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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ACS Launches Major New Foster Care Initiative, Strong Families NYC

Up to 13,000 children and their families will benefit from innovations each year

As the number of children in foster care continues to decline, New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS) is launching **Strong Families NYC**, an initiative that promotes family permanency and well-being among children in foster care and their families.

"Through Strong Families NYC, we will work with our partners to raise the bar and improve outcomes. This initiative will bring targeted and intensive trauma therapy and other practices built on the science of what works to many more New York City children and families," said ACS Commissioner Gladys Carrión.

When fully implemented, **Strong Families NYC** will reach up to 13,000 children annually—about 80% of the children who spend any time in the city's foster care system each year—through four innovative components:

1. Comprehensive Trauma Screening

- Robust and dynamic assessments of our children and families result in a better understanding of the services and support they need.
- The nationally recognized [Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths- New York \(CANS-NY\)](#) screening tool is being incorporated into the assessment of every child in foster care placement. The tool includes more 101 measures of a child and his/her caregiver such as school performance, medical issues, exposure to trauma, and cultural identity so foster care caseworkers can develop more comprehensive and appropriate plans.
- Since July 2014, provider agencies have completed more than 14,000 CANS-NY screenings.

2. Reducing Foster Care Caseloads and Increasing Supervision

- Lower caseloads and supervisory ratios support high quality case planning and more detailed assessments.
- The New York City foster care system has reduced average foster care caseloads from 18 to 22 children per case planner to 12 children or fewer per case planner, and reduced supervisory ratios to four case planners per supervisor.

3. Strengthening Young Child-Parent Bonding

- A young child's ability to form secure attachments is a proven, powerful factor that protects against stress and trauma, and is associated with lifelong positive outcomes.
- Through the **Strong Family NYC's** Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up (ABC) model, caregivers (including parents, foster parents, and relatives) with children 6-months through 3-years-old will take part in 10 weeks of in-home coaching sessions that boost healthy and secure attachment and promote caregivers' practical knowledge about child development.
- Caregivers will receive concrete feedback, encouragement and support while learning to understand and positively relate to their children's emotions and behavioral cues.

4. Increasing Mental Health Clinician and Foster Care Worker Collaboration

- Children and youth brought into care—and their families—have often experienced significant trauma and behavioral health challenges.
- **Strong Families NYC** builds new bridges between foster care workers and mental health clinicians so behavioral and mental health issues are better assessed and addressed through supportive, individualized services.
- Children will have greater access to Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Plus (CBT+), which has been proven effective in addressing anxiety, depression, behavioral issues and trauma, in addition to improving child and family well-being.

ACS reduced foster care caseloads and implemented CANS-NY in 2014 to 23 agencies providing family foster care, and will implement Partnering for Success and ABC in 2015. Partnering for Success will be rolled out to ACS' foster care agencies and partner mental health providers by trainers through the new ACS Workforce Institute, a \$14.5 million partnership with the School of Professional Studies of the City University of New York (CUNY). ABC will begin in a few high-needs neighborhoods in 2015 and will expand to all five boroughs and provide services to our 23 providers over the next three years.

Strong Families NYC builds on our 2012 pilot **ChildSuccessNYC**, which introduced evidence-based interventions in five foster care agencies. These interventions include Parenting Through Change, which provides parents with support as they prepare to be reunited with their children, and the Keeping Foster and Kin Parents Supported and Trained (KEEP) model to New York, helping foster parents manage needs of children and youth who have experienced trauma in order to promote stable placements. ACS found that foster care agencies that used KEEP and Parenting for Change were 11% more likely than a comparison group to achieve permanency. Based on results, the five foster care agencies will continue implementing these two evidence-based models.

Strong Families NYC and **ChildSuccessNYC** are part of the federal government's Title IV-E Foster Care Waiver program, which allows child welfare agencies to use federal dollars to implement innovative child welfare practices. Title IV-E refers to the federal funding that has traditionally only paid for supporting children when they are removed and placed into foster care. By joining a growing number of jurisdictions who are seeking flexible federal funding, New York City has developed creative approaches to engaging with families, increasing permanency, preventing child abuse and neglect, and promoting positive outcomes. **Strong Families NYC** was developed after an analysis of the foster care system, which included interviews and focus groups with leaders, staff, and young people.