



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMISSIONER DAVID HANSELL ANNOUNCES CITYWIDE MEDICATION SAFETY CAMPAIGN**

*The campaign will educate parents, caregivers and community providers on how to prevent unintentional exposures to medications and household products when children are present*

**New York, NY** – The New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS) Commissioner David A. Hansell today announced, in partnership with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), a campaign to educate parents, caregivers and community service providers on how to prevent unintentional exposures to high-risk medications and household products in their homes when children are present.

The public campaign will also instruct families and caregivers to contact the NYC Poison Control Center immediately if they suspect that children have ingested any type of medication or household product, and empower them to create plans to proactively safeguard their medications and household products at home.

“There is nothing more important than keeping our children safe, and that includes preventing tragic accidents from happening,” said **ACS Commissioner David A. Hansell**. “We are asking all parents to make sure that medication is stored ‘up and away,’ out of children’s reach. In the months ahead, we’re going to work with partner organizations to get the word out about the dangers of leaving medications and household products where children can reach them, and together we are going to help families and caregivers protect young people.”

“Many medications look like candy, but parents and caregivers can take important steps – such as putting medication up high and out of reach – to reduce the risk of children accessing medicine by accident,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett**. “The Health Department’s Poison Control Center can answer questions about poison exposures and medication safety 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. All calls are free of charge and confidential. Translation services are available in 150 languages. I thank the Administration for Children’s Services for their work to raise awareness about medication safety and protect the health of young New Yorkers.”

“As we continue to fight back against the scourge of opioid abuse on Staten Island, we must make every effort to ensure that unused prescription medications and other dangerous substances are promptly and safely disposed of and kept out of reach of children,” said **Staten Island District**

**Attorney Michael E. McMahon.** “I commend Commissioner Hansell and his team at the Administration for Children’s Services, as well as Commissioner Bassett and DOHMH, for launching this important campaign to help keep our most vulnerable victims safe.”

“The holidays are a time when families visit each other, and we want parents and caregivers to understand how dangerous is to leave medication on a bedside table or anywhere at home where children can reach to it,” said **ACS Deputy Commissioner Lorelei Vargas, Division of Child and Family Well-Being.** “A space ‘up and away’ is the best solution since it will make it impossible for children to access medications and will also make homes a safer place for families.”

As a result of critical incidents where children were harmed due to access to high risk medications and other household toxins, ACS will engage parents and caregivers, child welfare service providers, child care providers, home care workers, nurses, medical staff, shelter providers, NYPD officers, Fire Department, Foster Care agencies, and substance use treatment centers and provide them information about the importance of medication safety, with an emphasis on medication storage and proper disposal of high risk medications and household products.

Common household products (especially those that are brightly colored) can be easily mistaken for candy or food, and are also dangerous to children. These include laundry detergent pods, household cleaners (oil-based products such as pine oil and furniture polish), mouthwash and perfumes, and anti-freeze and windshield wiper fluid, among other products.

ACS is launching a pilot program in early 2018 to distribute Medication Lock Boxes and Bags to families that are engaged in ACS’ community programs and in child welfare services — many of them vulnerable families. Adults are encouraged to store medication and other household items ‘up and away’ from children. Those homes that lack medicine cabinets or other surfaces out of reach of children will be offered a Lock Box or Bag.

ACS’ goal is to make these Medications Lock Boxes and Bags available citywide; initially they will be available to ACS involved families. The Lock Boxes and Bags are easy and effective ways to keep medication accessible to parents, but difficult for children to reach.

ACS has also begun to train Child Protective Specialists, who visit families every day and investigate over 55,000 cases of child abuse and neglect a year, on how to recognize medication and household product hazards at home. A pilot training was held in September, with training for all Child Protective Specialists to begin in early 2018. ACS is providing them with the tools they need to reach families and have an important conversation about safeguarding medication and other household substances.

In 2016, the NYC Poison Center received more than 87,000 calls regarding exposure to pharmaceuticals and medications for the five boroughs and Nassau, Suffolk and Westchester counties. So far in 2017, the Poison Control Center has received more than 77,000 calls regarding exposure to medications.

The public campaign will be in full rollout across New York City through the first half of 2018. Posters and other materials for distribution via community partners and other City agencies will be in English and Spanish, as well as messages in social media, newspaper, radio and brochures.

To download the public campaign poster, please visit: <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/provider-bulletin/2017/Nov29/NYCDOHPosionControlFinal.pdf>

To download a picture of the Medication Lock Box and Bag, please visit: <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/provider-bulletin/2017/Nov29/20171129To120816.jpg>

For additional picture, please visit: <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/provider-bulletin/2017/Nov29/20171129To112307.jpg>

### **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. In child welfare, ACS contracts with private nonprofit organizations to support and stabilize families at risk of a crisis through preventive services, and provides foster care services for children not able to safely remain at home. ACS is aggressively implementing a [Foster Care Strategic Blueprint](#) to improve outcomes for children in foster care. The most recent status report indicates a 25% increase in children achieving permanency through kinship guardianship, and a 5% increase in children adopted from FY 2015 to FY 2016, even as the overall number of children in foster care continued to decline, among other significant progress made to improve case practice and outcomes for children and families in the foster care system. In juvenile justice, ACS manages and funds services including detention and placement, intensive community-based alternatives for youth, and support services for families. In early care and education, ACS coordinates and funds programs and vouchers for close to 100,000 children eligible for subsidized care.*

*For more information about NYC ACS, please visit [www.nyc.gov/acs](http://www.nyc.gov/acs)*

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