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**NYC ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES RECOGNIZES AND CELEBRATES FAMILIES THAT
HAVE BEEN SAFELY REUNIFIED**

The Majority of Children Who Enter Foster Care Return Home to Their Families

NEW YORK, NY – Today, in recognition of National Reunification Month, the New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS) recognized families that have been reunified and families that are working toward reunification. ACS and its foster care agency partners strive to keep families together by providing a full range of prevention and family support services; however, when a child must be removed from a home due to safety reasons, ACS works to ensure that children and families receive the services they need so that they can reunify as quickly as possible. Today, the number of children in foster care in NYC is at an all-time low of fewer than 7,000, and most children in foster care return home safely to their families.

"Family Reunification Month is a time to celebrate families, especially those who have been reunified and to rededicate ourselves to the vital work of helping families care safely for their children," **said ACS Commissioner Jess Dannhauser**. "This month, we are pleased to highlight the critical work to ensure children who are in our care can return home safely and expeditiously."

In 2020, ACS launched a new pilot initiative to pair parents with previous lived experience of the child welfare system with parents of children currently in foster care, to help mentor and walk alongside them, with the goal of improving reunification and race equity outcomes. Parents Empowering Parents (PEP) began with nine parent advocates/peer supporters serving parents at two foster care agencies. The program is being scaled across the entire foster care system, building over time to approximately 150 parent advocates/peer supporters who will support every parent working toward reunification with their children. ACS is grateful to Rise and the Parent Advocacy Council (PAC), which have helped lead the development of PEP and other key initiatives and continue their dedicated advocacy for parents.

ACS and its foster care agency partners have also reduced the number of children in care, increased the percentage of children in foster care placed with family members or close friends (kinship), and increased services and supports for children and families.

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