

A photograph of two men, one Black and one white, standing in a sun-dappled forest. They are facing each other and appear to be in a conversation. The man on the left is wearing a light-colored button-down shirt, and the man on the right is wearing a dark blue button-down shirt.

FOR FAMILIES, BY FAMILIES

» BECOME A FAMILY PEER ADVOCATE (FPA)

Family Peer Advocates are valuable professionals within the child serving system. They are uniquely qualified to work with families based on their first-hand experience as the parent/caregiver of a young person with a social, emotional, behavioral, health, or developmental disability. This experience, combined with additional Parent Empowerment (PEP) training, allows them to provide peer support to parents of children with similar challenges.

How can you become a **Family Peer Advocate** and help others like you? Learn more below.

» WHAT IS A FAMILY PEER ADVOCATE?

Family Peer Advocates empower and support families in unique ways and promote family-driven and youth-guided approaches.

As a Family Peer Advocate, you are paid to offer support in a variety of settings including:

- Independent Community-Based Family Support Programs
- Schools
- Clinics
- Residential Programs
- Hospitals
- Other Community-Based Organizations

You will work in partnership with parents and with service providers from all different areas – including social services, education, mental health, developmental disabilities, juvenile justice, health, and substance abuse -- to offer support and help families navigate difficult challenges.

» WHAT IS A TYPICAL “JOB DESCRIPTION” FOR A FAMILY PEER ADVOCATE?

Family Peer Advocates work with parents/caregivers to provide outreach, support, guidance, skill-building and mentoring. Among the roles a Family Peer Advocate might play are the following:

- Providing information and referrals
- Engaging families in services
- Working with families to discern their strengths, needs, and priorities
- Providing 1:1 assistance to help families connect to and participate in services
- Accompanying parents to meetings to assure their voice is heard
- Increasing parents’ feelings of self-efficacy
- Reducing stigma and feelings of isolation
- Serving as members of child and family planning teams
- Helping families identify goals and track progress
- Supporting families to develop ‘informal’ networks of support

» WHAT TRAINING IS REQUIRED TO BECOME A FAMILY PEER ADVOCATE?

Family Peer Advocates in New York State are trained through the Parent Empowerment Program (PEP), which focuses on improving knowledge about evidence-based services for children, collaborative working alliance skills, and mental health service self-efficacy.

Successful completion of the PEP Basic training is a core requirement of the New York State Family Peer Advocate credential. Family Peer Advocates must renew their credentials every two years.

To become a Family Peer Advocate, you must:

- Be the parent/caregiver of a child or adolescent with social, emotional, mental health, medical, addiction, or developmental needs with onset prior to the age of 21.
- Be at least 18 years of age or older.
- Have a High School diploma or TASC.
- Successfully complete Traditional PEP or PEP Level 1 training.
- Hold a valid Professional FPA Credential, or meet all the necessary requirements to apply for a Professional FPA Credential, if applicable.
- Complete the application.

For complete details, please see the Family Peer Advocate Professional Application on the FSNYS website at:
<https://www.ftnys.org/training-credentialing/parent-empowerment-program-pep/>

» WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF OBTAINING A FAMILY PEER ADVOCATE CREDENTIAL?

There are many benefits to obtaining this credential, including:

- Having an FPA Credential is increasingly becoming a hiring requirement and/or preference. Families who work with Family Peer Advocates can also be assured that the FPA has met standard requirements and agreed to follow a code of ethics.
- Family Peer Support Services will be billable to Medicaid only if provided by a credentialed Family Peer Advocate.
- The process of becoming credentialed and maintaining your credential provides a structure for a Family Peer Advocate to formally document his/her experience and training and may lead to career advancement opportunities as the profession continues to mature.

» IS THE FAMILY PEER ADVOCATE CREDENTIAL REQUIRED?

There are a number of changes in the Medicaid program taking place at state and national levels. These changes will increase the demand for family peer support services and will require that providers of this service be credentialed. In New York State, the FPA credential is a recognized credential for family peer support services providers.

» CAN I BECOME A FAMILY PEER ADVOCATE IF I AM NOT THE PARENT OR PRIMARY CAREGIVER OF A CHILD WITH SPECIAL CHALLENGES?

No. The Family Peer Advocate position is specifically for individuals with lived experience being a caregiver for a child with challenges.

» HOW DO I START THE PROCESS TO BECOME A FAMILY PEER ADVOCATE?

To become a Family Peer Advocate, visit this link for more information:

<https://www.ftnys.org/training-credentialing/parent-empowerment-program-pep/>

» QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions or if you require assistance completing your application, please contact us at fpacredential@ftsnys.org



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