,462
Tompkins	1,128,233	24,750	738	(46,408)	1,107,313
Ulster	3,230,149	8,046	18,754	(47,425)	3,209,524
Warren	1,447,515	-	28,021	(80,266)	1,395,270
Washington	558,431	17,633	-	(59,022)	517,042
Wayne	1,244,474	-	279,690	(75,621)	1,448,543
Westchester	21,402,520	-	-	(595,333)	20,807,187
Wyoming	746,851	18,152	-	(45,373)	719,630
Yates	335,330	2,123	-	(24,999)	312,454
Upstate Totals	180,407,721	1,398,306	13,198,216	(9,166,970)	185,837,273
New York City	219,144,279	7,714,194	14,139,284	9,166,970	250,164,727
Statewide Totals	399,552,000	9,112,500	27,337,500	-	436,002,000