



**The New York City Council,
Committee on Juvenile Justice
June 18, 2013**

**“Re-entry Planning for Youth in Detention and Placement”
Testimony by
Raye Barbieri, Deputy Commissioner, Division of Youth and Family Justice
New York City Administration for Children’s Services**

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Good afternoon Chair Gonzalez and members of the Committee on Juvenile Justice. I am Raye Barbieri, Deputy Commissioner for the Division of Youth and Family Justice at the New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS). Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to share with you our work related to reentry planning for young people in juvenile detention and placement.

Before we address re-entry planning, I would like to update the Committee on Close to Home. As you know, ACS has been planning for the second phase, Limited-Secure Placement, which will begin fall 2013. Over the past six months, we have held a total of ten community based events – two in each borough – to gather public input on Limited Secure Placement. We incorporated that feedback into our draft Limited Secure Placement plan, which we are about to submit to the State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) for review and expect will be approved later this summer.

Last week, ACS announced the recommended awards for providers who will offer Limited Secure placement services in three facilities that we are leasing from New York State in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Staten Island. We are pleased to announce that Children's Village was recommended to serve Limited Secure youth in Staten Island and that Leake and Watts was recommended for the awards the Brooklyn and Bronx facilities. Leake and Watts was also recommended for an award to serve LSP youth with serious emotional disturbances and

intellectual/developmental disabilities. These awards account for approximately half of the 158 LSP slots that ACS intends to procure; over the summer, ACS will determine who will provide the additional Limited Secure placement services.

While we roll out this second phase of Close to Home, ACS continues to ensure that youth in all of our juvenile justice residential settings are well-supported to smoothly transition back into their homes and communities. The transition planning varies depending on whether a young person is in detention or placement and I will take the next few minutes to walk through both processes.

Re-entry Planning for Youth in Detention

A Family Court order determines the course of a juvenile delinquency case through the juvenile justice system. The court can dismiss the case, parole the young person to an Alternative to Detention or send the young person to a residential juvenile placement facility. In FY 2012, approximately 29% of youth were placed by the Family Court (which, at that time, was OCFS custody), and the remaining 71% of youth were discharged from detention with or without community conditions and supervision. For those youth released to the community, the Family Court may order that an Alternative to Detention (ATD) program, the New York City Department of Probation and/or an Alternative to Placement (ATP) program provide services and activities and monitor and support the youth in the community. Thus, for young people who a judge has deemed safe enough to be returned to the community without a period of confinement but with the supervision of an agency, there are substantial services, comprehensive monitoring and multiple support systems in place.

For youth who are released from detention directly back to the community without an order requiring supervision or services, ACS' ability to provide discharge planning for their re-

entry varies depending on the length of time the youth is in our care. The average length of stay in a detention facility for a young person who has been charged with committing a delinquent act is approximately 23 days. However, that time period could be significantly shorter. In fact, 42% are almost immediately released and stay less than three days and over 54% of young people are in detention for fewer than seven days.

Within 24 hours upon arrival at any detention facility, a young person is assigned a Case Manager whose primary responsibility is to facilitate the orientation of youth to the facility, counsels the young person, develop behavior support plans, and coordinate mental health and health services and special programming. At intake, the Case Manager gathers information about the youth – the circumstances that brought them into detention, as well as information about their interests, background, strengths, and goals. Based on that interaction with the youth, the Case Manager begins to assess the young person’s needs, which they will continue to monitor throughout their time in detention.

When preparing for the young person’s release, the Case Manager generates a “Resident Re-entry Plan.” The plan is based on the information gathered at the original intake interview and the time spent with the youth for the duration of their time in placement and is mailed to the young person’s home within ten days of discharge. Generally, the re-entry plan will identify at least one supportive adult in the community who the young person can speak to. It will also identify concrete steps that the young person can take upon arriving home to address their specific emotional, educational and recreational goals. It is important to note that for young people released from detention without a court-ordered supervising entity, ACS cannot require attendance or participation in any program; all participation must be voluntary. However the Re-entry Plan includes specific resources that the young person or their family can contact. For

example, if a youth enters detention on a substance abuse related offense, the Re-entry plan may include a recommendation to a local substance abuse clinic.

Youth in detention are educated by New York City schoolteachers at the Passages Academy and earn Department of Education credits toward graduation. Youth in secure detention attend schools located in those two facilities - Crossroads and Horizon. Youth in non-secure detention either travel to Passages Academy at Bronx Hope or at Belmont in Brooklyn. Counselors and case planners work with youth to ensure that while they are in detention, they are provided the support they need so that there is no lapse in their education.

ACS is also planning for the mental health needs of young people who come through our juvenile detention system. We recently received a \$1.6 million grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to partner with the Bellevue Hospital Center to provide trauma-focused care at both of our secure juvenile detention facilities. The program will provide screening for and counseling to young people who have experienced trauma in their lives, as so many of the youth in detention have. The program will also train and educate staff within juvenile detention facilities to ensure more successful outcomes. To date, in collaboration with the fantastic team at Bellevue, we have trained nearly the entire staff at Crossroads and Horizon in the "Think Trauma Curriculum," which was created specifically for juvenile justice staff to support youth in care.

Re-Entry Planning for Youth in Placement

For Close to Home youth who are sent to placement with ACS, discharge planning begins on day one. All of our programs are geared to working with the youth and families to ensure that at the end of placement they can achieve permanency, either with their families or another resource. One of the cornerstones of Close to Home is that each youth in placement is assigned to an ACS Permanency and Placement Specialist (PPS), whose job includes working with the youth throughout their time in residential placement to identify all of their needs and concerns, working closely with family to ensure a smooth transition home, and building a comprehensive after care plan.

The PPS role has been designed to form a circle of care around the young person – to coordinate among all of the players in a young person’s life – the family, the placement provider, the school and any relevant health professionals – to make sure that the youth is getting the proper level of care while in residential placement. The PPS and other ACS staff participate in family meetings to discuss the youth, including their adjustment and progress; their medical and mental health updates, including decisions to prescribe or modify medications; their permanency planning activities and goals; the success and quality of family visits; and to identify and discuss any barriers to release or discharge. PPS and other ACS staff have bi-weekly calls with providers to make sure that there is a clear sense of what needs to be put in place in order for the youth to safely return to the community.

In planning for re-entry, ACS staff think creatively with the young person, their families and other caretakers and the providers about how best to combat the negative influences that may have led to placement in the first place and how to connect youth to necessary services and

positive pro-social activities. For example, over 70 youth who will be leaving placement this summer have applied to DYCD's Summer Youth Employment Program.

Aftercare for Youth in Placement

As described, prior to discharge from the residential component of placement, ACS coordinates intensive aftercare services for young people and their families – further extending the circle of care to ensure a successful and sustainable re-entry process. For the past nine months that New York City has handled non-secure placement, we have developed relationships with a wide array of organizations to provide aftercare services including the Children's Aid Society's LINC program, which was the aftercare provider for NYC young people prior to Close to Home; Catholic Guardian, which offers a 12-week evidence-based program; and the Department of Probation's Advocacy, Intervention and Mentoring (AIM) program. We also refer young people leaving placement to many other community-based providers such as PAL, FEGs, the Door, the Boys and Girls clubs, and various mentoring programs throughout the City who can connect youth to positive activities.

Given this variety of programs, the PPS are able to coordinate a transition plan between the placement and aftercare provider that is individually tailored to the needs of the young person leaving placement.

Furthermore, ACS recently announced recommended awards for new aftercare contracts that will begin on July 1. The new contracts will not only expand available services but will also streamline access for youth and families while continuing to provide a highly individualized approach to aftercare. Three providers – the Children's Aid Society, the Jewish Board for Children and Families Services and Boys Town – were recommended to provide aftercare

services for all youth leaving general non-secure placement and two providers – Children’s Village and New Alternatives for Children – were recommended to provide after care services for youth leaving specialized NSP settings.

The majority of these aftercare providers will be using the Functional Family Therapy (FFT) model, which is a proven, evidence-based intervention. Aftercare services provided under the new contracts will be aligned with the treatment models being provided in residential placement and endeavor to build off of the treatment the youth was receiving while in placement. In addition, the aftercare providers will begin connecting with youth and families and doing transition planning *before* the youth leaves the NSP facility, which will further assist in a smooth transition back into the community. As described earlier, in addition to these newly contracted services, ACS will continue to connect youth on aftercare to other evidence-based family skill building services, health and mental health services, academic support or tutoring, vocational counseling and assistance, recreational and cultural programming, and skill building opportunities as well as provide ongoing individual support and monitoring.

Educational Planning

We know that to ensure the success of youth who leave detention and placement, we must prioritize their education and plan for successful re-entry back into community schools, in addition to their community. Given that it was difficult for young people who were placed upstate to transfer school credits, education is one of the central components and benefits of Close to Home.

Under Close to Home, youth in placement are educated by New York City school teachers and earn Department of Education school credits toward graduation. New York City’s

Passages Academy operates seven school sites for young people in non-secure placements. We are thrilled to report that 98% of the youth being served by Passages Academy are obtaining New York City Department of Education (DOE) credits during the 2012-2013 school year. Ninety-one percent of the young people who complete the program transition into DOE schools, and eight young people passed a regents exam in January. We believe this good news is a result of our comprehensive and collaborative approach with the Department of Education to focus on education from the moment youth enter placement. When youth enter placement, they receive an educational assessment of their reading and math skills, which is used to determine whether they need extra tutoring and support during their time in placement, as well as an orientation which provides a general overview of school rules and expectations during placement. Throughout a youth's stay in residential placement, the Placement and Permanency Specialists work collaboratively with DOE staff to develop a transition plan for the youth. As discharge nears, DOE and ACS staff reviews the youth's educational progress to set up a plan for the youth's release. DOE and ACS staff also reach out to the receiving schools to apprise them of the youth's academic progress while in placement and to facilitate the youth's transition to that school. If the youth was placed for a school-related offense or there are other concerns about the original school placement, DOE staff will to work to enroll the youth in a different school.

ACS maintains regular communication with the DOE about youth in placement. We have established a Steering Committee between the DOE and ACS, which meets every two weeks to discuss educational policy and procedures for youth in placement. In addition, we coordinate a bi-weekly Education Working Group meeting to bring the issues discussed at Steering Committee meetings to the attention of the providers. ACS also attends weekly site-based meetings at the two Passages Academy schools to promote coordination among school

administrators, providers and ACS staff. ACS and the DOE jointly plan and conduct trainings for DOE, ACS and NSP staff on specific issues such as transition planning, special education as well as other professional development topics.

Many students are successfully completing their coursework and earning academic credits at much higher rates than before they were in placement. As of March 2013, two thirds of NSP high school students have earned high school credits while at Passages. Students entitled to special education are earning credits in close to equal proportion to students in general education, which is substantially better than the proportion in community schools. Students have been staying after school to participate in test preparation for the Regents exams.

ACS has also hired an attorney to work in our Office of Education Support and Policy Planning to serve as ACS' point person on educational matters for youth in placement. He serves as a resource regarding the educational needs of individual youth, develops educational policies, conducts trainings, coordinates the education working group for placement providers, visits school programs and communicates regularly with the DOE about educational issues.

Closing

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you the important work we are doing to support our youth in detention and placement and to ensure a safe transition back to their homes and communities. We are grateful for all of the support of the Council as we continue to strive to improve services for the City's most vulnerable young people. I am happy to take any questions you may have.