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**ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES RELEASES FIVE-YEAR
FOSTER CARE PLAN, ALONG WITH KEY FINDINGS FROM FIRST-EVER
YOUTH SURVEY AND CASE REVIEW**

Survey of nearly 1,200 youth in foster care and review of 2,200 cases inform ambitious blueprint to continue improving foster care in NYC

New York, NY – Today, the New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS) Commissioner David A. Hansell released the **Foster Care Strategic Blueprint for 2019-2023**, along with results of the first-ever **Foster Care Youth Experience Survey** which was completed by youth in foster care earlier this year.

The new five-year plan was informed by the survey of nearly 1,200 youth in foster care and a review of 2,200 cases of children who have been in foster care for more than two years. The case review was conducted by ACS in partnership with national child welfare expert Casey Family Programs. The plan was informed by intensive analysis of performance data across the system, recommendations from the Interagency Foster Care Task Force, and input from a range of stakeholders including youth, parents, providers and advocates. It builds on priorities established in the ACS 2016-2018 Blueprint.

“We have made historic progress in reducing the number of children in foster care in New York City and improving outcomes for young people who do need to be in foster care. This five-year blueprint is a bold strategy for continuing to improve all aspects of foster care in New York City – including reuniting young people with their families or finding them permanent homes faster, increasing the number of kids who are placed with relatives or close family friends, improving services for children while they're in foster care, and expanding support for older youth,” **said ACS Commissioner David A. Hansell.**

“Our work is driven by intensive analysis of performance data, best practices in the field and the voices of youth, parents and professionals. This five year plan builds on the success we've seen over the last several years,” **said Julie Farber, ACS Deputy Commissioner of Family Permanency Services.**

“I commend Commissioner Hansell for his demonstrated commitment to serving the children and families who come into contact with ACS,” **said New York City Council Majority Leader, Laurie A.**

Cumbo. “With the unprecedented Foster Care Youth Experience Survey, we can now center systemic changes around the very children and young adults we are here to serve. And thanks to my colleagues, Council Members Stephen Levin and Donovan Richards, the law now ensures that the voices of some of the city’s most vulnerable population will be heard.”

"ACS is leading the way with innovative reforms informed by a collaborative process," **said Council Member Stephen Levin, Chair of the Committee of General Welfare.** "I'm proud our city is making consistent progress on reducing the amount of children in care all while empowering parents and families to provide the best possible outcomes for our children. This work is never done, but I'm heartened we have a clear vision on the evidence-based steps we need to take to keep the momentum going."

“After participating in the Foster Care Shadow Day, it became clear that we needed to do more to provide a voice to the voiceless in the foster system,” **said Council Member Donovan Richards.** “Local Law 146 of 2016 delivered that voice to about 1,200 children through the Foster Care Youth Experience Survey. I’d like to thank Mayor de Blasio and the entire team at ACS for producing this thoughtful and thorough survey and their responsiveness to the concerns of foster youth. I look forward to seeing this blueprint progress to make substantial improvements in the lives of those in the foster care system.”

The five-year plan and the case review stem from legislation introduced by City Council Member and Chair of the General Welfare Committee Stephen Levin, which was signed into law by Mayor Bill de Blasio in November 2016. The survey of youth in foster care stems from legislation introduced by City Council Member Donovan Richards and signed into law by Mayor Bill de Blasio in November 2016.

Priorities highlighted in the 5- year Blueprint include:

Improving Permanency Outcomes

The five-year plan builds on a range of targeted strategies through an initiative known as “No Time to Wait.” These include: increasing and improving the quality of family visiting, enhancing materials for parents about the child welfare system and their rights, improving assessment for determining when families are ready to reunify, expanding partnership with parent advocacy organizations to increase parent voice and engagement, increasing placement of children in foster care with kin (relatives or close family friends), continuing to increase KinGAP as a permanency option, continuing to streamline adoption administrative processes, continuing to provide training and technical assistance on open adoption to provider agencies, and fully implementing the Wendy’s Wonderful Kids model.

Improving Foster Care Placements to Enhance the Well-Being of Children

The plan builds on the agency’s “Home Away from Home” initiative, which is focused on increasing placement with kin and redesigning the way foster parents are recruited and supported. The five-year strategy includes: increasing placement of children in foster care with kin, continuing the redesign of foster parent recruitment supports and implementing strategies to support the important role of foster parents in achieving permanency for children in foster care, and continuing to expand and enhance programming at the ACS Children’s Center.

Improving Health, Mental Health, and Education Services for Children in Care

The five-year plan includes: partnering with the Department of Education and the Department of Youth and Community Development to expand academic enrichment and supports for children and youth in foster care, partnering with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH) and other stakeholders to expand access to mental health and supportive services for children and families, partnering with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to facilitate access to home visiting services for pregnant and parenting youth in foster care, and working with foster care providers to prepare for transition to Medicaid managed care.

Improving Outcomes for Older Youth

The five-year plan includes: increasing youth involvement in permanency planning, re-launching the Youth Advisory Council, continuing to disseminate the Annual Youth Experience Survey to gather input directly from older youth, increasing access to housing for youth and families, providing integrated, accessible information on housing resources for youth and families, continuing to scale college-bound and college support programs for youth in foster care, and continuing to develop initiatives to enhance youth readiness for the world of work.

Building Systemic Capacity

Through this five-year plan, ACS will provide additional tools to support foster care providers. Significantly, ACS will also be undertaking a comprehensive assessment of community needs, the current service array and best practices to inform the re-procurement of all foster care services (including family foster care and residential services).

In releasing the five-year strategic plan, ACS also shared findings from the first-annual **Foster Care Youth Experience Survey**. As part of the survey, youth were asked a variety of questions regarding their education, employment, the support they receive from family and friends, social interactions, access to health care, satisfaction of basic needs, and the support they receive from foster care agencies and permanency planning. The survey also asked young people for recommendations to help continue improving the foster care system.

Key findings from the survey include:

- Almost all of the youth surveyed were in school or a GED program (92 percent).
- More than one-fourth (26 percent) of respondents reported having a job or paid internship. Sixty-three percent reported interest in obtaining employment. Unemployed youth who were interested in employment reported needing the most help with finding places that are hiring (66 percent).
- The vast majority of youth said that they felt very supported or somewhat supported by their foster parents or residential facility staff.
- The majority of youth said that using social media is their primary social activity, followed by spending time with friends.
- Youth were asked about their access to health care and the extent to which they feel their basic needs are met. This included the identification of the types of health care they need (such as

dental care, sexual health care, etc.). 93 percent of respondents who reported a need for sexual health and family planning care reported receiving it.

- Most respondents reported receiving support from their foster care agency to reach their educational goals (88 percent), plan for permanency (83 percent), connect with their attorney (81 percent), and get ready for a job (77 percent).
- Youth were also asked, “*If you were the Commissioner of ACS, what improvements would you make?*” Eleven themes emerged from their responses: Provide more education support; provide more jobs and housing support to help with aging out of foster care; provide more health services and counseling/therapy support; provide more money/allowances; provide more and better social activities; implement better placement and monitoring practices; provide better emotional and communication support (including use of technology); improve interactions with biological family to ensure that youth return to their families in a more timely manner; allow more freedom and more opportunities for independent living; and hire more qualified and better trained staff to undertake their responsibilities in a caring and efficient manner. These recommendations have informed the development of the 5 year plan, which includes strategies to improve permanency outcomes, increase education and employment support, and enhance services, supports and placements for young people.

To read the **ACS Foster Care Strategic Blueprint for FY 2019-FY 2023** [click here](#).

To read the **Foster Care Youth Experience Survey** [click here](#).

To read the **case review** conducted by ACS in partnership with Casey Family Programs [click here](#).

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