



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

January 11, 2019

Contact: mediainquiry@acs.nyc.gov

WITH NEARLY 3,000 NYC YOUTH IDENTIFIED AS TRAFFICKED OR AT-RISK, ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNOUNCES NEW CHILD TRAFFICKING PREVENTION TOOLKITS TO HELP NY'ERS BETTER SPOT SIGNS OF TRAFFICKING & PREVENT AT-RISK YOUTH FROM BEING EXPLOITED

Already, in the Last Year, ACS Has Trained Nearly 2,500 Parents, Teachers, Clinicians, Youth & More On How to Better Recognize & Prevent Child Sex Trafficking

New Toolkits Mean That Thousands More Will Have Access to Critical Resources, Including Info on How & Why Traffickers Target Specific Youth, Behaviors to Look For, And More

New York, NY – Today, as part of National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month, Administration for Children Services (ACS) Commissioner David A. Hansell announced that new trafficking prevention toolkits will be distributed to 5,000 child welfare professionals within ACS and its contract agencies. The 40-page toolkit, titled “Child Trafficking and What YOU Can Do About it,” provides detailed information on how to best recognize signs of possible child trafficking, learn how traffickers target specific youth, prevent exploitation and provide interventions for trafficked youth when safe to do so. [More information on the toolkits can be found at: nyc.gov/acs/childrenarenoforsale.

Human trafficking involves the recruitment, transportation, selling or buying of people for various forms of exploitation, including labor and sexual exploitation.

In 2017, a total of 2,996 youth across New York City were identified as either trafficked or at-risk for trafficking, a 21 percent increase from the program’s 2016 data according to a report conducted by the NYC Safe Harbour Program. Of these, 1,203 were identified as under the age of 19. Young people in the foster care and juvenile justice systems, as well as homeless and runaway, immigrant, LGBT and other marginalized youth are particularly vulnerable to exploitation. Nationally, middle-school-aged children are most vulnerable to sex trafficking.

ACS has been steadily building its capacity to identify and prevent sex trafficking through a range of supports and services. In addition to the toolkits, last year, ACS trained over 2,500 individuals across New York City on how to address and prevent child sex trafficking. The trainees include: youth, parents, teachers, clinicians, nonprofit service providers, and city agency staff address and prevent child sex trafficking.

Additionally, Child Protective Specialists receive training on how to identify and intervene in cases where there is suspected trafficking. Frontline workers are then able to monitor at-risk

and trafficked youth and provide supportive services through partner agencies. Children's Counselors and Youth Development Specialists also receive training.

Moreover, the ACS Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy (OCTPP) works with provider agencies to provide guidance in assessing trafficking indicators, suggests resources towards development of appropriate service plans, and liaises between key stakeholders

"ACS is committed to increasing child trafficking awareness and supportive programs designed to help at-risk youth protect themselves and help survivors find a permanent way out," said **ACS Commissioner David A. Hansell**. "With innovative new tools like this child trafficking prevention toolkit, and trained professionals across the city, we can better engage more our young people, particularly those in our child welfare and juvenile justice systems who are especially at-risk."

ACS has implemented several programs and supportive services to help prevent trafficking including:

- In August 2018, ACS announced NYC Child Tattoo Eradication Project, a new pilot program to provide free tattoo removal services to trafficked and gang involved New York City youth who have been engaged in the child welfare system. Through the initiative, ACS partners with medical providers who offer pro-bono services to youth affiliated with ACS whose brandings have hindered their ability to positively move on with their lives.
- New York City also became the first jurisdiction in the country to purchase "I am Little Red," a primary prevention tool aimed at children ages 11-14. The film is a contemporary adaptation of the classic fairy tale, Little Red Riding Hood, and depicts the tactics typically used by "wolves" (traffickers) to lure young victims. The film helps young people learn strategies for responding to recruitment. My Life, My Choice, an anti-trafficking organization, designed the curriculum materials that go along with this resource and gives at-risk children the skills and tools they need to identify and prevent trafficking.
- In 2018, ACS also distributed 300 copies of the "I am Little Red" video to teach children ages 11-14, how to spot recruitment tactics used by sex traffickers. The video, which was written by 10 survivors of child sex trafficking along with the writer of the film "Toy Story" is narrated by actress Jessica Chastain, and has been shared with youth directly via Facebook and Snapchat ads and through distribution to 300 city agencies and nonprofit service providers.
- In 2018, ACS' Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy, launched the Love 146's #Not a Number curriculum to New York City, through Safe Harbour grant funding. Twenty-three (23) clinically focused staff from Foster Care, Preventive Services, Juvenile Justice and the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy attended the 3day Train the Trainer session, to be certified to use the model within their practice areas to assist youth in learning how to protect themselves from human trafficking through information receipt, critical thinking development, and skills growth.
- Additionally, ACS contracts with anti-trafficking organizations, like Safe Horizon and GEMS, to provide on-site assessments and mentoring services at our Children's Center,

a temporary placement setting serving children who have been abused and neglected and removed from their parents for safety reasons.

“This invaluable resource will ensure that our city strengthens its efforts to prevent child trafficking while addressing the unique challenges of survivors. I am proud to join ACS in ensuring our city empowers those on the frontlines of protecting our children,” said **Cecile Noel, Commissioner of the Mayor’s Office to End Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence (ENDGBV)**.

“The NYPD and all of our partners share an unwavering commitment to protecting the survivors of child trafficking, and we will continue to fight on behalf of our society’s most vulnerable groups. I thank and commend ACS for its work to help the people we serve identify and prevent such crimes, and I applaud New Yorkers for sharing the responsibility for public safety. Together, we must ensure that anyone who would seek to profit through the abuse and exploitation of another person – especially at-risk youth – be brought to justice swiftly and successfully. Through efforts like this, we will continue to make every neighborhood in our nation’s safest large city even safer,” said **NYPD Commissioner James P. O’Neill**.

“Prevention and early intervention are critical when it comes to combatting the exploitation and trafficking of New York City’s youth,” says **Jacqueline Ebanks, Executive Director of the Commission on Gender Equity**. “I applaud Commissioners Noel and Hansell for their critical work in providing training, resources, and education to those on the front lines of identifying and supporting at-risk and trafficked youth. We must continue to build safer communities for all of New York’s children.”

“With thousands of New York City children identified as survivors of or being at-risk for trafficking, we need to do all we can to stop this abuse and exploitation. With the right tools, we can spot the signs of trafficking and save our children from this horrific crime. I applaud the Administration for Children’s Services for introducing these new tool kits and engaging with those who are in a position to help these kids,” said **Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney**.

“We have so many vulnerable young people throughout New York City and they are at greatest risk of being victimized by traffickers. I am glad to see ACS is being proactive on this issue,” said **State Senator Velmanette Montgomery**. “It is a community responsibility to care for our children and it is important that we have access to tools that will help all of us identify the warning signs.”

“Human trafficking isn’t just happening in some other part of the state or internationally. It’s happening right here, in our communities, with our boys and girls,” said **Assemblymember Amy Paulin**, sponsor of many of the landmark anti-human trafficking laws passed by the state legislature. “The more we do to keep our most vulnerable kids safe and inoculate them from the recruitment techniques of traffickers, the more we can do to prevent these predators from devastating the lives of our children, our families, and our communities.”

“Law enforcement can’t fight child sex trafficking alone – we depend on well-trained service providers to help identify warning signs and protect the children they work with

every day. We are proud to partner with ACS to protect young New Yorkers from exploitation and commend Commissioner Hansell for his commitment to thwart traffickers who target vulnerable children in our child welfare system,” said **Manhattan District Attorney Cy Vance**.

“We must confront the terrible reality that in 2017, over twelve-hundred New York City youth under age 19 were trafficked or identified as at-risk for trafficking. Protecting and supporting each of these young people – and all vulnerable youth -- is of paramount importance. I commend the New York City Administration for Children’s Services for all of their efforts to fight back against trafficking, and absolutely agree that we must enlist more and more professionals and community members to be on the look-out for youth who may be in danger,” said **Council Member Helen Rosenthal, Chair of the Committee on Women**.

“At GEMS, we have developed programs that have become the gold standard for organizations serving trafficking victims and survivors across the country,” said **Rachel Lloyd, Founder and President of Girls Educational & Mentoring Services (GEMS)**. “Our collaborative efforts with ACS, including providing quarterly trainings to ACS staff and weekly awareness groups with youth in facilities, is a prime example of what is needed to address this issue and we look forward to continuing our long term partnership.

“At Safe Horizon, we know child trafficking is a pervasive problem because we see survivors every day,” said **Ariel Zwang, CEO of Safe Horizon**, the nation’s largest victim-services agencies. “ACS’ work to make sure that New Yorkers recognize the signs will help prevent trafficking and refer children who have been exploited to the services they need to heal.”

“Trafficked children often do not readily disclose for a variety of reasons, so it is easy for them to remain undetected. By increasing training and providing additional resources to the community we can work towards better identifying trafficked youth and, therefore, provide them with the services and safety enhancements they need to thrive. That’s why ACS strives to enhance provider agencies and community partners through trainings and the continual development and distribution of new programs and tools,” said **Selina Higgins, Executive Director of ACS’ Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy**.

###