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**NEW REPORT FROM THE NYC ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES
HIGHLIGHTS SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS TO NYC'S CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM
UNDER MAYOR DE BLASIO**

*Over the Last Eight Years, ACS Safely Reduced the Foster Care Census to A Historic Low,
Launched A Redesigned Prevention Services System, With a Focus on Addressing Inequities;
Enhanced Technology for Child Protective Workers; & More*

To Read the Full Report, [Click Here](#)

A new report, released by the NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS), highlights key improvements and milestones achieved at the agency under the de Blasio Administration.

"Over the past eight years, ACS has implemented a wide range of initiatives and reforms that have helped strengthen New York City's child welfare, juvenile justice and early education systems. All of our work has been grounded in the belief that the best way to keep children safe is to ensure their families have the resources that they need to thrive," **said ACS Commissioner David A. Hansell.**

Commissioner Hansell continued, "I am proud of the fact that today, there are approximately 7,200 children in New York City's foster care system – a dramatic reduction from the approximately 11,000 children in foster care just eight years ago; more than 20,000 families each year receive support like family therapy, mental health counseling, substance misuse treatment and domestic violence interventions, as well as help accessing concrete supports, including food, diapers, cribs, benefits and housing support; we have provided frontline staff with both the tools and the technology to enhance their work, and the access to services and supports so they can connect families to help when they need it; and so much more. Thank you to Mayor de Blasio for his unwavering support of our work and commitment to improving the outcomes of New York City children and families."

"It has been an honor and privilege to work with Commissioner Hansell these past 5 years. Commissioner Hansell and his staff are advocates to children and families to the utmost sense of the word, evidenced by their hard-fought successes and contributions to revamping the way New York does prevention services. Under Commissioner Hansell, the number of children in

foster care dropped by over one-third, ensuring that thousands of kids will have substantially better chances at positive outcomes. The impact of this alone cannot be understated, and in addition, Commissioner Hansell's team has opened up concrete and immediate supports, expanded primary prevention to reduce participation in the welfare system, and helped advocate for legislative victories in Albany, including the historic "Raise the Age" package that stopped juveniles from being treated as adults in our criminal justice system. I wish Commissioner Hansell the best on this next chapter and look forward to a continued partnership to serve New York's children and families," **said Assembly Member Andrew Hevesi, Chair, Committee on Children and Families.**

"As Chair of the Council's General Welfare Committee for the past 8 years, I have seen consistent and significant strides at ACS on a range of important areas. Under the leadership of Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Hansell and Commissioner Carrión, ACS has invested in primary prevention and kinship care to reduce the need for foster care and have established Fair Futures to support youth in care and give them the same opportunities for guidance that every other young person has. They have invested in the Child Protective workforce to bring case rates to historic lows and that has made our city safer. We haven't always agreed on everything, and there is much more work to do, but their dedication to NYC's children, especially the most vulnerable, has always been clear," **said Council Member Stephen Levin, Chair of the General Welfare Committee.**

"We celebrate New York City's success in expanding prevention and primary prevention supports for families during the past eight years, to keep children at home with their families and in so doing reducing the foster care census. For children and youth who entered care, our providers and ACS have worked together to prioritize placement of children in foster care with kin, and kinship placements have increased dramatically as a result. We applaud the City's commitment and work with our providers to provide youth in foster care with mentors to navigate their transition to adulthood through Fair Futures. Thank you, Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Hansell, and ACS for your partnership with providers and stakeholders in pursuit of improving ways to meet the needs of children and families. We are very proud of our essential child welfare workers, who continue to work tirelessly to support children, youth and families throughout the pandemic, and we are committed to building on this work to achieve the best possible future for the children and families in New York City," **said Kathleen Brady-Stepien, President and CEO, COFCCA.**

Below are some highlights from the report. For the full progress report, [please click here](#).

- **Strengthened and increased services and support for families, while safely reducing the number of children in foster care to a historic low of approximately 7,200.** Prevention services aim to help connect families with resources to meet their needs, enhance protective capacity and manage crises, maintain safety and stability within the home, and strengthen their ability to thrive within their community. Today, more than 20,000 families each year receive support like family therapy, mental health counseling, substance misuse treatment, and domestic violence interventions, as well as help accessing concrete supports, including food, diapers, cribs, benefits and housing support. In 2020, ACS launched a redesigned prevention services system for the first time in ten years, offering universal access to its full range of programs to all families across the City, regardless of where they live.

- **Expanded “primary prevention” efforts aimed at supporting children and families in their communities, and reducing child welfare involvement.** In 2017, ACS created a new division within the agency that is dedicated to providing services, community support and educational messages to all New York City families, whether or not they are involved in the child welfare system, with the goal of avoiding such involvement. ACS is on the forefront nationally in implementing this “primary prevention” approach and continues to invest in community-based support services, like its Community Partnership Program, walk-in community centers known as Family Enrichment Centers, child safety campaigns and more. Over the next four years, New York City plans to expand from 3 to 30 Family Enrichment Centers in communities that were hit hardest by COVID-19.
- **For the dramatically reduced number of children who do need to enter foster care, ACS has made major improvements, including place more children in care with relatives and friends.** Research has shown that children in foster care who are placed with family members or friends (also known as kin) experiences less trauma, have greater overall well-being, are more likely to be reunified with their parents, and more. ACS has successfully implemented multiple strategies to increase the proportion of youth placed with kin from 31% in 2016 to 43% in 2021. Additionally, in 2019, ACS became the first jurisdiction in the nation to provide universal coaches to youth in foster care. The “Fair Futures Initiative” aims to enhance education, employment, housing and permanency outcomes for youth in care ages 11 to 21.
- **Strengthened child protection work by giving staff the tools they need to do their jobs most effectively and efficiently, using rigorous data analysis to enhance policies and practices, and improving staff morale.** For the first time, ACS provided all frontline child protection staff with tablets, equipped with high-speed internet and advanced features, allowing child protective specialists to type case notes, access the state’s child welfare database while out in the community, and more. These enhancements proved especially crucial during the pandemic. Additionally, to help frontline staff make initial home visits more quickly and respond to reports of child abuse and neglect more quickly, ACS implemented a multi-faceted transportation approach, including access to ZipCars that authorized staff can pick up and drop off at locations across the City. ACS also expanded the Emergency Children’s Services Unit, which responds to reports of abuse and neglect at night, and on weekends and holidays. In addition to doubling the size of the unit, ACS implemented the ECS Applications Unit, which includes a more robust system to assign Statewide Central Register (SCR) reports in a timely fashion and request background information on each case before the frontline staff meet with families.
- **Launched initiatives focused on continuous quality improvement to better guide critical decision point and better serve families.** Almost immediately after his appointment in 2017, Commissioner Hansell restructured and relaunched the ChildStat Continuous Quality Improvement Program. Additionally, Commissioner Hansell implemented a Quality Assurance unit within the Division of Child Protection that aims to continuously improve the quality of investigations involving high-risk families, and enhanced safety review protocols, including by implementing a new “heightened oversight protocol” involving a fatality or alleged physical or sexual abuse of a child under the age of three.

- **Implemented historic “Raise the Age” legislation, ensuring that youth aged 16 and 17 who are involved in the justice system are treated as juveniles.** Today, under Raise the Age, older adolescents in New York City have better access to age-appropriate services and programs designed to promote rehabilitation, positive behavior change and successful re-entry into the community all while preserving the safety and security of youth and staff and protecting public safety.
- **Strengthened agency-wide commitment to addressing race equity and combatting racial disproportionality in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.** In 2017, ACS created an Office of Equity Strategies to provide focus and direction to the agency’s equity work. The Office has helped spearhead implementation of the agency’s “Equity Action Plan” and “LGBTQAI+ Action Plan,” which aims to strengthen services and supports for LGBTQAI+ youth in foster care. Additionally, as part of its equity work, ACS has infused more parent and youth voice into policies, procedure and service arrays. ACS created a new role of “Parent Engagement Specialist,” and expanded the involvement of parent advocates with lived experience of the child welfare system in supporting other parents.

All this work continued uninterrupted throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, albeit with public health protections in place. Even when New York City implemented widespread closures and public health restrictions to help contain the COVID-19 virus, ACS staff continued to carry out unabated the agency’s core mission of keeping children safe and families supported.

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