

FY 2023 Borough Budget Consultations

Manhattan - Administration for Children's Services

Meeting Date:

AGENDA ITEM 1: General Agency Funding Discussion

The purpose of holding the Borough Budget Consultations is to provide Community Boards with important information to assist in drafting their statement of District Needs and Budget Priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. As you know, Community Board Members are volunteers who may not be familiar with the budget process and how agencies' programs are funded. At the same time, Community Board members are very knowledgeable about local service needs.

This year's Manhattan agendas have three sections:

I. Agencies previously faced unprecedented cuts and new funding requirements due to COVID 19. The Federal Government recently provided relief funds to states and municipalities as part of COVID relief stimulus.

1. What programs are restored by this funding for the current fiscal year and what further changes are planned for FY 23 when an estimated \$4 billion budget gap reemerges?
2. What changes in federal funding have been instituted for FY 22? Will those changes continue into FY 23? What portion or percentage of the FY 21 and FY 22 budgets consisted of non-recurring federal funding?
3. What is the overall budget increase or decrease for FY 22 adopted budget compared to FY21 budget? Does the Agency anticipate a budget shortfall for FY 22, FY 23 or further out years after the non-recurring federal funding has been exhausted?

II. Then, the agenda continues with Community Boards asking about program funding.

1. What programs will see a significant increase or decrease in funding? To what extent, if any, is the increase or decrease in funding related to non-recurring federal funding allocations?
2. Which programs will be new or eliminated entirely?
3. What are your benchmarks for new and existing programs and what are your benchmarks/key performance indicators for measuring success?
4. What are your priorities, operational goals, and capital goals for FY22 and projected priorities, operational goals, and capital goals for FY23?
5. What expense or capital needs would ACS recommend or encourage Community Boards advocate be funded or expanded?

III. Lastly, the agendas include Boards' requests on district-specific budget questions. We request that the agency respond in writing, but have any further discussions on these items with the Community Boards outside of the consultation.

For the first section, please present on the four topics below for 10-15 minutes at the beginning of our Consultation. Also, please provide written responses or even a PowerPoint presentation that we can use to fully and accurately educate our Board Members.

1. Which Manhattan community districts will see the largest increases or decreases in applied operational or capital funding for programmatic goals in FY 22 and FY 23?
 - a. What indicators do you use to direct these funds according to perceived need?

AGENCY RESPONSE:

- I. **Agencies previously faced unprecedented cuts and new funding requirements due to COVID 19. The Federal Government recently provided relief funds to states and municipalities as part of COVID relief stimulus.**

1. What programs are restored by this funding for the current fiscal year and what further changes are planned for FY23 when an estimated \$4 billion budget gap emerges?

ACS is responsible for the safety and well-being of New York City’s children and their families by providing child welfare, juvenile justice, primary prevention, and child care services, which are funded through a mix of federal, state, and city dollars. The agency’s adopted budget for FY2022 is approximately \$2.73 billion overall, including \$995.2 million in City Tax Levy (CTL), \$704.3 million in State, \$1.032 billion in Federal funding.

- Through **Child and Family Well-Being**, ACS offers primary prevention support to families and children including child care vouchers and through our network of Family Enrichment Centers and Community Partnerships. ACS aims to proactively connect families with services, resources and educational messages that can support healthy children, families and communities, so that families have what they need to thrive and never reach the child welfare system.
- In **Prevention Services**, ACS contracts with nonprofit organizations to support and stabilize at-risk families with prevention services that address common family challenges including family communication, mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, economic mobility, housing instability and more. Prevention services are free, available citywide, and reach approximately 20,000 families with more than 41,000 children per year.
- **Child Protection** responds to reports of suspected child abuse or neglect to assess safety and offer supports to families.
- In **Family Permanency**, ACS contracts with non-profit organizations to provide foster care services. There are fewer than 8,000 NYC children in foster care (compared with more than 50,000 NYC children in foster care 28 years ago, and 15,000 just a decade ago). For children who enter foster care, we have increased the proportion who are placed with “kin”—relatives, family friends, or other close adults—to 42%.
- **Juvenile Justice** administers services for youth and families, including detention, residential placement, and intensive community-based programs.

ACS’s FY2022 Adopted Budget did not contain any cuts to our core programs and services. Despite the tough economic environment, we are pleased to receive important new investments that will support children and families. Notable highlights include:

- **\$20 million invested to continue Fair Futures in FY2022**, with \$12 million baselined in FY2023 and beyond. Through Fair Futures, thousands of young

people in foster care ages 11-21 are receiving coaching, tutoring and/or educational advocacy and support.

- **\$54.9 million in FY2022 to address the budget gap for foster care services** created by the federal elimination of the Title IV-E waiver and the end of the federal transition funding.
- **\$94.6 million additional capital funding for renovations to the City's two secure detention sites for youth**—Crossroads in Brooklyn and Horizon in Bronx— which will provide the essential and comprehensive upgrades that both of our detention facilities require to become safe, state of the art facilities for youth. This work will include critical infrastructure upgrades to HVAC, electric, and safety and security systems, as well as food service upgrades. Additionally, we will expand programming, vocational, education, medical, mental health, and family visiting spaces, all of which will help us better meet the needs of youth, including the older population of youth we are now serving since Raise the Age.
- **\$4.9 million to enhance child care operations**, including enrollment support for low-income and child welfare-involved families; enhanced attendance tracking for child care providers, which will help ensure timely payments; and related quality assurance activities.
- **\$17.1 million in FY2022 and the outyears to expand Family Enrichment Centers** across the city over the next four years. After the successful implementation of 3 Family Enrichment Centers, including O.U.R. Place in Hunts Point/Longwood and Circle of Dreams in Highbridge, ACS will expand to 30 sites that will be located in the priority neighborhoods identified by the Mayor's Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity (TRIE), based on equity burdens and the impact of COVID-19. This includes 5 new sites to serve the following neighborhoods in Manhattan: Lower East Side/Chinatown, Morningside Heights/Hamilton Heights, Central Harlem, East Harlem, Washington Heights/Inwood.
 - The FECs are walk-in community centers that are co-designed with local families and community members to increase social connectivity and provide families programming and resources they need to thrive. The goal of the FECs is to support families and, thus, reduce child welfare involvement and disrupt racial disproportionality in the child welfare system in communities that have been historically over-represented. The FEC staff work hand-in-hand with community members to provide concrete resources and other offerings responsive to the communities' needs and interests. In particular, the FECs proved crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic by providing critical supports to community members in need, including food, clothing, emergency funds, and technology, as well as social supports to parents and caregivers.

In addition to the City's important investments in ACS's programs and services, we were pleased that the final enacted state budget did not contain any of the devastating cuts that were initially proposed, including reversing the 20% across the board cut to many of ACS's services, including prevention, adoption subsidy and detention.

2. What changes in federal funding have been instituted for FY 22? Will those changes continue into FY 23? What portion or percentage of the FY 21 and FY 22 budgets consisted of non-recurring federal funding?

Foster care services are supported by a mix of federal, state, and city dollars. In regard to non-recurring Federal funding, which was primarily related to COVID-19 and the transition to the Family First Prevention Services Act, these sources made up less than 2% of the total budget in FY2021 and are projected to be less than 0.5% of the FY2022 total budget.

As further background: ACS was one of several jurisdictions around the country that participated in the federal Title IV-E waiver program that allowed ACS to reduce foster care caseloads, enabling caseworkers to provide more intensive, higher quality services and achieving more timely permanency for the children in their care. The federal law that allowed us to use these funds in non-traditional ways sunset in September 2019. ACS and NYC participated in successful advocacy that resulted in Congress passing the Family First Transition Act in December 2019. Among other provisions, the Transition Act provides temporary funding to waiver jurisdictions to bridge the time period to implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) and avoid federal shortfalls. This was a 2-year bridge. To address the hole caused by the end of the waiver and the end of the transition funds, ACS's budget includes \$54.9 million in city funds for FY2022 to fill the budget gap.

ACS continues to work diligently with the State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) and our child welfare partners to implement FFPSA. At a high level, the law is intended to do two things: 1) allow jurisdictions to seek federal IV-E reimbursement for qualified prevention services for eligible children (there are specific requirements tied to a child's eligibility and the type of prevention service models that would be reimbursable); and 2) reduce the number of children placed in residential foster care settings. NYS opted to delay implementation of FFPSA until September 29, 2021. The State, as part of the SFY22 budget, has now passed new legislation to implement some of the residential foster care provisions of the federal law.

The State also needs to submit a 5-year prevention plan to the federal Administration for Children & Families (ACF), with a proposal for prevention programs that would qualify for federal Title IV-E reimbursement, and we understand this proposal remains in progress. Programs must be approved and included in a federal Clearinghouse in order to qualify, and the State would have a maintenance of effort requirement in order to access federal IV-E funds. It has been challenging to assess whether NYC will benefit from additional prevention resources without fuller information. If there are additional federal resources as a result of FFPSA, we will likely not see any in FY2022.

ACS has been pleased to see strong action at the federal level to support children and families. In particular, the American Rescue Plan that was enacted earlier this year contained significant investments in child care, both adding to the Child Care Block Grant and allocating stabilization

funds for child care providers. In August 2021, NYS OCFS opened a process for child care providers to access the \$1.1 billion in available funds to help cover the unexpected business costs associated with COVID-19 and to stabilize their operations. OCFS is administering this process and accepting grant applications through November 30, 2021. Details are available at: <https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/contracts/funding/COVID-relief/childcare-stabilization/>

ACS is eager to fully leverage federal Child Care Block Grant funds—both existing funds and new federal investments—to enable many more families received federally funded child care, and we included more details about our child care expansion priorities in item (II) (4) below.

3. What is the overall budget increase or decrease for FY 22 adopted budget compared to FY21 budget? Does the Agency anticipate a budget shortfall for FY 22, FY 23 or further out years after the non-recurring federal funding has been exhausted?

ACS's Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Adopted Budget is \$2.73 billion, including \$995.2 million in City Tax Levy (CTL) funding. This is an increase from ACS's adopted FY 2021 budget, which provided for operating expenses of \$2.66 billion, of which approximately \$869 million was City Tax Levy. ACS's ten-year capital plan is \$519.5 million from FY 2021 through FY 2030, of which \$72 million falls into FY 2022.

We do not project a budget shortfall due to non-recurring Federal funding.

We are in constant communication with OMB to identify resources as new needs arise so that we are able to meet our programming and service goals in the outyears, including State and Federal funding. This helps us both to meet our current programming and service goals, but also to institute new and innovative programs to address the needs of children and families.

II. Then, the agenda continues with Community Boards asking about program funding.

1. What programs will see a significant increase or decrease in funding? To what extent, if any, is the increase or decrease in funding related to non-recurring federal funding allocations?

As noted above, we do not have cuts in FY2022 to our core programs that promote child safety and support family stability and well-being, and we are pleased to receive new needs to maintain and enhance services for children and families. We do not project a budget shortfall due to non-recurring Federal funding.

2. Which programs will be new or eliminated entirely?

Fortunately, none of our programs will be eliminated and there are no cuts to ACS's core services. As mentioned above, several programs will be expanded or enhanced due to additional funding, such as the investment to increase from 3 to 30 FECs throughout NYC over the next 4 years, the strengthening of our child care operations, and the continuation of Fair Futures for youth in foster care.

3. What are your benchmarks for new and existing programs and what are your benchmarks/key performance indicators for measuring success?

Many of ACS's programs and services are subject to city, state, and federal reporting and oversight, and we have robust oversight and performance measurement processes in place internally. A few key areas of performance evaluation are included here.

Frequent Leadership Oversight:

On a monthly basis, ACS's Deputy Commissioners and Commissioner review and discuss key performance indicators including child protective caseloads, numbers of families served in prevention services, foster care census and entry information, court filings, and juvenile justice statistics. This regular, deep dive at the Cabinet level is in addition to the daily management and oversight within our program divisions and working with our contracted provider agencies.

ChildStat:

ChildStat is a cornerstone of the ACS quality assurance and improvement system for child protection. The primary responsibility of the Division of Child Protection (DCP) is to reduce risk and ensure safety and well-being for children and families throughout NYC. Each session includes a presentation of data and case practice, and includes extensive dialogue and Q&A. Each session concludes with a review of recommendations and learnings for both the individual zone and the system as a whole.

Scorecard:

ACS issues annual Scorecards for every foster care and prevention program and agency. The Scorecard is an annual summary of the performance of our contracted services that support New York City's youth and families. In New York City, ACS manages the prevention and foster care system, under State oversight, and contracts with nonprofit organizations who provide services to children and families.

Scorecard is one of many tools that ACS uses to monitor contract agencies closely, identify areas for improvement, and track ongoing compliance with required changes to practice. The scores alone do not tell the full story of provider performance; they must be combined with other sources of information to fully assess performance, such as the varying complexity of the children and families served by each agency

Monthly reports for provider agencies:

ACS produces monthly reports for each foster care and prevention program and agency, which provides the agency with a status update on key indicators, including agency progress towards annual targets, programmatic utilization and length of service, as well as system-wide trends and comparative data.

FLASH report and other public reports:

ACS produces a monthly report on key indicators that is distributed widely within ACS and available to the public. The FLASH report is available on our public website at:

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/about/flashindicators.page>

ACS produces a number of publicly available reports to help stakeholders better understand our work and outcome. These are published at: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/about/data-analysis.page>

4. What are your priorities, operational goals, and capital goals for FY22 and projected priorities, operational goals, and capital goals for FY23?

ACS's mission is to promote the safety, permanency and well-being of New York City's children and young people, and we are pursuing a number of important initiatives related to this mission.

- FEC Expansion: As detailed above, ACS is expanding from 3 to 30 FECs over the next four years. The FECs partner with families in the given community to co-design programming responsive to their needs and interests, providing resources and supports to enhance child and family well-being. By proactively addressing family needs that are identified by the families themselves we can provide families and children what they need to thrive and reduce the likelihood of child welfare involvement.
- Child Care Expansion: ACS considers child care as part of the primary prevention continuum and ACS and our City agency partners have focused on making sure that families most in need of child care have access, including by:
 - Restoring prioritization of post-transitional child care vouchers, so that low-income families transitioning off other public assistance benefits can continue to receive child care.
 - Prioritizing child care vouchers for families who are homeless.
 - Prioritizing child care vouchers for families who have recently received child care through participation in ACS's child welfare programs, such as families who have adopted a child from the foster care system or recently completed preventive services.
 - Expanding eligibility for those receiving subsidized child care to include families participating in an approved substance abuse treatment program.
- Launching the Office of Child Safety and Injury Prevention: The Office of Child Safety and Injury Prevention, launched in August 2021, is an office dedicated entirely to education, information and outreach to prevent accidents and injuries among children. This new office will support ongoing child safety campaigns, including those related to unsafe sleep practices, hot car tragedies, window guards, unsafe storage of prescription medications and, most recently, accidental ingestion of cannabis edibles.
- Re-procuring and Redesigning Foster Care: ACS is currently in the process of re-procuring and redesigning foster care services, including both family foster care and residential care, for new contracts to begin in FY2023. These RFPs are the result of extensive research and input from youth, parents, foster parents, advocates, provider agencies, child welfare experts, and other stakeholders. The redesigned system will strengthen foster care services in a number of key ways:
 - First, the new system will require and fund foster care agencies to hire parent advocates with lived experience of the child welfare system, to help parents safely reunify with their children more quickly and to improve race equity outcomes. Every parent working towards reunifying with their children will have an assigned parent advocate to partner with them throughout the process.
 - Second, the redesigned system will significantly increase therapeutic and evidence-based supports to better meet children's needs while they are in foster care.
 - Third, the redesigned system increases resources and expands the use of proven practices across the system in key areas, including visiting; continuing to increase

the proportion of children placed with family and friends; expediting reunification; and providing services and supports to youth in care such as coaching, tutoring.

- Building NYC's Success in Juvenile Justice Reform: ACS is preparing for reprocurement of the Close to Home residential placement system that successfully transformed the NYC juvenile justice landscape starting in 2012. Our model of care places youth in small, residential settings near their family and communities, with intensive structure and trauma-informed services in place to promote successful reentry into the community. We anticipate releasing a concept paper for Close to Home in Fall 2021.
- Renovating Secure Detention to Promote Youth-Centric Care: The Executive Budget adds \$94.6 million to ACS's capital budget, for a total of \$336 million committed to renovations at Horizon and Crossroads which will provide the essential and comprehensive upgrades that both of our detention facilities require to become safe, state of the art facilities for youth. This work will include critical infrastructure upgrades to HVAC, electric, and safety and security systems, as well as food service upgrades. Importantly, we will expand programming, vocational, education, medical, mental health, and family visiting spaces, all of which will help us better meet the needs of youth, including the older population of youth we are now serving since Raise the Age.
- Promoting More Equitable Outcomes: ACS has intensified our focus on achieving more equitable outcomes for children and families by taking a close look at internal policies and practices, as well as advocating for external changes that will reduce disparities in the child welfare system. Examples of continuing priorities in this area include:
 - Ensuring that the voices of parents and children with lived experience are at the forefront of our decision-making. Our prevention contracts specifically require contracted providers to incorporate parent voice and choice into service development and delivery. Building on ACS's long-standing work to incorporate parent advocates into child welfare, we are preparing to issue a new RFP to expand the use of Parent Advocates to support families during initial Child Safety Conferences—meetings with the child protective team and family to discuss risks to the child and family service needs during an investigation. ACS is also scaling up the Parents Supporting Parents Initiative across the foster care system as part of the new RFP.
 - Implementing the state law to reform practices related to SCR history, in order to reduce collateral consequences for families. Investigations that are opened on or after January 1, 2022 will require the higher “fair preponderance of evidence” standard to “indicate” a report of child abuse or neglect, and the law also reduces the time that an “indicated” case of neglect will remain visible to employers.
 - Expanding our Collaborative Assessment, Response, Engagement and Support (CARES) program, with the goal of reducing unwarranted investigations. Where we can safely do so, we are working to retrack cases from the investigative route to one which emphasizes the provision of support and services to address the family's needs. Currently we have 16 CARES units citywide, and our plan is to reach 32 units by the end of 2021 and expand to 64 units in 2022.
 - Continuing our internal work, led by ACS's Office of Equity Strategies to build staff capacity, knowledge, and skills to transform ACS into an anti-racist organization.

- Continuing COVID-19 Recovery and Long-Term Innovation:
 - We continue our strong efforts to urge ACS and provider staff, and the children and families we serve to get vaccinated, which is crucial to the full recovery of our city and country.
 - Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, ACS has adapted our practice in new and innovative ways, and we continue to evaluate the lessons learned to carry forward. For example, we have seen that families and youth value the opportunity to access medical and mental health services via telehealth, and we are urging continued flexibility for this type of service provision going forward.
 - Additionally, given the very limited operations of the Family Court during COVID, ACS was concerned about the impact reunifications. We took aggressive action to proactively review thousands of cases and to work with parents' and children's attorneys to determine if cases could move forward to increased/unsupervised visiting, trial discharge or final discharge. We plan to institutionalize these kinds of proactive reviews on an on-going basis to help ensure children move to safe and timely permanency.

5. What expense or capital needs would ACS recommend or encourage Community Boards advocate be funded or expanded?

We encourage the Community Boards to support our core program areas: primary prevention through our Division of Child and Family Well-being, prevention services, child protection, family permanency services, and juvenile justice.

With COVID-19 and the ensuing economic crisis, we see families struggling to meet basic food, housing, and education needs. As we move through reopening and recovery, it will be crucial for the state and federal government to sustain and enhance critical resources for families like food assistance, income assistance, housing support, access to health and mental health services, in addition to ACS's programs that are supporting and strengthening families.

III. Lastly, the agendas include Boards' requests on district-specific budget questions. We request that the agency respond in writing, but have any further discussions on these items with the Community Boards outside of the consultation.

1. Which Manhattan community districts will see the largest increases or decreases in applied operational or capital funding for programmatic goals in FY 22 and FY 23?

a. What indicators do you use to direct these funds according to perceived need?

ACS provides services for children and families across New York City, and we detailed our important new investments in FY2022 to support children in families above in part I.

ACS's ten-year capital plan is \$519.5 million from FY 2021 through FY 2030, of which \$72.0 million falls into FY 2022. ACS is currently in the planning phase for renovations (funded at \$14.8 million) to increase programmatic space at the ACS Children's Center, which is a 24/7 temporary care center for children entering foster care, located in Manhattan CD 6.

MEETING NOTES:

AGENDA ITEM 2: Foster Care

The Foster Care Strategic Blueprint for FY 2019-2023 outlines progressive increases in the delivery of preventive services designed to keep families together and an apparently corresponding decline in the need for Foster Care services over the period 1996 to 2017.

Please update us on the implementation of the Foster Care Strategic Blueprint for FY 2019-2023, including:

- Has the trend of increasing preventive services and decreasing need for Foster Care placement continued? Please provide a summary of results and any projections for the near future.
- What budget impact does the trends outlined in the Strategic Blueprint have on the type and need for funding at ACS?
 - are the current amounts and line items for ACS funding sufficient and accurate?
 - are the current amounts and line items appropriate and relevant, or should new line items be developed?

Please update us on the delivery of mental health and education services specifically targeted to children in Foster Care.

-- are the funds available for these needs sufficient to ensure all those in need of such services have a reasonable chance of having those needs met?

Please give the status of foster care case worker pay parity. Are increases funded for FY 22 and planned for FY23? Is current status causing continued delays in placement?

Please discuss how budget cuts have impacted transitional programs for youth aging out of foster care.

AGENCY RESPONSE:

Has the trend of increasing preventive services and decreasing need for Foster Care placement continued? Please provide a summary of results and any projections for the near future.

Through ACS's strong prevention efforts there are **fewer than 8,000 NYC children in foster care** (compared with more than 50,000 NYC children in foster care 28 years ago, and 15,000 just a decade ago). Our goal is always to help support and strengthen families to keep children safe at home whenever possible.

ACS's Prevention Services continue to be a strong and effective support for families. Services are free to all families and are accessible in all five boroughs. The goal of prevention services is to support New York City families in building skills to manage crises, maintain safety and stability within the home, and strengthen their ability to thrive within the community. **With the help of a network of community-based providers, approximately 20,000 families (with more than 41,000 children) each year receive supports like family therapy, mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, and domestic violence intervention, as well as concrete support, including food, diapers, cribs and more.**

ACS continues to aggressively implement our Foster Care Strategic Blueprint priorities, and our FY2020 Progress Report is available here: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/data-analysis/2020/FosterCareBluePrintFY2020.pdf>

Through our Foster Care Strategic Blueprint, ACS has achieved measurable positive results, including fewer children in foster care; reduced length of stay in foster care; increased kinship placement and kinship guardianship; increased foster home recruitment; and expanded programming for older youth. We are building on this progress as we are now in the process of reprocurring and designing foster care services, as discussed above.

What budget impact does the trends outlined in the Strategic Blueprint have on the type and need for funding at ACS?

- are the current amounts and line items for ACS funding sufficient and accurate?
- are the current amounts and line items appropriate and relevant, or should new line items be developed?

The FY22 Adopted Budget provides approximately \$350.2 million for prevention and homemaker services and \$1.023 billion for foster care support and services, and adoption subsidies. We are in constant communication with OMB to identify resources as new needs arise so that we are able to meet our programming and service goals.

Please update us on the delivery of mental health and education services specifically targeted to children in Foster Care.

- are the funds available for these needs sufficient to ensure all those in need of such services have a reasonable chance of having those needs met?

Mental Health Services for Children in Foster Care

We have a full array of medical and mental health providers serving the youth in our care. During the pandemic telehealth services have been an important resource for children and families. Children in foster care are covered by Medicaid, and foster care agencies submit claims directly to the state when needed. During the pandemic telehealth has been covered and we are hopeful this will continue.

Additionally, under the new RFP, the redesigned foster care system will significantly increase therapeutic and evidence-based supports to further enhance our ability to meet children's needs while they are in foster care.

Education Services for Children in Foster Care

Ensuring that the children and youth in ACS's care have access to high-quality education services is always a crucial priority for ACS, and it required extra attention and partnership during the pandemic. Starting in Spring 2020, we partnered with the DOE to provide thousands of young people in foster care with remote learning devices. Continuing into this school year, ACS has worked closely with DOE staff to expedite delivery for children and youth newly entering care who require devices. ACS and providers have also furnished students with tablets and desktop computers when needed while students are awaiting arrival of their DOE devices. In addition, ACS and DOE have collaborated to enhance the capacity of foster care agency staff to support students in foster care with remote and hybrid learning, offering a series of provider trainings on how to assist families in navigating remote learning technology. We have also partnered on a series of successful information sessions about remote and hybrid learning for foster parents and parents of students in foster care.

We have numerous other programs to support youth in foster care as they achieve their educational goals. Through Fair Futures, thousands of young people in foster care ages 11-21 are receiving coaching, tutoring and/or educational advocacy and support. The City has invested \$20 million to continue this model in FY2022, with \$12 million baselined in FY2023 and beyond.

ACS continues its commitment to support the post-secondary goals of students in foster care. New York City is unique in that students have multiple levels of social-emotional and financial support pathways, including assistance from provider agencies, ACS CUNY, and NYS Opportunity Programs. These supports can provide a pathway to success for either a traditional college or vocational training settings.

Additionally, ACS provides a significant range of college programming and supports for youth in foster care. Examples of supports that we provide include:

- **140** students are receiving ACS' Fostering College Success stipend, available to full-time students residing in dormitory housing.
- During the 2020-21 academic year, **130** students were enrolled ACS's Fostering College Success Initiative (also known as the "Dorm Project"), a partnership with CUNY and foster care agency New York Foundling. Through FCSI, students in foster care who attend CUNY and other institutions receive tutoring, coaching, career counseling, and other supports to help them successfully complete college. Housing at dorms operated by Queens College and Hunter College is available to FCSI participants who attend CUNY schools. in FCSI.
- **26** students age 21 years old or older received support from ACS to fund their college room and board during the 2020-2021 academic year (College Room and Board Program). When colleges and universities closed their dorms due to COVID-19, ACS worked closely with foster care agencies to help ensure these students had alternative housing placements.

Are the funds available for these needs sufficient to ensure all those in need of such services have a reasonable chance of having those needs met?

We are in constant communication with OMB to identify resources as new needs arise so that we are able to meet our programming and service goals.

Please give the status of foster care case worker pay parity. Are increases funded for FY 22 and planned for FY23? Is current status causing continued delays in placement?

The foster care work force is critical to the well-being of children in foster care. While each foster care provider agency sets the salary for their staff, ACS is continuing to work with our providers to strengthen the workforce. We agree that adequate salaries are important to maintain experienced foster care case planners.

Regarding placements, ACS and foster care provider agency staff collaborate closely to ensure children in foster care have safe, nurturing environments to meet their needs. When children are placed into foster care, ACS is intensely focused on placing them with relatives or other trusted adults with whom the child has a connection. These “kinship” placements are known to help reduce trauma, improve outcomes, and they can help a child maintain cultural and language ties. By continuously strengthening our work to identify and support kinship caregivers, we have been able to achieve an overall increase in the proportion of the city's foster children who are with kinship caregivers from 30% in 2017 to more than 42% in 2020.

If a kinship placement is not immediately available, or in situations where a child’s medical, mental health, or behavioral health needs require a higher level of care, we place the child in the correct setting with other services or supports as needed. ACS operates the Nicholas Scoppetta Children’s Center, NYC’s foster care intake center that is located in Manhattan CB6. It serves as a temporary placement for youth that have been removed from home for their safety while awaiting placement with kin, a foster family or other foster care setting.

When placing a child, we consider a range of factors that include the type of setting, location related to the child’s community and school of origin, language, age, gender and any other relevant child characteristics (e.g. frequent appointments, developmental disability, dietary restrictions) that we have identified for the child as required for the foster care resource to be a match.

We are continually working to streamline the placement process. In October 2019, ACS and the State Office of Children and Family Services implemented a new foster care placement module in the Connections system, which is helping us more efficiently match children with the foster care placements most suited to their needs. With funds allocated in FY2020, ACS also procured the Binti system, software that has made the foster home certification process digital, making it more user-friendly and reducing paperwork. This helps support caregivers through the foster home certification process.

Please discuss how budget cuts have impacted transitional programs for youth aging out of foster care.

As discussed above, ACS has not received any cuts to our core programs and services.

While most children and youth in foster care return home, are adopted, or achieve permanency through kinship guardianship, every young person’s situation includes its own unique circumstances and challenges, and some will ultimately transition out of foster care to independent

living (fewer than 600 each year). ACS is committed to providing older youth in care with the necessary services and supports to acquire the skills to live a healthy, productive and self-sufficient adult life.

For youth age 18+ who elect to leave foster care before they turn 21:

- ACS has a specialized unit that provides outreach, support and services to these young people.
- We work with these young people to facilitate their reentry into foster care when needed.
- We have a process in place to make sure a youth can be immediately housed and assisted when needed, pending any further planning with the youth and their attorney and filing in court.

ACS requires our contracted foster care agencies to report to ACS on the work they are doing to help older youth apply for housing, to support youth in their academic pursuits (including college), to provide assistance for young people in obtaining and maintaining employment and to ensure youth are receiving necessary health, mental health and other services. ACS has also provided funding to implement the Fair Futures program, which includes coaches, tutors, and housing specialists, among other supports for youth in care.

Historically, while youth can remain in foster care until the age of 21 with the support of state/federal and city funds, youth over age 21 who do not yet have a permanent living arrangement were able to remain in foster care with the full support of city funds only.

The federal consolidated appropriations bill that was signed into law in December 2020 contained COVID-19 emergency relief provisions including the following related to older youth in foster care:

- Prohibits aging out of foster care during the pandemic.
- For any foster youth who left care due to age after the public health emergency was declared, they must be permitted to re-enter care.
 - o States/local agencies must notify these youth that they are eligible to return to care.
- Title IV-E funds are available to support the care of these older youth who are otherwise IV-E eligible and remain in care and/or re-enter care.

NYS also recently enacted state law changes that intended to make it easier for youth to re-enter care during the COVID-19 pandemic. We applaud these legislative efforts that align with ACS's longstanding practices, and that will allow more older youth around the state and the country to receive continuing foster care support during this challenging time.

The federal consolidated appropriations bill also increased the allocation to states under the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program to provide Educational & Training Vouchers and other supports to older foster youth, which are being administered by NYS OCFS.

MEETING NOTES:

AGENDA ITEM 3: Capital - Capacity

Please update us on the status of maintaining capacity for ACS-funded programs and facilities located in buildings that are either:

- purpose-built and approaching the end of their useful lives; or
- approaching the ends of their leases; or
- are otherwise expected to be redeveloped.

AGENCY RESPONSE:

ACS's current portfolio includes the Children's Center, two secure detention facilities, and 24 office locations. Out of 24 City-leased office facilities, five sites are in the Borough of Manhattan.

- 110 William Street, New York, NY 10038; Lease commencement date: 6/27/2019; Lease expiration date: 2/14/2040
- 150 William Street, New York, NY 10038; Lease commencement date: 9/1/2008; Lease expiration date: 8/31/2023 (ACS is currently working with DCAS to explore options)
- 55 West 125 Street, New York, NY 10027; Lease commencement date: 6/7/2019; Lease expiration date: 6/6/2039
- 61 Broadway, New York, NY 10006; Lease commencement date: 4/3/2019; Lease expiration date: 4/30/2028
- 66 John Street, New York, NY 10038; Lease renewal 9/1/2021; Lease expiration date: 8/31/2026

ACS is currently in the planning phase for renovations (funded at \$14.8 million) to increase programmatic space at the ACS Children's Center which is a 24/7 temporary care center for children entering foster care, located in Manhattan CD 6.

MEETING NOTES: