

Fund for Social Change

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The Fund for Social Change

The Fund for Social Change is a public foundation founded in 2002 to use philanthropy to increase the influence and improve the well-being of disempowered people in New York City, including poor people, people of color, people with disabilities, immigrants, and young people.

To Reach These Goals, the Fund Administers the Following Programs

START (Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Teams)

The New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS), in partnership with the **Fund for Social Change**, is launching a Bronx-based pilot of a nationally-recognized approach to working with caregivers who abuse substances and their children. Recognizing the challenges that families face when they are simultaneously involved in the child welfare and substance abuse treatment systems, **START** provides a team of a child welfare worker and family mentor, to work with caregivers to keep children safe, to help caregivers overcome their substance abuse, and to make sure that children are growing up in permanent and nurturing families.

The Fund for Social Change is recruiting and employing **Family Mentors** to work as members of the **ACS START** team in the Bronx. Drawing on personal experience as a former client of the child welfare system and/or as a person in recovery, Family Mentors provide support to **START** clients.

To view the START Family Mentor Job Description, please [click here](#).

To APPLY to be a Family Mentor, please [click here](#).

The Child Welfare Fund provides grants to nonprofit organizations that address system-wide problems in child welfare or offer direct services to children and families.

The OMRDD/FAR Fund Collaborative works to transform agency cultures and to assist individuals on the autistic spectrum so they have more person centered lives as they transition to adulthood and independence.

The Partnership for Family Supports and Justice: Bridge Builders is a collaboration of 15 foundations and the Administration for Children’s Services. It is testing a new neighborhood-based collaborative approach in which neighbors assist families experiencing difficulties to prevent foster care placement.

The Parent Advocate Initiative (PAI) is a collaboration of six foundations, the New York City Administration for Children’s Services, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies, and the Child Welfare Organizing Project. We are promoting the hiring of Parent Advocates by foster care agencies. Parent Advocates in the child welfare system are parents who have had their children removed to foster care and have successfully reunified with them, and who subsequently choose to be trained and to work within the child welfare system. They humanize the child welfare system by giving voice to parents’ experiences and incorporating their own experiences into practice.

To view the **PAI Request for Proposals**, please [click here](#).

To view the **PAI Workplan and Monitoring Matrix**, please [click here](#).

For more information on **Parent Advocates**, [click here](#).

Six Main Strategies Guide These Programs

First, the Fund for Social Change believes that people have the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives, and therefore promotes the independent voice of clients served by various social welfare systems—parents and youth involved with the child welfare system, people with autism and other disabilities, victims of violence, and people who are homeless.

Second, social change is fostered by reforming systems rather than by continuously fixing problems, so the Fund focuses on long-term, system-wide reform in public policy, funding streams, and direct services.

Third, the Fund supports strong organizations, guided by the people they serve, to improve the lives of disempowered people. To that end, the Fund helps launch many new organizations, as well as supports existing ones.

Fourth, we have tried to promote new types of direct services and new models of service delivery to meet the unmet needs of various vulnerable groups. These include exemplary legal representation for parents whose children are at risk of foster care, individual living arrangements for people with severe disabilities, outreach programs for isolated at-risk families, and collaborations within communities to integrate services.

Fifth, the Fund for Social Change promotes accountability. Grantees submit monitoring reports twice a year describing the impact of their work on the individuals they assist and the social welfare systems they seek to change. Each fund also supports formal evaluations of programs that we seek to replicate.

Finally, we promote collaboration among grantees, among foundations, and between government, foundations and nonprofit agencies. We have created and participate in collaborations among foundations that pool resources to have a larger and more strategic impact. We encourage grantees to undertake joint projects, to learn from each other and to assist each other. We have also brought grantees together from different service areas to learn from each other's experience. Collaboration is often more difficult and time consuming than operating independently, but the impact and the growth in the process are often far greater.

Accomplishments

The Fund for Social Change in a relatively short period of time has contributed to significant improvements in programs and systems:

The Child Welfare Fund was founded in 1992 by an anonymous donor and David Tobis at Hunter College. In 2002 the Fund for Social Change began administering the Child Welfare Fund. Since its founding, the Child Welfare Fund has had a profound influence on changing the New York City child welfare system.

For more information on the Child Welfare Fund go to the [Child Welfare Fund page](#) of the FSC website or the [Child Welfare Fund website](#).

The Partnership for Family Supports and Justice: Bridge Builders is administered by the Fund for Social Change. It is a collaboration of 12 service providers, 15 foundations and the Administration for Children's Services. Bridge Builders began providing services in Highbridge, the Bronx at the end of 2003. It tests the hypothesis that family well-being and child welfare outcomes will improve as a result of community members being trained and working to assist their neighbors who then link the families to targeted social services and legal representation. Parents and youth are involved in the collaborative with neighborhood-based service providers. The program is built upon strengthened relationships with the Administration for Children's Services, the public child welfare agency.

Bridge Builders provides two key elements which are generally lacking in community-based child welfare programs. The first is an active role for parents in policy making, program design and implementation, particularly parents who have had contact with the child welfare system. And second, quality legal representation is provided to distressed families. Bridge Builders is evaluated each year by a team at the University of Chicago Chapin Hall Center for Children. For more information on Bridge Builders, go to the [Bridge Builders page](#) of the FSC website.

While the **FAR Fund** was administered by the Fund for Social Change, it made significant progress in improving and expanding services for people on the autistic spectrum, preventing

homelessness, and preventing violence against youth. Starting in 2007 the FAR Fund changed its focus. The Fund for Social Change continues to administer the OMRDD/FAR Fund Collaborative which works to transform agency cultures and to assist individuals on the autistic spectrum so they have more person centered lives. This collaboration is now in its fourth year. Other activities of the FAR Fund are administered elsewhere.

Often the lives of people with disabilities are restricted by a lack of sensitive, comprehensive services. The FAR Fund launched efforts to enrich instructional methods, programs, and resources available to children with disabilities in the New York City public school system and their families. The Fund also supported quality employment programs and housing for people with disabilities, to ease their transition to satisfying, productive adult lives. The FAR Fund supported an approach called Person Centered Planning, which develops an individualized plan to nurture each person's specific skills, passions and interests. To test this approach for individuals, as well as to change organizational culture, the Fund for Social Change and the FAR Fund created the OMRDD/FAR Collaboration, an unprecedented collaboration between several social service agencies and the New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD). The project was evaluated by the Institute for Basic Research.

Because of the success of the collaboration during the first three years, the collaboration has expanded to include six service providers as part of a learning network with technical assistance provided by Job Path. The Institute for Basic Research is continuing to conduct a yearly evaluation of the collaboration.

To prevent homelessness, the FAR Fund promoted supportive housing, providing on-site social services to help stabilize vulnerable families. The Fund's support for the Dorothy Day Apartments helped create a complex with 70 permanent apartments, along with a childcare center and an array of social service and educational programs. In addition, the FAR Fund supported the Task Force on Housing and Services for Families. The work of this Task Force contributed to several important changes in City and State policy and funding that will lead to increased supportive housing for families.

Through a five-year matching grant to the Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology at City College, the FAR Fund revitalized the training of doctoral level psychoanalytically-oriented psychologists. The Fund also supported programs that provide psychotherapy to adolescents with Asperger's Syndrome, young people in foster care, and victims of domestic violence. Finally, the FAR Fund Fellowship enabled individuals to design and implement important new projects serving people with autism and victims of domestic violence.

The **Trude Lash Fellowship Program**, honoring Trude Lash, an outstanding leader in child welfare, enabled gifted and passionate New York City activists to combine research with public advocacy to help children and families. Fellowships were awarded in 2006.

[Read about the Fund for Social Change in the NY Nonprofit Press](#)