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**NYC ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES RECOGNIZES
APRIL AS "NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH," HIGHLIGHTING THE
SERVICES AND SUPPORTS AVAILABLE TO FAMILIES**

*As NYC Continues to Confront the COVID-19 Pandemic, ACS and Contracted Non-Profits Have
Been Working to Ensure Children Are Safe & Families Are Supported*

NEW YORK, NY – In recognition of April as “National Child Abuse Prevention Month,” the NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS) today highlighted the many services and supports available to families in need. ACS and its community-based providers offer a full range of services and supports ranging from child safety educational campaigns, mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, homemaking services, community Family Enrichment Centers, in addition to providing concrete resources to families like food, diapers, laundry cards and more. Known as prevention services, they are designed to support and strengthen families and keep children safely at home with their families, and these services have never been more essential than during the pandemic.

As the State is in the final stages of negotiating the budget, ACS remains hopeful that proposed cuts to prevention services will be reversed. In addition, ACS looks forward to working with the State and the Federal government on identifying or creating funding streams that support prevention services for families prior to the need for child welfare involvement.

“We believe that the best way to keep children safe is to provide families with the services and supports they need,” **said ACS Commissioner David A. Hansell.** “In recognizing April as Child Abuse Prevention Month, we are reminded that, now more than ever, families are under an unusual amount of stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The best way to prevent child abuse is to provide support to families who need a helping hand—something ACS and our providers do through a range of prevention programs aimed at meeting each families’ individual needs.”

“As a middle school teacher, I often saw how children are impacted when their families don’t get the support they need. Making sure every family has access to the resources and information they need to keep their children safe and healthy is the single most effective way to protect kids. In the wake of this pandemic, that mission is more important than ever,” **said Jabari Brisport, New York State Senator, and Chair of the Senate Children and Families Committee.**

"As we recognize April as National Child Abuse Prevention Month, it is important to recognize that one of our greatest tools to combat child abuse is primary prevention. Families have been under immense amounts of pressure and stress, many facing challenges that seemed unfathomable over a year ago. It is important that families in New York know that they do not

have to face these challenges alone. I'm grateful for the work ACS and Commissioner Hansell have done and continue to do to expand primary prevention services," **said Andrew Hevesi, New York Assembly member and Chair of the Committee on Children and Families.**

"We have seen ACS' heartfelt devotion to prevent child abuse, as they entrust not-for-profits like ABC to engage respectfully and empathically with struggling families up close and on their own turf. We believe in a parent's fundamental devotion to keep their child safe, healthy, and beloved. No matter what the specific struggles, circumstances, or events that brought the family to the child welfare system, building on this unwavering belief in a parent's devotion, coupled with a genuine partnership between the family, us, and ACS, we can transform trauma and hopelessness into safety and tenderness," **said Gretchen Buchenholz, Executive Director and Eri Noguchi, Associate Executive Director of Association to Benefit Children.**

"Through prevention services, we work with entire families to ensure strong, stable households and spare children the lifelong trauma of family separation," **said Phoebe Boyer, President and CEO of Children's Aid.** "This past year, the need for these services became even more evident, as many families experienced incredible losses, unemployment, and food insecurity. Children's Aid is proud to partner with ACS to help families through this crisis and to find stability through essential programs and prevention services."

"Prevention/Family Support provides services and supports that protect children and strengthen families. Throughout the year, our staff works collaboratively with families in their communities to prevent child abuse and neglect. As we strengthen families, we strengthen our communities, and the City at large," **said Karen Dixon, Executive Director of Harlem Dowling-West Side Center.**

"The 11 ACS funded community partnerships cultivate leadership amongst community residents and provider partners; supporting their ability to create a community response that promotes child and family wellbeing and nurtures family success. Community partnerships invite all who value the wellbeing of our children and families, to play an active role in building strong communities and ultimately, keeping children safe. Community partnerships are effective primary prevention models that are inclusive and seek to reduce the racial and ethnic overrepresentation of families of color in the child welfare system," **said Denise Rosario, Executive Director of Coalition for Hispanic Family Services.**

"Keeping children safe from abuse must remain a top priority of our nation if we are serious about delivering hope for our future generations. We have all witnessed the longstanding affects that stem from the abuse that was endured by a person at a young age. In an effort to address this issue, ACS has provided families with additional supports in the form of primary preventive services where community members become the catalyst to their own success. Both the Circle of Dreams (FEC) and the Highbridge Community Partnership Program have focused on the strengthening & empowerment of the multi-generational family unit. Bridge Builders and the Children's Village are true believers in this model and are honored to join ACS in their unrelenting fight to prevent child abuse in the communities we serve," **said Warren Kent, Vice President for Community Based Services, The Children's Village and Executive Director, BridgeBuilders, Inc.**

ACS has also invested in services, often called "primary" prevention services, which are designed to address family needs without any involvement in the traditional child welfare system. For instance, ACS launched three Family Enrichment Centers (FEC's), which are led by local parents and community members who determine what services and resources will be

provided to families. Additionally, ACS funds 11 Community Partnership Programs (CPP) throughout New York City. The CPPs are community coalitions that function as local hubs to coordinate services and resources. CPPs are partnerships with local communities to ensure that everyone – from ACS and other City agencies to community providers, faith-based groups and local leaders – is involved in supporting children and families. ACS has also launched educational child safety campaigns on important topics for parents like safe sleep practices, ensuring homes are equipped with window guards, medication safety, and reminders to keep common hazards like hand sanitizer out of the reach of young children.

Throughout the pandemic, as families have been feeling stressed, ACS has worked hard to ensure families have the support they need. Specifically, ACS created a new digital campaign, [Coping Through COVID](#) and launched “[Teens Take on COVID](#),” a consolidation of resources for young people. This resource page lists out the various types of services available specifically for youth, including: medical services, mental health services, LGBTQIA health and mental health resources, substance abuse preventions and treatment, information on family or relationship violence, suicide prevention supports and more. ACS has also provided funding for emergency stipends and other critical support to youth and families including help to cover costs of rent, utilities, food and other expenses as a result of the pandemic. In addition, child protective specialists have continued to provide concrete resources to families, including: diapers, formula and other essentials for parents in need.

In the vast majority of child welfare investigations where ACS identifies a concern, families are able to engage in prevention services that provide assistance and coaching to families experiencing serious challenges and obstacles. When surveyed about their experiences with prevention services:

- Approximately 94% of survey participants said they are happy with the prevention services their families received.
- 71% of participants said that they would recommend these services to a friend and/or family member.
- Overall, 86% of the parents participating in the survey said prevention services helped them reach their parenting goals.

In July 2020 ACS announced the launch of its redesigned prevention services system which for the first time, offers universal access to the full range of programs to all families across the City, regardless of where they live. Additionally, the new system expands therapeutic supports to families, increases parent voices and choices in service delivery and promotes racial equity through mandated efforts to address racial disparities in all programs. ACS prevention services have safely reduced the utilization of foster care. There were nearly 50,000 New York City children in foster care 25 years ago, and 17,000 just a decade ago. Today there are fewer than 8,000 NYC children in foster care, a historic low.

To learn more about prevention services in your community, visit our website by clicking here: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/child-welfare/preventive-services.page>

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