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Position Statement

Educational Neglect

August 2020

In New York State, about 10% of all neglect reports are for suspected educational neglect, or the failure by a parent or guardian to provide adequate schooling for the child(ren) in their care. PCANY believes that every child has the right to a high-quality education with appropriate supports, and understands that there are times when a report and/or charge of educational neglect is warranted.

PCANY also knows that many working parents struggle under the best of circumstances and that, as New York State re-opens, the increased pressure to juggle a job while educating a child (be it via a virtual, hybrid, or homeschool model) will be challenging at best. For our highest risk families—those experiencing poverty, homelessness, child care challenges, and other stressors—ensuring that their child is “keeping up” educationally will be a daunting task. Involvement with the child welfare system could push fragile families over the edge. An influx of reports would also overwhelm an already strapped system.

New York State’s school re-opening plan outlines expectations for families and districts, and does speak to the need for flexibility due to the unique position families find themselves in today. PCANY is appreciative of that acknowledgement and of the stance that undertaking an educational neglect proceeding should be a last resort. The suggestions regarding outreach to families and the importance of an “ally” or other nurturing adult relationship are also positive steps.

PCANY has requested that those involved in the educational and social service systems intensify tracking of educational neglect by school districts and across the State and provide response strategies and direct resources for families, districts, and communities hardest hit by neglect. PCANY has offered to assist in this endeavor.