

The child protective movement began in New York City in 1875 with the founding of the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the first child protective agency in the world. Shortly thereafter, Northern Rivers' history in Schenectady begins, dating back to 1888 when a group of ladies met to discuss doing "something for the homeless children of our city." In April of that year, the Home for Destitute Children opened its doors to serve destitute children ages 2–18. Separately, the Women's Club of Schenectady established the Schenectady County Humane Society, and shortly after, they hired an investigator to pursue reports of child and animal abuse.

- 1888 A group of Schenectady women created the Home for Destitute Children and later changed the name to Children's Home of Schenectady.
- 1893 New quarters are created to house 24 children, ranging in age from 2 to 18, which will serve the agency for the next 63 years.
- 1902 The Schenectady County Humane Society is formed.
- 1904 The Society begins a probation program for children who had been arrested.
- 1904 The Schenectady County Humane Society and the Mohawk and Hudson River Society merge with a mission to protect both children and animals.
- 1908 The Humane Society begins providing coal, food, clothing, medical assistance, and rent to needy families.
- 1916 The Humane Society opens a children's shelter, housing children awaiting disposition of criminal charges and later adds children who could not remain at home because of abuse, neglect, family problems, fire, runaways, or abandonment as well as destitute mothers with children.
- 1953 The Humane Society no longer houses delinquent youth, limiting its services to dependent and neglected children.
- 1956 Northern Rivers' Park Avenue location is built to accommodate the expanding needs of the children in the Schenectady community.
- 1959 The first group home in Upstate New York, the Children's Home of Schenectady, opens.
- 1961 Day Education Certification opens a group home for girls.
- 1974 In-residence diagnostic services begin.
- 1977 – A variety of services are now offered at Children's Home including Therapeutic Afterschool Program, Independent Living for Teens, and Vocational Exploration Program.
- 1983 Northeast Parent & Child Society is formed, uniting Children's Home of Schenectady and the Schenectady Humane Society.
- 1985 – More programs continue to open at Northeast including special education co-ed school, including the Sexual Treatment Program. The girls unit opens at Children's Home, along with Therapeutic Foster Family Program, Respite Program, outreach services, Schenectady County Child Guidance Clinic, and the Schaffer Children's Shelter.
- 1996
- 2000 Northeast purchases the building at 530 Franklin Street to serve as its administrative headquarters.
- 2009 The new 68-bed Children's Home (now the Schenectady Residence) opens at 122 Park Avenue, replacing the 1956 structure, which is demolished.
- 2012 Northeast affiliates with Parsons Child & Family Center in Albany, creating parent agency Northern Rivers Family of Services, one of the largest human services agencies in upstate New York.
- 2018 Northern Rivers sells the building at 530 Franklin St., returning the property return to tax rolls. The agency continues to maintain a presence in downtown Schenectady signing a 10-year lease with new owner to maintain services.
- 2018 In response to New York state's new Raise the Age law, the New Directions program opens, serving 8 young women, ages 16–17, who previously would have entered the adult criminal justice system.