

# FY 2023-2024 Strategic Priorities





October 21, 2022

Dear Staff and Provider Partners,

As part of Mayor Adams's vision, ACS is committed to helping build a New York City that is more safe, just and equitable for children and families. We will rely on the ideas, wisdom and assets of NYC communities and families.

We will neither ignore the complex history of the child welfare or juvenile justice systems, nor the disproportionate and often painful impact on underserved and over-represented groups.

We will promote a safety culture within ACS and our Provider partners that focuses on learning and improvement rather than blame. We will strive to be an anti-racist organization that supports diverse opinions, thoughts and identities and seeks to be just in all that we do.

We envision a NYC where children and young people are safe and thriving and families are supported as their most important resources and protectors.

To this end, in Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024, ACS will undertake the priority initiatives outlined here. As we make progress and have more conversations with our stakeholders, we will continue to update and recirculate our Strategic Priorities.

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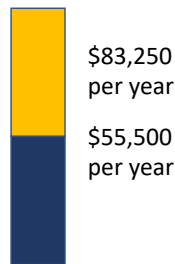
Jess Dannhauser,  
Commissioner

## Support Community Investments for Families

### Increase access to subsidized child care assistance

- In July, Mayor Adams unveiled NYC's Blueprint for Child Care & Early Childhood Education expanding access for families and support for providers.
- Between March and September 2022, ACS offered the opportunity to apply for a child care voucher to families of over 35,000 children who had been on a waitlist.
- Over the last six months, the number of children enrolled in child care with a low-income voucher has increased 48% from 7,533 in March 2022 to 11,139 in September 2022.
- ACS is targeting voucher enrollments in 17 high need community districts where unemployment and poverty are the highest and child care supply is inadequate.

ACS successfully advocated to New York State to increase the income eligibility ceiling for families to receive subsidized childcare from 200% to 300% of the Federal Poverty Level, which will expand the number of families who are able to be served.



**Increase in income ceiling for a family of four to be eligible for child care assistance**

### Implement new Beacon Family Support Programs by July 1, 2024

ACS is re-envisioning the model for our programs in Beacon schools and will issue an RFP in summer 2023.

### Support healthy early childhood development, maternal health and parent-child attachment

ACS, with City partners including DOHMH and H+H, is exploring ways to ensure more families have access - without an investigation - to the range of services offered.

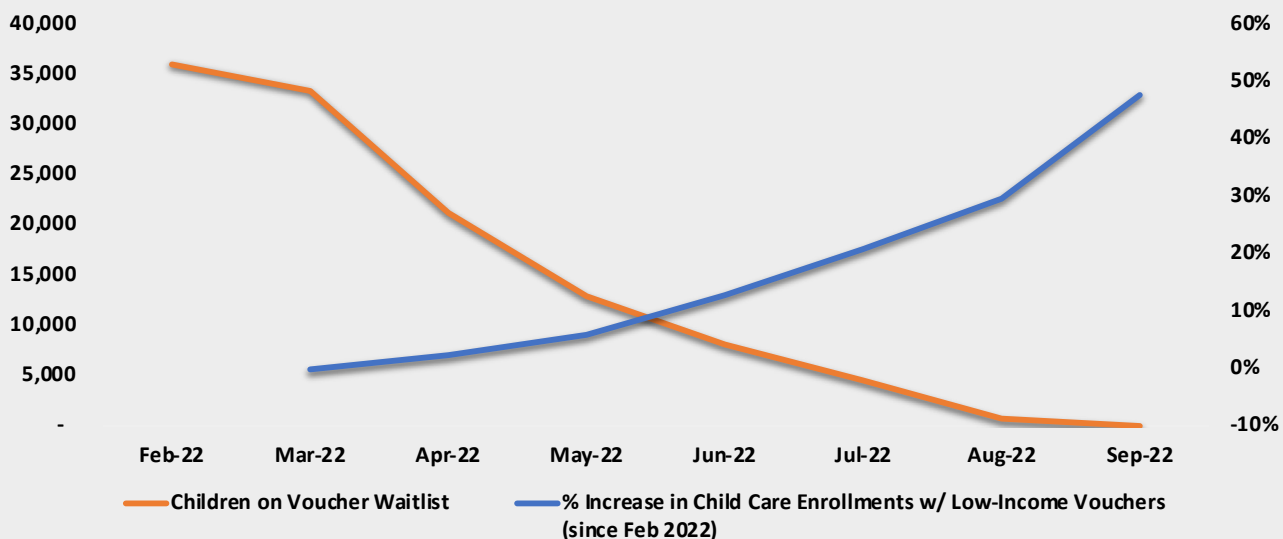
### Help access housing supports

ACS is piloting programs to secure stable housing for over 400 ACS involved youth and families through housing vouchers and retention services.

### Re-envision NYC's Alternatives-to-Detention programs

By July 2023, ACS will reprocure these services to best serve youth and keep them out of the juvenile justice system.

### Voucher Waitlist Cleared while Child Care Assistance for Low-Income Families Climbs



## Expand Family Enrichment Centers (FECs)

In 2017, ACS opened three FECs and in July 2022, we entered into contracts for nine more. By 2024, 30 FECs will be located in priority neighborhoods identified by the Mayor's Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity.

## Keep Children Safe and Promote Family-Driven Solutions

### Create alternative pathways to support families by...

- **Expanding our differential response track: CARES (Collaborative Assessment, Response, Engagement and Support)**  
By December 2023, ACS will refer 25% of incoming child protection cases to CARES by adding units and increasing caseloads.
  - **Expanding and strengthening referral pathways for family support**  
To serve more new families ACS is offering financial flexibility to our Provider partners. We are also strengthening community referral linkages across city agencies (including schools, hospitals, housing agencies), community-based organizations, as well as within ACS divisions.
  - **Expanding A Safe Way Forward**  
By December 1, 2022, ACS will expand the innovative model that serves intimate partner violence survivors and the persons causing harm.
- Continuously strengthen practices to protect children by...**
- **Expanding real-time review and coaching for highest-risk cases**  
Our Accelerated Safety Analysis Protocol team will increase reviews from 200 to 300 per month by July 2023.

## FEC LOCATIONS

### CURRENTLY OPEN:

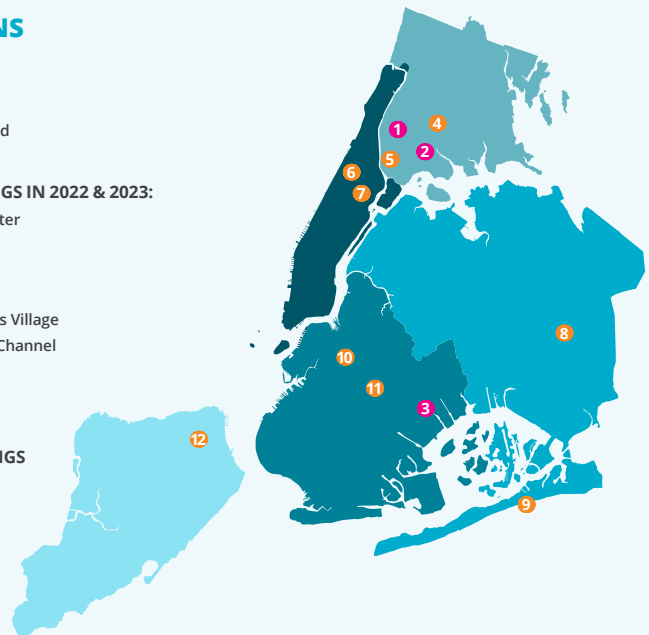
- 1 Highbridge
- 2 Hunts Point/Longwood
- 3 East New York

### ANTICIPATED OPENINGS IN 2022 & 2023:

- 4 Soundview/ Parkchester
- 5 Mott Haven/Melrose
- 6 Central Harlem
- 7 East Harlem
- 8 Jamaica/Hollis/Queens Village
- 9 Far Rockaway/Broad Channel
- 10 Bedford-Stuyvesant
- 11 Brownsville
- 12 St. George/Stapleton

### ANTICIPATED OPENINGS AFTER 2023:

- Jackson Heights
- Elmhurst/Corona
- Bushwick
- East Flatbush
- Fordham/ University Heights
- Washington Heights/ Inwood
- Lower East Side/Chinatown
- Morrisania/Crotona & Belmont/East Tremont
- Ozone Park/Woodhaven & South Ozone Park/Howard Beach



- **Growing and supporting our continuous learning and improvement culture, including evolutions to ChildStat and other QA/QI approaches**
- **Expanding support for Child Advocacy Centers**  
By early 2023, a collaborative quality assessment process will be in place.

### Reduce the stress investigations can cause

By April 2023, in the first home visit, all CPS will offer families more information about the investigation process and how to access legal and other supports.

### Increase community-based supports for families during child protection interventions by...

- **Enhancing the role for Parent Advocates in Child Safety conferences**  
In January 2023, new and enhanced city-wide contracts will launch.

- **Increasing capacity to rapidly deploy intensive family supports**  
ACS is exploring an increase in intensive crisis intervention services and other family supports including voluntary services such as DOHMH's Newborn Home Visiting program.

### Expand resources for fathers and other male caregivers

ACS is integrating a series of initiatives aimed at better serving fathers and identifying metrics for reaching and successfully engaging fathers.

### Safely reduce Family Court involvement

ACS is developing policies related to family court filings that incorporate lessons from the Court's restrictions during the COVID-19 Pandemic which substantially limited filings without a commensurate increase in risk to children.

## Expand initiatives to prevent child injuries

ACS's Office of Child Safety and Injury Prevention is expanding our public education and training around safe sleep, medication storage, seasonal safety related items such as sun exposure, water safety, window guards, car safety and increased risk of cannabis products that resemble sugary snacks.

## Provide Quality Care and Enduring Solutions

### Partner with Foster Care providers to use resources to advance...

Respectful and effective practice with families that leads to timely permanency, safe stable placements for youth, quality care for children with complex needs, and the success and well-being of youth.

### Reduce "pre-placement" stays at the Children's Center and Youth Reception Centers

ACS is advancing placement strategies including engagement with foster care agency leadership, adding capacity to recruit foster parents with specialized skills, exploring the use of professional foster parents, and enhancing coordination with relevant state agencies.

### Continue to improve staff retention, youth engagement and safety within secure juvenile detention

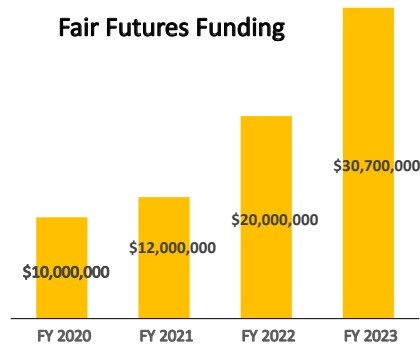
ACS, in partnership with DOE, is upgrading the programming in Secure Detention for an older group of young people. We are focused on retention of Youth Development Specialists and Special Officers and are creating new leadership structures to improve facility management and responsiveness to youth, families and staff.

## Support the Success of Young People

### Expand Fair Futures

In FY23 and beyond, ACS's budget for the Fair Futures program - which provides coaches and mentors who work to enhance

education, employment, housing, and permanency outcomes for youth was expanded to serve youth up to age 26 and those in or at risk of justice involvement.



### Partner with the DOE

ACS is working with the DOE's newly created Foster Care Office to best serve youth and families, including arranging for school transportation, supporting individual youth and co-designing systems and tools to provide more holistic, child and family-centered educational support services.

### Expand educational, internship, vocational training, and employment initiatives for older youth

ACS's foster care and juvenile justice divisions are collaborating to increase youth leadership and expand available support for young people as they prepare for adulthood including but not limited to College Choice, V-CRED, City College Rangel Initiative, SYEP and in-house internships.

### Re-procure the NYC juvenile placement system

By July 1, 2024, new Close to Home contracts will increase the education, mental health, substance use, housing and workforce supports for youth.

### Identify ways to support Provider partners in helping young people heal and benefit from a range of therapeutic resources

ACS has hired a new expert in Medicaid Services to engage with providers and other stakeholders to find ways to increase access to services for youth and families.

## Ensure That First-Hand Experiences Guide Our Work

### Work with the Parent Advocacy Council

Since 2019, the PAC has brought parents with lived experience into policy and practice development by regular convenings with ACS leadership.

### Work with the Youth Leadership Council, Fair Futures Youth Advisory Board and other Youth Groups

The YLC brings together youth to participate - in a sustainable and authentic way - in the development of ACS's cross-agency work. The YAB has led the advocacy for Fair Futures and is focusing its efforts presently on better housing options for youth.

### Respond to recommendations from other youth and family advocates

ACS is actively engaged with the "Narrowing the Front Door" workgroup and other advocates as they make recommendations to transform the child welfare system.

### Engage with Provider partners

ACS meets regularly with its Provider Partners to identify ways to support their vital work including a newly established series of meetings with direct practice staff.

## Reduce Unwarranted Involvement with Families, and the Over Representation of Black, Latinx and LGBTQAI+ families in our systems

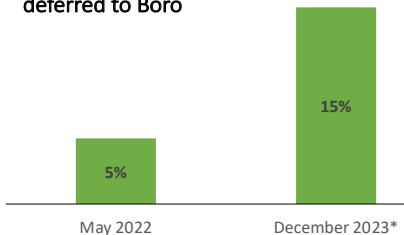
### Work with other City and state agencies to improve training for mandated reporters

A revised OCFS Mandated Reporter training - that focuses on family support - will be released this fall. ACS and the DOE also overhauled the training for designated DOE Liaisons and are training schools city-wide.

## Defer appropriate late-night low-risk investigations for daytime follow-up

We are currently deferring about 5% of Emergency Children's Services cases and working toward the goal of 15%.

Percent of ECS cases deferred to Boro



\* Projected

## Reduce disparities in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems through...

- **Continued implementation of the ACS's Race Equity Action Plan**  
<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/reporting/LL174-July-2021-Submission.pdf>
- **Continued implementation of the ACS LGBTQAI+ Equity Action Plan**  
<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/about/2020/LGBTQActionPlan.pdf>
- **Safely ending ACS involvement and combating the weaponization of the SCR.**  
ACS and our foster care agencies are identifying cases where court ordered supervision can end and or families can be reunified. We are also pursuing limits to anonymous and false and malicious SCR reports.

## Invest in ACS and Provider Workforce

### Hire frontline staff ahead of attrition to keep workloads manageable

### Regularly solicit and act on staff recommendations

ACS has developed numerous channels including an "Ask the Commissioner" e-mailbox, Town Halls with and visits to each of our 37 office locations, and surveys to staff to gather input and respond.

## Continue to recruit and retain excellent staff by advocating for workforce enhancements

NYC is working to disburse \$60 million to support staff at social service Providers who did not receive state funded COLA increases and who have current contracts with the City.

## Implement simplified processes for provider partners to offer immediate and tangible support to youth and families

As of FY 23, ACS has reformed our special payments process for foster care and is offering waiver flexibility to preventive programs.

## Streamline processes so staff can spend more time directly engaging with children and families

ACS is removing strict templates for documentation. ACS seeks input from Providers for similar efforts to streamline case management. We are also updating processes that will reduce the workload for Child Protective Managers by 25%.

## Provide our workforce with the technology and tools to do their jobs safely and effectively

- **Safety App for Providers**  
ACS is exploring the ability to provide an app to contracted staff to help protect their safety in the field.
- **Leadership Academy**  
ACS is exploring the development of a training program and executive coaching opportunities for supervisors and managers.
- **Career-Long Learning**  
ACS is exploring our ability to offer scholarships to Provider Agency staff.

## Continue to offer healing circles and wellness initiatives

ACS offers Race, Diversity and Intersectionality – Reflective Process™ sessions, healing circles, and consultations/facilitations related to race equity initiatives as needed throughout the agency.

## Strengthen Infrastructure

### Undertake cyber security updates

ACS is safeguarding the data and privacy of the 150,000+ families we work with every year.

### Progress critical capital projects to create warm respectful spaces

In collaboration with DDC, ACS is modernizing both of our secure detention facilities. We are also working to DCAS to relocate some ACS offices to better support family engagement, security, and technology.

### Improve key administrative processes to better serve children and families

ACS is working to improve our transportation services for frontline staff who serve families as well as our security supports for staff and families, where necessary.

### Strengthen language access services limited-English proficient families

In 2024, ACS will procure in-person interpretation, written translation and American Sign Language services.

This is just the beginning.  
We commit to continuing to listen, learn and evolve in our work.