



October 17, 2018

Dear Interagency Foster Care Task Force Members,

**David A. Hansell**  
**Commissioner**

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As you know, in March 2018, the Task Force released its report including 16 recommendations designed to improve outcomes for children and families in the foster care system. These recommendations were incorporated into the ACS Five Year Foster Care Strategic Blueprint issued in May 2018.

I am very pleased to share this mid-year update regarding the status of implementation of the 16 Task Force recommendations.

Since the Task Force report was released in March, we have been working closely with many of you to implement the recommendations. Some recommendations have already been completed and many more are well underway. In a short period of time, we have accomplished a lot together. To name just a few examples:

- This fall, ACS is launching pilots with four foster care providers to advance the Kinship and Family Time recommendations from the Task Force in order to improve safety, permanency and well-being outcomes for children in foster care.
- ACS and DYCD have completed a data match that identifies which youth in foster care are and are not in DYCD afterschool programs, and this information is being used to help increase utilization.
- DOHMH launched a High Fidelity Wraparound (HFW) pilot in September 2018 for NYC children with serious mental health needs.
- ACS and NYCHA established a clear business process ensuring that older youth leaving care have priority access to NYCHA apartments.
- ACS successfully advocated to NYS OMH for access to the PSYCKES database which includes information on diagnosis, medications and mental health services for children in foster care.
- The City Council doubled its support of transition age youth programming from \$550K to \$1.1 million in the FY 2019 budget and has allocated funding to eight agencies. ACS also partnered with New Yorkers for Children and Youth Villages to launch the YVLifeSet program. These programs are providing education, employment and supportive services for older youth in foster care.

A Task Force meeting will be scheduled for February 2019 to review and discuss progress on the recommendations. Per the requirements of Local Law 144 of 2016, the Task Force will issue its one-year implementation report to the Mayor and the City Council by March 31, 2019.

Please contact me or Deputy Commissioner Julie Farber with any questions about this report.

Thank you for your partnership and commitment to NYC children and families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Hansell".

David A. Hansell  
Commissioner

#	Task Force Recommendation	Status Update as of October 2018
1	Identify strategies to increase placement of children in foster care with kin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Kin Pilot:</b> ACS is launching a \$366K pilot in Fall 2018 with two foster care provider agencies, Children’s Village and Little Flower. Each agency will receive funds to implement strategies to increase the proportion of children placed safely with kin. The research is unequivocal that trauma is reduced for children in foster care who are placed with family and friends.</li> <li>• <b>Targets Established:</b> In March 2018, ACS announced a goal to increase the proportion of children placed with kin from 31% to 46% by the end of 2020.</li> <li>• <b>Kinship Specialist Positions Established:</b> As of March 2018, 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. ACS engaged nationally known kinship care organization <i>A Second Chance</i> to provide training to these staff that was delivered in June 2018.</li> <li>• <b>Public/Private Partnership:</b> In May 2018, five foundations (New York Community Trust, Redlich Horwitz Foundation, Ira W. DeCamp Foundation, Joseph Leroy &amp; Ann C. Warner Fund and Tiger Foundation) made grants totaling \$750K to five foster care agencies to advance ACS’ <i>Home Away from Home</i> (HAFH) kinship and foster home recruitment work. HAFH is a targeted initiative to ensure that children are safe and receiving the highest quality of care in their foster care placements, and foster parents (both kinship and non-kinship) are receiving the supports they need.</li> <li>• <b>Technical Assistance to Foster Care Agencies:</b> 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’ HAFH initiative.</li> <li>• <b>ACS Staff Education:</b> ACS had previously launched a staff information campaign within DCP called “Find Family and Friends First,” and this campaign is ongoing.</li> </ul>
2	Identify strategies to increase and improve the quality of family time (aka family visiting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Family Time Pilot:</b> ACS is launching a \$469K pilot in Fall 2018 with two foster care provider agencies, Children’s Aid and Good Shepherd Services. Each agency will receive funds to implement strategies to improve the quality of family time practice, ensuring that children are safe and that visits are occurring at the appropriate frequency and with the appropriate level of supervision.</li> <li>• <b>Launched Two New Tools for Foster Care Agencies:</b> ACS has implemented two new family time tools with foster care agencies to help improve family time practice. One tool is designed to help foster care agency staff assess safety and risk issues and families' readiness to move from supervised to unsupervised family time according to ACS’ visiting policy. The other is a family time space assessment tool to help agencies evaluate and improve the quality of their visiting areas in order to encourage a positive family time experience.</li> <li>• <b>Parent Advocacy:</b> ACS has a partnership with parent advocacy organization Rise to develop tools and videos and provide training and technical assistance to foster care agency staff in order to enhance family time practice. Rise has developed tip sheets for parents and staff and a video</li> </ul>

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		<p>that have been widely disseminated and incorporated into trainings with foster care agencies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Family Time for Children with Incarcerated Parents:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACS has a partnership with the Osborne Association to enhance foster care agency practice with families with an incarcerated parent. The Osborne Association is currently developing a training film and desk aids about the importance of visits for children with incarcerated parents that will be released in Fall 2018.</li> <li>• In June 2018, ACS expanded its visiting program for children with mothers incarcerated at Riker’s Island to include Saturdays in addition to weekdays.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Alternative Family Time Locations for Parents Living in Shelters:</b> In May 2018, ACS issued guidance to foster care providers regarding appropriate visiting locations, with instructions for requesting ACS approval and payment for alternative visiting locations when parents lack appropriate housing.</li> </ul>
3	Enhance materials for parents about the child welfare system and their rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Two Documents for Parents to Be Reissued:</b> ACS is currently making revisions to two documents: The <i>Parent’s Guide to Child Protective Services</i> and the <i>Handbook for Parents with Children in Foster Care</i>. ACS has gathered input from key stakeholders including legal advocates, parents, parent advocates and providers. These documents will be reissued in early 2019 and provided to all parents with investigations and/or children placed in foster care.</li> </ul>
4	Explore feasibility of establishing dedicated guidance counselors for children in foster care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Specialized Supports for Youth in Foster Care:</b> DOE and ACS are determining how best to provide guidance counseling support to foster care students. A new pilot program funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation will enable ACS foster care provider The Children’s Village to provide school-based supports to students in foster care and their foster families and DOE staff in five DOE community schools.</li> </ul>
5	Identify strategies to provide academic enrichment services, tutoring and social-emotional supports for middle school students in foster care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ACS/DYCD MOU:</b> On March 22, 2018, ACS and DYCD signed a data-sharing MOU. ACS and DYCD since completed a data match that identified 5th-8th grade DOE students in foster care who are or are not enrolled in DYCD programs. ACS and DYCD are now using the results of this analysis to identify opportunities to connect additional foster youth to DYCD programs.</li> </ul>
6	Identify strategies to improve service coordination and regulatory oversight to support DOE students in foster care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Service Coordination and Oversight</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In August 2018, DOE developed and filled a new position, the Family Support Manager for Vulnerable Populations, to help advance this recommendation. The Family Support Manager is working closely with the DOE Citywide Coordinator on Child Abuse and Neglect to facilitate a coherent set of supports for students involved in the child welfare system.</li> <li>• ACS and the DOE Office of Counseling Support are developing comprehensive guidance for DOE personnel, students and parents</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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		<p>outlining educational rights and academic supports for students in foster care.</p>
7	<p>Explore opportunities to expand intensive, trauma-informed psychosocial and behavioral supports for youth in family foster care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>New Strategies to Support Foster Parents:</b> Through ACS' Home Away from Home (HAFH) foster home recruitment initiative, foster care agencies are developing and implementing various strategies for ensuring that children are safe and receiving the highest quality of care in their foster care placements, and foster parents are receiving the supports they need. Strategies include hiring experienced and skilled foster parents in support and recruitment roles; piloting peer support models; providing specialized training to staff regarding supporting foster parents; resourcing around-the-clock on-call supports for foster parents; and investing in skilled staff who provide in-home individualized coaching, respite and crisis management.</li> <li>• <b>Medicaid Redesign:</b> The NY State Plan Amendment (SPA), which is currently pending federal approval, includes trauma-informed services to support children and families. ACS is closely monitoring the approval of the SPA in anticipation of accessing these services.</li> </ul>
8	<p>Explore feasibility of implementing wraparound model for youth in foster care with significant mental health needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>High Fidelity Wraparound (HFW) Pilot:</b> In September 2018, DOHMH launched an HFW demonstration project for NYC children and youth with serious social, emotional, or behavioral concerns who are involved in multiple child service systems (e.g., child welfare, juvenile justice, behavioral health, special education). HFW is an evidence-based model of care coordination that uses a highly structured, team-based, family/child-centered management process. HFW involves intensive, individualized planning for children and youth, with the goals of empowering youth and families to develop family-driven plans, connecting youth and families to community-based services and improving mental health outcomes.</li> </ul>
9	<p>Advocate to NYS DOH to ensure that youth leaving foster care are eligible for Home and Community Based Waiver Services (HCBS)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ongoing Advocacy:</b> ACS and other members of the Task Force have advocated to NYS DOH that continuity of care is critical to the well-being of youth exiting foster care. Discussions with DOH are ongoing and we are hopeful that this important issue will be addressed.</li> </ul>
10	<p>Advocate to NYS OMH to provide ACS with access to PSYCKES (Psychiatric Services and Clinical Knowledge Enhancement System)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>OMH and ACS Partnership:</b> OMH has agreed to grant ACS access to PSYCKES, a web-based application designed to support quality improvement, care planning, and clinical decision making for the Medicaid Behavioral Health population. PSYCKES includes information such as diagnosis, medications, medical and behavioral health outpatient and inpatient services and health home care coordination for children on Medicaid, including children in foster care. ACS and OMH are currently working to finalize a data-sharing agreement.</li> </ul>
11	<p>Facilitate access to home visiting services for pregnant and parenting youth in foster care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>DOHMH and ACS Partnership:</b> DOHMH and ACS are working together to develop and implement strategies to increase the utilization of the Nurse Family Partnership and Newborn Home Visiting programs by children and families in the child welfare system.</li> </ul>

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12	Ensure that eligible foster youth aging out of care receive the NYCHA N-zero priority, if they are legally in the care and custody of ACS, regardless of the location of their foster placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>NYCHA Priority for Youth in Foster Care:</b> NYCHA confirmed that N-zero priority will be granted as long as youth are in the care and custody of the ACS Commissioner regardless of their foster care placement address. As of June 2018, ACS and NYCHA have established and implemented the required business process to facilitate this.</li> </ul>
13	Advocate to increase State-set housing rental assistance for youth and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Advocacy:</b> ACS is exploring ways to advocate for this change in the upcoming State legislative session, including partnering with the New York City Council to advance this priority with the State.</li> </ul>
14	Explore expansion of transitional housing for youth leaving foster care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ACS/HPD Partnership:</b> ACS partnered with HPD to submit a proposal to HUD to fund Family Unification Program (FUP) housing vouchers for (1) youth leaving care and (2) reunifying families. The Family Unification Program (FUP) is a program under which housing assistance is provided under the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program in partnership with Public Child Welfare Agencies (PCWAs) to families that are reunifying and youth aging out of care.</li> <li>• <b>New York City 15/15 Supportive Housing Initiative:</b> In November 2015, Mayor de Blasio announced New York City’s commitment to developing 15,000 units of supportive housing over the next 15 years. ACS is currently referring single youth and pregnant/parenting young adults for 15/15 supportive housing.</li> </ul>
15	Provide integrated, accessible information on housing resources for youth leaving foster care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ACS Launching New Resources Website:</b> ACS is developing a mobile-enabled resource website that will feature resources for families, older youth in foster care, foster parents and child welfare professionals. The website will be an essential resource to older youth who are preparing for adulthood who are seeking housing, educational, employment, health and other resources in the community. This will launch in early 2019.</li> </ul>
16	Explore strategies to provide supportive services to youth ages 16-25—both during and after foster care—to achieve career, educational and housing goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>New YV LifeSet Program Launched:</b> In April 2018, New Yorkers for Children, in partnership with ACS and Youth Villages launched the YV LifeSet program in NYC. The program will serve 350 young people over three years with the goals of improving education, employment and housing outcomes and helping youth successfully transition to adulthood.</li> <li>• <b>City Council Initiative:</b> For Fiscal Year 2019, the City Council has partnered with ACS and provider agencies that serve transition aged youth—doubling the Council’s support to \$1.1M from \$550K in prior fiscal years. This enhanced funding supports education, employment and supportive services for older youth and youth aging out of foster care. Children’s Aid Society, City Living, Forestdale, Graham Windham, JCCA, JBFCS, SCO and Sheltering Arms are receiving this funding.</li> <li>• <b>YA WORC:</b> ACS is continuing our partnership with The Workplace Center at Columbia University in FY19 to deliver the Young Adult Work Opportunities for Rewarding Careers (YA WORC) curriculum to five additional foster care</li> </ul>

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		<p>agencies to serve a total of ten agencies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mentored Internship Program:</b> ACS is continuing our partnership with the Pinkerton Foundation and the Workforce Professionals Training Institute (WPTI) in FY19 to provide mentored in-house internship opportunities to youth in foster care.</li> <li>• <b>YAIP+:</b> ACS has renewed our partnership with DYCD in FY19 to provide internship opportunities to youth with child welfare history who are not currently working or enrolled in school via the Young Adult Internship Program Plus.</li> <li>• <b>College Programming:</b> ACS has expanded the ACS/CUNY Dorm Program from 50 students in FY17 to 93 students in FY18 to 128 students this year. These CUNY students with foster care history receive year-round housing in four CUNY dorms across NYC. They are also provided with on-site 24/7 social-emotional and academic support and receive daily stipends for living expenses.</li> </ul>