

Children's Services **Update**

January 2010



Robin Hood Grant to ACS Juvenile Justice Initiative

The New York City Administration for Children's Services today announced that the Robin Hood Foundation has awarded a grant of \$1.1 million to support Children's Services' innovative Juvenile Justice Initiative (JJI). The grant will fund community-based treatment slots for youth with serious mental health diagnoses in a program run by The New York Foundling, under a contract with Children's Services. These New York City youth are at risk of placement in a state juvenile facility after involvement with the juvenile justice system. There is a severe shortage of such programs for these youth, who are particularly vulnerable and for whom appropriate psychiatric treatment is largely unavailable in juvenile detention facilities in New York State.

To date, the ACS Juvenile Justice Initiative has served 786 youths with alternative to

placement programs including 302 youths in 2009, the largest annual number to date.

The New York Foundling, the JJI provider with the greatest level of experience and expertise in the type of service to be provided, will provide these youth and their families with intensive, home- and evidence-based services. The model that will be provided is the Psychiatric Adaptation of Multisystemic Therapy. The families supported by the Robin Hood grant will be served by therapists with low caseloads and a crisis worker on call 24 hours a day.

Research shows lower recidivism, fewer hospital stays and lower suicide rates in this type of treatment rather than incarceration. Until now, approximately 150 youth in need of these services each year in New York City were placed instead in juvenile facilities run by the state Office of Children and Family Services. Many of these youth did not commit violent crimes and may be maintained in the community safely. Until now, they were placed in state facilities only because there was no community-based alternative equipped to serve them. Children's Services expects to start accepting youths into the program in March, 2010. The recent investigation into these state-run juvenile facilities by the U.S. Department of Justice specifically cited unconstitutional conditions for youth with psychiatric disorders. With this grant, Children's Services will be able to keep 40 youth a year from placement in those facilities, as well as other, privately-run, facilities. In addition, The Foundling plans to seek funding sources to sustain the service.

David Saltzman, Executive Director of the Robin Hood Foundation, said: "Robin Hood funds only the best and brightest initiatives to combat the root causes of poverty. We are excited to partner with Children's Services and The New York Foundling – who have expertly collaborated on the successful Juvenile Justice Initiative -- to bring this innovative service to New York City for the first time. By keeping kids home, safely and with services, we are helping to prevent poverty and increase long-term well-being."

Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs said: "This model of forward-thinking programming mirrors what the City has successfully been building for the past several years allowing us to cut juvenile placement rates in half. Generous grants such as this are critical to our efforts as we continue to focus on increasing public safety, reducing recidivism and saving money."

"We are in dire need of alternatives to place kids with psychiatric illnesses, and we are very grateful to Robin Hood for giving us the ability to provide these services for the first time to NYC youth," said ACS Commissioner John Mattingly. "With this program, we will be able to support and teach caregivers to supervise the youth in order to avoid future juvenile justice involvement. This is what has been proven to work long-term."

Bill Baccaglini, The New York Foundling's Executive Director, said: "The Blue Sky program – one of our other collaborations with ACS -- has saved lives. Young people who would otherwise never have broken the cycle of crime and punishment in the criminal justice system are now on a path toward productive lives. We are eager to apply the experience we have gained to a population with more complex needs. The plight of teens in the juvenile justice system has been overlooked for too long. We are grateful to the Robin Hood Foundation for empowering us to effectively serve these youth and their families."

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