



Residents from a non-secure detention group home visit a neighborhood library.

Children’s Services and Juvenile Justice to Integrate Operations

Targeting increased public safety and improved outcomes for young people who have been involved with the criminal justice system, Mayor Bloomberg has announced the integration of the City’s Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) and The Administration for Children’s Services (ACS). Children’s Services Commissioner John B. Mattingly was designated to lead both agencies, effective January 20th.

The City’s integration of juvenile justice and child welfare programs will make possible long-term planning for the youth and their family as soon as they enter the juvenile justice system, and a focused strategy to place the youth on the path toward school, work, and successful adulthood. The overarching goal is to decrease the rate of recidivism for youth, a rate that is traditionally higher among juvenile offenders than adult criminals. The integration is also expected to realize cost savings and operational efficiencies by combining two separate agencies that otherwise serve overlapping constituencies.

“By pulling together all our resources, we will be able to do more than we can each do on our own to build a system of supports, supervision and guidance for young people who get into trouble with the law,” Commissioner Mattingly said.

As the city’s child welfare agency, Children’s Services investigates reports of abuse and neglect, oversees children in foster care, provides supportive services to families, and manages a network of child care programs. ACS has also for the past several years been operating the City’s largest alternative to placement program for youth who have been arrested – the Juvenile Justice Initiative (JJI). The JJI, an ACS-operated alternative to placement program, utilizes evidence-based programs which have been proven to reduce recidivism rates for chronic juvenile delinquents by 30% to 70%. These programs are designed to strengthen the parent or caretaker’s ability to provide structure and guidance for youth.

Since 1979, DJJ has provided custody and care to juveniles under the age of 16 who are involved in the City’s juvenile justice system. The Department accomplishes this through a network of three large-capacity secure detention facilities and 16 non-secure group homes.

In recent years, data has shown that a significant percentage of youth coming into detention suffer from serious mental health issues, a factor that not only brings young people into trouble with the law, but keeps them detained longer than youth without mental health needs. In addition, the presence of a mental health need is an almost certain indicator that a young person will return to detention in the years leading to adulthood if effective psychiatry services are not continuously provided.

There is also a significant overlap in the populations served by DJJ and ACS – many of the young people served by DJJ and their families have had previous involvement with ACS, either as the subject of an abuse and neglect report, as someone who has had a stay in foster care, or because the family has received support services.

During this system integration, the City will expand its use of risk assessment instruments and other data-driven tools to better inform decision making at different stages of the detention and judicial process. This approach will build on results already achieved by the City, which as part of its ongoing Juvenile Justice Reform has already reduced placements in state juvenile institutions by 56% since 2002. Existing program models will be revisited, and new programs will be developed that draw on the experience of other jurisdictions using evidence-based models and positive youth development approaches. The City will also seek to develop new alternative to detention models.

DJJ is headquartered at 110 William Street, Manhattan, close to the Children’s Services main building at 150 William Street.

