



**8 YEARS OF
PROGRESS
2014-2021**





Dear New Yorkers,

Over the past eight years, the NYC Administration for Children's Services (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 and supports that they need to thrive.

Today, there are fewer than 7,200 children in New York City's foster care system – a dramatic reduction from the 11,000 children in foster care in 2015. This milestone was achieved in large part due to the Administration's steadfast commitment to, and investment in, supportive services for families, also known as prevention services. 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. ACS's newly redesigned prevention services system, launched in 2020, offers universal access to a broad range of programs to families across the City, regardless of where they live.

To complement these efforts, in 2017, ACS established a new division dedicated to providing services, community support, and educational messages for all NYC 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. The expansion of Family Enrichment Centers, from 3 to 30 sites across the City over the next three years, will ensure that communities facing equity burdens have inviting spaces co-designed with community members to meet their needs. Furthermore, as part of the work of this division, we have taken important steps to expand child care access to low-income families in need, including those involved in the child welfare and homeless services systems.

For the dramatically reduced number of children who do need to enter foster care, ACS has made major improvements: reducing length of stay in foster care; reducing the use of residential/congregate care; placing a greater proportion of children in foster care with family and friends (kinship care); increasing foster home recruitment; and significantly expanding services for children, youth and families.

In 2018, building upon the Administration's prior work to transform the juvenile justice system in New York City, ACS began to implement the historic "Raise the Age" legislation, under which 16- and 17- year old youth are no longer automatically prosecuted as adults. 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.

Through training, oversight and retention of highly qualified and committed staff, we have strengthened all of our child protective work. We have provided our frontline staff with both the tools and the technology to enhance their work, and the access to services and supports so that they can connect families to help when they need it. All of 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.

And finally, all of our work has been done with a concerted focus on equity. ACS seeks to establish an equitable child welfare and juvenile justice system in which a child or family's race, gender, sexual orientation or other identities does not predict how they fare. The disparate impact of the pandemic, and the systemic racism that has plagued our society, and impacted the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, has galvanized us to focus on building the capacity of ACS staff at all levels to respond effectively to structural racism and individual bias.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Mayor Bill de Blasio for his unwavering support of our work and to my predecessor Commissioners, particularly my immediate predecessor, Commissioner Gladys Carrión, for their leadership.

Together, we have done so much to keep NYC's children safe and their families supported. We are proud of this work, and committed to further progress.

With appreciation for your partnership,

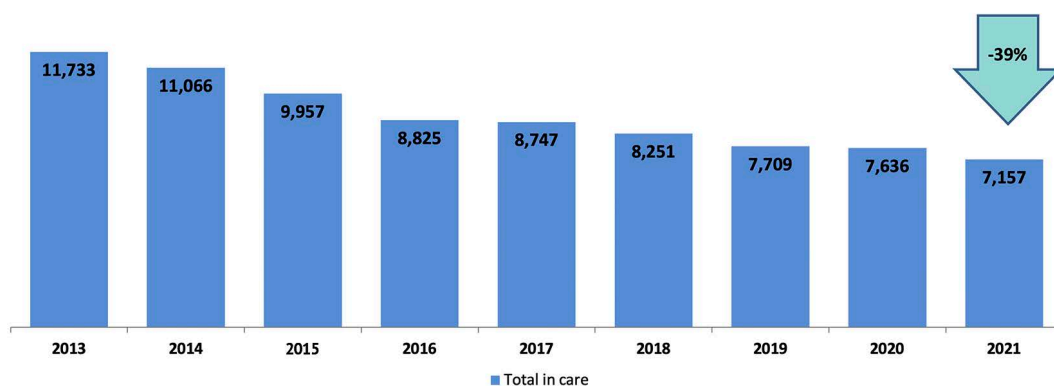
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David A. Hansell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David A. Hansell
Commissioner

Administration Report 2014-2021

NYC Children

Children in Foster Care, 2013 to 2021



Includes children in 24-hour foster care. 2013-2020 is census for last day of each year. 2021 is as of 9/30/21. Excludes youth in Youth and Family Justice/Close-to-Home placements.

The number of children in care has dropped dramatically since 2010.

Strengthened and increased services and support for families, while safely reducing the number of children in foster care from over 11,000 (as of January 2015) to under 7,200 today

Launched a Redesigned Prevention Services System

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, and expanding access to evidence-based and evidence-informed models that combine intensive case management supports with clinical interventions so that thousands of children each year can remain safely at home. The 119 new programs expand

therapeutic supports to families, increase parent voice and choice in service delivery, and promote racial equity through mandated steps to address racial disparities in all programs. These new programs build upon the agency's existing prevention services system, which was already recognized as a national model.

Expanded Mechanisms for Structured Feedback from Families to Support Prevention Program Improvement

First released in 2020 and then again in 2021, ACS partnered with service providers to develop and administer an annual "ACS Prevention Family Experience Survey." Findings from the survey indicate that a vast majority of survey participants are pleased with the quality of services received: 91 percent of participants agree services helped them achieve their goals, and 93 percent of survey recipients said that they are happy with the prevention services their families received.

Implemented the "Group Attached-Based Intervention" (GABI) Program Citywide

The GABI program, which first launched in July 2017, helps caregivers build strong bonds with their young children and foster their healthy development. GABI serves families who have experienced significant trauma, housing instability, mental illness, domestic violence, and other challenges that make parenting a very young child difficult. The program provides clinician-facilitated play therapy, allowing parents to strengthen attachment with their children, which research demonstrates reduces the risks of child maltreatment. The program also provides parents individual support and peer support through parent groups. As of today, there are six GABI sites citywide: Staten Island, Queens, Manhattan, South Bronx, North Bronx and Brooklyn.

Launched Innovative Project to Serve Families Experiencing Domestic Violence

Safe Way Forward (SWF) is a three year demonstration pilot to provide child welfare prevention services, including access to clinical interventions, to families experiencing intimate partner violence and particularly those receiving court-ordered supervision. Many other programs seek to disrupt the cycle of intimate partner violence by working exclusively either with the survivor to heal trauma and strengthen pathways to independence, or with the person causing harm to build awareness and accountability. In contrast, SWF seeks to work with the entire family system, offering separate and simultaneous case planning and therapeutic services to the survivor, child(ren), and person causing harm, whether the caregivers choose to remain together in an intimate relationship or to separate, continuing solely as co-parents.

Reduced Number of Youth Requiring Out-of-home Placement due to Family Conflict

The Family Assessment Program (FAP) provides support and interventions to families with youth who are at risk of out-of-home placement and present with behavioral challenges, such as truancy, antisocial or criminal activities, substance misuse and other behavioral and mental health challenges. FAP has significantly reduced the number of youths entering foster care via the Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS) process. In 2019, FAP prevented a PINS foster care placement for 98% of the families served. PINS placements fell 90%, from 188 youth in 2014 to 19 in 2021. In 2021, FAP programs were re-procured to further strengthen the program and services for families. ■



Expanded “primary prevention” efforts aimed at supporting families and children in communities with historically high child welfare involvement

Established Primary Prevention as Core Component of ACS Structure

Rooted in the belief that all New Yorkers should have access to quality resources and opportunities that enhance their capacity to thrive and enjoy self-determination, ACS launched a new division, called the Division of Child and Family Well-Being, in 2017. The new division focuses on leveraging concrete resources, stakeholder relationships, and community and family strengths to drive toward greater equity and social justice, reduce disparities and disproportionality in the child welfare system, and create conditions that foster well-being for families and children across New York City.

Launched Family Enrichment Centers (FECs), with Citywide Expansion Underway

First launched in 2017, there are currently three FECs (in Hunts Point, Highbridge and East New York). The FECs are warm, home-like walk-in community centers that are co-designed with local families and community members with the goals of offering families a space to strengthen ties to other community members and to access important resources. The FECs work alongside community members to provide concrete resources and other offerings responsive to their needs and interests. Families and communities determine the activities, events and offerings of FECs. By providing families and children the resources they need, ACS aims to ultimately reduce the risks of involvement with the child protection system. Some examples of offerings at the FECs over the years include: movie nights (for families to meet in a safe space and allow children to make new friends), a senior caregivers connect group, a therapist-led Healing Through the Arts offering for families recovering from community violence, cultural activities (African Empowerment, Latinas Talk, etc.), among many,

many others Their success has led to the plan to expand from 3 to 30 FECs over the next 4 years, focused on the communities that were hit hardest by COVID-19. ■



Created an Office of Child Safety and Injury Prevention, and launched child safety initiatives to provide caregivers with information and resources to keep children safe

Launched Office of Child Safety and Injury Prevention

In 2021, ACS created a new office within the agency dedicated

entirely to education, information and outreach to prevent accidents and injuries among children. The Office of Child Safety and Injury Prevention will support ongoing child safety campaigns (including those related to unsafe sleep practices, hot car tragedies, window guards, unsafe storage of prescription medications and accidental ingestion of cannabis edibles) and develop new ones as issues emerge.

Infant Safe Sleep Initiative

Each year, between 40 to 50 babies in New York City die from a preventable, sleep-related injury. The New York City Infant Safe Sleep Initiative encourages parents and caregivers to learn the ABCs of safe sleep. In 2015, New York City created a dedicated Safe Sleep Team with outreach members focused in neighborhoods in high risk areas. In 2017, ACS and DOHMH announced a citywide campaign that directs parents to “Put them to bed as if their life depends on it. Because it does.” The campaign was featured in bus shelters, hair and nail salons, bodegas and laundromats in East and Central Harlem, throughout Brooklyn and the Bronx, parts of Queens and Staten Island. In 2018, ACS, the Department of Health, and NYC Health + Hospitals introduced the city’s first-ever ‘Safe Sleep Toolkit’, which is now provided to all new parents and caregivers at public hospitals across the city. The toolkit provides safe sleep resources such as a wearable blanket to keep the baby warm, an infant onesie, netting and educational materials about best practices for infant safe sleep. The toolkit includes a video to help debunk myths and misconceptions about sleep-related infant safety practices.

Home Fire Safety Initiative

ACS launched a partnership with the FDNY aimed at preventing

future fires in New York City. First, ACS distributes smoke and carbon monoxide detectors to families, and works with the American Red Cross who can install the detectors at no cost. Second, FDNY now trains front-line child welfare workers on how to examine homes for fire hazards and better educate children and families on the importance of fire safety.

Safe Medication and Household Chemical Storage Campaign

ACS educates parents and caregivers on the importance of making sure medications and potentially dangerous household items are stored out of children’s reach.

“Look Before You Lock” Campaign

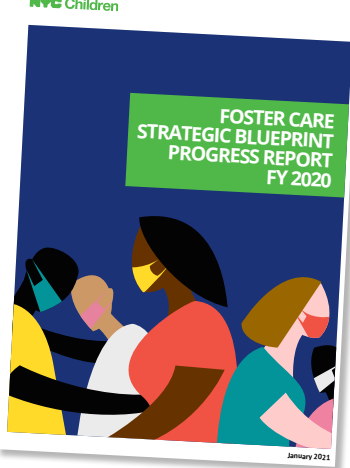
The Look Before You Lock campaign urges parents and caregivers to always check for children in the backseat of the car before leaving and locking it. Vehicles can heat up quickly, which can be extremely dangerous for children as their bodies heat up three times faster than an adult’s, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Preventing Accidental Ingestion of Cannabis Edibles

ACS educates parents about the importance of storing cannabis edibles ‘up and away’ out of children’s reach and out of children’s sight because of the health risks they present to young children. Many of these products look identical to typical desserts, candies and chocolate bars. ACS is urging parents to place these products in child proof containers and locked boxes. ■



NYC Children



Strengthened foster care services for those children and youth who need foster care

Our Accomplishments by the Numbers

- ACS reduced the number of children in foster care by 39%, from 11,737 in January 2014 to 7,136 in August 2021.
- ACS decreased the number of children in residential foster care by 32%, from 940 in January 2014 to 641 in August 2021.
- ACS reduced the total number of days that NYC

children spend in foster care each year by 27% from 2014 to 2020.

- ACS reduced the number of children who are in foster care for two years or more by more than 40% since 2014.
- ACS increased the percentage of all foster children living in kinship care (with relatives, close family friends, or other people who are already in a child's life) from 31% in 2016 to 43% in 2021.
- Since 2016, ACS increased the percentage of children entering foster care because of abuse or neglect who are placed with kin from 25% to 51%.

Improved Foster Care Placements by Increasing Proportion of Youth in Foster Care Placed With Family and Friends ("Kinship Care") and Increasing Foster Parent Recruitment and Support

Research has shown that children in foster care who are placed with family members or friends experience less trauma, have greater overall well-being, and are more likely to be reunified with their parents, be adopted into new homes, or achieve long-term guardianship. ACS has successfully implemented multiple strategies to increase the proportion of youth placed with kin, including establishing new Kinship Specialist positions within the ACS Division of Child Protection. Overall, ACS increased the proportion of children placed with kin from 31% in 2016 to 43% in 2021. Through our "Home Away From Home" initiative, ACS increased new foster home recruitment by 50% from FY17

to FY19. In FY20, ACS procured Binti, a software that streamlined the foster home certification process for both foster parents and foster care agencies.

Implemented Critical Initiatives to Reduce Length of Stay, Increase Family Voice and Improve Permanency Outcomes

Through our 'No time to Wait' initiatives and our highly successful federal Title IV-E waiver, ACS reduced length of stay in foster care while providing children and families with more therapeutic supports. We launched the 'Parents Supporting Parents' pilot, which incorporates Parent Advocates with lived experience of the child welfare system to help parents toward the goal of reunification and improve permanency and race equity outcomes.

Initiated Transformation of Family Based Foster Care and Residential Foster Care Systems through New Procurements

ACS released two Requests For Proposals (RFPs) in 2021, with contracts anticipated in the 2022. The vision for the redesigned foster care system builds upon the significant progress already made to strengthen New York City's foster care system, and includes significant additional funding and resources to make transformational change in three critical areas: increasing supports for parents; increasing therapeutic and evidence-based services for children and youth; and scaling proven practices across the system in order to further improve the safety, well-being and permanency outcomes of youth in foster care. The new system will include a first-ever workforce of 150 parent advocates with lived experience of the

child welfare system, working with parents of children currently in care to improve reunification and race equity outcomes; increased staffing for kinship placement and recruitment, training and support for foster parents, a new Enhanced Family Foster Care system to provide additional therapeutic staffing and resources for children, new funding to lower staffing ratios and enhance staffing in residential care, and support for evidence-based models of care to be implemented in all residential programs. To ensure the highest quality of care and services for children, youth and families, ACS is also implementing new accountability and fiscal structures that support improved safety, permanency and well-being outcomes for children and families. ■

In 2019, ACS launched the Fair Futures Initiative (in partnership with youth, philanthropy, foster care agencies and advocates) to enhance education, employment, housing, and permanency outcomes for youth in care ages 11-21. Hundreds of new coaches, tutors, education, employment and housing specialists are helping thousands of young people to set and achieve academic, career and permanency goals, and planning for successful transitions from foster care.

Expanded Programming for Older Youth

ACS's Office of Education and Employment Initiatives, with multiple partners, has significantly

support, engagement activities, and a residential experience on a college campus. The program successfully graduated a four-year cohort in partnership with the College of Staten Island in 2021 and will soon be enrolling a new cohort in collaboration with Manhattan College. In the summer of 2016, ACS launched a partnership with the City University of New York (CUNY) to establish the Fostering College Success Initiative ("ACS/CUNY Dorm Project) to provide year-round housing and academic supports to foster youth attending CUNY schools. ACS has connected thousands of ACS-involved youth annually to paid internships within the agency and outside. In partnership with Columbia University, ACS sponsors the Young Adult Work Opportunities for Rewarding Careers (YA WORC) program, which provides career readiness programming for older youth in care. ACS offers Driver's Education instruction to support youth in foster care in receiving their driver's licenses, and partners with Google, Hopeland and New Yorker's for Children to develop a pipeline of youth for careers in technology through the Google's Code Next Lab.

Enhanced Commitment to Ensuring Youth Are Connected to Safe and Affordable Housing

ACS is committed to ensuring that all youth leaving foster care have appropriate housing resources. Since 2016, ACS and its contracted foster care agencies have significantly increased housing staff to assist young people, secured permanent housing for nearly 1,000 youth in public housing, supportive housing, and other housing programs; and partnered with the Corporation for Supportive Housing to expand supportive housing options for ACS involved youth and families. In 2021,



Expanded and strengthened supports for youth in foster care

Became First Jurisdiction in the Nation to Provide Universal Coaches to Youth in Foster Care

increased specialized education and employment programming and opportunities for youth in foster care to explore careers, pursue vocational training, and be connected with paid job and internship opportunities. Through the First Star Academy, high school students in care learn about and prepare for college with academic

ACS collaborated with the NYC Department of Social Services to create a City FHEPS housing voucher program to help youth secure independent housing, and worked to connect 200 youth in care with federal pandemic-relief Emergency Housing Vouchers.

Enhanced Programming at the Nicholas A. Scoppetta Children's Center

In an effort to engage and nurture youth in ACS' temporary "pre-placement" setting, the Children's Center expanded its array of meaningful, age and developmentally appropriate programming opportunities and activities for youth in our care. Through partnership with local NYC Parks, the 13th Precinct – NYPD, and many nonprofit partners, a wide variety of programs were offered both in house, and in the community, to ensure youth have an outlet for their energy, creativity, and a safe place to spend time while awaiting placement. ACS also enhanced our health and mental health services at the Children's Center to better meet the needs of the children and youth. ■

Implemented historic Raise the Age legislation, ensuring that youth aged 16 and 17 who are involved in the justice system are treated as juveniles

Decreased the Number of NYC Juveniles in Detention

Despite raising the age of criminal responsibility to include 16 and 17-year old youth in the juvenile justice system, the number of youth in the justice system de-

clined. The average daily population in detention fell 31% from 198 in Calendar Year 2014 to 136 in 2021 (January-October 2021).

Strengthened the Close to Home Juvenile Justice Placement System for Juvenile Delinquents

Close to Home remains a national model that realigns the traditional juvenile justice experience with evidence-based best practice to improve outcomes for youth. In partnership with the Department of Probation, ACS adopted a Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) framework and an evidence-based assessment tool—the Youth Level of Services (YLS)—to guide our interventions and ensure we reduce youth likelihood to recidivate. Despite moving 16- and 17-year olds into the juvenile justice system under Raise the Age, ACS saw a record 73% percent reduction in the Close to Home census from 2014 to 2021. ACS also worked to expand educational and vocational programming for youth and create a more seamless aftercare program for youth transitioning from placement to the community.

Created a new job title, Youth Development Specialist, to provide safety and support for the youth in detention

Working with the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, the Office of Labor Relations and the Office of Management and Budget, and through negotiation with Local 371 of District Council 37, ACS finalized the YDS civil service title, which replaced the Juvenile Counselor title. It was the first time in forty years that the Juvenile Counselor title had been updated. The new YDS title better encompasses the hard work that is involved in helping youth learn new

skills and behaviors. Moreover, the YDS title offers a more competitive compensation package and career-step-pay ladder. ■

Worked in partnership with other City agencies to ensure children across New York City had access to child care services, especially low-income and vulnerable New Yorkers

Successfully transitioned Child Care Center System to Department of Education

As part of the Mayor's commitment to early education, ACS' EarlyLearn NYC contracts were transferred to the DOE's Division of Early Childhood Education in 2019, to create a unified birth-to-grade 12 program. The successful transition helped build upon the important work done by EarlyLearn programs, strengthening birth-to-five care and education in New York City and creating a more seamless experience for children, families, and educators.

Child Care Vouchers

Developed and initiated a plan to expand child care vouchers and create more equity in the child care system by ensuring those most in need are able to receive vouchers, including families transitioning out of the child welfare system, homeless families, and families receiving in-patient substance misuse treatment. ■



Strengthened our work by giving staff the tools they need to do their jobs most effectively and efficiently, enhancing policies and practices, and improving staff morale

Deployed Mobile Technology to Frontline Staff

For the first time, ACS provided all frontline child protection staff with tablets, equipped with high-speed internet and advanced features, allowing child protection specialists to type case notes, electronically handwrite notes and use speech to text options, and access the state's child welfare database while out in the community. In addition to child protection workers, all family court attorneys were provided with laptops to better access information while in court and to promote efficiency.

Created Safe Measures Dashboard

ACS launched the Safe Measures Dashboard, which transforms case data into actionable information and gives CPS, supervisors, and their managers a streamlined overview of case details. For instance, Safe Measures provides a calendar of tasks and deadlines for cases, tracks completion of casework contacts with all family members on a case, and helps to prioritize workloads. Safe Measures also allows supervisors to view caseworkers' workload and progress, and enables ACS data-driven performance monitoring across the child welfare system. Safe Measures has also been expanded to foster care and prevention case planners and their supervisors.

Expanded Transportation Options for Frontline Staff

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.

Expanded the "Emergency Children's Services" Unit

ACS expanded the Emergency Children's Services Unit, which responds to reports of abuse or neglect at night, and on weekends and holidays. In addition to doubling the size of the unit, ACS implemented the ECS Application Unit, which includes a more robust system to assign State-wide Central Register reports in a timely fashion, and request background information on each case before the CPS meet with families.

Launched New Employee Support and Wellness Programs and Activities

In 2018, ACS kicked off the first annual "CPS Appreciation Week," an opportunity to recognize the work of our child protective specialists. Additional staff appreciation events include the agency wide Distinguished Service Awards, FCLS Appreciation Week and Detention Appreciation. In June 2020, ACS implemented the first-ever CPS Peer Mentorship program where more experienced child protective staff mentor newer CPS staff. In partnership with NYC Mayor's Office of Labor Relations/WorkWell NYC, ACS established the agency's first office devoted solely to employee wellness in 2017. An Employee Wellness Director was placed at ACS to support high-priority wellness and continue supporting and advancing workplace health and wellness initiatives. The ACS Employee Wellness Program aims to develop a holistic approach to

health promotion, fitness, and healthy living to support ACS employees as they endeavor to help children and families of NYC. ■

Strengthened agencywide commitment to addressing race equity, and combatting racial disproportionality in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems

Created the Office of Equity Strategies

In 2017, ACS created an Office of Equity Strategies to provide focus and direction to our equity work. The Office leads ACS's efforts to develop and advance specific policies and practices that reduce disparities in outcomes for children and families that are the result of bias based on race, ethnicity, gender and gender expression, and/or sexual orientation.

Implemented an Equity Action Plan to Address Racial Disparities in Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice

The Equity Action Plan was developed as part of the agency's commitment to confront and address racial disparities at key stages in the child welfare system. The Plan includes concrete strategies to reduce disparities at each stage of a child or family's involvement with the child welfare system.

Created LGBTQAI+ Action Plan to Strengthen Services and Supports for LGBTQAI+ Youth in Foster Care

The multi-pronged action plan includes the creation of a dedi-

cated LGBTQAI+ Committee as part of the ACS Youth Leadership Council; expanding recruitment targeting foster parents interested in fostering LGBTQAI+ youth; revising and strengthening staff training on LGBTQAI+ issues; increasing services and supports for LGBTQAI+ youth in foster care; and more.

Created Mandatory Implicit Bias Training for All ACS Staff

In October 2018, the Workforce Institute launched its Understanding and Undoing Implicit Bias eLearning and instructor-led training. The eLearning teaches participants about implicit bias and specific strategies to address it and is required for all ACS staff, regardless of division and title, and prevention agency direct service staff and supervisors. In the instructor-led training, participants deepen their understanding and discuss the influences of implicit bias on institutional racism and structural inequity. To date, 10,376 learners have completed the eLearning and 3,939 learners have completed the instructor-led/virtual training.

Expanded Utilization of Non-Investigative Response to SCR Reports

ACS has significantly expanded its Family Assessment Response (FAR) program, now known as the Collaborative Assessment, Response, Engagement and Support (CARES) – this allows ACS to divert many low-risk reports to a non-investigative, service-focused response. The pilot began in 2013 in Queens. By 2016, the program expanded to Brooklyn and in 2018, it expanded to the Bronx. The first Staten Island and Manhattan units launched in 2021, bringing the program citywide.

Infused More Parent & Youth Voice Into Policies, Procedures and Service Arrays

ACS created the new role of Parent Engagement Specialist to increase the voice of parents with lived experiences in all aspects of ACS's work around practice, policy and programming. The Parent Engagement Specialist supports the Parent Advocacy Council, which meets and shares recommendations with ACS leadership regularly. ACS also has a Youth Leadership Council that includes youth who have experienced the foster care and/or juvenile justice systems. ACS launched a new Parent Advocate Initiative, called "Parents Supporting Parents," to improve reunification and racial equity outcomes. ■

Launched initiatives focused on continuous quality improvement to better guide critical decision points and better serve families

Implemented a Quality Assurance unit within the Division of Child Protection

The unit aims to continuously improve the quality of investigations involving high-risk families. The Accelerated Safety Assessment Protocol (ASAP) uses predictive analytics to identify children at high risk of harm, and ensures that those investigations receive enhanced Quality Assurance review. The ASAP team provides frontline child protection staff with real-time feedback on safety assessments, decision-making and service provision to better guide critical decision points and better serve families.

Enhanced Safety Review Protocols

ACS Implemented a “Heightened Oversight Protocol” on certain SCR reports involving a fatality or alleged physical or sexual abuse of a child under the age of three. These high-priority cases receive enhanced review and coordination between child protective teams and Investigative Consultants who assist with investigative strategy.

Restructured and relaunched ChildStat Continuous Quality Improvement program

ChildStat was relaunched in the first three months of Commissioner Hansell’s tenure. ChildStat combines quantitative data and qualitative case practice in a manner designed to support Continuous Quality Improvement in child protective practice. It involves the regular participation and leadership of senior agency officials, including the commissioner; and generates recommendations for both practice improvement within local child protective offices, and system-wide improvement to support child protective work across the City.

Built a Safety Culture Framework

Under the Safety Culture framework, ACS promotes inquiry and learning to help us shift our focus in analyzing critical incidents from individual blame to system accountability and improvement. ACS formally began implementing Safety Culture in 2018 with a redesign of our Child Fatality Reviews. Our new Systemic Child Fatality Review process guides us in learning about the underlying systemic factors that impact our work, so we can better understand when improvements are necessary. ■

Strengthened accountability and oversight through enhanced management

Strengthened Internal Oversight and Accountability

In 2017, Commissioner Hansell created the Office of Agency Accountability to centralize the agency’s internal oversight functions, streamline responses to external oversight inquiries and support management reforms within the agency. ACS also created a new specialized accountability unit to conduct audits of case practices of ACS employees working with the Division of Child Protection.

Implemented a Comprehensive Quality Management System that Supports Continuous Improvements in DCP and Provider Agency Practice

ACS expanded and strengthened its monitoring and quality management oversight of DCP and its contracted prevention and foster care agencies, leading to substantial, measurable performance improvements. Using outcomes data and findings from thousands of case reviews annually, ACS tracks performance and establishes annual improvement plans with all provider child welfare programs and DCP zones, and then supports and monitors implementation. These improvement efforts are core to a culture of learning that drives system-wide improvements.

Created the Position of Chief Medical Officer

The Chief Medical Officer oversees the Office of Children and Family Health, which manages health care issues throughout the agency. This includes creating a Psychiatry and Behavioral Health Unit that devel-

oped and implemented a new psychiatric medications consent policy to reduce the prescription of such medication for children in foster care, and secured access to the New York State PSYCKES database to better track children’s medications. In addition, the unit oversees ACS’s provision of services for parents with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and oversaw the implementation of Medicaid Redesign through which all children in foster care now participate in Medicaid Managed care. ■



Enhanced training for ACS and provider staff through the Workforce Institute and James Satterwhite Academy

Onboarded and Trained Thousands of New Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Staff

The James Satterwhite Academy provides intensive and thorough onboarding programs, facilitated by expert trainers, which combine classroom training with on-the-job experiences. Each year, the James Satterwhite Academy provides onboarding training to record numbers of new Child Protective Special-

ists, Youth Development Specialists, and Supervisors, in addition to providing other specialized coursework. Programs range from four days to 41 days. Since 2015, ACS onboarded 1,355 new YDS, 2,704 new CPS, and 682 new Supervisors.

Trained Thousands of NYC and Provider Direct Service Staff and Supervisors

The ACS Workforce Institute is a collaboration with CUNY, launched in 2016, and provides ongoing professional skills development for direct service staff and supervisors at ACS and its many provider agencies. Trainings provide direct service staff and supervisors with the knowledge and skills to enhance their case practice and improve outcomes for children and families. Learning programs focus on a variety of skills, including strengths-based engagement, coaching, safety and risk assessment, implicit bias, differential response, intimate partner violence, on-boarding new provider agency child welfare staff, as well as other specialized coursework. The Institute has also developed and implemented new, comprehensive and uniform onboarding trainings for newly hired prevention and foster care case planning staff. The institute trains more than 20,000 learners each year, in more than 40 course offerings.

Launched the City's First-Ever Simulated Training Sites for Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Staff

The new ACS simulation centers (in Jamaica and Harlem) allow child welfare workers, including CPS, YDS, foster care and prevention case workers and attorneys, the opportunity to train in mock apartments, a mock courtroom, and a mock detention center. The sites can accommodate the training of more than 11,000 staff throughout the child welfare and juvenile justice sectors. ■



Supported and advanced key pieces of state legislation to promote more equitable outcomes for children and families

SCR Reform

ACS successfully advocated for statewide legislation to help address the collateral consequences of being reported to the SCR. As a result, beginning with investigations starting January 2022, New York State will raise the standard of indication from 'some credible evidence' to 'a fair preponderance of evidence', which is more consistent with the standards for indication used throughout the country. The new law also reduces the length of time an 'indicated' case for maltreatment would be accessible to potential employers.

Implicit bias training for mandated reporters

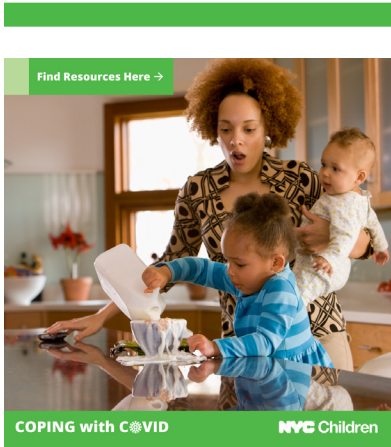
After being suggested by a Child Protective Specialist, ACS developed, advanced and advocated for a successful state legislative proposal to require all mandated reporters to receive implicit bias training.

Raise the Age

ACS successfully implemented Raise the Age, the state law that changed the law so that all 16- and 17-year olds are now treated as juveniles by the justice system. By all October 1, 2018, all 16- and 17-year olds were moved off of Rikers Island. ACS created a new job title, Youth Development Specialist (YDS), and hired hundreds of new staff to provide care and supervision to youth in detention. Youth now have better access to age-appropriate services, education 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 preserving public safety.

Successful Budget Advocacy

Through collaborative advocacy with colleagues, ACS was able to successfully prevent state funding reductions to ACS services, including child welfare prevention services. At the federal level, ACS successfully advocated for two years of federal funding for localities transitioning from federal child welfare waivers to the Family First Prevention Services Act. ■



Maintained core mission of keeping children safe and families supported throughout the COVID-19 pandemic

Expedited Family Reunification Despite Limited Family Court Operations

In April 2020, with the onset of the pandemic, as a result of the Family Court’s restricted operations the number of reunifications approved by the Family Courts dropped by more than half. ACS developed new protocols to review cases of children in foster care in order to identify those that could safely progress toward reunification through agreement among the parties. Since the onset of the pandemic, ACS conducted almost 5,000 of these reviews and worked with legal advocates and the Court to progress cases as appropriate. These efforts contributed to a significant increase in the number of children reunified with their parents by mid-summer 2020 and throughout the pandemic. More than 3500 children were reunified with their families, in FY20 and FY21 combined.

Redoubled Efforts to Connect Families With Concrete Goods and Financial Resources

Through existing partnerships and programs, ACS was able to quickly mobilize its network to reach families hit hardest by the pandemic. Its programs helped deliver food, clothing and diapers to families; helped families enroll in public benefits; offered transportation and more. In 2020, New Yorkers For Children and ACS established the COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund to address urgent needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic among children, youth and families involved with ACS. The Fund’s strategic partnership with philanthropy and individuals helped raise and disperse more than \$1.5 million in support of vulnerable youth and families, reaching more than 3,000 youth, parents, foster parents, and other caregivers. ACS also collected more than \$3 million in in-kind donations to distribute to families and youth, including clothing, winter coats, diapers and wipes, essential care items, backpacks, and more.

Technology for Staff

ACS’s investment in mobile technology for frontline workers positioned the agency well when the pandemic hit. With mobile technology, frontline staff could carry out their core responsibilities for child welfare while protecting public health by minimizing in person contact. Similarly, attorneys were able to continue to file cases in court, participate in hearings and obtain necessary protective orders even as the court went virtual. Technology was also critical in detention, where youth had access to tablets and wi-fi for school and programming, as well as court hearing and family

visits in the newly constructed video conferencing booths. Additionally, ACS deployed laptops and smartphones to all staff working remotely.

Access to Telehealth

Telehealth services have been an important resource for children and families during the pandemic. ACS collaborated with City partners, families and service providers to create “Telehealth Tips,” a website with tips to guide and support families and providers on the use of telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Leveraging Pandemic Funding

ACS utilized pandemic-driven emergency funding sources to provide financial assistance to non-profit provider partners, including funds for additional indirect costs; food and other necessities for children and families; technology supports to maintain family engagement and programming; additional nursing and tutoring in detention; enhanced cleaning in ACS facilities; and to provide Personal Protective Equipment for ACS staff, providers, and families.

Coping Through COVID

During the pandemic, ACS launched two new campaigns that better connect families to resources they need. “[Coping Through COVID](#)” is a resource page aimed at supporting families through the pandemic, and “[Teens Take on COVID](#),” is aimed at supporting teens, many of whom are struggling with social isolation and some of whom may be experiencing violence at home, and need to know where to turn. ■ ■