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**MAYOR BLOOMBERG AND DYCD COMMISSIONER MULLGRAV ANNOUNCE  
*TEEN ACTION*, A NEW SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAM TO COMBAT TEEN  
PREGNANCY AND INCREASE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

*Youth-Driven Program Encourages Community Involvement and Helps 4,000 Low-Income New York City Youth Avoid High-Risk Behaviors*

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and Department of Youth and Community Development Commissioner Jeanne B. Mullgrav today announced the launch of *Teen ACTION* (*Achieving Change Together In Our Neighborhoods*), a new Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) initiative aimed at reducing rates of teen pregnancy and other high-risk behavior among the City's low-income young adults. The program takes place after school and combines a youth-driven community service experience with a curriculum focused on leadership skills, civic engagement, and personal responsibility. The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) will administer the program, which is guided by a primary goal of reducing teen pregnancies and a secondary goal of increasing civic engagement. *Teen ACTION* will be offered at 31 different locations across the five boroughs, primarily in high-need and low-income neighborhoods such as Mott Haven in the Bronx, which has the City's highest rates of teen pregnancy. The CEO has committed \$5.7 million to this program, which is expected to serve 4,000 young adults over the next year.

"Programs like *Teen ACTION* encourage participants to take responsibility within their communities, and to address issues of concern to them. In the process, they learn about cooperation, team work, and how to be supportive of each other," said Mayor Bloomberg. "They begin to see the results of their work and become more aware of how risky behaviors such as teen pregnancy, drug use, and poor school attendance can affect them. Consequently, we can expect that they'll begin making the positive decisions that help them to become responsible and productive citizens."

"By last count, there were over 200,000 young adults living in poverty in our city. These youth face several risks during their transition to adulthood, which can undermine their long-term economic success and keep them trapped in poverty," said Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Linda Gibbs. "Teen ACTION provides a positive alternative by building on the assets these youth already bring to the table."

(more)

“Service learning is an exciting youth development model that has been proven to help young people develop valuable leadership skills,” said DYCD Commissioner Jeanne Mullgrav. “Youth are responsible for designing their service activities, and are asked to reflect on the impact they are having within their communities. When combined with positive adult role models and structured learning, participants leave the program confident in their abilities to change their lives and their neighborhoods for the better.”

Unlike many service learning programs, *Teen ACTION* is targeted to youth in low-income communities who are considered at-risk for dropping out, drug use, school suspensions, unprotected sex leading to teen pregnancies, and other unsafe behaviors. The program is open to 13-21 year old adolescents in grades 6 through 11, a group that is less likely than younger children to participate in any type of after-school program. *Teen ACTION* has the potential to draw in these traditionally harder-to-serve youth by focusing on the complex, real-life problems they may be facing, and providing them with opportunities to take on more adult roles and responsibilities.

*Teen ACTION* encourages participants to design and take part in activities that involve relevant community issues. Youth research pressing community problems and brainstorm potential solutions. They then generate, develop, and undertake their own service projects designed to address these issues, and engage in regular review and reflection on their work. The intended outcome is that the program’s focus on life skills, community awareness, and self confidence will promote academic achievement and discourage unsafe behaviors.

Research shows that service learning programs can have positive impacts on the health and education outcomes of young adults. A study of *Learn and Serve America*, a nationally implemented model, found that participants had lower pregnancy rates during the school year in which they participated. A study of another national model, the *Teen Outreach Program*, found that a reduction in pregnancy rates among participants was accompanied by substantial reductions in course failure and school suspensions. DYCD, with support from CEO and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, has examined best practices nationwide in developing *Teen ACTION*. The program will be rigorously evaluated by CEO’s independent evaluators, Westat and Metis and Associates.

*Teen ACTION* programs are currently recruiting students between the ages of 13-21 who are enrolled in middle school or high school. Parents and teenagers who are interested should call 3-1-1 to learn more about the programs available in their communities. Enrollment is ongoing.

### *The Center for Economic Opportunity*

The Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) was established by Mayor Bloomberg to implement innovative ways to reduce poverty in New York City. The CEO works with City agencies to design and implement evidence-based initiatives aimed at poverty reduction. The CEO manages an Innovation Fund through which it provides the agencies with annual funding to implement its initiatives, and it will oversee a rigorous evaluation of each initiative to determine which are successful in demonstrating results towards reducing poverty and increasing self-sufficiency among New Yorkers.

