

Close to Home Annual Report 2016-2017



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New York City and New York State are in the middle of a historic transformation in youth justice.

Five years ago, the City and State launched Close to Home, an innovative juvenile justice program that shifts away from sending New York City youth to large, geographically isolated institutions far from New York City and instead places them in residences near their home communities where they receive rehabilitation programs that include education and counseling. In contrast to traditional detention halls and placement facilities, Close to Home residences have been intentionally designed to ensure participation in programming while preserving the safety and security of youth, staff, and the surrounding community.

As Close to Home expanded and became a model for jurisdictions across the country, New York State passed a new law last year, known as “Raise the Age,” which requires that 16- and 17-year-olds be treated as minors in the justice system. Prior to the legislation passing, New York was one of only two states that treated these minors as adults in the justice system. Raise the Age is about to be implemented, with newly-arrested

16-year-olds scheduled to transition to the juvenile justice system by October 2018, and 17-year-olds by October 2019. In addition, all 16- and 17-year-olds are to leave Riker's Island by October 2018.

Taken together, these two reforms represent a sea change on juvenile justice in New York. They are also inextricably linked. Most 16- and 17-year-olds who would have gone through the adult criminal justice system will instead be treated as juveniles – and many will be placed in Close to Home residences. The State estimates that the number of young people in Close to Home placements will more than double once Raise the Age is implemented.

In this context, the success of Close to Home is particularly important this year – and this report shows that Close to Home is running well and working.

Since it was launched in 2012, the administration and operation of Close to Home has been improved and refined. It is operating efficiently and effectively. Close to Home is also succeeding in improving outcomes for youth through services and education that can help youth who have been involved with the juvenile justice system rehabilitate and transition to productive adulthood.

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE LAST YEAR INCLUDE:

A 41% DECREASE IN AWOLs:

From calendar year 2015 to 2016, there was a 41% drop in AWOL incidents at Non-Secure Placement sites (NSPs). AWOLs are now lower than they were when the State managed voluntary placements.

A 38% DECREASE IN PHYSICAL INCIDENTS:

From 2015 to 2016, there was a 38% drop in assaults and altercations at NSPs.

A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN OVERSIGHT AND MONITORING:

ACS expanded Close to Home oversight and monitoring activities, increasing the total number of site inspections from 81 in 2015 to 348 in 2016.

A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF SCHOOL CREDITS EARNED:

Close to Home youth attending the NYC Department of Education Passages Academy earned an average of 9.3 credits during the 2016-2017 school year – up from 6.4 the previous year.

A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF YOUTH PASSING CLASSES AT SCHOOL:

Close to Home youth attending Passages passed 91% of their classes during the 2016-2017 school year – up from 77% three years ago.

A 93% ACADEMIC ADVANCEMENT RATE AMONG THE YOUNGEST STUDENTS:

At the end of the 2016-2017 school year, 93% of Close to Home youth enrolled in Passages for middle school were promoted at least one grade level.

A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF YOUTH PASSING REGENTS EXAMS:

Of the Close to Home youth enrolled at Passages who took New York State Regents exams, almost half passed. Additionally, 80% of the Close to Home youth with a disability enrolled at Passages who took a Regents exam passed.

A 91% PARTICIPATION RATE IN COMMUNITY-BASED SUPERVISION:

Among the 222 Close to Home youth who transitioned out of placement in 2016, 91% were enrolled with one of five community-based supervision programs. Among those, 67% completed the program during the same calendar year, and the others remained enrolled.

In calendar year (CY) 2016, the NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS) continued to invest in intensive services to prevent young people from entering or re-entering the juvenile justice system, while strengthening citywide implementation of practice models to meet the intensive needs of system-involved youth. This includes continuously working to improve and expand programs that foster social and cognitive skill development, provide individualized educational or vocational support, and address the immediate needs of youth to avert community violence and cyclical justice system involvement. ACS also solidified previous commitments to placement stability, family engagement, and community reintegration.

2016 was a critical year for Close to Home. While ACS has been able to prevent a substantial number of justice-involved youth from being placed in a residential setting through community-based services, those who enter and remain in placement are representative of New York City's highest-needs youth. Compared to the population admitted to Close to Home in 2015, the young people served in 2016 were more likely to be involved in the foster care system at both admission and release, further amplifying the service needs of youth in Close to Home.

Against the backdrop of these efforts, a number of notable year-over-year improvements were achieved in 2016. Close to Home youth enrolled in the New York City Department of Education Passages school earned more credits and passed more classes, on average. The number of transfers between Close to Home programs and upward modifications to a higher level of residential care continued to decrease significantly. Permanent deployment of additional staff to reduce critical incidents and streamline incident reporting led to additional safety and security improvements. In addition, ACS expanded Close to Home oversight, monitoring, and technical assistance, with a particular emphasis on a four-fold increase in residential site inspections. Across-the-board decreases in all indicators of safety and security reflect a system that is increasingly safer, transparent, and more conducive to improving outcomes for youth.

Finally, it is important to note that this report comes at a time of fiscal uncertainty, with the initial budget proposal from the State eliminating all State funding for Close to Home and dramatically reducing funding for child welfare in New York City. It is not clear if the Governor or the State Legislature will allow these drastic cuts to be enacted. What is clear is that reduced funding would have a significant adverse impact on the Close to Home Initiative and, by extension, on implementation of Raise the Age, as well as on a range of services that families in New York City count on today.

INTRODUCTION

CLOSE TO HOME IN CONTEXT

As in most other jurisdictions, prior to the advent of the Close to Home Initiative, young people adjudicated as juvenile delinquents in New York City Family Court were typically placed in facilities far from their families and home communities. Although many received academic credits, they encountered considerable difficulties when attempting to transfer credits to local New York City schools, exacerbating already significant barriers to school enrollment and graduation.

Close to Home implementation began in September 2012, as the New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS) assumed responsibility for New York City youth who are adjudicated juvenile delinquents and determined by a Family Court Judge to be in need of Non-Secure Placement (NSP) services. In December 2015, implementation was completed with the launch of Limited-Secure Placement (LSP), with LSP in full operation for the entirety of CY 2016. Under Close to Home, youth are matched to small, resource-rich residential programs located in or near the five boroughs, affording young people the opportunity to attend New York City Department of Education (DOE) schools and accumulate academic credits towards a high school diploma or promotion into or from middle school while providing access to community-based resources that support safe reintegration upon release.

CORE PRINCIPLES:

While developing Close to Home, ACS engaged national leaders so that evidence-based models, contemporary research findings, and best practices were woven into the program design. All efforts to improve outcomes for youth are grounded in the following principles:

PUBLIC SAFETY:

Consistent with the Family Court's determination that each youth requires supervision and treatment within the least restrictive setting possible, intensive supervision and monitoring is provided by well-staffed residential and community-based aftercare programs.

ACCOUNTABILITY:

Data are used to drive programmatic decisions and to ensure that Close to Home is effective, efficient and responsive.

EVIDENCED-BASED/EVIDENCE-INFORMED TREATMENT:

Close to Home operates along a trauma informed continuum of care that empowers and supports youth by responding to individual treatment needs and skills gained with services that have a proven track record of achieving positive outcomes.

EDUCATIONAL CONTINUITY AND ACHIEVEMENT:

Individualized educational services through the NYC Department of Education allow youth to earn transferrable academic credits, while an assigned Educational Transition Specialists ensure academic continuity upon return to community schools.

COMMUNITY REINTEGRATION:

Youth connect and remain connected to positive adults, peers, and community supports embedded in their neighborhoods well past Close to Home placement.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION:

Family support and contact are essential to each youth's well-being; Close to Home minimizes dislocation in order to nurture frequent and meaningful opportunities to participate in treatment and engage with families.

PERMANENCY:

Close to Home is structured to develop, support and maintain permanent connections for youth and families.

OVERVIEW

Starting with a description of the Close to Home residential placement system and followed by demographic data of youth served in 2016, this report reviews system-wide efforts to facilitate permanency and family engagement, NSP incident data for CY 2014 through 2016, and baseline LSP incident data for CY 2016. The report then describes Close to Home educational services, aftercare and community reintegration, discusses system-wide efforts to sustain and foster emotional and physical safety, and the oversight and corrective action process for Close to Home providers. Lastly, the report concludes with a narrative highlighting community engagement and ACS support of youth beyond Close to Home.

Residential Placement

Close to Home facilities are small, supportive neighborhood-based programs where youth in need of intensive intervention to effectuate long-term behavior change learn new skills designed to address their unique needs and criminogenic risk factors. In CY 2016, ACS partnered with eight local non-profit agencies contracted to implement Close to Home residential services at 27 NSP residences and five LSP residences.

Multiple layers of oversight and quality assurance mechanisms promote public safety and high-quality services for young people in placement. ACS works closely with the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) Office of Close to Home Oversight and System Improvement, which is responsible for programmatic licensure and compliance with New York State regulations, and oversees and monitors the work of ACS.

NON-SECURE PLACEMENT

In CY 2016, eight nonprofit Provider Agencies operated a total of 28 Close to Home NSP residences located in New York City and Dobbs Ferry (Westchester County). Each Provider, with previous juvenile justice experience, offers structured residential care in a supervised and home-like environment of varying capacity (13 bed maximum). In addition, NSP residences are further distinguished by program type (general versus specialized). **See tables 1 and 2** for a breakdown of NSP Provider Agencies by program model, program type, and capacity.

[See next page for Table 1 and 2]



Table 1. CY 2016 NSP Provider Agencies – General Beds

Provider Agency	Sex	Program Model	Capacity
Good Shepherd Services	M	Missouri Approach / Sanctuary	12
Good Shepherd Services	F	Missouri Approach / Sanctuary	12
Leake & Watts Services	M	Missouri Approach	12
Leake & Watts Services	M	Missouri Approach	13
Martin De Porres Group Homes	M	Lasallian Culture of Care	6
Martin De Porres Group Homes	M	Lasallian Culture of Care	6
Martin De Porres Group Homes	M	Lasallian Culture of Care	6
SCO Family of Services	M	Missouri Approach	6
SCO Family of Services	M	Missouri Approach	6
SCO Family of Services	M	Missouri Approach	6
SCO Family of Services	F	Missouri Approach	6
Sheltering Arms Children and Family Services	F	Missouri Approach	12
Sheltering Arms Children and Family Services	M	Missouri Approach	12
Sheltering Arms Children and Family Services	M	Missouri Approach	12
Sheltering Arms Children and Family Services	M	Missouri Approach	13
St. John's Residence for Boys	M	Missouri Approach	12
St. John's Residence for Boys	M	Missouri Approach	12

Table 2. CY 2016 NSP Provider Agencies – Specialized Beds

Provider Agency	Sex	Program Model	Program Type	Capacity
Jewish Child Care Association ¹	F	Sanctuary	Specialized – Commercial/Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC)	6
SCO Family of Services	M	Missouri Approach	Specialized – Developmental Disabilities	6
SCO Family of Services	M	Missouri Approach	Specialized – Developmental Disabilities	6
The Children's Village	M	Integrated Treatment Model	Specialized – Fire Setting Behavior	9
The Children's Village	M	Integrated Treatment Model	Specialized – Problematic Sexual Behaviors	6
The Children's Village	M	Integrated Treatment Model	Specialized – Problematic Sexual Behaviors	9
The Children's Village	F	Integrated Treatment Model	Specialized – Serious Emotional Disturbance	10
The Children's Village	F	Integrated Treatment Model	Specialized – Serious Emotional Disturbance	10
The Children's Village	M	Integrated Treatment Model	Specialized – Substance Abuse and Addiction/Serious Emotional Disturbance	9
The Children's Village ²	M	Integrated Treatment Model	Specialized – Substance Abuse and Addiction	9

LIMITED-SECURE PLACEMENT

LSP and NSP share common goals and anticipated outcomes, while LSP facilities are designed for young people who have been deemed to require more restrictive supervision than youth entering NSP. In CY 2016, LSP sites ranged from six to 18 beds, maintained a lower youth-to-staff ratio than NSP sites, and operated with additional security features throughout the facility (most notably 24/7 control rooms, sally port entrances, and interior door hardware with electronic locking mechanisms). Youth placed in LSP sites attend school and participate in a majority of services on-site. [See Table 3](#) for a breakdown of LSP Provider Agencies by program model, program type, and capacity.

[See next page for Table 3]



1 JCCA Gateways closed in July of 2016

2 CV Bradish closed and contracted services were merged with CV Collins in February of 2016

Table 3. CY 2016 LSP Provider Agencies – General and Specialized Beds

Provider Agency	Sex	Program Model	Program Type	Capacity
The Children's Village	M	Integrated Treatment Model	Specialized	6
The Children's Village	M	Integrated Treatment Model	Specialized	6
Sheltering Arms Children and Family Services	M	Integrated Treatment Model	Specialized	18
Sheltering Arms Children and Family Services ³	M	Integrated Treatment Model	General	10
Sheltering Arms Children and Family Services	M/F	Integrated Treatment Model	Intensive Support	8
Leake & Watts Services	F	Person-Centered, Relational Organizational Milieu aimed at Increasing Self-Efficacy	General / Specialized	16

YOUTH ADMISSIONS

In CY 2016, a total of 252 young people were newly admitted into a Close to Home residential placement facility on a NYC Family Court dispositional placement order or as custodial transfers from OCFS. Young people admitted on a dispositional placement order receive either an NSP, LSP, or Unspecified placement dispositional order⁴. Depending on presenting needs and risk factors, youth with Unspecified placement designations may be admitted to either NSP or LSP facilities, at the discretion of ACS. The below sections describe new admissions to NSP and LSP. Transfers and modifications are discussed in a later section.

NON-SECURE PLACEMENT

Two hundred twenty-two young people were newly admitted into NSP in CY 2016. Similar to admissions in CY 2015, most youth were male (78 percent or 173), Black (60 percent, or 134), and 16 years of age (34 percent, or 76) at the time when Close to Home placement was ordered by the court (Family Court disposition). Brooklyn and the Bronx were the top two boroughs of origin for admissions to NSP in 2016 at 28 percent (or 62) and 27 percent (or 60), respectively. In a slight increase from the previous year, 19 percent (or 43) of young people admitted to NSP were foster care youth.

³ Bruner Avenue General and Intensive Support program closed in January 2017

⁴ Youth admitted by custodial transfer from OCFS have existing dispositional placement designations

Figure 1. CY 2016 NSP Admissions by Sex

N=222

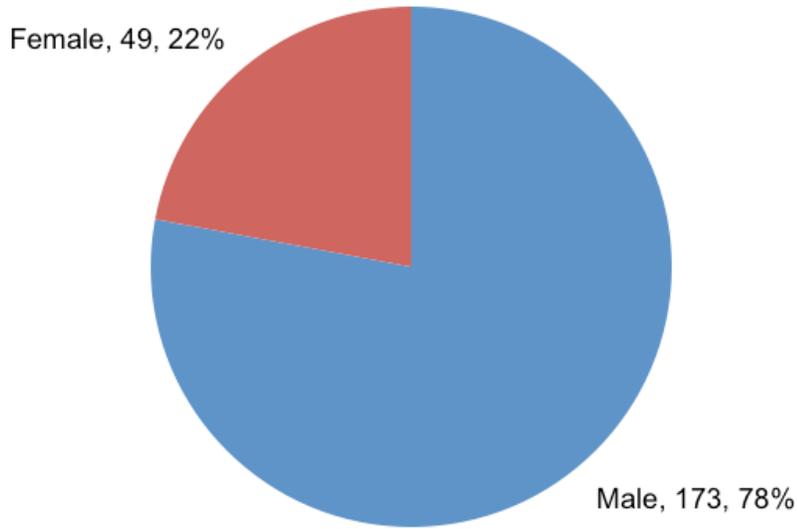


Figure 2. CY 2016 NSP Admissions by Race

N=222

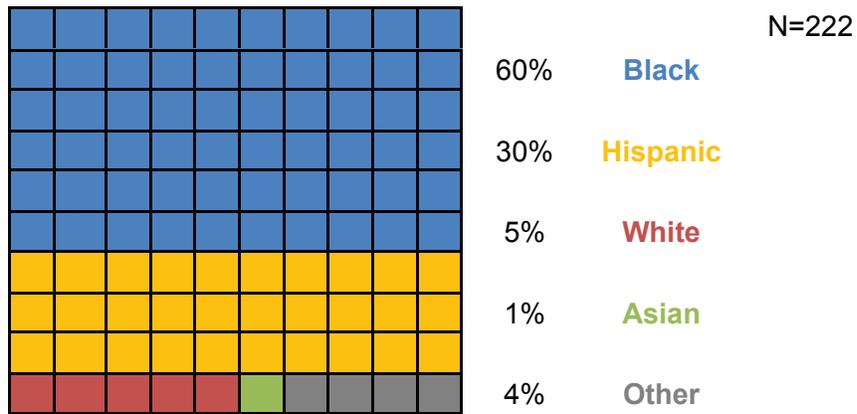


Figure 3. CY 2016 NSP Admissions by Age

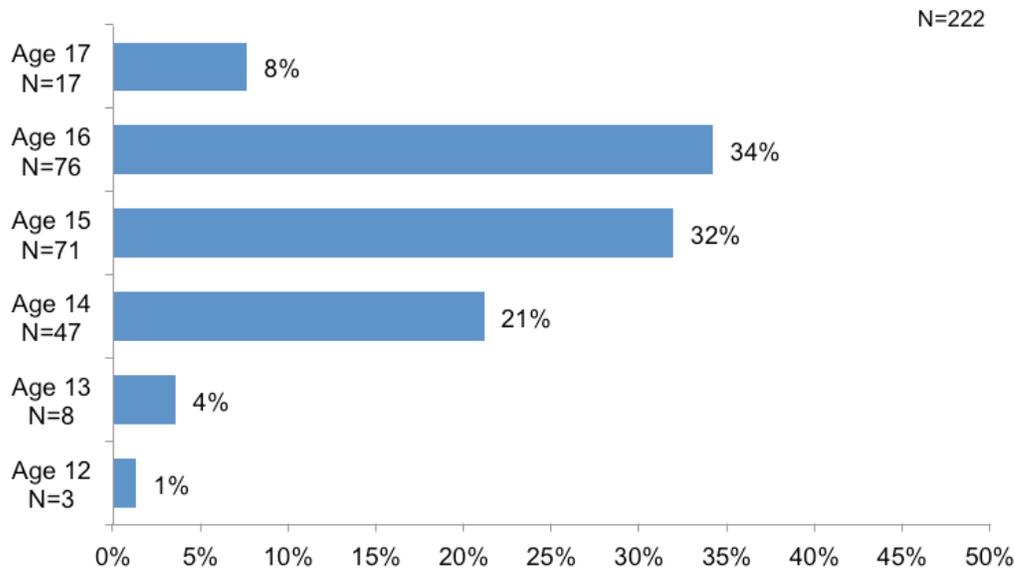
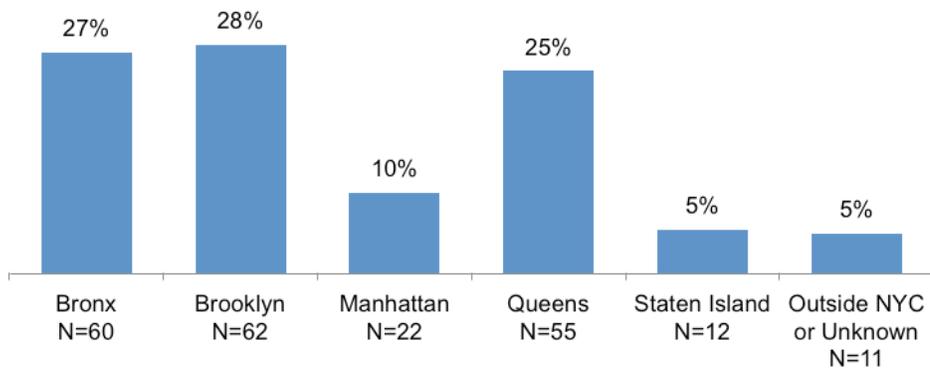


Figure 4. CY 2016 NSP Admissions by Home Borough



LIMITED-SECURE PLACEMENT

In CY 2016, 30 young people were newly admitted into LSP. Again, new admissions to LSP include youth who received an LSP or Unspecified placement designation, or were custodial transfers from OCFS. Compared to placement admissions in NSP, there was a higher percentage of boys (90 percent, or 27) and a greater presence of Black youth (67 percent, or 20). Similar to NSP admissions, most youth entering LSP were ages 15 and 16, though there is a higher percentage of 15-year-olds entering LSP. The top borough of origin for LSP admissions was Queens at 33 percent (or 10), followed by Brooklyn at 17 percent (or 5). Ten percent (or 3) of LSP youth admitted came from the foster care system.

Figure 5. CY 2016 LSP Admissions by Sex

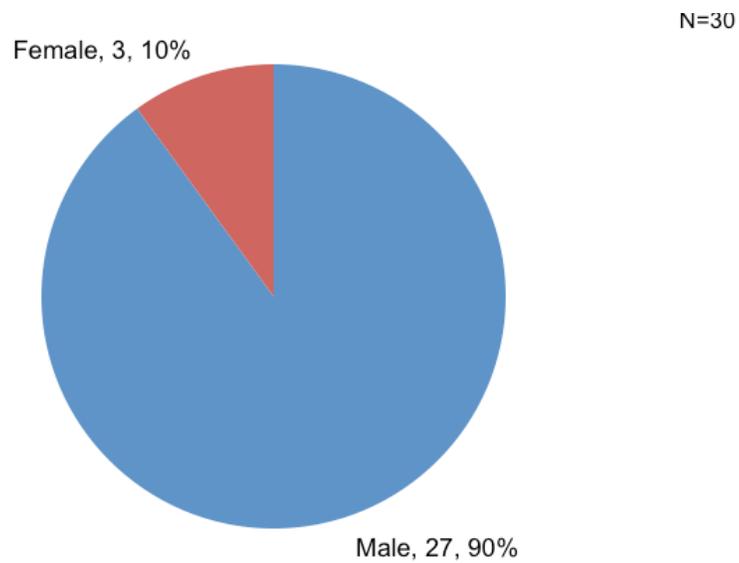


Figure 6. CY 2016 LSP Admissions by Race / Ethnicity

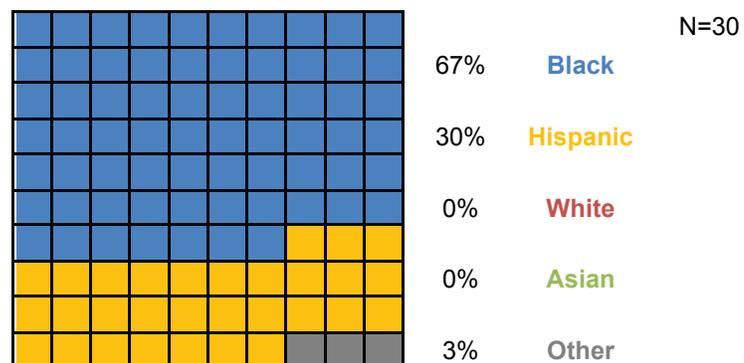


Figure 7. CY 2016 LSP Admissions by Age

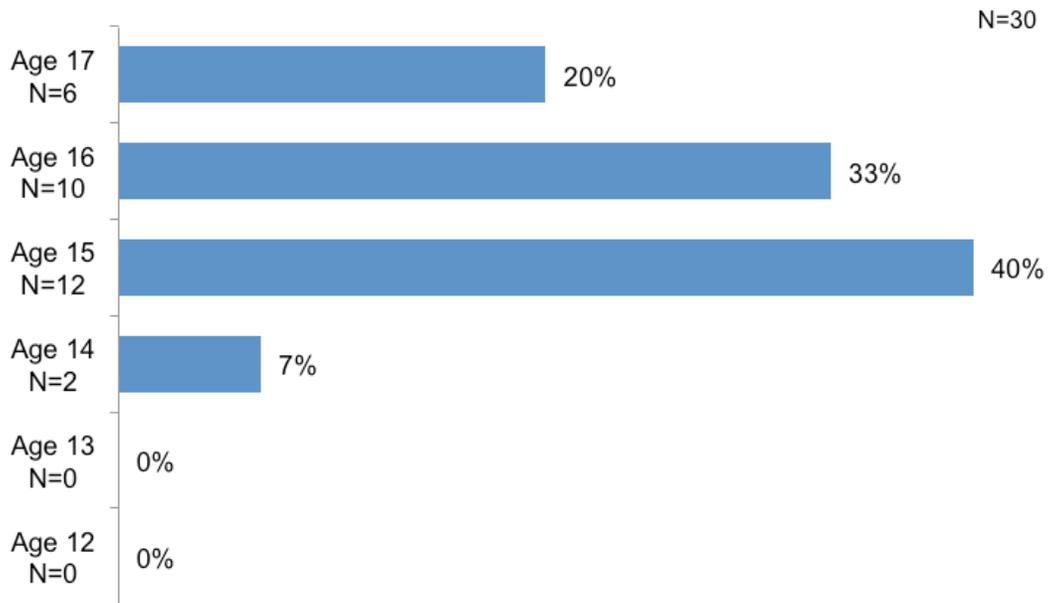
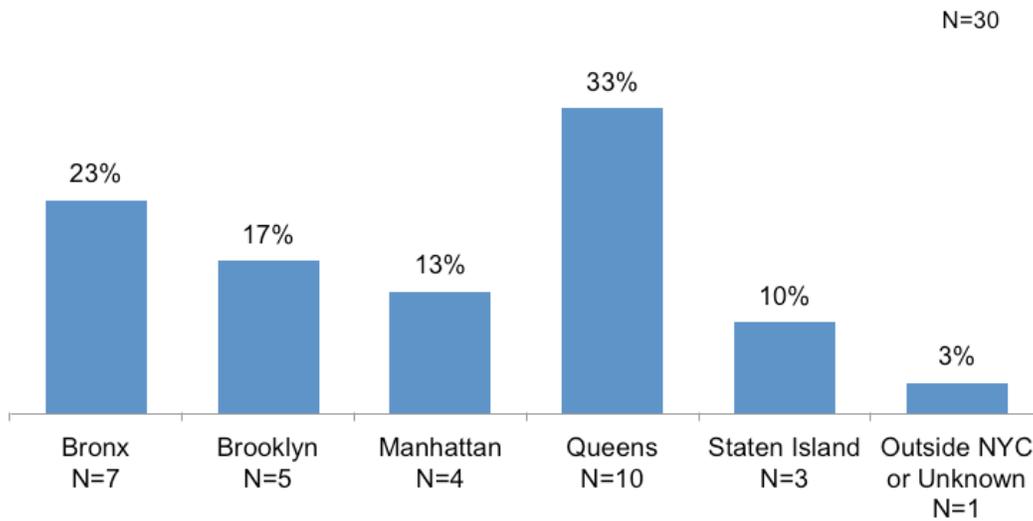


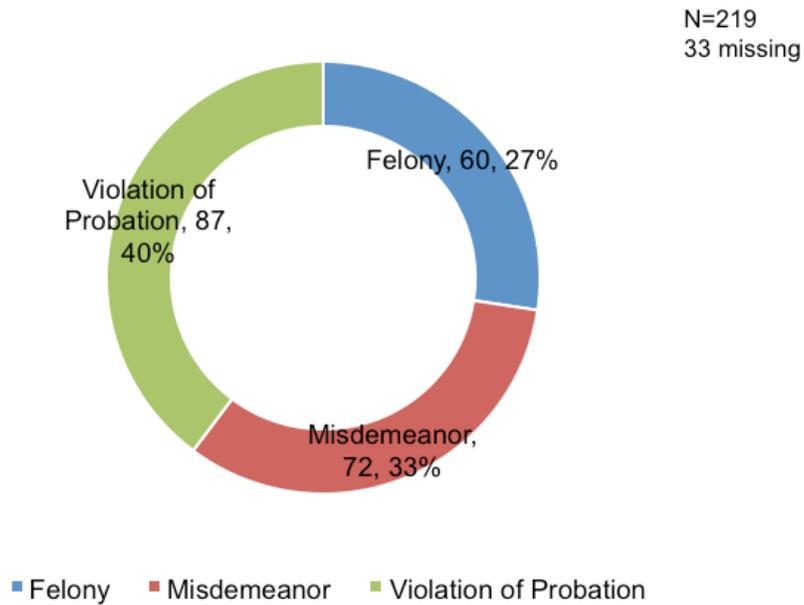
Figure 8. CY 2016 LSP Admissions by Home Borough



JUSTICE SYSTEM INVOLVEMENT

Of the 252 Close to Home admissions in CY 2016, fourteen percent (or N=36) of young people (NSP and LSP combined) had a previous Close to Home placement. Out of the 219 Close to Home admissions with adjudication type information⁵, a plurality of youth coming into Close to Home were placed on a Violation of Probation (40 percent, or 87). As shown in Figure 9, 33 percent of youth (or 72) were placed on a misdemeanor and 27 percent (or 60) were placed on a felony.

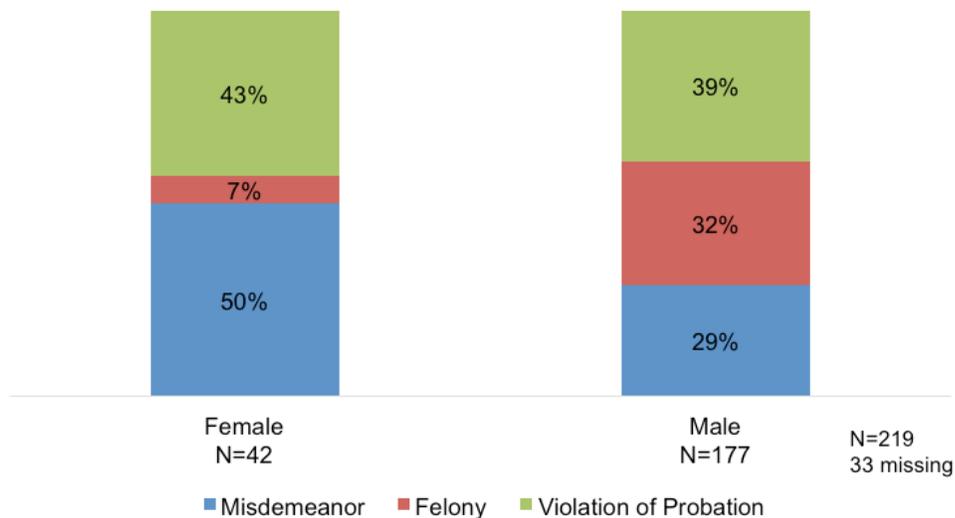
Figure 9. CY 2016 Close to Home Admissions by Top Charge Type



⁵ 33 youth were excluded from this analysis due to missing adjudication type data

When broken out by gender, we find that youth who identify as male are most likely to come to Close to Home as a result of a Violation of Probation (39 percent) and least likely to enter on a misdemeanor charge (29 percent). Youth who identify as female, on the other hand, are entering Close to Home half the time (50 percent) due to a misdemeanor, followed by a Violation of Probation (43 percent); only seven percent of girls are entering Close to Home on a felony charge.

Figure 10. CY 2016 Close to Home Admissions by Gender and Adjudication Type



The top three charges, after Violation of Probation, that resulted in adjudication in CY 2016 were:

1. Grand larceny in the 4th degree
2. Petit larceny
3. Criminal mischief with intent to damage property

PERMANENCY AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Close to Home manages the assessment, treatment and care of each youth by planning, coordinating and utilizing appropriate interventions of varying intensity and restriction. Central to the Close to Home Case Management model is the Placement and Permanency Specialist (PPS), who serves as each youth’s primary case manager, guide, and liaison to family members and service providers. PPS assignments remain the same for the entirety of each youth’s Close to Home placement and Aftercare supervision. This provides continuity, consistency, and a caring and trusting adult for the duration of their dispositional placement. These specialists also connect youth to social supports and resources whenever necessary.

Working in geographically designated units under the guidance of a Close to Home (CTH) Director of Placement and Permanency, PPS staff assess risk and needs, facilitate goal identification and development, and coordinate services with providers and caring adults involved in the youth's treatment. The PPS oversees the provision of services and partners with ACS Family Court Legal Services, residential and Aftercare service providers, DOE staff, foster care agency case planners, and other community resources.

Family Team Conferences

The Family Team Conferencing (FTC) model is used across ACS to facilitate effective service interventions for young people and to engage families and relevant stakeholders in the planning process. As appropriate, youth, parents, relatives, foster parents, adoptive parents, family friends, service providers, community representatives, ACS and Provider Agency staff are invited to attend each FTC. These conferences review family strengths and needs to develop a service plan, propose options for maintaining individual and public safety, and assess progress towards achieving positive outcomes. FTCs represent a process for engaging family, supportive resources, foster parents and relative caregivers in critical decisions related to community and individual safety, placement preservation, well-being and permanence.

In May 2016, Close to Home rolled out FTCs as an additional level of support to augment the work of the PPS and to align with agency-wide practice. In Close to Home, FTCs engage participants in an honest, open discussion about the core principles of child safety, placement stability and permanency, and family and child well-being. All service plan decisions are made in collaboration with the young person's family, members of their support circle, and service providers. As a result, youth and families are provided with a comprehensive continuum of support. Weaving together familial expertise and the knowledge of professionals fosters a collaborative effort to design effective and informed service plans.

Close to Home deploys a team of Family Engagement Conference Facilitators (FECF) to facilitate planning and support meetings that occur for the duration of the youth's dispositional placement order. Each FECF is assigned to specific Close to Home facilities to foster and build strong working relationships with youth, families, and Close to Home provider agency treatment teams. In addition to facilitating conferences at critical decision points during a youth's placement, the FECF's convene a meeting with the youth, family, PPS and service providers following a critical incident (such as an AWOL) to discuss presenting challenges and work with the group to create a plan of action.

INNOVATION

Recognizing that public safety is best achieved through the development of social and cognitive skills, Close to Home has continued to dedicate significant resources to system-wide integration of two leading innovations in the juvenile justice field. The first, known as the Risk-Needs-Responsivity Framework, is a series of structured, validated and responsive risk assessments that effectively matches each youth to the appropriate, least restrictive intervention and reduces

criminogenic risk by seeking out and targeting contributing factors. The second, broadly referred to as Positive Youth Development, is grounded in research that suggests youth are more likely to achieve positive outcomes when they are offered meaningful engagement in prosocial activities and develop supportive, trusting, and caring relationships with adults and peers.

Risk-Needs-Responsivity Framework

In a continuation of efforts beginning in CY 2015, ACS partnered with nationally recognized leaders in youth justice and Close to Home stakeholders to prepare for full implementation of a Risk, Needs, and Responsivity (RNR) framework for Close to Home. The primary principles of the RNR framework are:

- **Risk** – Program intensity is matched to the level of risk posed by the individual; Needs – Interventions target dynamic or changeable criminogenic risk factors;
- **Responsivity** – Strategic service delivery adapted to individual development level and learning capacity;
- **Professional Discretion** – Decisions are not made solely on the basis of “scores” and are weighed alongside legal, ethical, humanitarian, and service availability factors

This framework utilizes the Youth Level of Service Inventory (YLSI), a validated Risk Assessment Instrument used to identify criminogenic risk factors among young offenders, as the foundation for case management, service planning, and service delivery for youth. In New York City, the YLSI is initially administered by the Department of Probation (DOP) for all youth appearing in Family Court on a delinquency matter. This is a primary component of the decision-making process for judges and administrators in the juvenile justice system, and is well-suited to the Close to Home workforce, as the assessment can be administered by non-clinicians once fully trained and certified.

In CY 2016, ACS worked closely with DOP to develop a formal procedure for streamlining existing YLSI data from DOP the moment youth enter Close to Home. In addition to this initial assessment, the YLSI will be administered at critical moments in each youth’s placement to tailor services and inform the intensity or level of supervision each youth will receive upon release to Aftercare. The YLSI assesses youth service needs in the following domains:

- Prior and Current Offenses/Dispositions
- Family Circumstances
- Education/Employment
- Peer Relations
- Substance Abuse
- Leisure/Recreation
- Personality/Behavior
- Attitudes/Orientation

Due to an inherent emphasis on risk and needs, these types of assessments can be interpreted as relying solely on individual youth deficits. Through continued collaboration with Close to Home stakeholders, ACS is in the final stages of developing an RNR framework that both empowers youth to play a central role in their behavior change process and is compatible with positive youth development and strengths-based service delivery. ACS anticipates full implementation of the RNR framework by 2018.

Positive Youth Development

In CY 2016, ACS built upon the advancements of the previous year by further expanding and developing the profile of Close to Home services that align with positive youth development. These programs focus on offering youth and families an opportunity to engage in services that promote prosocial, vocational and academic engagement, creative arts, and positive adult and peer mentoring.

Creative Arts and Vocational Services

Carnegie Hall Music Connections is a collaboration with the Weill Music Institute, started in 2015, which offers workshops, musical training, and public performances for family members and peers to celebrate participants' achievements. This partnership affords youth the opportunity to earn elective course credit toward high school graduation while inspiring creativity and encouraging artistic growth. Close to Home has also continued to develop pathways for youth to access vocational programs, such as paid internships and job readiness workshops offered through the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development's Summer Youth Employment Program, which promote career exploration, financial literacy, and social growth.

Cure Violence

In 2015, Close to Home partnered with Cure Violence, an evidence-informed public health model that identifies and engages youth at highest risk of gun violence by employing Credible Messengers⁶ to diffuse street disputes, offer emergency crisis intervention, mediation, mentorship, and counseling. Cure Violence serves youth who reside within specific catchment areas, and provides linkages to neighborhood-based pro-social activities to prepare youth for return home. In line with national best practice, Credible Messengers use an asset-based approach to engage youth and facilitate conflict mediation sessions in residential and school-based settings.

This proactive response to the rise of gang affiliation among Close to Home youth was maximized in 2016, as ACS made significant operational changes to incorporate Cure Violence services at each point in the case management process. Close to Home began piloting the YLSI to identify and refer youth to Cure Violence while in residential placement, invited Cure Violence staff to participate in critical service plan meetings, and built upon the strengths of each Cure Violence Provider to tailor services for specific populations, such as gender-responsive

6 Credible Messengers have high street credibility, are connected to the community, and can relate to and engage high risk youth.

programming. By enhancing these existing partnerships and reserving services that emphasize continuing engagement, youth are afforded the opportunity to leverage positive experiences and achievements to participate in programming during residential placement, through aftercare, and well beyond their dispositional placement order. See Table 4 below for the community expertise of each Cure Violence Provider.

Table 4. Cure Violence Providers and Community Expertise

Cure Violence Providers	Community Expertise
Good Shepherd Services - Bronx Rises Against Guns (BRAG)	Bronx
Gangstas Making Astronomical Community Changes (GMACC)	Brooklyn
Getting Out and Staying Out (GOSO)	Manhattan
Life Camp	Queens
True 2 Life	Staten Island

Education

Since the start of Close to Home, education has been fundamental to the successful rehabilitation of young people in residential placement. According to the NYC DOE, “more than 90 percent of students enrolled in Passages Academy read at least one grade level below the national norm for students in their grade level”⁷. While acknowledging this difficult baseline, ACS Close to Home Providers work each day across a variety of school environments to ensure that the youth they supervise receive quality education and instruction. A majority of youth in Close to Home are educated in special schools run by the NYC DOE’s Passages Academy. NSP youth who are placed at Children’s Village Dobbs Ferry Campus attend the Greenburgh Eleven Unified School District (G-11). The campus has a capacity to serve 33 NSP youth. Similarly, NSP youth who are placed at St. John’s Residence for Boys attend NYC DOE’s District 75. In all circumstances, credits earned in placement transfer back to NYC DOE upon the young person’s return to school.

The 2016-2017 school year (SY) consists of data from the Fall semester of 2016 and the Spring semester of 2017. Because data are captured this way, it should be noted that the following data also reflect young people who were not admitted during CY 2016.

NYC DOE District 79 / Passages Academy

2016-2017 SY

- There were 177 Close to Home youth enrolled in Passages during the 2016-2017 school year.
- The average young person passed 91 percent of their courses.
- In comparison to previous school years, youth attending Passages earned more credits and passed more of their courses.

⁷ Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice and NYC Department of Education, *Maintaining the Momentum: A Plan for Safety and Fairness in Schools*, 11.

Table 5. Credits Earned and Courses Passed SY 13-14 to SY 16-17

	13-14 SY	14-15 SY	15-16 SY	16-17 SY
Average credits earned	6.3	6.9	6.4	9.3
Course pass rate (Percentage)	77.3	85.4	88.5	91.4
Passed 70% of Courses (Percentage)	68.1	83.8	88.7	94.1
Passed 80% of Courses (Percentage)	52.1	74.4	84.5	84.3
Passed 90% of Courses (Percentage)	27.2	53.4	61.3	66.7

- Among the 50 enrolled students who took one or more New York State Regents exams, 46 percent (23) passed one or more Regents at the Regents level (a score of 65 or higher).
- Among the 30 enrolled students with a disability who took one or more Regents exams, 80 percent (or 24) passed at the Local level (a score of 55 or higher).
- Among middle school students eligible for promotion at the end of the school year, 93 percent of youth were promoted at least one grade level.

NYC DOE District 75 / ST John's Residence for Boys

2016-2017 School Year

- During the 2016-2017 SY, there were 32 youth enrollments in D-75.
- The average student in St. John's NSP had an attendance rate of 96 percent.
- Among youth with course completion and credit accumulation data, the average student completed 10 courses (N=27) and earned 9 credits (N=26) during their time of enrollment.
- During this time period, 14 young people took a NYS Regents exam; six passed at the local level and nine passed at the Regents level.

Greenburgh Eleven Unified School District

2016-2017 School Year

- Fifty-two Close to Home NSP youth enrolled in G-11 during the 2016-2017 SY.
- Among the 12 youth with data on the number of credits accrued during enrollment, the average youth earned 3.52 credits.
- Forty-three youth had data on courses taken and the average young person took 7 courses.
- Among the 29 youth with data on courses completed, the average student completed 2 courses.
- According to G-11 data, 13 students were able to take a NYS Regents exam during the school year. Eight youth were able to pass the Regents at the local level and four youth passed at the Regents level.

TRANSFERS AND MODIFICATIONS

ACS is committed to providing the appropriate level of care for all Close to Home youth. Transfers and modifications are only considered when all efforts to prevent such action have been exhausted. This includes using interventions established during FTC meetings to address recurring problematic behaviors. In a limited number of circumstances, Close to Home stakeholders may determine that a youth in residential placement requires either a different residential setting of the same security level (transfer) or a more restrictive level of residential care (modification).

[See Table 6 below for the number of transfers and modifications in Calendar Year 2016]

Table 6. Transfers and Modifications CY 2015-2016

Movement Type	CY 2015	CY 2016
NSP to NSP Transfers	112	66
LSP to LSP Transfers	0 ⁸	11
NSP to LSP Transfers ⁹	0	5
NSP to LSP Modifications	10	6
LSP to OCFS Modifications	0 ¹⁰	0

Community Reintegration

Release planning begins immediately upon admission into placement, and ACS is committed to appropriately matching youth and families to Aftercare services upon release. In line with the philosophy of applying the least restrictive environment in meeting a young person's rehabilitative needs, Close to Home aims to release all youth as soon as practicable, with consideration to public safety, individual progress in residential care, enrollment in a community-based school, and the development of a comprehensive Aftercare service plan.

Among NSP youth released in 2016 (N=210), the median length of stay in residential placement was 229 days, or approximately 7.6 months. For LSP youth released in 2016 (N=12), the median length of stay was 191 days, or approximately 6.3 months.

Aftercare

Aftercare is a critical component of successful community reintegration, and ACS has procured and developed a network of contracted service providers to support youth upon their initial return home. Although initial release from residential care is conditional and can be revoked,

⁸ Note: LSP began in December of 2015.

⁹ While NSP to LSP transfers are an increase in security level traditionally referred to as modifications, youth with an unspecified placement designation who begin in NSP and are moved to LSP are counted as transfers. A formal modification for youth with NSP or LSP designations requires legal court order.

¹⁰ Note: LSP began in December of 2015.

Aftercare supervision enables youth to successfully return home by practicing and enhancing the skills they acquired in placement. Placement and Permanency Specialists (PPS) serve as the legal authority for youth on Aftercare. PPS are responsible for identifying potential public safety risks by conducting routine assessments and facilitating appropriate responses to negative behaviors or actions, including extensions of placement, modifications and revocations.

In CY 2016, five contracted nonprofit agencies provided Aftercare services for NSP youth using one of the following evidence-based models (EBM): Functional Family Therapy (FFT), Multi-Systemic Therapy-Family Integrated Transitions (MST-FIT), the Boys Town Model, or an evidence-informed Positive Youth Development (prosocial) model. In addition, all LSP programs are contracted to provide MST-FIT or FFT aftercare services to youth seamlessly upon transition to the community. In CY 2016, a total of 222 youth transitioning out of Close to Home residential placement were released to the community. 203 youth (or 91 percent of releases) were enrolled with one of five Aftercare Providers, 137 of whom completed the full aftercare service program during the same calendar year. The remaining 66 youth were active on aftercare status at the close of the reporting period, with an anticipated completion of aftercare services in 2017. The chart below details the five provider agencies and the populations served:

Table 7. CY 2016 Close to Home Aftercare Providers

Agency	Population Served	1Model	Enrolled
Boys Town New York	General NSP - Youth citywide	Boys Town Model	39
Children's Aid Society	General NSP - Youth returning to Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island	FFT	15
The Children's Village	Specialized NSP - Youth with sexually abusive behaviors	MST-FIT	36
The Children's Village	Specialized NSP - Youth with severe emotional disturbance or fire-setting behaviors		
Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services	General NSP - Youth returning to Manhattan and the Bronx	FFT	15
Fund for the City of New York	General NSP - Youth returning to Brownsville, Jamaica, Harlem, and Staten Island catchment areas	Evidence-Informed Positive Youth Development (Pro-Social)	98

Revocations

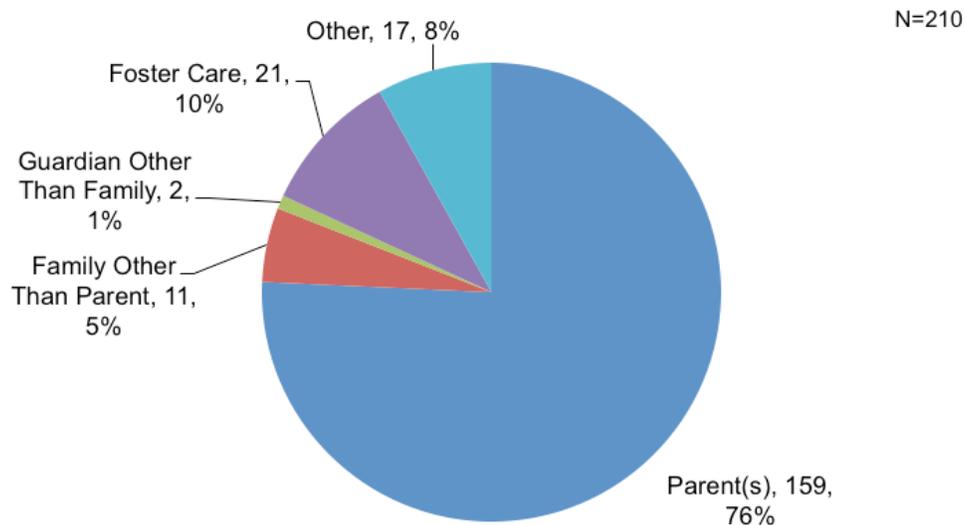
Youth on Aftercare status may be revoked¹¹ to residential placement at any time during their time on Aftercare. Although revocation is an option when young people violate their conditions of release, it is only considered after interventions of increasing intensity are exhausted while on Aftercare. A total of 21 youth were revoked from Aftercare to residential placement in 2016, a decrease from the previous year.

PERMANENCY UPON RELEASE

As shown previously, there were 222 releases from Close to Home residential placement in CY 2016. Among all releases from an NSP residence (N=210), 76 percent of youth were released to a parent, 10 percent were released to a foster care agency, and five percent were released to a family member other than a parent. The remaining nine percent of youth were released to a permanent resource other than a family member, hospitals, adoptive families, independent living and, in some limited circumstances, juvenile or adult detention facilities. In addition, there were 11 NSP youth with a permanency goal of Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) in 2016.

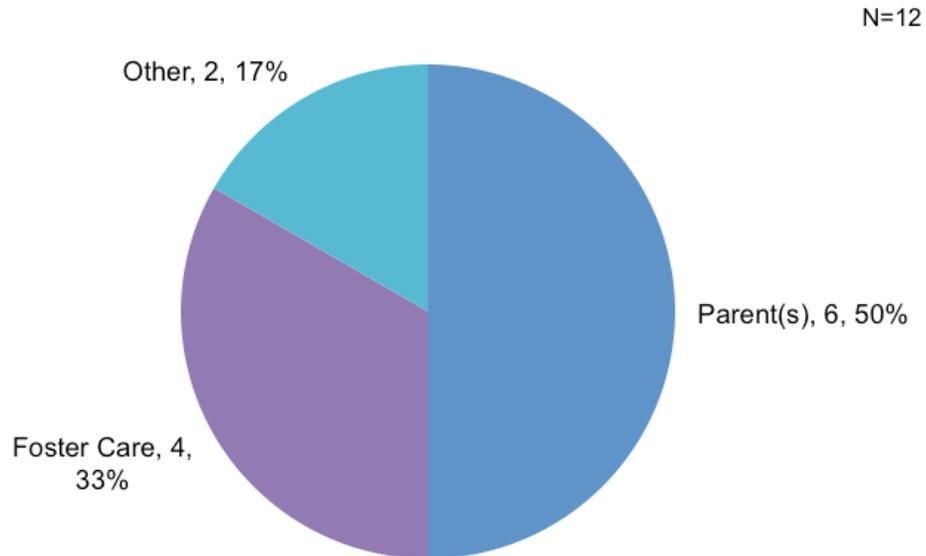
For LSP releases (N=12), 50 percent were released to a parent and 33 percent were released to a foster care agency. The remaining 17 percent were released to hospitals, adoptive families, independent living, or a juvenile/adult detention facility.

Figure 11. CY 2016 NSP Releases by Receiving Resource



¹¹ Prior to a release, each youth reviews and signs their “conditions of release”, acknowledging ACS’ expectations with respect to the youth’s continued compliance and engagement with aftercare services. As per ACS policy, a youth may be revoked from aftercare status upon violation of one or more “conditions of release”.

Figure 12. CY 2016 LSP Releases by Receiving Resource



SAFETY

Emotional and physical safety is vital to providing youth with a supportive atmosphere to change problem behaviors, build positive peer and adult relationships, and nurture association and attachment to their home communities. In addition to program models that encourage positive development and celebrate youth achievements, all program staff members are trained in crisis intervention and attend recurring trainings to refresh and build upon existing skills.

Incidents in Close to Home are defined as events which affect the health, safety, and/or security of youth, staff, or the community or which affects a facility, the agency, or agency property. All incidents involving youth, staff, or residences require appropriate attention and timely reporting by provider agency staff to the ACS Movement Control and Communications Unit (MCCU) and, where applicable, to the NYS Justice Center's Vulnerable Person's Central Register (VPCR). ACS requires provider agencies to report incidents accurately, thoroughly, and timely.

INCIDENT TRENDS

Incident reporting is necessary to identify service needs, discover gaps in training, and develop technical assistance resource deployment strategies. A better understanding of where and how often incidents occur allows ACS staff to assist Provider Agencies with reducing incidents. In CY 2016, the incident trends analyzed include:

- Youth Absent Without Leave (AWOL)
- Youth on Youth Assaults and Altercations
- Youth on Staff Assaults
- Physical Restraints
- VPCR Substantiated Cases
- Contraband

Building on the emotional and physical safety improvements of the previous year, Close to Home realized a continued decrease in each indicator of safety and security in CY 2016. Improved adherence to incident reporting protocol and the implementation of additional oversight mechanisms to monitor emergency physical interventions led to an increase in the number of VPCR substantiated cases in CY 2016. See Table 8 for NSP three-year comparison data and Tables 9 and 11 for AWOL Incidents by De-identified Provider and Site.

Table 8. NSP Safety Incidents CY 2014-2016

Incident Category	2014	2015	2016	Percent Change (2015-2016)
AWOL Incidents	363	232	136	-41.4%
Youth that AWOL'ed	171	134	86	-35.8%
Total Assaults and Altercations	615	450	280	-37.8%
Youth on Youth	460	302	186	-38.4%
Youth on Staff	155	148	94	-36.5%
VPCR Substantiated Cases	25	33	45	36.4%
Restraints	728	608	405	-33.4%
Contraband	276	186	152	-18.3%

Table 9. NSP AWOL Incidents by De-Identified Provider and Site

PROVIDER	SITE	TOTAL NUMBER OF AWOL INCIDENTS
A	1	5
	2	7
B	1	2
C	1	13
	2	0
D	1	2
	2	5
	3	5
E	1	1
	2	1
	3	3
	4	5
	5	7
	6	7
F	1	1
	2	1
	3	7
	4	2
G	1	0
	2	1
H	1	8
	2	0
	3	0
	4	13
	5	5
	6	1
I	SCHOOLS	17
J	1	4
K	1	1
L	1	2
M	3	10
TOTAL		136

Table 10. LSP Safety Incidents CY 2016

Incident Category	2016
AWOL Incidents	3
Youth that AWOL'ed	3
Total Assaults and Altercations	65
Youth on Youth	24
Youth on Staff	41
Physical Restraints	149
Mechanical Restraints	10
Contraband	38

Table 11. LSP AWOL Incidents by De-identified Provider and Site

PROVIDER	SITE	TOTAL NUMBER OF AWOL INCIDENTS
A	1	0
	2	0
B	1	0
C	1	3
	2	0
TOTAL		3

Oversight, Monitoring, and Technical Assistance

Within the Division of Youth and Family Justice, the Office of Planning, Policy, and Performance (OPPP) is responsible for monitoring, providing technical assistance, and evaluating performance of Close to Home programs. OPPP monitoring, technical assistance and evaluation activities operate within a quality assurance framework that uses data and perpetual oversight to drive continuous system improvement. These activities are centered on a foundation of data-driven performance management and best practices in quality improvement.

The office is charged with:

- Conducting programmatic reviews and site inspections using standardized tools;
- Analyzing, interpreting, and responding to real-time data and data trends to guide quality improvement;
- Developing improvement plans to address program deficiencies;
- Communicating regularly with programs and providing targeted technical assistance;

Collaboration with Close to Home Providers is essential to improving practice, preventing critical incidents, and uncovering trends. OPPP maintains frequent communication with Close to Home Providers regarding specific individual incidents or an uptick in concerning trends. This communication is informed by routine oversight activities and observations or feedback from Close to Home partners.

In CY 2016, OPPP began conducting regular unannounced safety and security checks during the overnight shift at all Close to Home facilities, an additional oversight mechanism to monitor provider agency compliance with 24/7 operational requirements. As a result, OPPP increased the number of site inspections from a total of 81 in 2015 to a total of 348 in 2016. This total included 256 routine site inspections and 92 unannounced safety and security checks.

Technical Assistance

Data review and analysis help identify successes, potential areas of improvement, trends indicating a serious programmatic concern, and/or indicate whether the Close to Home provider is out of compliance with the DYFJ Quality Assurance Standards and related ACS policies. In CY 2016, practice areas of focus for data review and routine oversight activities include, but were not limited to, the following domains¹²:

- Organizational/Program Structure and Staffing Ratio
- Staff Permanency, Retention, and Recruitment
- Staff Support, Supervision, and Accountability
- Training and Professional Development
- Incident Reporting and Documentation
- Required Log Books and Paper Files
- Maintenance, Upkeep, and Environmental Safety
- Youth, Staff, and Public Safety and Security
- Therapeutic Programming and Daily Activities
- Evidence-Based Model/Approach Fidelity
- School Engagement, Attendance, and Academic Transition Planning
- Recreational and gender responsive programming
- Youth Treatment, Case Management, and Transition Planning

As system-wide safety improvements inherent to an evolving system are realized, ACS will continue to work closely with national experts and developers of therapeutic treatment models utilized in Close to Home to integrate measures of model fidelity into ongoing monitoring and quality assurance.

12 Data Infrastructure to support domains is under development with full implementation targeted for 2018

Heightened Monitoring and Corrective Action

In the event technical assistance does not sufficiently address programmatic concerns, OPPP may elevate the Close to Home Provider or individual program to formal monitoring status. Placement on formal monitoring status occurs when routine oversight activities find persistent negative trends in multiple practice domains or following an egregious act or incident that seriously jeopardizes youth safety and/or overall risk to the program.

Elevation to a formal monitoring status indicates that a Close to Home Provider or individual program lacks stability and has challenges providing youth with the supportive, strengths-based services necessary to succeed while in residential placement. Formal monitoring status involves an increased level of support, targeted technical assistance in a series of practice domains, and increased contact with the Close to Home provider through formal meetings and monthly site inspections. OPPP utilizes two formal monitoring status levels: Heightened Monitoring Status (HMS) and Corrective Action Status (CAS).

While placed on Heightened Monitoring, OPPP increases the frequency of monitoring activities, particularly site inspections, in-person meetings, and conference calls. This increase in direct contact is both supportive and collaborative with a dual focus on short-term triage and long-term sustainability, and often involves Field Operations, OCFS, and other Close to Home stakeholders. A Provider or program may be elevated from HMS to CAS following failure to complete HMS deliverables within the agreed upon target completion dates or, during HMS, a serious safety risk or concern is identified or reported which indicates a need for intensive focus and additional monitoring activities. A provider may also be immediately elevated to Corrective Action following an egregious and/or negligent event or incident.

Although each program placed on Heightened Monitoring and Corrective Action in 2016 encountered unique challenges, all faced a combination of safety and security concerns and broader programmatic issues. The nature and outcome of each status/plan is listed in the following table:

Table 12. Heightened Monitoring (HMS) and Corrective Action (CAS) Status, CY 2016

Program	Status	Reasons for Status	Start Date	End Date	Outcome
A	CAS	Hiring, Training, and Supervision of Staff Behavior Management and Youth Supervision Documentation Accuracy and Incident Reporting	Dec 2015	May 2016	Stepped-Down to Heightened Monitoring Status
A	HMS	Hiring, Training, and Supervision of Staff Behavior Management and Youth Supervision Documentation Accuracy and Incident Reporting	May 2016	June 2016	Program returned to regular monitoring status
B	HMS	Program Leadership and Staff Supervision Behavior Management and Youth Supervision Treatment Planning and Case Management Program Model Implementation and Fidelity School Engagement and Educational Transition Planning Treatment Planning and Case Management	Jan 2016	July 2016	Program closed, contract terminated
C	HMS	Program Leadership and Staff Supervision Program Model Implementation and Fidelity Staff Training and Professional Development Documentation Accuracy and Incident Reporting Behavior Management and Youth Engagement	Mar 2016	Dec 2016	Program returned to regular monitoring status
D	CAS	Staff Training and Supervision Safety and Security Behavior Management and Youth Supervision	Apr 2016	June 2016	Program Stepped-Down to Heightened Monitoring Status

D	HMS	Staff Training and Supervision Safety and Security Behavior Management and Youth Supervision	June 2016	July 2016	Program returned to regular monitoring status
A	HMS	Staff Training and Supervision Safety and Security Behavior Management and Youth Supervision	Sept 2016	Dec 2016	Program returned to regular monitoring status
E	HMS	Staff Training and Supervision Safety and Security Behavior Management and Youth Supervision	Oct 2016	Jan 2017	Program returned to regular monitoring status
A	HMS	Staff Training and Supervision Safety and Security Behavior Management and Youth Supervision	Nov 2016	Mar 2017	Program elevated to Corrective Action Status
A	HMS	Staff Training and Supervision Safety and Security Behavior Management and Youth Supervision	Nov 2016	Mar 2017	Program returned to regular monitoring status

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

An important measure of community engagement is the number of Community Advisory Board (CAB) meetings each Close to Home Provider holds each year. As part of the quality assurance process, ACS monitors the engagement of each Close to Home Provider Agency with the surrounding community. Similar to last year, ACS surveyed Close to Home Provider Agencies on CAB meetings, existing relationship with the police/community, and the type of programs young people were offered during their time in residential placement. For the purpose of this report, JCCA Gateways was excluded from the analysis due to program closure.

Of the 28 Close to Home programs with available CAB meeting data, 93 percent held at least one CAB meeting in CY 2016, with an average of three to four CAB meetings each. Nearly 80 percent of Close to Home sites expressed a positive and consistent relationship with their local police precinct. For many sites, police and other community members regularly show up to CAB meetings. This data further highlights a systemic shift in focus from “start-up” operations to building and enhancing durable community partnerships.

In an effort to connect young people to community programs and events, the vast majority of Close to Home programs engaged in community-based programming. These programs and services allow

youth the opportunity to engage in positive prosocial activities and foster strong community bonds during their stay in residential placement. Activities include, but are not limited to:

- Carnegie Hall Music Connections and similar music-oriented arts programs
- Community-based cultural events, such as celebrations of Black History Month and Hispanic Heritage Month
- Drama therapy, creative writing, and other self-expression art programs
- Broadway shows and sporting events
- Volunteer efforts to help New York City's homeless
- Food drives and food pantry volunteering
- Environmental and sustainability programming
- Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)
- Anti-violence mentoring and gang prevention programming

Conclusion

The majority of Close to Home youth met or exceeded program expectations in 2016. They developed insights and learned new skills to reach individualized treatment goals, participated in recreational, cultural, and group activities, and received educational instruction in credit-bearing public schools. The passage of landmark "Raise the Age" legislation in April 2017 has necessitated significant collaboration with stakeholders once on the periphery of the juvenile justice system. With consideration to the operational achievements and innovations described in this report, ACS and our Close to Home partners are uniquely situated to shepherd the arrival of a new era in youth justice while continuing to procure and expand programs that improve public safety outcomes and well-being at each point in the service continuum.