



DJJ Assistant Commissioner Nina Aledort speaks at meeting of the Interagency Coordinating Council on Youth.

DJJ Assistant Commissioner Nina Aledort Discusses Middle School Education In Detention With Advocates And Education Officials

On Tuesday, February 19, 2008, DJJ Assistant Commissioner for Program Services Nina Aledort joined education advocates and city officials to discuss middle school education in New York City at a meeting of the Interagency Coordinating Council on Youth (ICC), part of the City’s Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD).

As many juveniles who enter the Department’s care are middle school students, the provision of high quality education is a core agency value. As such, DJJ and the City’s Department of Education (DOE) have collaborated to assess the needs of youth in the Agency’s care and provide them with education appropriate to their learning abilities.

DJJ has also worked to help youth released from the Department’s care transition back into a school in their community. However, because many youth in DJJ care have mental health needs and do not perform as well academically compared to other youth their age, the Department is supporting DOE’s efforts to improve academics and access to services for youth returning to their communities.

In order to provide young people with the social support they need as well as access to critical mental health services, DJJ has launched the Collaborative Family Initiative (CFI). CFI partners youth released from DJJ care with community based organizations near their homes where they receive mental health services and work to meet goals, including school attendance, academic success, and family counseling.

DJJ is committed to continuing its collaboration with ICC to ensure the needs of middle school students in Department care are addressed, both inside and outside of detention.

Assistant Commissioner Aledort said, “Of the many challenges faced by youth in DJJ care, education is of particular concern, including high school aged youth who perform at middle school grade level, a lack of appropriate learning settings once the youth return to the community, and the tendency of under-performing youth getting lost in large classes. To help give these young people a chance to succeed, we need to work to find appropriate learning environments for juveniles once they return to their communities where they can have the opportunity to learn and grow. These youth are the future of our City.”

DJJ was joined by experts and officials from a wide spectrum of agencies and organizations, including Deputy Mayor for Education and Community Development Dennis Walcott; DYCD Commissioner Jeanne Mullgrav; Director of Middle School Initiatives for DOE; Lori Benntt; and Deputy Director and Director of Programs for Global Kids, Inc., Evie Hantzopoulos.

