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Contact: mediainquiry@acs.nyc.gov (212) 341-0886

NYC FOSTER CARE TASK FORCE ISSUES 16 RECOMMENDATIONS TO FURTHER IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES

ACS Immediately Launches Two Initiatives to Start Implementing Recommendations – One on Kinship Placements; One on Afterschool Programs

New York, NY –Today, New York City’s Interagency Foster Care Task Force, chaired by Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) Commissioner David A. Hansell, released a report that outlines 16 concrete steps the city can take to further improve outcomes for children and families in the foster system.

ACS also announced that it is immediately launching initiatives to address two of the report’s key recommendations – increasing the number of youth in foster care who are placed with relatives or close friends from 31% to 46% by the end of 2020, and increasing the number of youth in after-school programs that can help improve academic performance and social skills.

The report released today builds on New York City’s ambitious Foster Care Strategic Blueprint. Dozens of youth, parents, advocates, providers and government officials served as members of, or advisors to, the Task Force, which was established by legislation introduced by Council Member Stephen Levin and signed into law by Mayor Bill de Blasio on November 16, 2016.

“Supporting children and families across New York City is a top priority for the de Blasio Administration, and continuing to improve foster care is a critical part this effort,” said **Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Dr. Herminia Palacio**. “We have made incredible progress, and these recommendations will help generations of youth. I applaud the City Council, the Public Advocate, all of the City agencies, the parents and youth, and the nonprofit providers who have come together with ACS on this Task Force.”

“Today marks a major step forward for children and families in New York City. This is a bold, ambitious plan for building on the remarkable progress we’ve made in improving New York City’s foster care system,” said **ACS Commissioner David A. Hansell**. “The two initiatives we’re launching today are based on research and data on what helps young people in foster care thrive.”

“We all bring something valuable to the table and together we can form a better vision of the path ahead,” said **Council Member Stephen Levin, Chair of the General Welfare Committee**. “I’m proud of all the stakeholders who participated in this exemplary and engaging

process—ACS and partner agencies, nonprofit providers, advocates, and especially our city’s foster youth. The enthusiasm and expertise contributed by all participants has culminated into a comprehensive report that will be instrumental to a better future for all our youth.”

“The ACS Interagency Task Force is a critical collaboration to ensure that no child in the foster system is ever left behind,” said **Public Advocate Letitia James**. “These new recommendations paired with the concrete actions we are taking today will go a long way in providing supports and programs that our most vulnerable children need to succeed. I want to thank Commissioner Hansell for his leadership and commitment to improving the lives of foster children across New York City.”

The report released today comes at a time when New York City’s foster care is undergoing significant transformation for the better. The foster care population is at a historic low, dropping from 50,000 children in 1992 to under 17,000 in 2007 to under 9,000 in 2018. And new initiatives such as data analytics and structured business process improvement approaches are streamlining and improving services to children and families.

Building on these successes, the report makes 16 recommendations covering three priority areas, including: 1) improving permanency outcomes; 2) improving health, mental health, and educational services for children in foster care, and 3) improving the prospects of young adults leaving foster care. After the release of today’s report, the Task Force will evaluate implementation of the recommendations and produce two follow-up reports, in 2019 and 2020.

In addition, Commissioner Hansell announced that ACS is undertaking two initiatives immediately to implement Task Force recommendations. The first initiative is to further increase the proportion of children in foster care placed with kin (relatives or family friends) from the current level of 31% to 46% by end of FY 2020. Research has shown that children placed with kin experience less trauma, have better experiences in foster care, and are more likely to achieve permanency through reunification, adoption, or kinship guardianship. The second is a new initiative to increase the number of youth in foster care connected to Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) academic and social enrichment programs and improve educational well-being outcomes.

“The Task Force’s data-sharing recommendation will allow the City to better connect young people in foster care to DYCD-funded enrichment activities—such as STEM, literacy, leadership, and the arts—at afterschool programs and community centers in all five boroughs,” said **DYCD Commissioner Bill Chong**. “DYCD and ACS have a long history of collaboration, from co-locating opportunities at Beacon programs to targeting summer jobs for youth in foster care. We are proud to partner with ACS and our task force colleagues in moving these important recommendations forward.”

In addition to members of the City Council, ACS, and DYCD, members of the Task Force include: the Public Advocate, the Department of Social Services (DSS/HRA/DHS), the Department of Education (DOE), the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), the NYC Housing Authority (NYCHA), youth and parents involved with the foster care system, foster care agency providers, and advocates.

“It is critical that foster care youth have access to medical and mental health services” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett**. “As the City implements the Task Force recommendations, the Health Department is excited to partner with ACS and other city agencies to enhance these services for youth in foster care.”

“Connecting youth in foster care and their families to essential services is crucial to ensure their stability and wellbeing,” said **Department of Social Services Commissioner Steven Banks**. “We are proud to collaborate with ACS and the other members of the NYC Foster Care Task Force and look forward to continuing our collective efforts to support the City’s youth as they transition into adulthood.”

“As a member of the Foster Care Interagency Task Force, this report will build upon the great platform created by the ACS Foster Care Strategic Blueprint as we continue working together to support our foster families and youth,” said **NYCHA Chair and CEO Shola Olatoye**.

“It was a pleasure to work with the Interagency Foster Care Task Force. I’m grateful that youth and parents had a voice in the report. I’m feeling confident that the recommendations suggested in the report will bring positive changes within the foster care system, which is much needed,” said **Milcah Slater, Youth Representative to the Task Force**.

“Progress is a practical process. Planning and implementing proper changes provides a future of prosperity and success,” said **Patrick Brown, Youth Representative to the Task Force**.

“It's been a pleasure to be a part of this journey. We who have a voice that is heard must genuinely advocate for those whose thoughts go unspoken,” said **Anthony Trotter, Youth Representative to the Task Force**.

“It felt great to me as a parent that no one held their title over anyone else. Everyone’s voice was validated and together we came up with recommendations that will make positive, effective change to help families succeed,” said **Jeanette Vega, Parent and Training Director, RISE Magazine**.

“Having a task force to build upon the work ACS is doing to improve outcomes for children in foster care is very important, but working with families to provide them with the proper supports to keep their children safe, at home and thriving is invaluable,” said **Joyce McMillan, Senior Parent Leader and Director of Programming, Child Welfare Organizing Project (CWOP)**.

“We are so grateful to Council Member Levin and the City Council for passing legislation to create the Foster Care Task Force and to ACS for the opportunity to participate in this open and collaborative process. CCC looks forward to continuing to partner with family members, government, providers, and advocates to advance and implement the Foster Care Task Force recommendations that build upon the work underway to improve permanency outcomes, improve health, mental health and education outcomes for children in foster care, and improve outcomes for youth leaving the foster care system,” said **Jennifer March, Executive Director, Citizens’ Committee for Children**.

“The Interagency Foster Care Task Force was focused and unanimous in our recognition that foster care must be temporary and children of all ages deserve a family. These recommendations, when enacted, will eliminate current service gaps; ensuring that future generations of children in foster care will have greater support while in care and the love and belonging of family sooner,” said **Jeremy Christopher Kohomban, Ph.D., President and Chief Executive Officer of The Children's Village and President of Harlem Dowling – West Side Center.**

“Children in foster care are too often society’s forgotten kids but thankfully NYC is making sure kids in care and foster care alumni are front and center through the Interagency Foster Care Task Force. We at Graham know that kids who experience foster care have enormous capability, even with all that they have been through. They deserve consistent love, support, and opportunity to pursue their dreams. We are grateful to the Mayor’s Office, City Council, and Administration for Children’s Services for convening experts, including young people and parents, to develop recommendations that ensure kids and families get just that. With the implementation of the Task Force’s recommendations, we are confident that many more kids and families will thrive and make this City proud of its investment in them,” said **Jess Dannhauser, President and CEO, Graham Windham.**

A full version of the first report is online at www.nyc.gov/acs.

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About the New York City Administration for Children’s Services:

The Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) protects and promotes safety and well-being of New York City’s children and families by providing child welfare, juvenile justice, and early care and education services. For more information, please visit: www.nyc.gov/acs.