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ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES EXPANDS PILOT PROGRAM TO HELP PARENTS BETTER UNDERSTAND THEIR RIGHTS WHEN THERE IS A CHILD PROTECTIVE INVESTIGATION

After a Successful Pilot, ACS is Taking Steps to Move Citywide to Provide Parents With Written Notification of Rights Before Entering their Home

The NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS) is expanding its work to help parents better understand their rights at the outset of a child protective investigation. The announcement comes following the completion of an initial pilot program in parts of Brooklyn and the Bronx, in which child protective specialists distributed over four hundred notifications to parents who were the subject of an allegation of child abuse or neglect. The notifications explain that, while ACS has a legal requirement to assess the safety of the child, parents are not required to let ACS into their homes and can seek the assistance of an attorney. If ACS is not allowed to check a child's safety as required, the notification explains that ACS may seek permission from Family Court to complete the assessment. Commissioner Jess Dannhauser today announced that ACS will begin distributing written notifications to families in two more zones, with full implementation planned by July of 2024.

Providing this information builds upon ACS's ongoing work to address systemic flaws that have existed in child welfare historically and promotes equity and fairness, including a citywide strategy to reduce the number of unnecessary child welfare investigations. ACS has been working closely with city agencies that serve children and families and external stakeholders to ensure families are being connected to the services and supports they need without the need for a child abuse or maltreatment report or an investigation.

"ACS is committed to keeping children safe, and, at the same time, respecting families because New York City children and families deserve both," **said Jess Dannhauser, Commissioner of the NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS)**. "To this end, we are expanding the pilot to provide families with information about their rights during a child protective investigation citywide by July of this year. In doing so, we are taking an important step towards the mayor's vision of safety, equity and justice."

"In order to support children, we need to also act to support parents. With the expansion of this pilot, child protective specialists will help inform more parents of their rights during a child protective case. This pilot also shows how ACS is working to make the system more equitable and fair for families," **said Deputy Mayor of Health and Human Services Anne Williams-Isom**

The new written materials – which are available in ten languages in addition to English – being provided to families include the following information: "The Administration for Children's

Services (ACS) has received a report from the New York Statewide Central Register (SCR) with concerns about your child(ren). ACS has a legal obligation to assess the safety of your child(ren) to complete an assessment of the concerns. We are requesting your permission to enter your home to have a conversation with you about the alleged concerns and to explain the process. We want you to know that you have a right to not let ACS into your home. If you choose not to let ACS into your home, ACS is required by law to determine how best to assess the safety of your child(ren). This may include seeking permission from Family Court to complete the assessment. We also want you to know that you may call an attorney at any point during this investigation. We have an informational packet that includes contact information for your local family defense organization, along with other resources within your community.”

Through a wide range of initiatives, ACS has been working to address the disparities that exist at each of the stages throughout the child welfare system, as well as the number of families impacted by a child welfare intervention. As a result of this work, substantial progress has been made: the number of Black non-Hispanic families experiencing an indicated investigation declined 38 percent from 2018 to 2022; the number of Black non-Hispanic families in family court filings related to abuse and neglect dropped by nearly half; the number of Black non-Hispanic families experiencing an emergency removal declined by one-third; and the number of Black non-Hispanic families with a child placed into foster care as a result of a child abuse or neglect investigation was down 20 percent. Today, the number of children in New York City’s foster care system is less than 6,500. Comparatively, 25 years ago, there were more than 40,000 children in New York City’s foster care system.