

## Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Priorities Overview

### DCF: Services for Children and Families Line Item #4800-0038

FY 2023 Projected Spending	FY 2024 Request	FY 2024 Governor
\$333,158,821	\$355,293,909	\$354,543,909

#### Foster Care Supports:

#### Daily Rate of Support for Foster Children- \$6.9 million to raise foster care rates by 7%

Foster parents are volunteers who are reimbursed for the cost of caring for children placed in their homes through a Daily Rate of Support (DRS). The current rate is substantially below the actual costs of caring for a child. According to the U.S.D.A, the minimum annual cost of raising a child in 2022 is approximately \$15,438 (\$42.30 per day). This does not account for the costs associated with meeting any special needs that a child may have. Bringing the daily rate of support equal to the current cost of raising a child would require a 38% increase over current rates.

The current daily rate of support:

Age Range	Current Daily Rate of Support	Daily Rate of Support with H1 Proposed 7% Increase
0- 5	\$27.79	\$29.74
6-12	\$31.49	\$33.69
13+	\$32.90	\$35.20

#### MSPCC Kid's Net Program

- **Services for Foster Families:** Support groups, respite care, short-term childcare, after-hour helpline, and a diverse array of training opportunities.
- **Family Resource Liaisons (FRLs):** are experienced fellow foster/adoptive parents who are trained and supported to provide information, support, mentoring and help foster families with problem solving for everyday challenges.
- **Behavioral Health Partners:** are foster/adoptive parents with lived experience supporting children with behavioral health challenges. They receive extensive training to assist foster parents with navigating the behavioral health system, provide coaching and support, and act as a resource to address emerging behavioral health crises.

**Massachusetts Alliance for Families (MAFF):**

- Direct engagement with Foster and Adoptive Families at the local level: MAFF representatives understand what is going well in communities and where potential issue areas are emerging
- Regular communication with decision makers: MAFF reps elevate the foster parent voice to key child welfare officials, including: DCF, the OCA, policy makers and other relevant child-serving state agencies, to inform policies, practices and programming related to child welfare.

**Kid’s Net Behavioral Health Partners: \$400k (New Request)**

In response to increased behavioral health needs among children in foster care, a team of Behavioral Health Partners are being used to support foster/adoptive parents. Behavioral Health Partners are current or former foster parents with lived experience supporting children with behavioral health challenges. The Behavioral Health Partners receive extensive training on trauma, behavioral health, and navigating the service delivery systems, with the goal of preserving placement stability and preventing, when possible, behavioral health crises from occurring. The Behavioral Health Partners provide coaching and consultation, and facilitate access to resources to assist foster parents in meeting the behavioral health needs of the children in their homes. This request ensures the Kid’s Net Program has appropriate resources to continue meeting the increased behavioral health needs of foster families that arose as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The program is currently funded by a combination of federal and philanthropic grant funding.

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**DHE: Tuition and Fees Waivers for Foster and Adopted Youth Line Item #7066-0021**

FY 2023	FY 2024 Request	FY 2024 Governor
\$7,294,911	\$7,294,911	\$7,294,911

National data shows that the college graduation rate for children who spent time in the child welfare system is **less than 5%**, compared to the 37.9% graduation rate for all youth. Since 2008, youth who age out of foster care or are adopted from foster care have been entitled to a waiver of tuition and fees to state colleges and universities upon acceptance and enrollment. During the 2021-2022 academic year, 800 students who aged out or were adopted from foster care received a tuition and fee waiver for Massachusetts colleges and universities, totalling more than \$6.5M. Current projections indicate that tuition and fee waivers for the current academic year will exceed the 2021-2022 expenditures, both in number of recipients and total

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**DMH: Behavioral Health Consultation for Foster Care Line Item #5042-5000**  
**\$350K (New Request)**

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) classifies children in foster care as a special healthcare needs population. According to the AAP **up to 80 percent of children entering foster care have a significant mental health need**, and mental and behavioral health are the largest unmet need among youth in foster

care. Yet, youth who enter foster care without a behavioral health provider often wait for months to get an appointment. With philanthropic support, The Foster Child Evaluation Services Clinic at UMass Medical Center in partnership with the UMass MA Child Psychiatry Access Project (MCPAP) team have developed an expedited care model that allows primary care providers in Central MA enrolled in MCPAP to refer a youth who is in foster care for a trauma informed psychiatric consultation, diagnostic face to face evaluation and referral services. This funding would support formalizing and expanding the service to the entire Western/Central MCPAP region and provide a platform to test and develop strategies for statewide implementation.