



Family Justice Center

Providing 20 Years of Life-Saving Services to Victims & Survivors

Family Justice Center of Erie County, Inc.
438 Main Street, Suite 201
Buffalo, NY 14202

EC LEG OCT 6 '26 AM 8:08

September 30, 2026

The Honorable Mark C. Poloncarz
Erie County Executive
The Honorable Members of the Erie County Legislature
92 Franklin Street, 4th Floor
Buffalo, NY 14202

Re: Request for Equitable Funding & 2026 Surplus Allocation to Preserve Essential Domestic Violence Services

Dear County Executive Poloncarz and Members of the Legislature:

Thank you for the time you granted the Family Justice Center's CEO, Catharine Miles-Kania, to speak to the Erie County Caucus on September 24 to highlight the urgent funding challenges facing the FJC, and the devastating domestic violence trends Erie County is experiencing.

For two decades, the Family Justice Center has served as a critical lifeline for victims and survivors of domestic violence in Erie County. Under one roof, our advocates help survivors secure orders of protection, build safety plans, and work alongside police, prosecutors, and Family Court. Since opening our doors twenty years ago, our multi-agency model has provided compassionate, comprehensive, and life-saving intervention services to tens of thousands of local individuals and children escaping domestic abuse. Today, we write to you not merely to mark twenty years of dedicated service, but to issue an **urgent appeal regarding our financial sustainability and the future of domestic violence funding in our community.**

Erie County's service metrics provided for Domestic Violence agencies demonstrate that the FJC **provides 40% of all county-measured DV services**, serving as the primary hub for multi-disciplinary victim advocacy, safety planning, legal support, and other wraparound services – yet despite delivering a significant majority of these services in comparison to other funded agencies, **our agency receives less than 16% of the county's allocated funding.** As a result of this profound structural inequity in local funding, the Family Justice Center is currently operating under severe financial strain, compounded by external fiscal crises at the state and federal levels.

This dramatic disparity between services rendered and county investment comes at a time of alarming escalation in domestic violence incidents and domestic violence homicides across Erie County. Key local justice partners—including Erie County Family Court, Buffalo Police Department, and District Attorney's Office – rely heavily on the FJC's immediate advocacy. Our co-located model connects survivors with immediate safety planning and orders of protection, while partnering with law enforcement and the courts to document evidence and hold offenders accountable. Allowing our service capacity to degrade directly threatens these vital institutional partnerships and leaves our region's highest-risk residents unprotected during a period of rising lethal violence.

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This internal deficit is now dangerously exacerbated by severe delays and shortfalls at the federal and state levels. Funding streams through the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), and New York State grant allocations are experiencing historic administrative backlogs, reimbursement delays, and structural cutbacks. These macro-level disruptions threaten the stability of victim service providers in the county and statewide.

The Legislature possesses clear legislative amendment and funding powers to address critical community needs, and we ask that you utilize these mechanisms to safeguard our county's safety net. We urge the Legislature to reevaluate Erie County Budget Resolution 93, which eliminated the competitive application process for these funds, and to **reform the review protocols that have since unintentionally locked Title XX and other essential domestic violence funds into rigid formulas that fail to adapt to real-world caseload shifts.**

While federal and state gridlock remains outside local control, the county's funding allocation is entirely within *yours*. **If Erie County funded an equitable share of our budget that aligned with the services we render, our operations would be far better insulated from federal and state funding delays.**

To close our immediate deficit and establish sustainable equity, the Board of Directors respectfully but firmly requests two specific actions:

- 1. \$330,000 Allocation from the 2026 County Surplus:** We request an immediate appropriation of \$330,000 from anticipated 2026 year-end surplus funds. This targeted allocation will immediately close our present budget deficit, ensuring that core crisis intervention, legal advocacy, and safety planning remain fully operational without service reductions.
- 2. \$500,000 Baseline Appropriation in the 2027 Erie County Budget:** We request a \$500,000 baseline appropriation in the upcoming 2027 County Budget. This adjustment moves Erie County significantly closer to funding equity, bringing municipal support into better alignment with the 40% volume of measured services our staff delivers daily.

We ask for your decisive leadership to correct this funding imbalance. We welcome the opportunity to meet with you immediately to discuss our financial metrics and operational impact in detail.

Respectfully submitted,



Kevin Kimball, Chair
Board of Directors
Family Justice Center of Erie County, Inc.

cc:

Olivia M. Owens, Clerk of the Erie County Legislature
Hon. Michael H. Kooshoian, Chair, Finance & Management Committee
Hon. John A. Bargnesi, Jr., Vice-Chair, Finance & Management Committee
Hon. Lawrence J. Dupre, Erie County Legislator
Hon. Christopher D. Greene, Erie County Legislator
Hon. John J. Mills, Erie County Legislator
Hon. Jeanne M. Vinal, Erie County Legislator