

# Heading Upstream:

## Recommendations to Maintain and Accelerate Gains in Safety and Well-Being for New York City's Families, Children and Youth

January 2022



*COFCCA is the principal representative of New York City's child welfare providers – the nonprofits that provide child maltreatment prevention, family support, family foster care, and group foster care services. Our member agencies also provide non-secure and limited-secure detention programs, as well as other services designed to divert youth from juvenile justice involvement.*

*In partnership with New York City's Administration for Children's Services (ACS), our member agencies provide a continuum of supports for youth of all ages, across all boroughs, meeting a multitude of needs to maintain and improve our youngest New Yorkers' safety, connectedness, and well-being. Our more than 50 NYC member agencies employ more than 25,000 New York City residents, supporting tens of thousands of children and their families.*

**5 STRATEGIES TO MAINTAIN AND ACCELERATE MOMENTUM OF GAINS ACHIEVED SINCE 1990s**

New York City's child welfare and juvenile justice systems have improved significantly since the 1990s, when the number of children in foster care was at its peak, by investing in evidence-based prevention and foster care services, reducing the use of residential foster care, and keeping justice-involved youth within the City, while, at the same time, maintaining child safety and well-being and significantly reducing the City's expenses.

It is critical to continue building on these gains while also tackling both new and long-standing challenges, from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic across the entire system to the racial injustices inherent in the system that are long overdue to be confronted. It is crucial that the new administration take steps in the first 100 days to stabilize the system, secure the gains of the past year, and set the course for a new chapter of improvements and innovations.

**1. Do right by older adolescents and youth aging out of foster care.**

- Focus educational investments for youth to ensure High School graduation and post-secondary success.
- Ensure youth/young adult needs are met in supportive housing and subsidized housing plans by opening more supportive/transitional housing slots for youth leaving foster care and expanding voucher availability.
- Fully fund Fair Futures to baseline the program and bring the program to full scale for our older youth in foster care, so that every youth can have the services of coaches, tutors, and specialists through age 26.

**2. Stabilize and invest in the child welfare system workforce, which is predominantly female and People of Color (POC).**

- Eliminate pay disparity by increasing child welfare and human services contract funding to allow agencies to pay their staff on par with their public sector colleagues (currently a gap of ~\$10,000 exists between entry-level ACS child protective specialists and entry-level contract agency caseworkers).
- Include a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) in the FY23 budget *and in every annual budget thereafter*.

**3. Confront systemic racism in protective services investigations, foster care, and juvenile justice.**

- Dismantle racist policies from public systems that consciously or unconsciously perpetuate unjust outcomes for POC. Examine the policies and protocols of ACS and other public agencies (HRA, DHS, DOE) that impact youth and families, especially low-income families, and how racial bias and institutional racism affect the experience of families of color.
- Invest in communities, families and youth of color, especially young men of color, across public agencies and systems that interact with children and families.

**4. Invest in foster parents and expand their capacity to provide trauma-informed care to more children with complex emotional, behavioral, medical, and mental health needs.**

- Fully reimburse foster parents for the true costs of the work, including out-of-pocket expenses and in-kind costs such as time transporting children to and from visits, by increasing the foster parent board rate, along with assessing the foster parent community's other needs.

- Investigate the barriers to foster home placement faced by children with complex needs and implement new methods to support foster parents in caring for these young people.
- Increase the availability of high-quality foster parent training in topics such as understanding and managing problematic behaviors, child development, complex medical needs, and psychology.

**5. Ensure a well-funded continuum of community-based prevention programs, including primary prevention, general prevention, and evidence-based prevention.**

- Fully fund the Family Enrichment Centers to support a system of community-based social supports for parents and families, and maintain safe spaces for families to work toward self-sufficiency.
- Invest in primary prevention strategies such as employment, housing, health, and education supports to avoid unnecessary intervention in the child welfare system.
- Provide flexible funding that allow programs to tailor family support for individual family needs and circumstances.

The following sections provide detailed background regarding NYC child welfare and juvenile justice, as well as each of the areas described above. We at COFCCA are also happy to meet to discuss any of these urgent needs and address any questions you may have. We are looking forward to working with you and your administration in the coming years.

### **Highlights of Progress Made in New York City Child Welfare, 1990-Present**

In 1991, 49,100 children were in NYC foster care; as of August 2021, ACS data shows only 7,136 children in care, an astounding decrease of 85%. Much of the reason for this decrease has been the City's investment in **prevention services**. NYC's Administration for Children's Services has the most comprehensive prevention services programs in the country, with service models and interventions that have led other jurisdictions to seek ACS' consultation and guidance. ACS' expansion of prevention services in NYC has created significant changes in the lives of children and families, with exponential growth and access to a full continuum of community-based prevention programs and an average of 43,000 children served annually over the past 10 years. These programs not only provide supports that permit children to remain safely in their homes, which is better for the children and families, but also has **saved the City millions of dollars** that would otherwise have been used to fund foster care placements and programs. **Continuing the City's investments in these services will not only further improve the outcomes for children and families, but will further the innovations that have made New York's Children's Services a top model for child welfare services across the country.**

For those families for whom prevention services are not an option, ACS' contract agencies provide a spectrum of **foster care** settings with services based on the intensity of the children's needs, including regular and therapeutic foster boarding homes; foster homes for medically-fragile children; group homes located in the community; and residential treatment centers with small-group settings on a larger, enclosed campus. ACS and the agencies have **increased the number of children moved from foster boarding homes to placements with relatives** as certified kinship foster homes so that, with the benefits foster parents receive (e.g., training, a monthly stipend, caseworker support), the children have the benefit of keeping close connection with their families via a willing family member or long-time family friend.

ACS and the provider agencies have also transformed a system that routinely placed incoming teens into long-term **residential foster care** placements to a system that uses residential care as a last resort, a placement **for youth who truly need the supports of intensive care and for only as long as that level of care is needed**. Not only does this place NYC in an enviable position as new federal rules about residential care come into effect, but **this shift in the use of residential care is better for the youth (and better for the City's budget).**

At the same time as we have **achieved gains in permanency (discharge to parents, relatives, or adoptive parents) for all youth in foster care**, we recognize that despite our efforts **some older youth will need assistance through young adulthood**. As we support parents and prevent younger children from coming into foster care, older youth comprise a significant percentage of kids in care. These youth, like many youth not involved with child welfare, are attending college or trade school, living independently or with other young adults, and striving to find and maintain permanent employment at a living wage, but in need of additional support. **Investing in these youth who are straddling the line**

**between childhood and adulthood will yield better outcomes for the youth with less need to rely on adult supportive systems in the future.**

The City has also significantly improved **juvenile justice** practice. Before 2012, youth who committed crimes serious enough to warrant detention were sent to OCFS-run facilities upstate, far from family, and attended on-site education programs, completing classwork that did not convert into NYC Department of Education credits. Additionally, NYC paid OCFS for the time spent in OCFS care based on a formula that basically divided the cost of running the facility by the days and number of youth in their care, meaning that even as the City sent fewer children to these facilities the cost per child to the City *increased* to cover the fixed costs of the facilities. ACS invested in the **Juvenile Justice Initiative** in 2006-2007, a program which continues today. Providers developed evidence-based models to serve this population and offered these programs to keep kids in communities. Family Court judges, prosecutors and defense attorneys were cultivated to learn about the models and use them. NYC then recruited child welfare providers to operate **non-secure and limited-secure facilities under a new Close to Home program** (often referred to as CTH or C2H). These programs used new research in preventing teen recidivism through means including involving the families in the youth's rehabilitation, and keeping them on track academically by securely transporting them to and monitoring them in special school programs. **These efforts resulted in better outcomes for the youth (and, again, cost savings for the City).**

Currently there are a number of forces impacting the child welfare system. The federal **Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)**, implemented in New York State this year, encourages states to place fewer children in foster care by allowing federal funds to be spent on new prevention programs. This will allow the state to expand the number of families served through prevention services, improve the quality and effectiveness of programs, and improve access to community-based services for all families that could benefit from such services across the state. FFPSA's funding model will bring **additional dollars to NYC that will enable ACS to enhance and build upon existing primary and tertiary prevention programming** (services that do not involve ACS regularly monitoring the families).

In addition to enhancing prevention services to prevent foster care placement, FFPSA especially discourages the use of residential foster care by requiring additional checks on residential placements (e.g., case-by-case review by outside individuals, required family court approvals) and requiring regular case reviews to ensure this higher level of care remains necessary for every youth in residential care. FFPSA encourages states to create more community-based, family-supported services for youth and children in need of child welfare interventions. **ACS has already reduced NYC's use of residential care** significantly, between keeping youth at home and by supporting more youth in regular or kinship foster care. At the time of this writing, ACS is reviewing the proposals filed by providers for ACS' new model, "Enhanced Family Foster Care" (EFFC). **EFFC merges the higher requirements and supports of therapeutic foster care with traditional family-based foster care** to better support all children and families, and hopefully will meet the needs of more youth who might otherwise be placed in residential care. The success of this model is predicated on the supports we provide to our foster parents, a population that, as stated above, is not presently adequately supported for the work they are asked to perform.

Connected to the progress in reducing foster care is ACS' focus on permanency – ensuring youth are only in foster care as long as necessary, and are discharged to their parents, other family members, or

adoptive parents as soon as is practicable. Discharging children from care involves the **Family Courts**, which were beset by problems of their own during the pandemic, problems that have exacerbated delays in permanency. Providers, ACS, and the Courts have worked to adapt and have improved timeliness of discharges in recent months, but there is more work to be done. We want to continue to partner with the state and City on improving the time it takes to discharge children and youth to a permanent family along with improving general timeliness of the various Family Court mandates throughout the life of a case.

Finally, the number of youth being served in the **non-secure and limited-secure facilities** has decreased in recent years, even before the Raise the Age reforms allowed judges more discretion regarding which youth to detain and for what reasons. Close to Home has diverted justice-involved youth away from upstate juvenile detention centers, made it possible for youth to remain in their communities in NYC, and provided community-based youth development programs. ACS has recently issued contracts for the non-secure programs, giving the incoming administration a solid base from which to start its efforts in youth justice. The **next procurement cycle for juvenile justice services is scheduled to begin July 2022**, with contracts to start July 1, 2023. This means your administration will have a significant opportunity to impact juvenile justice programming. The strength of these programs and sustained successful outcomes for these youth will depend on the availability of community-based supports for the youth and families; access to aftercare services, educational and vocational programs, and other youth development opportunities; an increase in workforce supports, pay parity, and baselined funding to sustain quality programs and a credentialed and stable workforce, and inclusion of residential models that are tailored for a wide range of specialized needs of youth (young women, young people who identify as LGBTQIA+, and trauma-based services).

As the administration heads into its first year, we are greatly encouraged by your appointment of Anne Williams-Isom as Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services and Jess Dannhauser as Commissioner of the Administration for Children's Services. These two experienced and visionary human services professionals are excellent additions to your team and we look forward to working with them in the coming years.

#### **Recommendation 1: Do right by older adolescents and youth aging out of foster care.**

- Focus educational investments for youth to ensure high school graduation and college/skills training success.
- Ensure youth/young adult needs are met in supportive housing and subsidized housing plans by opening more supportive/transitional housing slots for youth leaving foster care and expanding voucher availability.
- Fully fund Fair Futures to baseline the program and bring the program to full scale for our older youth in foster care; continue and expand funding for coaches, tutors, and specialists so that every youth can have these services through age 26.

As prevention programs keep many children from entering foster care, a significant subset of the foster care population are adolescents. These are youth the City has identified as needing to be removed from their homes; fully supporting these youth is not a choice, from our perspective, but an obligation the City must fulfill.

In recent years, agencies found themselves in search of new interventions to successfully engage these youth and put them on a course to successful adulthood. After a pilot with a few agencies, NYC provider agencies implemented Fair Futures, an extremely promising program that provides older youth in foster care with coaches, tutors, and specialists to meet their needs. As their work has progressed, they have identified the key needs of the older youth in foster care – education, employment and housing.

After ensuring physical health and safety for children, education is key to building capacity and a pathway for children to grow into strong, independent adults. The number of disconnected, under-credited and over-aged youth in NYC has increased. Youth are exposed to more community violence, have extensive gang affiliations and access to weapons, and require a broad range of academic and vocational development programs. Many youth are also in need of intensive mental health services and community-based aftercare programs to help them recover from years of justice involvement. Older youth with child welfare or juvenile justice involvement need better pathways through DOE to trade school or college, along with housing and other supports while continuing education or skill attainment. As they work with youth on educational issues, family-serving agencies encounter obstacles along the way; the Department of Education, for example, only recently opened a designated office dedicated to understanding foster care and ensuring the needs of youth in foster care are met, including the need for transportation from their foster homes to their pre-placement schools. Not only do we need to place greater investments in educational supports for youth in foster care or juvenile-justice placement, we need to create more avenues for cooperation and collaboration between the Department of Education, ACS, and the provider agencies to provide the particular interventions that will enable them to become successful young adults.

For some youth, returning to live with their families of origin is not feasible, and some do not wish to be adopted or otherwise connected to a new family. For these youth, usually older youth, housing is paramount. Some youth have specific conditions that require supportive housing, such as impaired mental or emotional health; while the youth can live independently, they will need at least temporary assistance in learning advanced activities of daily living to get off to a good start. Others do not need this level of support but do not have the financial means to immediately pay market rent. In late 2021, the NYC Council passed a law that gives foster and Runaway/Homeless Youth credit for time spent in youth systems towards housing voucher availability, a move we applauded. With housing being such a pressing need for the aging-out foster youth population, we ask that more of these vouchers be made available to help our soon-to-be adults. We also recommend the continued support of Supervised Independent Living Programs (SILPs) which provide youth in care an opportunity to have a trial run at living independently, with agency support, before leaving foster care.

Fair Futures, besides identifying these issues, has created a system where older youth and young adults in and leaving foster care are connected with mentors who stay with them through various placements and after they leave care. They become a reliable resource for the youth to call for help and advice. Teaming these coaches with tutors and workers who specialize in different areas such as housing or financial aid set youth on a path to success, and divert youth from adult systems (e.g., Department of Homeless Services) that have traditionally seen disproportionate numbers of former foster youth relying on their assistance. Baselineing this program at \$35M in the City budget will ensure these services are available for all foster youth.

**Recommendation 2: Stabilize and invest in the child welfare system workforce, which is predominantly female and People of Color (POC).**

- Increase child welfare and human services contract funding to allow agencies to pay their staff on par with their public sector colleagues (currently a gap of ~\$10,000 exists between entry-level ACS child protective specialists and entry-level contract agency caseworkers).
- Include a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) in the FY23 budget *and in every annual budget thereafter*.

The front-line workers providing essential prevention, foster care, Close to Home, anti-poverty, and other human services within their communities are mostly women, and mostly people of color. They are the backbone of our programs, and yet the providers are not funded at a rate that allow them to offer competitive salaries. At the same time, the City's DOE was recently given funding for 500 social workers, resulting in many child welfare programs losing staff (and staff candidates) to the better-paying jobs in schools.

The child welfare/juvenile justice staff include entry-level support staff, direct support staff (also called child care workers) at residential foster care sites, case aides, case workers/case planners, casework supervisors, and program directors. Direct support staff in residences serve as the stable adult influencers for young people in care; while the job duties include supervising and monitoring the youth for safety, the therapeutic relationships the staff form with the youth serve as stabilizing forces, helping counter the trauma or chaos the youth may have experienced to that point. Child welfare and juvenile justice work is built on these relationships, the same way healthy bonding with stable, nurturing foster parents help promote healthy physical and psychological child development for youth in family care. Case aides generally have some college, while case workers and case planners have bachelor's or master's degrees in social work or another related field such as psychology. Casework roles entail coordinating all the services and individuals involved in a family's life – children, parents, other relatives, other involved adults, foster parents, direct support staff, teachers, community programs, Family Court, attorneys, and for older youth, trade schools, employment programs, colleges, and transitional housing programs. Casework supervisors, as the name suggests, monitor the casework activities and pitching in or covering caseloads when work demands are too high for the staff resources available. Casework supervisors and program directors generally have master's degrees in social work or another related field.

The staff of the City's nonprofit child welfare programs do not only support ACS' work. These professionals provide education-related technical assistance and equipment to families, including monitoring young children's development and identifying those needing Early Intervention assessment and services; ensure youth in foster care stay in their home schools whenever possible, which could mean escorting youth to school until DOE provides transportation; connect youth with tutors and mentors; and support youth in continuing their education after high school.

In addition to the work described above, these staff took on additional responsibilities during the pandemic including using flexible funding to pay for rent, food, and diapers – sometimes delivering these resources to homes or foster homes, along with hard-to-source PPE; educating clients about COVID-19 precautions, testing, and vaccines; assisting parents with technology and tech education to connect children to remote classrooms; and other concrete, emergency, essential services. The members of the workforce had to learn (or figure out) protective measures to keep clients and themselves safe when making home visits. At the same time, many of these workers were wrestling



with identical issues for their own families, and these were not staff whose work allowed them to work from home. These hard-working people were (belatedly, and after considerable pressure) described by the City as essential workers after the COVID pandemic reached its height in the spring of 2020. They did not, however, receive all the benefits of being deemed “essential” that their municipal colleagues received.

Unfortunately, the additional stresses of COVID and longstanding pay inequities have led to a crisis: The provider child welfare workforce has reached its breaking point. The child welfare and juvenile justice workforce are paid at rates significantly lower than their peers in the public sector. These workers, their ability to connect families to resources, and their ability to form relationships with the families to meet the intangible needs are what enable the City to tout the many successes outlined throughout this document. Yet currently the starting salary for a bachelor’s-level ACS Child Protective Specialist Level I is \$49,279, while the City’s funding only supports average starting salaries of \$39,762 for residential care caseworkers, \$40,263 for family foster care workers, and \$43,681 for Prevention workers at the BA/BS level. Many evidence-based program titles, supervisory roles, and other jobs require credentials or licenses identical to those required at public agencies, yet still the public and private agencies’ wages are inequitable.

The sector was feeling labor issues before the current nationwide hiring crisis, with agencies experiencing 20% turnover in caseworkers of all types in 2020. In 2021, agencies reported drastically-increasing worker vacancies with effects including fewer workers to divert children and families from foster care involvement and fewer workers to recruit foster families for teens at risk of residential care. The human services sector, and child welfare in particular, need an infusion of funding for pay parity, along with a commitment to annual Cost of Living Adjustments (too often “deferred” by the Mayor and the Council in the past) matching those of the public sector to prevent such wage inequity from developing again in future years. Currently, child welfare serves as the “training ground” for the public agencies: new workers come to provider agencies, get a year or two of experience, then often leave for the better-paying jobs at ACS, DOE, or DOHMH.

Staff shortages, vacancies, and turnover are linked to negative (and costly) outcomes: families without a consistent prevention worker are more likely to receive services for longer stretches of time or see their children placed in foster care; youth in foster care remain in care longer; youth in residential care are less likely to stabilize and step down to less-intensive care, and there are fewer foster families recruited to accept these youth; older youth are more likely to age out of care; aging-out youth without transitional workers’ support are more likely to need adult services. Wage parity prevents staff shortages, vacancies and turnover. Investing in the child welfare workforce prevents the erosion of progress made to support families and reduce the foster care population – along with being cost-effective for the city.

**Recommendation 3: Confront systemic racism in protective services investigations, foster care, and juvenile justice.**

- Expand ACS’ anti-bias efforts and explore public systems that consciously or unconsciously perpetuate institutional racism and individual bias.

- Examine the effectiveness of ACS and other public agencies (HRA, DHS, DOE) that impact youth and families, especially low-income families, and how racial bias and institutional racism affect the experience of families of color.
- Invest in youth of color, especially young men of color, across public agencies and systems that interact with children and families.

Families investigated by ACS and receiving services from provider agencies are disproportionately Black and Brown, and generally economically disadvantaged. ACS is required by law to investigate cases referred to them by the State Central Registry, which receives hotline calls from mandated reporters (e.g., teachers, social workers, and medical staff), concerned adults in the community, and at times malicious actors targeting parenting persons of their acquaintance. ACS generally receives around 50,000 reports to investigate annually, and it is here that racial and ethnic disparities first appear. As Commissioner David Hansell reported to the NYC City Council General Welfare Committee (October 2020), in calendar year (CY) 2019, 41% of SCR reports involved children in families who identified as Black/African American and 45% of the report involved children in Latinx/Hispanic families. For reference, Black/African American children make up 23% of the NYC child population and Latinx/Hispanic children 36%. The Critics of child welfare systems cite the over-policing of families, especially Black and Brown families, and rightly make the point that poverty should not be confused with child neglect.

It is important to note that children and youth in foster care (and Runaway/Homeless Youth programs) are not only disproportionately Black and Brown, they disproportionately identify as LGBTQIA+. Youth who are LGBTQIA+ regularly report feeling rejected and/or unsafe in the youth, young adult, and adult systems.

The City's child welfare providers have been examining this issue for years and have taken steps within their agencies to center Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) in their work with families. Agencies are working across numerous internal organizational platforms to develop diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice practices that address all the key stakeholders that they are involved with – children, families, clients, staff, vendors, and others. To better serve clients, children and families, agencies are scanning internal policies and practices to make adjustments that reduce inequities and harm to families who are in the child welfare systems. Agencies are revising organizational documents, forms, and other items to be more culturally responsive and appropriate for the populations they serve. Their efforts include creating racial equity mission statements and policies; hiring DEI Officers and Directors; diversifying positions on their Boards of Directors; hiring a diverse workforce at all levels - staff, management, and executive; taking action to ensure equity in staff benefits, salaries and promotions; implementing diversity and implicit bias training; and advocating for racial equity and fairness in legislation, funding, and government contracts.

ACS instituted an Office of Equity Strategies and regularly gathered stakeholders in their Racial Equity and Cultural Competence Committee. We applaud ACS' work in-house to address issues of bias in Child Protective Services investigations and other areas of their work. However, the majority of the reports ACS is required to investigate come from other city systems, highlighting a need to address bias across public agencies that serve families of color.

Youth placed in juvenile justice programs too are disproportionately youth of color. While the City and the provider agencies are also looking at youth work and youth outcomes through a DEIJ lens, the City should consider investing in young men of color differently in regards to their education and

employment needs. Young men of color in particular might be considered a special population within child welfare, similar to how the City emphasizes them in the Young Men's Initiative.

**Recommendation 4: Invest in foster parents and expand their capacity of foster families to provide trauma-informed care to more children with complex emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs.**

- Fully reimburse foster parents for the true costs of the work, including out-of-pocket expenses and in-kind costs such as time transporting children to and from visits, by increasing the foster parent board rate.
- Increase the availability of high-quality foster parent training in topics such as understanding and managing problematic behaviors, child development and psychology.

The city's foster parents, like front-line workers, stepped up during the pandemic and continued to care for children in need of foster care. Foster parents tend to be older, lower-income, and tend to be People of Color, and they have been at greater risk of contracting COVID. After two years of the pandemic some have opted out of continuing this important work at the same time that agencies' usual in-person foster home recruitment methods were unavailable, and as fewer people were interested or willing to accept children from other families into their households.

FFPSA's emphasis on limiting time spent in residential care (including community-located group homes) means the NYC providers will need to recruit many more foster parents willing and able to support youth who have traditionally been placed in group care – teenagers; youth with mental, developmental, or behavioral challenges; and youth with difficult histories, including drug use or sex trafficking. While ACS and its providers are doing well at identifying family members to serve as kinship foster parents, there will still be a need for trained, non-relative foster parents. In recent years, foster parent recruitment has been hampered by the difficulty of some aspects of the work, the low reimbursement rate that does not cover foster parents' total costs, the availability of sufficiently-large housing to support bringing children into homes, and most recently the concerns about health and safety due to COVID-19.

Foster parents need to maintain employment to make ends meet, yet the time demands of being a foster parent can make it difficult; for example, newly-placed children need to be brought to and from their home school for weeks until DOE provides school transportation. For younger children, foster parents find it difficult to access free or low-cost, quality child care. Foster parents also transport children to Family Court and family visits, participate in planning meetings, bring children to (and sometimes supervise) family visits, and attend regular classes to maintain their foster home licenses. These factors make it difficult for even very interested parties to say "yes" to becoming or continuing to serve as foster parents. Thankfully, in late December 2021, New York State settled a lawsuit that was filed more than ten years ago on behalf of the Adoptive & Foster Family Coalition of New York regarding foster parent rates. This is an incredible victory for children and youth in foster care and their foster parents, and will mean significant increases in foster parents' funding to better support the costs of caring for children and youth. COFCCA is actively working to support successful implementation of the settlement, as its provisions will better support foster parents in covering true costs of caring for children and youth in care, and modernize the rates. We look forward to working with the City and the State on this exciting development for foster parents, children, and youth.

**Recommendation 5: Ensure a well-funded continuum of community-based prevention programs, including primary prevention, general prevention, and evidence-based prevention.**

- Fully fund the Family Enrichment Centers to support a system of community-based social supports for parents and families, and maintain safe spaces for families to work toward self-sufficiency.
- Invest in primary prevention supports such as employment, housing, health, and education supports to avoid unnecessary intervention in the child welfare system.
- Provide flexible funding that allow programs to tailor family support for individual family needs and circumstances.

NYC is a national leader in restructuring child welfare service delivery. Over the past few decades, ACS significantly reduced the number of children in foster care from 40,000 to less than 9,000 by expanding the use of secondary prevention programs specifically designed to support families and keep children safely at home following ACS involvement. ACS has contracted and collaborated with our nonprofit agencies to increase the use of evidence-based interventions, programs with a proven track record of meeting families' needs. The number of families gaining access to services through prevention programs has increased annually, likely in part due to the use of these evidence-based models. In 2018, ACS was recognized as a leader among city agencies for facilitating a model budget process to ensure NYC was paying the actual costs of the programs that were cost effective and a best fit for families.

NYC's prevention programs encompass a wide-range of evidence-based and evidence-informed service models. Since 2013, the use of clinical interventions have been found to successfully and meaningfully change child safety outcomes, decreasing repeat maltreatment cases and the chances of future foster placements. Families that were at greatest risk of new abuse and neglect reports and participated in prevention services are far less likely to experience a new indicated abuse report, and between two and four times less likely to have a child placed in foster care, compared to families that did not participate in prevention services.

By expanding the use of secondary prevention programs, ACS diverted youth from foster care and realized significant savings as a result. We welcome ACS' plan to reinvest these savings directly into communities via community-based primary prevention programs. Efforts are underway to expand the number of Family Enrichment Centers (FECs) from three to 30, focusing on areas identified by The Task Force on Racial Inclusion and Equity (TRIE). FECs will provide neighborhoods with nonprofit-operated, community-designed support centers to assist families by meeting the particular needs of the families in their neighborhoods. The FEC model for primary prevention offers services to promote child safety and well-being, strengthening family supports outside of any child welfare intervention. We strongly encourage the City to continue its support to families through the FECs and to increase investment in vehicles not associated with the child welfare system, such as early literacy programs, counseling for individuals and families, and employment, housing, health and education supports. The City must invest early on in children, youth, and family well-being to support the best possible outcomes for the future.

One lesson learned from the COVID experience is that prevention programs need flexibility in how they provide services and what services, especially tangible resources, they can provide under their contract. We have already pointed out that poverty is often confused with child neglect. When families were unable to leave their homes at the height of the pandemic and families lost income, prevention

programs were going to families' homes to deliver diapers, distributing food, and providing personal protective equipment. Workers would go to homes, do a brief check of child safety in the home, then continue their meetings with their clients via teleconferencing. What the providers did and how they did it regularly shifted at a swift pace; the programs adapted as best they could, putting the families' needs first and figuring it out with their contract liaisons later. But agency funding does not always allow for provision of concrete items, and agencies are not always allowed the flexibility to adapt how they deliver their programs, regardless of positive outcomes and whether goals were met. We encourage the City to not just fully fund this vital work but to give the programs guardrails instead of specifications, allowing for innovation and agility, in pursuit of our most important goal—fully meeting families' needs.

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13640 Route 22  
Canaan, NY 12029-3500  
Phone: 518-781-4567  
Website: [www.berkshirefarm.org](http://www.berkshirefarm.org)  
CEO: Brian Parchesky

BronxWorks  
1130 Grand Concourse  
Bronx, NY 10465-3902  
Phone: 718-508-3160  
Website: [www.bronxworks.org](http://www.bronxworks.org)  
Executive Director: Eileen Torres

Brooklyn Community Services  
151 Lawrence Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
Phone: 718-310-5600  
Website: [www.WeAreBCS.org](http://www.WeAreBCS.org)  
Executive Director: Janelle Farris

CAMBA, Inc.  
1720 Church Avenue  
Brooklyn, NY 11226  
Phone: 718-287-2600  
Website: [www.camba.org](http://www.camba.org)  
Executive Director: Joanne Oplustil

Cardinal McCloskey Services  
115 East Stevens Avenue, Suite LL5  
Valhalla, NY 10595  
Phone: 914-997-8000  
Website: [www.cmcs.org](http://www.cmcs.org)  
President & CEO: Beth Finnerty

Catholic Charities – Archdiocese of New York  
1011 First Avenue  
New York, NY 10022  
Phone: 212-371-1000  
Website: [www.catholiccharitiesny.org](http://www.catholiccharitiesny.org)  
Executive Director: Msgr. Kevin Sullivan

Catholic Charities - Diocese of Brooklyn  
191 Joralemon Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
Phone: 718-722-6000  
Web site: [www.ccbq.org](http://www.ccbq.org)  
Vicar of Human Services/CEO: Msgr. Alfred LoPinto

Catholic Guardian Services  
1011 First Avenue  
New York, NY 10022  
Phone: 212-371-1000  
Website: [www.catholicguardian.org](http://www.catholicguardian.org)  
Executive Director: Craig Longley

Cayuga Centers  
101 Hamilton Avenue  
Auburn, NY 13201  
Phone: 315-253-5383  
Website: [www.cayugacenters.org](http://www.cayugacenters.org)  
Executive Director: Edward M. Hayes

Center for Family Life in Sunset Park, Inc.  
443 39th Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11232  
Phone: 718-438-9500  
Website: [www.centerforfamilylife.org](http://www.centerforfamilylife.org)  
Co-Executive Director: Julia Jean-Francois

The Child Center of NY  
118-35 Queens Blvd  
Forest Hills, NY 11375  
Phone: 718-651-7770  
Website: [www.childcenterny.org](http://www.childcenterny.org)  
CEO & ED: Traci Donnelly

Children's Aid  
117 West 124th Street, 5th floor  
New York, NY 10027  
Phone: 212-949-4800  
Website: [www.childrensaidsnyc.org](http://www.childrensaidsnyc.org)  
President & CEO: Phoebe Boyer

The Children's Village  
One Echo Hills  
Dobbs Ferry, NY 10590  
Phone: 914-693-0600  
Website: [www.childrensvillage.org](http://www.childrensvillage.org)  
President & CEO: Jeremy Kohomban

Chinatown YMCA  
273 Bowery Street  
New York, NY 10002  
Phone: 212-912-2466  
Website: [www.ymcanyc.org](http://www.ymcanyc.org)  
Sr. Youth & Family Director: Narcisa Loza

Chinese-American Planning Council  
150 Elizabeth Street  
New York, NY 10012  
Phone: 212-941-0920  
Website: [www.cpc-nyc.org](http://www.cpc-nyc.org)  
President & CEO: Wayne Ho

Coalition for Hispanic Family Services  
315 Wyckoff Avenue – 4th Floor  
Brooklyn, NY 11237  
Phone: 718-497-6090  
Website: [www.hispanicfamilyservices.org](http://www.hispanicfamilyservices.org)  
Executive Director: Denise Rosario

Community Counseling and Mediation  
25 Elm Place, 2nd Floor  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
Phone: 718-802-0666  
Website: [www.ccmnyc.org](http://www.ccmnyc.org)  
President & CEO: Emory X. Brooks  
Community Mediation Services, Inc.  
89-64 163rd Street  
Jamaica, NY 11432  
Phone: 718-523-6868  
Website: [www.adr-cms.org](http://www.adr-cms.org)  
Executive Director: John Harrison

Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation  
625 Jamaica Avenue  
Brooklyn, NY 11208  
Phone: 718-647-2800  
Website: [www.cypresshills.org](http://www.cypresshills.org)  
Director of Youth & Family Services: Robert Abbot

The Family Center  
493 Nostrand Avenue, 3rd floor  
Brooklyn, NY 11216  
Phone: (718) 230-1379  
Website: [www.thefamilycenter.org](http://www.thefamilycenter.org)  
Executive Director: Ivy Gamble Cobb

Forestdale, Inc.  
67-35 112th Street  
Forest Hills, NY 11375  
Phone: 718-263-0740  
Website: [www.forestdaleinc.org](http://www.forestdaleinc.org)  
Executive Director: William Weisberg

Good Shepherd Services  
305 Seventh Avenue, 9th Floor  
New York, NY 10001  
Phone: 212-243-7070  
Website: [www.goodshepherds.org](http://www.goodshepherds.org)  
Executive Director: Michelle Yanche

Graham Windham Services for Children & Families  
One Pierrepont Plaza, Suite 901  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
Phone: 212-529-6445  
Website: [www.graham-windham.org](http://www.graham-windham.org)  
President & CEO: Kimberly Watson

Harlem Children's Zone  
35 East 125th Street  
New York, NY 10035  
Phone: 212-360-3255  
Website: [www.hcz.org](http://www.hcz.org)  
CEO: Kwame Owusu-Kesse

Harlem Dowling-Westside Center  
2139 Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.  
New York, NY 10027  
Phone: 212-749-3656  
Website: [www.harlemdowling.org](http://www.harlemdowling.org)  
Executive Director: Karen Dixon

HeartShare St. Vincent's Services  
66 Boerum Place  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
Phone: 718-522-3700  
Website: [www.heartshare.org](http://www.heartshare.org)  
Executive Director: Dawn Saffayeh

JCCA  
858 East 29th Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
Phone: 917-808-4800  
Website: [www.jccany.org](http://www.jccany.org)  
Chief Executive Officer: Ronald Richter

The Jewish Board  
135 West 50th Street, 6th floor  
New York, NY 10020  
Phone: 212-582-9100  
Website: [www.jbfcs.org](http://www.jbfcs.org)  
CEO: Dr. Jeffrey Brenner

Lincoln Hall, Inc.  
P.O. Box 600, Route 202  
Lincolndale, NY 10540  
Phone: 914-248-7474  
Website: [www.lincolnhall.org](http://www.lincolnhall.org)  
Executive Director: Scott Merrow

Little Flower Children and Family Services of New York  
2450 North Wading River Road  
Wading River, NY 11792  
Phone: 631-929-6200  
Website: [www.lfchild.org](http://www.lfchild.org)  
President & CEO: Corinne Hammons

Little Sisters of the Assumption Family Health Service  
333 East 115th Street  
New York, NY 10029  
Phone: 212-987-4422  
Website: [www.littlesistersfamily.org](http://www.littlesistersfamily.org)  
CEO: Reada Edelstein

Lower East Side Family Union  
227 East 3rd Street  
New York, NY 10009  
Phone: 212-260-0040  
Website: [www.lesfu.org](http://www.lesfu.org)  
Executive Director: April L. Phillips

Lutheran Social Services  
475 Riverside Drive  
New York, NY 10115  
Phone: 212-870-1100  
Website: [www.LSS-MNY.org](http://www.LSS-MNY.org)  
CEO: Damyn Kelly

Martin de Porres Youth and Family Services  
218-24 136th Avenue  
Springfield Gardens, NY 11413  
Phone: 718-527-0606  
Website: [www.mdpyfs.org](http://www.mdpyfs.org)  
President/Executive Director: Eon Parks

MercyFirst  
525 Convent Road  
Syosset, NY 11791  
Phone: 516-921-0808  
Website: [www.mercyfirst.org](http://www.mercyfirst.org)  
CEO: Reneé Skolaski



New Alternatives for Children, Inc.  
37 West 26th Street  
New York, NY 10010  
Phone: 212-696-1550  
Website: [www.nackidscan.org](http://www.nackidscan.org)  
Executive Director: Dr. Arlene Goldsmith

New York Foundling Hospital  
590 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, NY 10011  
Phone: 212-633-9300  
Website: [www.nyfoundling.org](http://www.nyfoundling.org)  
President & CEO: William Baccaglini

North American Family Institute - NY  
85 Executive Blvd., Upper Level  
Elmsford, NY 10523  
Phone: 914-235-4726  
Website: [www.nafi.com](http://www.nafi.com)  
Regional Director: Bonnie Doran

Northside Center for Child Development  
1301 5th Avenue  
New York, NY 10029  
Phone: 212-426-3400  
Website: [www.northsidecenter.org](http://www.northsidecenter.org)  
Executive Director: Thelma Dye, PhD

Ohel Children's Home & Family Services  
1268 East 14th Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11230  
Phone: 718-851-6300  
Website: [www.ohelfamily.org](http://www.ohelfamily.org)  
Executive Director: David Mandel

Outreach  
117-11 Myrtle Avenue  
Richmond Hill, NY 11418  
Phone: 718-847-9233  
Website: <https://opiny.org>  
President & CEO: Debbie Pantin

Puerto Rican Family Institute  
145 West 15th Street  
New York, NY 10011  
Phone: 212-924-6320  
Website: [www.prfi.org](http://www.prfi.org)  
Executive Director: Dr. Luis A. Rodriguez

Rising Ground  
151 Lawrence Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
Phone: 212-437-3500  
Website: [www.risingground.org](http://www.risingground.org)  
CEO: Alan Mucatel

Safe Horizon  
2 Lafayette Street, 3rd floor  
New York, NY 10007  
Phone: 212-577-7700  
Website: [www.safehorizon.org](http://www.safehorizon.org)  
CEO: Liz Roberts  
Chief Program Officer: Lisa A. O'Connor

Saint Dominic's Family Services  
500 Western Highway  
Blauvelt, NY 10913  
Phone: 845-359-3400  
Website: [www.sdfs.org](http://www.sdfs.org)  
President & CEO: Diane Aquino

SCO Family of Services  
One Alexander Place  
Glen Cove, NY 11542  
Phone: 516-671-1253  
Website: [www.sco.org](http://www.sco.org)  
President & CEO: Keith Little

Sheltering Arms Children and Family Services  
25 Broadway, 18th floor  
New York, NY 10004  
Phone: 212-675-1000  
Website: [www.shelteringarmsny.org](http://www.shelteringarmsny.org)  
CEO: Elizabeth McCarthy

St. Christopher, Inc.  
70 South Broadway  
Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522  
Phone: 914-693-3030  
Website: [www.sc1881.org](http://www.sc1881.org)  
CEO: Dr. Sarah Ruback

St. John's Residence for Boys  
150 Beach 110th Street  
Rockaway Park, NY 11694  
Phone: 718-945-2800  
Website: [www.stjohnsresidence.org](http://www.stjohnsresidence.org)  
Executive Director: Jennifer Horsley

Sauti Yetu Center for African  
Women and Families  
2417 Third Avenue, Suite 205  
Bronx, NY 10451  
Phone: 718-665-2486  
Website: [www.sautiyetu.us](http://www.sautiyetu.us)  
Executive Director: Zeinab Eyega

SCAN-NY  
354 East 102nd Street, 3rd Floor  
New York, NY 10029  
Phone: 212-289-8030  
Website: [www.scanny.org](http://www.scanny.org)  
Executive Director: Lewis Zuchman

Seamen's Society for Children and Families  
50 Bay Street  
Staten Island, NY 10301  
Phone: 718-447-7740  
Website: [www.seamenssociety.org](http://www.seamenssociety.org)  
President & CEO: David Gaskin

Spence-Chapin Services to Families and  
Children  
410 East 92nd Street  
New York, NY 10128  
Phone: 212-369-0300  
Website: [www.spence-chapin.org](http://www.spence-chapin.org)  
CEO: Kate Trambitskaya

University Behavioral Associates  
(UBA)/Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences  
Montefiore Medical Center  
334 East 148th Street, 2nd Floor  
Bronx, NY 10451  
Phone: 718-401-5050  
Website: [www.montefiore.org](http://www.montefiore.org)  
Director: Anita Jose, Ph.D

University Settlement  
184 Eldridge Street  
New York, NY 10002  
Phone: 212-453-4555  
Website: [www.universitysettlement.org](http://www.universitysettlement.org)  
Executive Director: Melissa Aase

Vibrant Emotional Health  
50 Broadway, 19th floor  
New York, NY 10004  
Phone: 212-614-6307  
Website: [www.vibrant.org](http://www.vibrant.org)  
President & CEO: Kimberly Williams