



For Immediate Release:

December 20, 2024

Contact: mediainquiry@acs.nyc.gov

In 2024, Administration for Children’s Services Keeps Children Safe, and Supports Youth and Families By Increasing Access to Child Care Vouchers, Prevention Services, and College for Youth in Foster Care, and More!

ACS Expanded Access to Child Care Assistance to 50,000 Children, Provided Supports to Thousands of Families in Need with a 500% Increase in Calls to the Support Line, Helped 53 Justice-Involved Youth Graduate, and Enhanced its OIT Infrastructure, Hiring of Frontline Staff and Facilities for Staff and Families

New York: As 2024 comes to a close, the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) is highlighting the progress the agency has made to keep children safe, and families and youth supported. ACS continues to invest in upstream strategies the connect families to much-needed resources and services outside the traditional child welfare system. Over the past year, ACS has expanded its Family Preservation Program, launched its new School-Based Early Support prevention model, provided parents with information about their rights at the start of a child protection investigation, helped over 400 youth in foster care and the juvenile justice system go to college or receive college credits, and hired more staff to help us get the important work done.

“From day one, our administration has focused on creating a safer, more affordable New York City. In 2024, we continued to deliver on that vision and ‘Get Stuff Done’ for working-class New Yorkers,” said **New York City Mayor Eric Adams**. “Thanks to our extraordinary public servants, America’s safest big city got even safer this year, with overall crime down and thousands of illegal guns, mopeds, and ghost cars taken off city streets. We passed historic legislation to turn New York into a ‘City of Yes,’ shattered affordable housing records once again, and put billions of dollars back into New Yorkers’ pockets. We broke records for the most jobs and small businesses in city history and moved millions of trash bags off our sidewalks and into containers. But we know that there is even more we can do to continue to uplift working-class families. As we look to the future, our administration remains committed to keeping New Yorkers safe and making our city more affordable for the millions of New Yorkers who call our city home.”

“Over the past year, ACS has continued to develop and implement new strategies and initiatives to keep children safe, and better support families, as well as the children and youth in our care,” said **ACS Commissioner Jess Dannhauser**. “Through connecting families to services before the need for child protection involvement, increasing access to child care assistance to more than 50,000 low income New Yorkers, helping more youth in our care go to college and achieve academically, and more, we are helping New York City families thrive. As 2024 comes to an end, I want to thank the entire ACS team, and our provider network, for the work they do each and every day, and for all that we will accomplish together in 2025.”

Highlights from ACS’s 2024 accomplishments include:

Keeping Children Safe:

Expanding the Family Preservation Program (FPP): In the summer of 2024, ACS added additional staff and units for FPP, which is an intensive child protection and prevention model that enables children to remain safely at home, while ACS works with families to address immediate child safety concerns. The program is citywide and there are currently 131 families receiving FPP services. FPP helps families by accompanying families to community appointments (medical, public assistance, therapy, etc.); helping families navigate other systems such as housing and school; supporting the family as they transition to prevention services; and arranging for services such as homemaking, respite or heavy duty cleaning.

Providing families with more information at the door: After a successful pilot in 2023, in May 2024 ACS completed the citywide rollout of providing parents with plain language information in their preferred language regarding their rights when ACS comes to their home to respond to a report of alleged abuse or neglect. Over 1,600 ACS staff were trained and over 12,000 notifications were provided.

Training ACS and provider agency staff on how to support maternal mental health: ACS identified a need for staff to better understand Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders (PMADs) and assist pregnant and birthing people experiencing or at risk of experiencing PMADs. Throughout 2024, ACS has focused on raising awareness on the signs and symptoms of PMADs and the appropriate referrals for those experiencing PMADs by disseminating information through our new landing page on our web site <https://www.nyc.gov/site/acs/for-families/pmads.page>; sharing best practices and resources at a convening, developing a resource guide for staff; and expanding ACS’s Psychiatry and Behavioral Health Unit participation in team meetings and other case conferences.

Re-training Mandated Reporters on when to call the child abuse hotline and when families can be better supported without an investigation: Child protective investigations are traumatic to children and families, so should not be used as a way to connect families to services when children are not at risk or in danger. ACS and our sister agencies are committed to reducing the unwarranted involvement of Black and

Latino families in the child welfare system. Through training and conversations with mandated reporters throughout the city, ACS is working to achieve a better balance: fewer unnecessary reports to the SCR, continued reports when necessary, and more supports accessed by families across the board. In 2024, ACS conducted or co-led 180 presentations and trainings reaching over 12,700 mandated reporters who work with children, including schools, homeless shelters, hospital staff, after-school program, and ACS providers.

Increasing and Strengthening Supports for Families and Communities

Connecting Thousands of Families to Services and Supports through the ACS

Support Line: Parenting is both rewarding and challenging, so it is critical that parents and caretakers in need of a helping hand know how to get it. In 2024, ACS was intentional about marketing our Support Line, through hundreds of over 100 training sessions, tabling in communities, participating in ACS and other city agency events, as well as in social media and the press. The Support Line can be reached at (212) 676-7667 or connect@acs.nyc.gov. The Support Line assists families by connecting them directly to ACS Prevention Services and addressing concrete needs (such as food, beds, etc.) all without the need for a child welfare investigation. In 2024, there was an over 500 percent increase in calls to the Support Line, with over 3,200 New York City parents and caretakers reaching out.

Launching New School-Based Early Support Prevention Model: ACS has a nationally-recognized continuum of prevention services that served over 32,000 children from 15,000 families in 2024. In September 2024, ACS launched its newest prevention service model, aimed at providing families with services and supports as upstream as possible, preventing involvement with child protection, while keeping children safe. Each of the 16 new programs is working with at least three schools to help families address stressors that may impact a child's well-being, help families in need of concrete items, and strengthen social connections within the school communities, all to help families thrive.

Expanding Access to Child Care Assistance to Thousands More Families:

As of November 2024, over 50,000 children were enrolled in child care subsidized by an ACS-issued low-income voucher, up 73 percent from the same time last year. ACS continues to target outreach to 17 community districts where poverty and unemployment are highest and child care supply is inadequate. As part of this effort, we are partnering with three community-based organizations in Northern Manhattan and the Bronx that are conducting outreach and processing applications for childcare assistance to get eligible families linked to affordable care. As of November 2024, nearly 15,000 children from these community districts were enrolled in child care with the support of a low-income voucher, representing a nearly 500 percent increase in just 2 years.

Expanding Family Enrichment Centers (FEC) citywide: ACS is in the final stages of expanding FECs from 3 to 30 sites. FECs are warm, inviting, family-centered spaces that focus on social connection, parental resilience, and access to resources – factors known to promote child and family well-being. Twenty-nine of the 30 contracts have been awarded and FECs are in various stages from being open to working closely with their community to shape their individualized Centers. The final award will be announced in early 2025. Everything about the FECs – including the names, the physical layout, and the offerings they provide –are co-developed with families and community members.

Providing parents and caretakers with the information they need to prevent accidental injuries: Throughout 2024, ACS's Office of Child Safety and Injury Prevention was out in communities throughout the city educating parents, caregivers, and child-serving professionals on how to put infants safely to sleep on their back, in cribs, without blankets or other clutter. Through a partnership with Health and Hospitals, we distributed over 10,000 safe sleep toolkits to new parents. The team also educated communities on the need to keep medicines, cannabis edibles and other dangerous items locked up and high up to prevent accidental ingestion and distributed more than 300 hundred lockboxes.

Enhancing Support for Youth in Foster Care and Justice-Involved Youth

Doubling the number of youth in foster care attending college and participating in College Choice: In 2024, the ACS College Choice program – where tuition, housing and a daily living stipend are given to youth in foster care attending college – doubled from the program's inception just two years ago. In the Fall 2024 semester, there were over 400 youth in College Choice. Students are attending schools locally, within New York and throughout the county, at both public and private institutions. College Choice students are represented at every CUNY college, attend many SUNY schools such as Stony Brook and Binghamton, can be found on other college campuses within New York, like Syracuse and Ithaca College, or studying at Vanderbilt University in Tennessee or Holy Cross College in Massachusetts. College Choice even supported a student studying abroad in Japan. In 2024, there were 35 students graduate in Spring/Summer of 24 and anticipate another 17 to graduate at the end of the Fall 2024 semester.

Achieving positive educational outcomes for youth across the juvenile justice continuum: ACS, in partnership with New York City Public Schools' District 79 Passages Academy, continues to see an increase in student achievements across our secure detention facilities, non-secure detention program, and Close to Home program. The graduation rate has increased 51 percent over the past three school years, with 53 youth graduating this past year. ACS's investments in supplemental tutoring services helped youth achieve their academic goals. In addition, in 2024 ACS brought college to

secure detention, entering into a formal agreement with CUNY to provide college courses to young people who have graduated or are close to graduation through CUNY's College Now program.

Expanding Fair Futures to More Youth: Due to critical investments by the Adams Administration, ACS has been able to expand the Fair Futures coaching model up to age 26 and to the juvenile justice continuum. In 2024, over 4,000 youth benefited from Fair Futures coaching and/or tutoring. Of the 2,000 young people coached for 90+ days, 92 percent achieved at least three positive outcome goals, such as reconnecting to high school, grade promotion, graduation, enrollment in college or vocational training or successfully engaging in a job or internship.

Enhancing the Ability for Staff to Get Their Work Done

Improving our infrastructure to better support children, youth and families

For ACS and provider agency to get the work done, they must have the right tools and infrastructure. In 2024, ACS opened a new child protection borough office on Bartow Avenue in the Bronx, which was designed to both be more family-friendly and more supportive of staff. Similar work is underway for ACS's new Headquarters, which will be occupied in 2025. In addition, 2024 work at the ACS Children's Center included many enhancements to the space including a new cell phone café for youth, a visiting room, and a new Comfort Shop where children can select high quality items that bring them comfort, such as pajamas, journals, sneakers and stuffed animals. ACS has also strengthened its IT infrastructure, encrypting sensitive data to enhance security and implementing new monitoring tools to track the health of the IT network.

Hiring Frontline Line

ACS's frontline staff are essential to our ability to keep children safe, families supported, and ensure youth in our care receive all that they need to thrive. ACS has enhanced recruitment and retention efforts and continue to work to supplement existing staffing levels in identified areas of need, which includes frontline child protection staff and staff in our detention centers. In 2024, ACS hired over 500 child protection specialists; we now have nearly 1,100 active CPS handling responses to reports of abuse and neglect, compared to 900 just two years ago. The average child protection caseload of under 8 cases per specialist remains well below national of 12. In 2024, we hired over 250 Youth Development Specialists for secure detention; we currently have 591 YDS, close to our all-time high of 596 in 2021.