

## Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs

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### Mission

The Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs (Justice Center) is committed to supporting and protecting the health, safety, and dignity of all people with special needs and disabilities through advocacy of their civil rights, prevention of mistreatment, and investigation of all allegations of abuse and neglect so that appropriate actions are taken.

### Organization and Staffing

The Justice Center has an authorized staffing level of 490 FTEs with responsibility for two major program areas: the call center and investigations. The agency also has a legal team and staff that work in a variety of program areas including advocacy, training, and general administration. Additionally, the agency's responsibilities include maintaining a Staff Exclusion List of people who are prohibited from working with vulnerable populations.

### Budget Highlights

The FY 2025 Executive Budget recommends \$63.1 million in new appropriations. This represents a decrease of approximately \$1.1 million from FY 2024 and is based on anticipated agency operating costs.

To protect the health and safety of vulnerable people under the State's care or oversight, the Justice Center has primary responsibility for receiving, investigating and/or reviewing abuse and neglect allegations at certain facilities and programs that are operated, certified, or licensed by the following six agencies: Office of Mental Health (OMH), Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS), Department of Health (DOH), Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), and the State Education Department (SED). The Justice Center is responsible for ensuring the safety and well-being of the approximately one million adults and children receiving care from one of approximately 3,500 facilities or service providers overseen by the six State agencies. The Budget honors the State's pledge to protect vulnerable populations. Specifically, the Executive Budget will fund:

- **Investigations Expansion.** The Executive Budget includes an investment of \$1.3 million into the agency's Investigations Unit to support an additional 18 FTEs across six different titles. This expansion will address the anticipated need for investigative services driven by mental health investments, improve cycle time for investigations, and shorten the time staff accused of unsubstantiated charges are out of work. The costs of this expansion are supported by federal Medicaid reimbursement.
- **Enhance Support for the Interagency Coordinating Council for Services to Persons who are Deaf, Deafblind, or Hard of Hearing.** The FY 2025 Budget provides for an additional FTE to better support the Interagency Council for the Deaf, Deafblind, or Hard of Hearing within the Office of the Chief Disability Officer (CDO), and the deafblind community. This staff member will increase outreach and advocacy to deafblind individuals.

### Program Highlights

The Justice Center program highlights include the following:

#### **Call Center**

The agency's call center operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week to receive reports of allegations of abuse and neglect. Serious abuse and neglect reports and deaths are referred for investigation by the Justice Center, with lesser offenses delegated to the appropriate State Oversight Agency (SOA) listed above for investigation.

#### **Investigations**

The Justice Center investigates allegations of abuse and neglect against vulnerable populations served by programs operated, licensed, or certified by the six SOAs. Once a report is made to the Justice Center, two types of cases can be created: administrative or criminal. An administrative investigation is conducted in all cases that have an allegation of abuse and neglect, while a criminal investigation is conducted in all cases that have an allegation of potential criminal offense. In addition, local District Attorneys are notified of every allegation of criminal abuse and neglect reported to the Justice Center.

Investigations are conducted by the Justice Center, the SOA, or the provider depending on the severity and setting of the allegation. Every investigation is reviewed by the Justice Center once complete, regardless of what entity conducts it. Every allegation reported to the Justice Center is deemed to be either substantiated or unsubstantiated at the conclusion of the review process.

NYS DOB | FY 2025 Executive Budget | Agency Appropriations

In criminal cases, the Justice Center collaborates with State Police, local law enforcement agencies, and District Attorneys to pursue prosecution to the extent allowed by the law.

**Other Initiatives**

The Justice Center’s operations have continued to increase due to its participation in the Raise the Age (RTA) initiative and the placement of juveniles ages 16-17 in OCFS-operated programs. In addition, the FY 2022 Enacted Budget included the Humane Alternatives to Long-Term Solitary Confinement Act (HALT). The Justice Center continues to monitor segregated confinement and Residential Rehabilitation Units for compliance with various provisions of the HALT legislation.

**ALL FUNDS  
APPROPRIATIONS  
(dollars)**

Category	Available FY 2024	Appropriations Recommended FY 2025	Change From FY 2024	Reappropriations Recommended FY 2025
State Operations	63,410,631	62,265,000	(1,145,631)	4,068,000
Aid To Localities	799,000	799,000	0	588,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>64,209,631</b>	<b>63,064,000</b>	<b>(1,145,631)</b>	<b>4,656,000</b>

**ALL FUND TYPES  
PROJECTED LEVELS OF EMPLOYMENT BY PROGRAM  
FILLED ANNUAL SALARIED POSITIONS**

Program	FY 2024 Estimated FTEs 03/31/24	FY 2025 Estimated FTEs 03/31/25	FTE Change
Program Oversight			
General Fund	471	490	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>471</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>19</b>

**STATE OPERATIONS  
ALL FUNDS FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS BY FUND TYPE  
APPROPRIATIONS  
(dollars)**

Fund Type	Available FY 2024	Recommended FY 2025	Change
Enterprise Funds	500,000	500,000	0
General Fund	60,230,631	59,085,000	(1,145,631)
Special Revenue Funds - Federal	2,064,000	2,064,000	0
Special Revenue Funds - Other	616,000	616,000	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>63,410,631</b>	<b>62,265,000</b>	<b>(1,145,631)</b>
Adjustments:			
Transfer(s) From			
Special Pay Bill			
General Fund	(2,525,631)		
<b>Appropriated FY 2024</b>	<b>60,885,000</b>		

**STATE OPERATIONS  
ALL FUNDS FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS BY PROGRAM  
APPROPRIATIONS  
(dollars)**

Program	Available FY 2024	Recommended FY 2025	Change
Program Oversight			
Enterprise Funds	500,000	500,000	0
General Fund	60,230,631	59,085,000	(1,145,631)
Special Revenue Funds - Federal	2,064,000	2,064,000	0
Special Revenue Funds - Other	616,000	616,000	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>63,410,631</b>	<b>62,265,000</b>	<b>(1,145,631)</b>

**STATE OPERATIONS - GENERAL FUND  
SUMMARY OF PERSONAL SERVICE APPROPRIATIONS AND CHANGES  
FY 2025 RECOMMENDED  
(dollars)**

Program	Total		Personal Service Regular (Annual Salaried)	
	Amount	Change	Amount	Change
Program Oversight	46,609,000	(1,145,631)	46,292,000	(1,145,631)
<b>Total</b>	<b>46,609,000</b>	<b>(1,145,631)</b>	<b>46,292,000</b>	<b>(1,145,631)</b>

Program	Temporary Service (Nonannual Salaried)		Holiday/Overtime Pay	
	Amount	Change	Amount	Change
Program Oversight	0	0	317,000	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>317,000</b>	<b>0</b>

**STATE OPERATIONS - GENERAL FUND  
SUMMARY OF NONPERSONAL SERVICE AND MAINTENANCE UNDISTRIBUTED  
APPROPRIATIONS AND CHANGES  
FY 2025 RECOMMENDED  
(dollars)**

Program	Total		Supplies and Materials	
	Amount	Change	Amount	Change
Program Oversight	12,476,000	0	522,000	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,476,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>522,000</b>	<b>0</b>

Program	Travel		Contractual Services	
	Amount	Change	Amount	Change
Program Oversight	2,174,000	0	9,077,000	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,174,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9,077,000</b>	<b>0</b>

Program	Equipment	
	Amount	Change
Program Oversight	703,000	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>703,000</b>	<b>0</b>

NYS DOB | FY 2025 Executive Budget | Agency Appropriations  
**STATE OPERATIONS - OTHER THAN GENERAL FUND**  
**SUMMARY OF APPROPRIATIONS AND CHANGES**  
**FY 2025 RECOMMENDED**  
**(dollars)**

Program	Total		Personal Service	
	Amount	Change	Amount	Change
Program Oversight	3,180,000	0	729,000	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,180,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>729,000</b>	<b>0</b>

Program	Nonpersonal Service	
	Amount	Change
Program Oversight	2,451,000	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,451,000</b>	<b>0</b>

**AID TO LOCALITIES**  
**ALL FUNDS FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS BY FUND TYPE**  
**APPROPRIATIONS**  
**(dollars)**

Fund Type	Available FY 2024	Recommended FY 2025	Change
General Fund	799,000	799,000	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>799,000</b>	<b>799,000</b>	<b>0</b>

**AID TO LOCALITIES**  
**ALL FUNDS FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS BY PROGRAM**  
**APPROPRIATIONS**  
**(dollars)**

Program	Available FY 2024	Recommended FY 2025	Change
Community Support			
General Fund	799,000	799,000	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>799,000</b>	<b>799,000</b>	<b>0</b>

Note: Most recent estimates as of 01/16/2024