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ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNOUNCES AWARD FOR NEW YORK CITY'S "JUSTUS" DIVERSION PROGRAM FOR GIRLS & GENDER NON-CONFORMING YOUTH AT RISK OF INVOLVEMENT IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Expansion of "JustUs" is Part of New York City's Youth Safety & Success Initiative - Connecting More Youth to Counseling, Careers, College Opportunities & More

Today, the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) announced the recommended award for JustUs, a gender-responsive diversion program in New York City for girls and lesbian, gay, bisexual/transgender and gender non-conforming (LGB/TGNCNB) youth, ages 13-18, who are involved or at high risk of involvement in the juvenile justice system. While the number of girls entering the NYC juvenile justice system is small, the program provides supportive services to girls so as to avoid justice involvement whenever safely possible, reducing the female population even further. The goal of the JustUs program is to meet the youths' needs for career exploration and workforce development and help them build skills that promote self-sufficiency, self-reliance, and personal growth in an effort to reduce their involvement in the juvenile justice system. The recommended award for this program goes to the non-profit agency, Rising Ground, and will serve approximately 40-48 youth in Brooklyn per year beginning in July.

"New York City is committed to investing in youth because, by investing in our youth, we're investing in our future," said Jess Dannhauser, NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS) Commissioner. "The expansion of the JustUs program will help prevent as many youth as possible from coming into contact with the juvenile justice system. This program, along with the others as part of the Youth Safety and Success Initiative will provide young people with the skills they need to become independent and successful adults."

The goals of JustUS are as follows:

- Provide a comfortable shared space where girls can receive skilled individualized coaching and come together in groups to build community;
- Build safe and supportive relationships between program staff and participants;
- Offer trauma-informed supports and services;
- Examine the impact of sexism and racism in girls' lives;
- Focus on addressing the environmental causes of girls' behaviors;
- Cultivate leadership and economic sustainability through skill building and tangible workplace opportunities;
- Develop competencies and skills that promote self-sufficiency, self-reliance, and personal growth;
- Provide support to navigate the juvenile justice and child welfare systems;
- Divert and/or prevent initial engagement or further penetration into the justice system; and
- Increase school engagement.

JustUs is part of New York City's Youth and Safety and Success Initiative. Earlier this year, Mayor Adams announced the city would invest over \$40 million to expand five successful programs, which engage at-risk youth and young people in foster care. JustUs, along with Fair Futures, College Choice, Career Choice, and Assertive Community Engagement & Success (ACES) will be expanded as part of the initiative.