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## **WITH KINSHIP CARE MONTH UNDERWAY, ACS ANNOUNCES INCREASED EFFORTS TO HELP ENSURE CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE ARE PLACED WITH RELATIVES AND CLOSE FRIENDS**

*Children Placed With Kin—Such As Grandparents, Family Friends Or Teachers--Experience Less Trauma Than Others in Foster Care*

*ACS Sets Target to Increase Proportion of Children Placed With Kin to 46% By End of 2020; ACS Launches \$366K Kin Pilot With Foster Care Agencies; ACS Also Brings Onboard 10 Kinship Specialists Dedicated to Finding Kin Caregivers for Youth Entering Foster Care*

New York, NY - The NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS) Commissioner David A. Hansell today announced increased efforts to help ensure children in foster care are placed with appropriate kin caregivers, including relatives and close friends. The announcement comes during Kinship Care Month (September). Kinship caregivers may be related to the child by blood, such as a grandparent, aunt, uncle, cousin, etc. Kinship caregivers may also be an adult with a positive relationship to the child such as a family friend, neighbor or teacher. Kin are held to the same safety standards as non-kin foster parents and must meet all foster home requirements. Research has shown that children placed with kin experience less trauma, have greater overall well-being, and are more likely to achieve permanency.

ACS and its community partners strive to support kin and to guide them through the home study process so that children can stay closely connected to their natural support networks.

In March 2018, the Interagency Foster Care Task Force released its report including 16 recommendations designed to improve outcomes for children and families in the foster care system. One of those recommendations included identifying strategies to increase placement of children in foster care with kin. Increasing kinship placement is a top priority in the ACS Foster Care Strategic Blueprint. In addition, ACS has set a target to increase the proportion of children in foster care placed with kin from 31 percent to 46 percent by the end of FY 2020.

ACS Commissioner Hansell today highlighted the following strategies that the agency is implementing in an effort to increase placement of NYC children in foster care with kin:

- **New Kinship Specialist Positions:** ACS established 10 new kinship specialist positions in the ACS Division of Child Protection (DCP). These staff have the dedicated function of finding and engaging kin caregivers for children entering foster care. Kinship Specialists support child protection staff by finding a kin caregiver to place a child with when the

youth can no longer safely remain in a home. ACS has engaged nationally known kinship care organization *A Second Chance* to provide training to these staff.

- **Kin Pilot Program:** ACS is launching a \$366k pilot in Fall 2018 with two foster care provider agencies, Children’s Village and Little Flower Children and Family Services of NY. Each agency will receive additional funding to implement strategies to increase the proportion of children placed with kin.
- **Technical Assistance to Foster Care Agencies:** ACS, in partnership with national experts Public Catalyst and Action Research, is continuing to provide intensive technical assistance on kinship placement to foster care agencies through ACS’ *Home Away from Home initiative*.

The announcement comes at a time when New York City’s foster care system is undergoing significant transformation. 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. ACS is also implementing structured process improvement strategies that are streamlining and improving services to children and families.

“We know that children fare best when they maintain strong ties to their families, and increased efforts to place kids with kin reinforce our commitment to improve outcomes for all children and families who come in contact with ACS,” said **ACS Commissioner David A. Hansell**. “Already, approximately 3,000 children in foster care are in kinship care, with relatives or family friends who have stepped up to provide safe, loving homes for these youth. Under this new plan I am confident that that number will grow.”

“We applaud ACS for focusing on kin and we are grateful to be included in this important pilot. The greatest gift we can give children in foster care is a family,” said **Jeremy Kohomban, PhD, President and CEO, Children’s Village**. “Removing a child from parents is traumatic and hard on the child. Moving that child to kin reduces the pain of separation. In the arms of appropriate kin, children feel secure while they wait for parents to obtain the help that is needed.”

“Little Flower is proud to have been chosen for this important and significant pilot program with ACS,” said **Corinne Hammons, CEO, Little Flower**. “The substantial difference kin placement can make in a child’s life requires that we continue to seek out opportunities for these types of loving homes and I am excited to work on implementing strategies to increase each child’s chance of success that can be shared across the system.”

“Kinship Care, when a nonparent relative, mostly grandparents, or close family friend, take on the responsibility of raising a child, is on the rise throughout the country. In New York State, there are an estimated 170k children living with kin, and only 3,400 of these children are in foster care, with the rest being raised by relatives outside the child welfare system,” said **Rae Glaser, Co-Director, NYS Kinship Navigator**. “The Kinship Navigator System of Care, which includes the statewide NYS Kinship Navigator OCFS funded kinship programs, permanency centers, and other local programs, provide education, advocacy and support for caregivers in all

62 counties. Each September, we celebrate kin as a natural and national resource by coming together to celebrate the selfless and honorable work that they do.”

"The role family and loved ones play in the foster care system is critical — kinship care can help improve the wellbeing of children and parents and achieve permanency," said **Council Member Stephen Levin**. "As a member of the Interagency Foster Care Task Force, I am proud to see its recommendations become reality with the hiring of 10 new kinship specialists and the administration’s Kin pilot initiative. All New York City’s youth and families deserve the resources, support, and care to lead safe and healthy lives.”

“ACS and Commissioner Hansell are to be commended for their new multi-faceted efforts to place foster care children with kin caregivers. I was proud to write the law that extended kinship caregiver status to individuals not related by blood to the child, in order to increase the pool of caring, responsible adults that may care for foster care children. These new strategies from ACS will place foster care children in permanent homes, thereby exponentially increasing their chances of success,” said **Assemblyman Andrew Hevesi**.

“Having worked in the foster care system, I understand what a challenge it is to find the dedicated, compassionate, and responsible caregivers that our city’s most vulnerable children need and deserve. I am thrilled to see ACS actively meeting this challenge by committing additional staff and funding to ensure we as a city are working to place even more of these children with kin caregivers, who have been proven to provide some of the best outcomes for these kids according to a large body of research,” said **Assemblyman Harvey Epstein**.

"Every child deserves a bright future and this starts with the provision of a safe and loving environment. They are tomorrow’s leaders; therefore, we must continue to invest in their future! It's a great step to see the NYC Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) push to provide the best possible placement for our children with kin caregivers, like relatives or close friends, whenever possible," said **Senator Roxanne Persaud**.

“As Chair of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families, I applaud the efforts and commitment of ACS to help ensure that children in Foster Care are placed with Kinship Caregivers. The benefits of placing children in Kinship homes as a first priority of our Foster Care System cannot be emphasized enough. Placing children with grandparents, relatives, or close family friends minimizes the trauma of removal; improves children’s well-being; increases permanency for children; improves behavioral and mental health; promotes sibling ties; and preserves children’s cultural identity, customs and community connections,” said **Assemblywoman Ellen Jaffee**.

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