



# Strategic Priorities

## Spring 2025 Update

**NYC** Children

April 24, 2025

Dear ACS Staff and Provider Partners,

I am pleased to share the Spring 2025 update to ACS's FY 2025-2026 Strategic Priorities. In the fall of 2022, when we first announced our Strategic Priorities, we committed to building toward a New York City that is more safe, just, and equitable for children and families. We continue to carry out these commitments and are pleased to share with you this update to our priorities as well as an appendix of our completed and established initiatives over the past three years.

As you will see, we have continued to increase the number of children enrolled in child care with a low-income voucher, with over 65,000 children enrolled as of March 2025, a 780% increase since June 2022. We have also continued to drive toward greater equity in access to child care assistance, by targeting outreach to the 17 community districts with the highest poverty and unemployment rates. During the same period we have seen a 1140% increase in children enrolled from these community districts, outpacing citywide growth. We also streamlined our application processes, reducing application processing time to an average of 15 days. NYC is actively advocating with state officials for the funding needed to maintain these enormous gains.

We are investing in both the ACS and provider workforce-with hiring, training, ongoing coaching, scholarships and the ACS Leadership Institute to promote excellent practice, including safety assessment and decision-making and youth and family engagement. We are also strengthening our infrastructure, with a new governance

framework for technology priorities and improved administrative processes.

We are continuing to strengthen our work to decrease unnecessary child welfare involvement and promote supportive services that can stabilize families. We continue to collaborate across several city agencies so that mandated reporters are clear about what must be reported and other ways they can support families without an SCR call. We are continuing to see the number of children in foster care decrease. By February 2025 over 98% of non-kinship foster parents have been trained in the Trauma-Responsive Informed Parenting Program (TRIPP), over 475 youth in foster care applied to College Choice, and approximately 4,300 NYC young people between the ages of 11- 26 are receiving one-on-one services through Fair Futures. We are also planning to pilot our Career Choice program to help young people who do not want to attend college achieve a stable and successful adulthood.

ACS remains dedicated to building a city where children and young people are safe and thriving and families are supported as their most important resources and protectors; and where ACS and provider staff are supported to carry out this critical work. The deep commitment and passion our teams have for making New York City a better place for children and families continues to inspire and move me and the ACS leadership team. And I pledge -- on behalf of all of us -- that ACS will continue to listen, learn and evolve our work.

Sincerely,



**Jess Dannhauser,**  
Commissioner



### **ACS Framework**

ACS created a framework codifying our approach to our work. The ACS framework seeks to define and align the agency's priorities and to describe the culture and leadership of the agency. Highlighting our mission in service of children, youth, family and community success, the framework includes seven elements. See definitions in the appendix, p. 12.

## FAMILIES

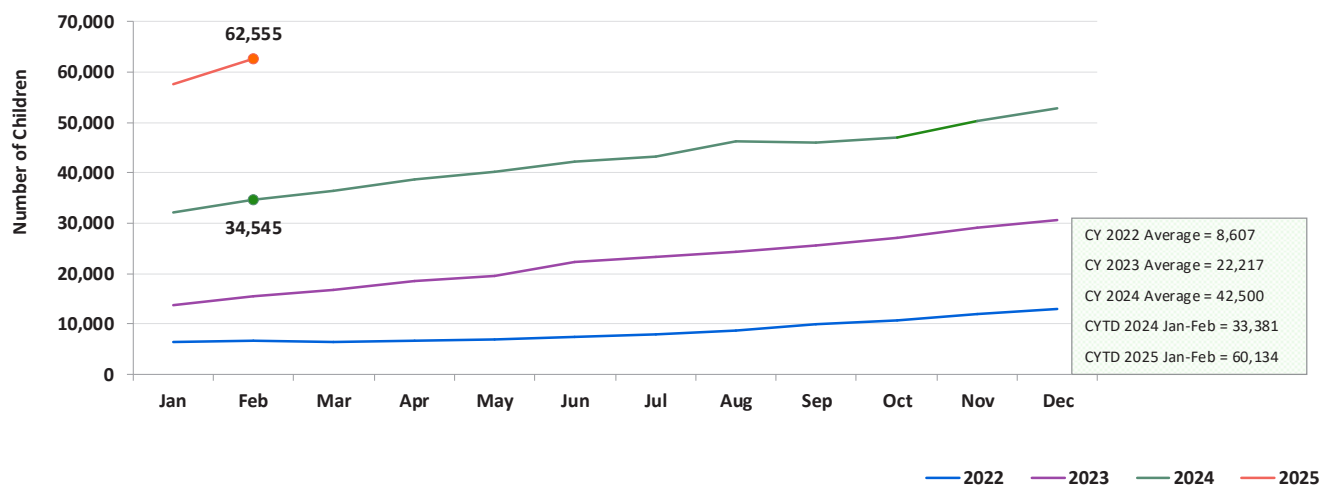
**Expanding Access to Subsidized Child Care.** ACS continues to implement NYC's Blueprint for Child Care and Early Childhood Education by providing vouchers that make care affordable for low-income families. As of March 2025, over 65,000 NYC children were enrolled in child care subsidized by an ACS-issued low-income voucher, up from about 7,400 in June 2022, marking an increase of 780%. We have also continued to drive toward greater equity in access to child care assistance by targeting outreach to the 17 community districts with the highest poverty and unemployment rates that have

faced inadequate access to child care. During this same time period, children from these neighborhoods enrolled in care with a low-income voucher have increased from 1,500 to over 19,000, marking a 1140% increase.

**Early Childhood – Partnership with NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH).** ACS and DOHMH have initiated a planning process to determine ways to enhance maternal health, early childhood development and attachment, family stability and well-being with an additional aim of preventing families from becoming involved with child protection. We are discussing options to expand eligibility effective services, hiring additional staff with expertise in perinatal mental health and/or substance use disorder, bolstering non-clinical supports (e.g. peer advocates, childcare during appointments) for families served in DOHMH clinics, and expanding training opportunities.

**Supporting Families Managing Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities.** ACS's Developmental Disabilities Unit (DDU) helps individuals suspected or diagnosed with an intellectual and/or developmental disability (I/DD) receive community-based services, supports and care. In 2024, ACS expanded the unit to assign DDU staff to every DCP borough. These staff facilitate trainings to DCP/CPS staff and participate in conferences to link more families to relevant supports and programs geared toward maintaining safety and stability in the home. Additionally, the DDU Parenting Skills Training Team will provide additional trainings to external stakeholders and support to our contracted providers. The DDU transitioned 22 young people off the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) waiting list for adult residential housing this year.

### Children Using ACS-Issued Low-Income Child Care Vouchers\* January 2022 – February 2025

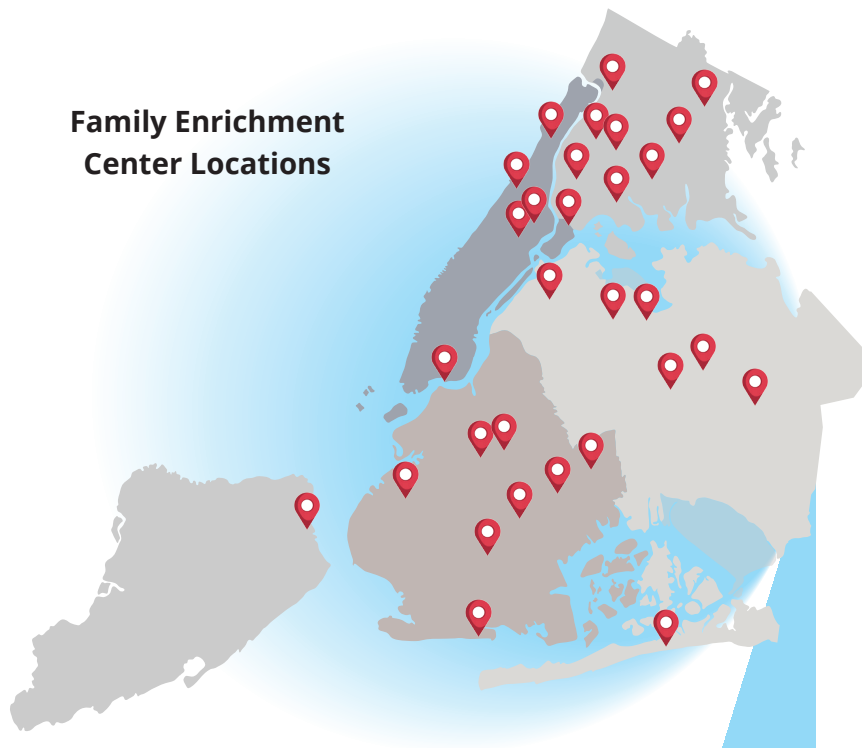


\*This represents the subset of enrollments in child care with ACS-issued low-income vouchers funded by the NY State Child Care Block Grant (CCBG).

### Completed Planned Expansion of 30 Family Enrichment Centers (FECs).

FECs are warm, inviting spaces co-designed with community and open to community members. They promote protective factors, such as social connection, and parental resilience, that contribute to healthy development and reduce risks related to child maltreatment. There are 29 FECs across the five boroughs of New York City, all in varying stages of implementation. Some have been open and operating for several years, others are in a start-up phase, working to hire and train staff, engage community members to design and renovate their sites, conduct outreach, and provide in-person and virtual offerings. ACS awarded the thirtieth FEC in early January to serve Pelham Parkway and Morris Park.

### Family Enrichment Center Locations



### Implementing New School-Based Early Support Programs.

In 2024, ACS launched a new prevention program called School-Based Early Support (SBES). These contracted providers partner with local schools in high need districts and work together to support to families. The SBES program offers support to families through a menu of flexible service options, including access to concrete supports, school-based offerings, parenting groups, and case management.

### Ensuring that First-Hand Experiences Guide Our Work

- Parent Advocacy Council (PAC). Since 2019, the PAC has brought parents with lived experience into policy and practice by convening and collaborating with ACS leadership. The PAC continues to participate in agency wide initiatives and meet with agency leadership to weigh in on policies and protocols. ACS and the PAC are planning summer 2025 Parent Day events in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens, seeking to engage over 450 families

across the city and provide them with resources. The PAC has recruited four new members and seeks to recruit an additional seven to meet the maximum capacity of the PAC.

- Narrowing the Front Door

(NTFD) Committee. With the Mayor's Commissioner on Racial Equity (CORE), the newly named Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, and ACS, NTFD continues to explore the development of a body to advance racial equity in government operations and increase community voice in government decision-making.

### Expanding Concrete Support for ACS-Involved Families

- Securing Stable Housing for ACS-Involved Youth and Families. ACS contracts with a nonprofit to help our youth and families navigate the housing process. We have referred over 400 households to these services, of whom: 130 are in the housing search or leasing process; 152 have moved into new homes using these navigation services and are receiving stability services; and 18 have graduated after a

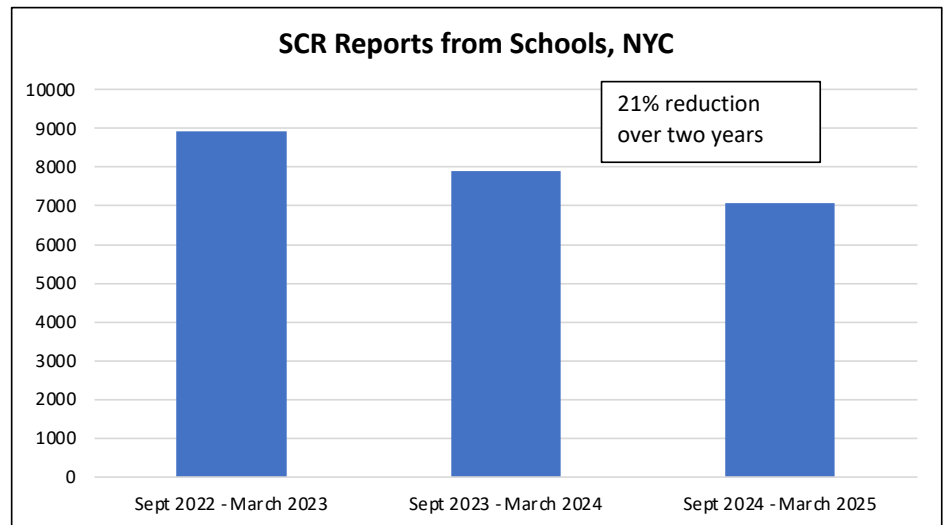
year of stability, having renewed their leases and recertified their vouchers. In addition to connecting families to housing navigation and stability support, the non profit offers help applying for voucher programs (such as CityFHEPS, Family Unification Program Vouchers, and Emergency Housing Vouchers) as well as housing subsidies to help cover move-in and security deposit costs. ACS also assists youth aging out of care to secure NYCHA apartments. In 2024, 146 youth secured NYCHA housing.

- Increasing Access to Basic Economic and Concrete Resources. Given that a significant number of ACS-involved families do not have access to affordable housing, benefits and other resources, we are implementing a pilot to increase our capacity to provide immediate concrete support and improve our families' likelihood of achieving greater economic stability. This pilot seeks to improve the ways that ACS and our providers assess and address the economic needs of families and youth who become involved with ACS.

- Food Pantries. ACS has opened food pantries to serve families experiencing food insecurity. These pantries serve all families known to ACS and accept referrals from prevention services and other partners. There are currently four pantries located in ACS borough offices in Bronx South, Bronx North, Manhattan, and Brooklyn.

**Decreasing Unnecessary SCR Reports and Increasing Supports for Families.** Since 2023, ACS has conducted more than 300 presentations and trainings reaching more than 19,000 mandated reporters including staff from schools, homeless shelters, hospitals, after-school programs, and ACS providers. These collaborations aim to promote a citywide culture shift from reporting to supporting families with successful engagement, relationship-building and service referrals. We are simultaneously encouraging outreach to the ACS Support Line (212-676-7667) as an alternative means to connect families with supports and services without initiating a child protective response when an SCR call is not necessary. The Support Line now receives an average of more than 300 inquiries per month (in the last 12 months), up from about 30 monthly in early 2023.

**Connecting Families to Supportive Services.** ACS contracts with 43 community-based nonprofit organizations offering over 145 programs in every borough of NYC. These providers serve families with case management, homemaking services, and intensive therapeutic services. In 2023, ACS established the ACS Support Line to connect families to services without a child welfare response. Social workers who staff the line respond to inquiries from mandated reporters, service providers, community partners, and often, parents themselves, and connect NYC families to stabilizing supports that help them to thrive.



### Creating Alternative Pathways to Support Families

- Increasing Community-Based Supports for Families During Child Protection Interventions. Collaborative Assessment, Response, Engagement and Support (CARES) is a state-authorized, non-investigative child protection response in which specially trained child protective staff assess the safety of the children and then partner with the family to identify their needs, empower the family to make decisions that address their needs and the needs of their children, and connect families to appropriate services. CARES cases account for about 25% of new cases. Recently, ACS extended CARES to support eligible parenting youth in foster care by adding a CARES unit to the Office of Special Investigations (OSI), the DCP team that responds to concerns for foster care cases. The OSI CPS teams engage the youth and partner with their foster care case planners to enhance service provision and community support without an investigation or a determination.
- Reprocuring ACS's Clinical Consultation Contracts. This program supports case work decision making through consultants with specialized knowledge and skills in areas that often come to our attention: intimate partner violence, mental health, and substance misuse. ACS released an RFP

seeking a refined approach to the ways that contracted nonprofits support the child protective team in assessing the safety of and options for the families we serve. New contracts for an updated "Clinical Support Program" will be recommended for award over the summer and will begin in January 2026.

### Promoting Safety for Children and Families

- Accelerated Safety Analysis Protocol (ASAP). The Quality Assurance team within the Division of Child Protection (DCP QA) reviews hundreds of the city's highest risk cases and identifies potential risks or signs of abuse/neglect early, allowing for interventions to protect the child(ren) and for increased support, resources and stability for families in need. These reviews also allow staff to receive real-time coaching and support and also identify training/development needs for staff citywide. As ACS continues to increase our CARES response citywide, DCP QA has integrated CARES case reviews into their ASAP system as of November 2024. DCP QA is also incorporating coaching guidance for the staff at Emergency Children's Services (ECS), which are the CPS teams who provide child protective response on evenings, weekends and holidays. DCP QA provides guidance to the ECS leadership team, which is then used in Supervision to enhance case practice,



individualized feedback on specific cases, helping workers refine their approaches and improve outcomes for children and families.

- Enhancements to Family Service Units (FSU). This unit is involved when a New York State Family Court orders supervision for a family. FSU Teams are in each borough and assess for families' engagement in their service plans and behavioral changes mitigating the safety concerns that led to the Family Court's involvement. Over the last two years, DCP has worked to reduce FSU caseloads to allow workers additional time to focus on case practice, the family's needs, partnering with preventive services and conducting joint visits with provider agencies. As a result, service planning with families has been enhanced and families are working toward achieving their goals.

- Promoting Family Reunification and Safely Ending ACS Involvement. In summer 2024, ACS began collaborative Reunification Reviews with Foster Care provider agencies. ACS staff from the divisions of Family Permanency Services and Family Court Legal Services meet with foster care case planners, supervisors, and managers to troubleshoot barriers in cases with a permanency planning goal of return to parent. With the information learned from these reviews, ACS has launched Third Thursdays, which brings together ACS and provider agency case planning staff for robust, topic-focused sessions every third Thursday of the month. Examples of Third Thursday sessions include connecting families to Prevention Services and the partnership between Case Planners and Parent Advocates to support timely permanency. In spring 2025, ACS will be partnering with the provider agencies to focus on families on trial discharge who may be ready for final discharge to reunification.

## YOUTH

**Expanding and Sustaining Fair Futures.** Fair Futures is a professional coaching program guided by youth voice serving over 4,300 young people across NYC's foster care and juvenile justice programs. Fair Futures has grown with the support of a city-funded investment of over \$30 million per year to over \$54 million starting in FY27. The program has been supporting youth ages 11–26 with tutoring and coaching services through collaboration with the Center for Fair Futures and ACS foster care provider agencies. The Center for Fair Futures has also launched Soul Care, a partnership to enhance mental health and wellness for foster youth ages 13–26. The Soul Care pilot includes collaboration with five foster care providers. Training and targeted support began with pilot providers, Fair Futures coaches, and the NYC Youth Wellness Collective in the Fall of 2024. Art Pharmacy (a program offering creative and therapeutic art experiences through social prescribing) will begin engaging youth by April 2025, with the pilot running through June 2026.

### **Expanding Educational, Internship, Vocational and Employment Initiatives for Older Youth.**

- ACS's College Choice program supports young people in foster care to attend college. As of January 2025, 475 applications for College Choice were received, representing a 26% increase from January 2024.
- In recognition of the fact that a traditional college pathway does not meet the needs of all youth, we launched a vocational training and apprenticeship program called V-CRED (Vocational training that emphasizes a Continuing Responsibility toward Education and Development) in 2023. Since then, V-CRED successfully afforded 90 youth in foster care vocational training and apprenticeships.
- Using the lessons learned from College Choice and the successful

program V-CRED, ACS is developing the Career Choice program. Launching officially in FY26, Career Choice will provide resources and supports, including a stipend to youth in foster care enrolled in a vocation, trade, or workforce development program.

**Addressing the Needs of LGBTQAI+ Youth.** ACS's new draft LGBTQAI+ policy includes relevant laws and policies, such as ACS' medical consent policy and the non-Medicaid reimbursable policy, a resource guide, and increase guidance related to trans and non-binary youth. This policy, which is currently pending with OCFS for approval, will provide ACS divisions and provider agencies with clear expectations and responsibilities for serving LGBTQAI+ youth. In response to concerns raised by providers who serve LGBTQAI+ youth across NYC, all ACS and provider agency direct services staff and supervisors must take the ACS LGBTQAI+ staff training upon being hired and every two years thereafter. The training covers best practices for engaging LGBTQAI+ youth, outlines the ACS LGBTQAI+ policy, and provides staff with affirming language. Foster parents also take a LGBTQAI+ training that teaches about sexual orientation and gender identity via a childhood developmental lens and provides language on how to talk to children and adolescents about identity.

**Trauma Training for All Foster Parents and Staff.** ACS partners with our contracted family foster care agencies to ensure that all foster parents and staff are trained in the Trauma-Responsive Informed Parenting Program (TRIPP), which is designed to increase foster parent and staff capacity to support children and youth with complex needs. As of February 1, 2025, 98% of the system's non-kin foster parents are therapeutically trained. 306 trainers have completed training of trainers for TRIPP. Additionally, over 1100 staff participated in either a TRIPP training or webinar. Beginning in November 2024, all new foster parents (kin and non-kin) are being trained in

the National Training and Development Curriculum (NTDC) with TRIPP principles, a learning program that tackles separation, loss, grief, trauma, and differences of race and culture in foster care and adoption. Across the system, 155 new trainers have completed training of trainers for NTDC.

**Re-Envisioning NYC's Work to Keep Youth Out of the Justice System.** In 2018, New York State raised the age of criminal responsibility to 18 years old. To support older youth and prevent court involvement, ACS's Division of Youth and Family Justice (DYFJ) is exploring and expanding our community-based programs to serve young people before they come to the attention of the Family and or Criminal Court.

- Girls JustUs is a highly successful gender-responsive juvenile justice diversion program that currently operates in Brooklyn and will now be expanded to Queens and the Bronx to serve an additional 24 girls and LGBTQAI+ youth.
- ACS provides evidence-based services to high-risk youth with prior involvement in the justice system. The program provides social pathways away from gang and gun violence to young people ages 16-24, and is expanding citywide to serve over 400 young people annually.

#### **Prioritizing Youth Safety, Wellness and Engagement Within Juvenile Facilities**

- A Reduction in Violent Incidents, Despite an Increasing Census: Over the past several years, the census in secure detention has continued to rise, driven largely by older youth facing serious charges, which result in longer detention stays. Despite a rising census, facility staff have improved most safety indicators and reduced violence in the facilities by focusing on core strategies to promote safety and security including training staff in crisis prevention and de-escalation techniques, hiring sufficient staff to mentor and coach newer

Youth Development Specialists, open communication among leadership, staff and unions about safety concerns, enhanced search protocols and equipment, and a youth-centered behavior management system.

- **Creating Space for Older Youth:** To meet the enhanced needs and increasing number of older youth in ACS' custody due to Raise the Age, ACS is adding capacity to our Bronx campus. With the NYC Department of Design and Construction, we will build a safe, secure, and youth-centered annex to Horizon Juvenile Detention Center. By 2029, the new annex will add residential and educational space, an expanded kitchen/dining area, outdoor recreation space and a mental health clinic. Construction on a vertical recreational area, which will allow for outdoor recreation while the annex is being built, will begin in mid-2025.

- **Expansion of Mental Health Services:** Bellevue Juvenile Justice Mental Health Service (BJJMHS) provides comprehensive, trauma-informed mental health services, which include screening for trauma exposure, depression, problematic substance use, and commercial sexual exploitation, diagnostic assessment and evaluation, treatment and intervention, psychoeducation, and medication management to young people in secure detention. Approximately 90% of youth across both secure detention facilities are engaged in mental health services. Bellevue also coordinates with DYFJ Non-Secure Detention (NSD) contracted provider agency staff to ensure the provision of mental health services for youth in NSD. ACS added 18 BJJMHS positions and right-sized salaries for clinical practitioners to competitively attract talent.

#### **Collaborating with the Juvenile Justice Advisory Board**

Pursuant to New York City Local Law 33 of 2023, the Juvenile Justice Advisory Board (JJAB) was established to convene leaders from across

governmental, community-based service, and advocacy sectors to provide recommendations to the Mayor, City Council and ACS on issues related to juvenile justice. The JJAB is diving into the areas of mental health and education and explore system responses to mitigate against the impact of poor mental health and academic underperformance.

**Reducing Stays at the Children's Center.** Pre-placement at the NYC Children's Center is intended to be a short-term approach to caring for children while an appropriate foster care placement is identified. Finding kin such as relatives, close family friends, or other familial resources is one of our key strategies for shortening stays at the Children's Center. ACS and our contracted agencies have increased the proportion of children placed with kin upon entering foster care from 30.1% in FY17 to 44.3% in December 2024. Other efforts to reduce pre-placement focuses on increasing foster home capacity, which grew with over 500 newly recruited foster homes in FY24. Furthermore, ACS is working proactively to place children in loving homes through direct outreach to foster care agencies and using veteran Family Permanency Services Staff to engage youth in pre-placement about their next steps.

**Working with the Youth Leadership Council, Fair Futures Youth Advisory Board and Other Youth Groups.** The ACS Youth Leadership Council (YLC), which is composed of youth with lived experience in the child welfare system, is working closely with ACS on helping youth both in and out of foster care and juvenile justice to better understand their rights. The YLC is working on recruitment efforts and advocacy for youth currently in and transitioning out of foster care. The YLC is focused on creating info sessions to provide robust understanding of supports and services that ACS offers such as housing and continues to partner with OCFS to facilitate the annual statewide Youth Summit.



**The Fair Futures Youth Advisory Board (YAB)** is comprised of 17 young adults representing 14 foster care agencies that led the advocacy for Fair Futures. It is currently focused on advocating for more and better quality housing in safe, desirable neighborhoods that are fully integrated; addressing housing discrimination and improving voucher processes increasing the rate of youth aging out to highly stable housing; and launching a Know Your Rights campaign for transition-aged youth, which includes streamlining documents and communication so young people ages 13+ have the key information they need to make informed decisions.

## ORGANIZATION

### Investing in ACS and Provider Workforce

- Continuing Fiscal Support to Human Service Providers: In Summer 2024, the city announced a 3% Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) for eligible Human Service providers starting on July 1, 2024. ACS worked with Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to allocate the funding, which is valued at \$7.5M in FY25, \$15.2M in FY26 and \$23.2M in FY27 among 245 ACS contracts. This COLA is on top of workforce enhancements disbursed to Human Service providers in Fiscal Years 2023, 2024, & 2025.
- Engaging with Provider Partners: ACS continues to prioritize communication with provider agencies to ensure that their experience working with children and families informs ACS policy. Through a partnership with the Council on Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA), the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioners meet regularly with frontline staff and managers of all levels from programs providing foster care, juvenile justice, and prevention services. Provider staff develop the agendas for these

sessions, ensuring that ACS' most senior officials hear directly about the issues that most impact daily practice. Additionally, the ACS Chief Nonprofit Officer and her team are troubleshooting issues related to contracting and payments.

- Supporting Contracted Providers with Workforce Development. The ACS Workforce Institute is redesigning core trainings for child protection; foster care; and juvenile justice, and implementing Family First Prevention Services Act trainings to support implementation and claiming for Motivational Interviewing and other evidence-based models in Prevention.
- Advancing Scholarship Opportunities. In June 2023, ACS extended our scholarship program to provider agency staff who are pursuing a Master's in Social Work. Since FY19 to the present, 316 ACS scholarships have been awarded which included 33 Provider Agencies totaling \$3,805,386. In FY24, 88 scholarships were given totaling \$858,797. In addition to advanced degrees, this funding supported mentorship and staff development, as well as preparatory classes for the social work licensing exam.

### Enhanced Support for Division of Child Protection (DCP)

- Coaching and Support. In 2024, DCP deployed four additional Associate Commissioners to provide support and oversight to the Borough Commissioners and Child Protective Specialist Teams in the borough. The value of these staff being in borough offices is that they are available to provide real-time guidance to our CPS teams when confronted with complex cases. They have also been helping to impart guidance on policies, practices and standards and they have been assisting with operational and administrative needs.
- DCP-Supervising Best Case Practice Workshop. This three-day workshop encourages supervisory efficacy with

a safety focused approach. Developed for both new and veteran supervisors, the sessions provide clarity about the supervisory role. In addition, to practical insight related to purposeful supervisory guidance, it addresses time management and oversight while offering constructive support around work-life balance and concrete resources available to supervisors and their teams.

- DCP Managerial Enrichment Seminars. The DCP Managerial Enrichment Seminar is a six-week interactive seminar provided citywide to all Child Protective Managers (CPMs). It is a space to review ACS policies, guidelines, and practices instrumental to child protective work through guided discussions facilitated by experienced leaders. The presentations consist of a combination of current ACS-DCP protocols tailored to their unique needs taking into consideration the organizational culture of their zones. The content explored is based upon prevailing data and casework trends within the offices.

**Enhancing the Safety of Investigations.** ACS continues to work with the NYPD to ensure support for safe CPS investigations. The NYPD has increased the number of liaisons who serve as points of contact for ACS Investigations staff. In addition to a liaison in the Chief of Departments, and the Domestic Violence Unit, ACS Investigations staff also now have a designated liaison in each of the eight NYPD Patrol Boroughs. These liaisons are all supervisors and can assist with operational and investigative concerns on a local level.

**Hiring Frontline ACS Staff Ahead of Attrition to Keep Workloads Manageable.** ACS has improved our hiring rate of staff and decreased our attrition of staff. ACS successfully brought on 1,082 new employees in 2024. This includes 256 Youth Development Specialists and 38 Special Officers to support the Division of Youth and Family Justice and the Raise

the Age Initiative, as well as 521 Child Protection Specialists to strengthen the Division of Child Protection. One strategy ACS used to improve recruitment and attract a broader candidate pool for key ACS positions, collaborated with Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) to revise the Minimum Qualification Requirements (MQRs) for the Youth Development Specialist (YDS) and Child Protection Specialist (CPS) titles. MQRs now reflect the skills that are critical to for these positions.

**Supporting a Continuous Learning and Improvement Culture.** In 2024, ACS held 30 ChildStat sessions and four CARES Forums to review child protective data trends and practice. In 2025 ACS has incorporated FAR/ CARES cases into ChildStat. ACS also conducts Zone-Based Reviews and Collaborative Quality Improvement of child protection on a regular basis. These reviews and the CQI process highlights areas that zones are doing well, areas that could be strengthened and a plan for improvement.

**Promoting the ACS Institute for Leadership Development (ILD).** Launched in 2023, ILD aims to serve close to 250 ACS emerging leaders each year by providing executive coaching and leadership

development through the Learning and Exploring through Development (LEAD) curriculum. The framework guides leaders by providing the knowledge and skills to advance their professional growth. Currently, the 3rd cohort of LEAD is underway with 23 participants and 138 participants receiving individual executive coaching sessions. ILD is launching a portal for asynchronous e-learning to promote adaptive leadership skills. The first phase will have 8 key courses in 4 domains: Leading People, Leading Change, Leading Results, and Leading with Data.

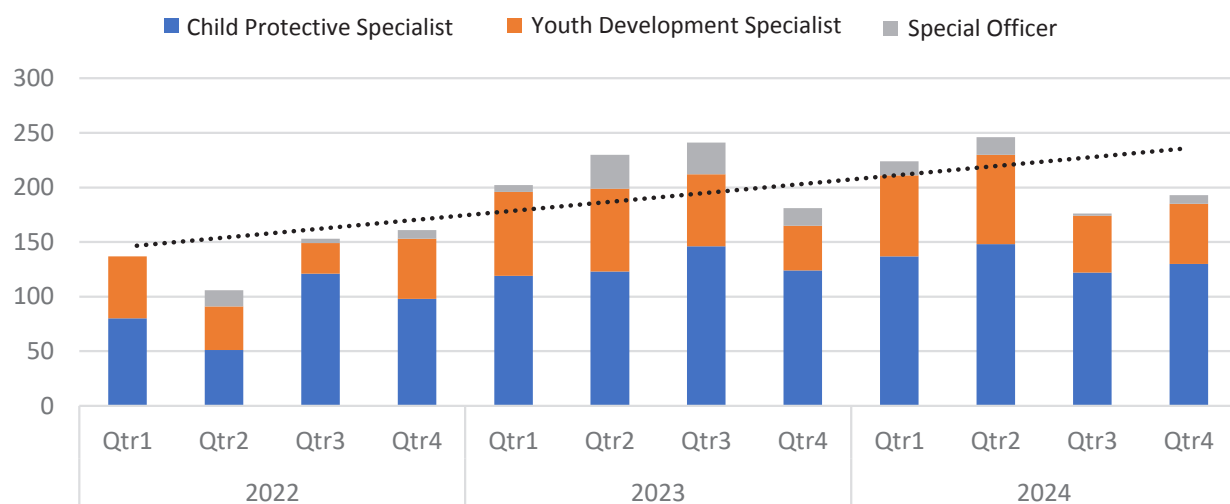
**Committing to Smart, Safe, and Secure Technology Solutions.** The Office of Information Technology (OIT) continues to prioritize the creation of smart, safe, and secure technology solutions aimed at enhancing support for NYC families. The Division's Center for Technology Ideation and Management is focused on the challenges and needs of CPS case workers, streamlining digital tools used by case workers and identifying mobile application opportunities to enhance home visits and document case details. OIT has been working on several additional fronts:

- Increasing engagement with divisions to better align IT services

with business needs. The IT Performance Metrics Dashboard provides real-time monitoring of service delivery and allows for quicker identification and resolution of issues.

- ACS has achieved a 90% compliance rate in cybersecurity training, which has significantly reduced risks. We are strengthening authentication protocols and real-time monitoring of security incidents and threat detection.
- The ACS Data Center is being relocated to an advanced data center. Aging desktop computers across ACS have been replaced and enhanced mobile device management tools have been deployed, strengthening security and improving asset tracking.
- IT Lunch & Learn sessions are educating on IT services, security, and emerging technologies.
- The improvement of IT service request and incident tracking systems has optimized response time and resolution rates. The standardized IT intake and prioritization process has enhanced project transparency and execution speed.

## Count of Hires



### Improving Key Administrative

**Processes.** The ACS Division of Administration continues to improve communication about its extensive work throughout the agency.

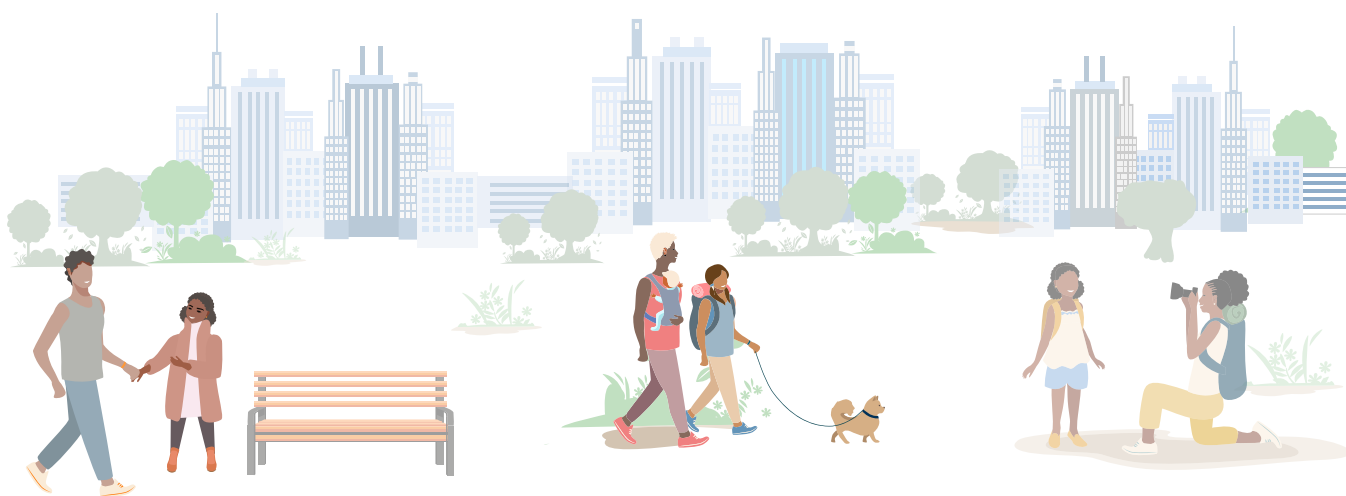
- **Safety and Security:** To maintain the safety and security of staff and the families we serve, ACS Police are ensuring a full integration of Genetec security systems and other safety improvements at all sites. We are installing or upgrading cameras at entry and exit points, conference rooms (with audio disabled for privacy and confidentiality), and reception areas to allow police to monitor rooms; and continuing to partner with the New York Police Department and the Suffolk County Sheriff's Office to enhance the training programs.
- **Emergency Vehicle Designation for ACS Police -** ACS Police created a Special Operations Team that can respond immediately to high-risk situations at our congregate care and detention facilities.

- **Repair, Maintenance and Construction Projects -** Several child protective borough offices have received new paint, blinds, flooring, furniture and other amenities.

◆ **At the Nicholas Scoppetta Children's Center,** ACS overhauled the Family Visit Center with washed stone, improved lighting and welcoming touches. We installed a Wi-Fi Café with new flooring, architectural trim and a custom barista counter creating a comfortable space for cell phone use and internet access for youth in our care and constructed a Calming Room designed to provide a safe and relaxing space for youth; and created a Comfort Shop, stocked with premium items and resources that the children receive upon arrival to promote healthy sleep. We have also transformed the auditorium with new seating, flooring and paint.

◆ **In Secure Detention,** ACS has replaced water heaters, installed air conditioning compressors, and installed new kitchen steamers. We have concurrently updated training modules for kitchen staff on food safety quality controls, introduced new menu items, and are standardizing recipes to ensure consistency across all locations.

◆ **Headquarter Relocation:** ACS is moving our current Headquarters from 150 William Street to 110 William Street. With the support of DCAS, over 2,300 staff will relocate over the summer and fall. The move will support growth, modernization, security upgrades and technological advancement. ■





## ACS Framework

<b>Providing Quality Care &amp; Resources</b>	ACS prioritizes the safety and well-being of New York City's children, young people, families, and communities. We strive to deliver quality services with respect, cultural humility, accountability, and transparency.
<b>Advancing Equity</b>	ACS believes that equity is achieved when a person is no more or less likely to experience society's benefits or burdens just because of their identity. We are committed to developing equitable policies and practices toward becoming an anti-racist and anti-oppressive organization.
<b>Committing to Learning &amp; Improving</b>	ACS is committed to being a learning organization that creates, acquires, and transfers knowledge, as well as one that continually incorporates new knowledge and insights to improve our policies, priorities, and practices.
<b>Cultivating a Safe Workplace Culture</b>	ACS seeks to establish a work environment where everyone feels safe and valued. We are committed to creating an organizational culture that supports open discussions without fear of retaliation, facilitates learning, and increases engagement.
<b>Developing Leaders</b>	Recognizing that everyone has the capacity for leadership, ACS seeks to create a culture where people at every level of the organization can influence decision-making and effect change. We strive to create robust opportunities for ACS staff and provider agency staff to develop their skills and seek professional advancement.
<b>Partnering with Respect</b>	ACS recognizes partnership must be rooted in respect. We strive to develop trusting relationships with all our stakeholders – families, young people, children, communities, provider agencies, oversight organizations, city agencies, and others – by creating spaces for voices to be heard and cultivating systems of transparency and accountability.
<b>Evolving Based on Lived Experiences</b>	ACS acknowledges the complex and difficult history of the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. We believe that firsthand experiences can strengthen and guide our work. We are committed to having direct and consistent dialogue with people with lived experience and the communities most impacted by ACS.

## FAMILIES

### Preventing Child Injuries

ACS's Office of Child Safety and Injury Prevention (OCSIP) promotes interventions that address fatal and severe unintentional injuries impacting young children, including infant unsafe sleep, Shaken Baby Syndrome, and poisoning prevention focused on safe storage of harmful substances. OCSIP offers free resources, trainings and public campaigns to heighten awareness about how to keep children safe. Current OCSIP priorities include promoting infant safe sleep practices and preventing children's unintentional consumption of harmful household items, including medication and cannabis-infused edibles.

### Reducing the Stress Investigations Can Cause

- **Implementing Written Notifications at the Front Door:** ACS is helping parents better understand their rights at the outset of a child protective investigation. Since May 2024, ACS has been providing families with written information about their rights regarding CPS requests to enter their homes and assess the safety of the children. All borough staff have been fully trained to provide this notification.
- **Connecting Families to Supportive Services:** CPS continue to offer families a packet of information containing contact information for lawyers as well as other service providers in their local communities. This effort allows parents to receive relevant information, while continuing to keep child safety and well-being at the forefront.
- **Minimizing Unnecessary Late-Night Visits on Low-Risk Investigations:** Since the spring of 2022, ACS' Emergency Children's Services has been assessing whether certain cases can wait until daytime for a home visit by CPS. This allows for families involved in lower risk allegations to engage with CPS during less stressful and disruptive hours. In the summer of 2024, we updated the protocol to safely increase the types of investigations that can be assigned to daytime investigations, continuing to decrease late or overnight home visits.

### Supporting Maternal Mental Health

ACS is working with a comprehensive treatment center for new and expecting parents that offers support groups, therapy, medication management, and other services. The partnership is aiding ACS to develop in-depth training materials for staff on perinatal mood and anxiety disorders that affect parents during pregnancy and the postpartum period. ACS also believes that for children to thrive and have their needs met, both parents must be healthy physically and mentally. We are interested in supporting the mental health and well-being of fathers who experience perinatal mood anxiety disorders (PMADs) that can interfere with their ability to care for the child and family. Fathers can also play a critical role in recognizing PMADs symptoms in their pregnant or postpartum partner. It is important to provide training and information to fathers as they enter their own journey into parenthood. In late winter 2024 we recorded the third video in the PMADs series which centered on the voice of fathers with mental health needs and experience providing support to partners with PMAD, as well as highlighted supportive programs for fathers in NYC.

### Expanding Resources for Fathers and Other Male Caregivers

ACS continues the planning process for the Office of Fatherhood Engagement. ACS' Fatherhood Working Group, which includes ACS staff, outside agency staff, and community nonprofits, is driving the planning process. Their goal is to create policy recommendations that identify areas to increase engagement with fathers.

## CHILDREN & YOUTH

### Implementing New Foster Care Contracts

In partnership with providers, in July 2023, ACS launched a new foster care model to increase therapeutic supports for children and youth in care. The model includes parent advocates to support family members and offers more trauma-informed and evidenced-based services in residential care programs. These enhancements support our goals to strengthen services, achieve permanency and improve well-being and success for children, youth, and families. We have made significant progress in the following areas:

- The average number of New York City children in foster care in FY24 reached a low of 6,441 dropping from 6,728 in FY23.
- The majority of children who enter foster care return home. In FY24, 1,622 children were reunified with their families.
- The rate of children maltreated in family foster care remained at 3.2 per 100,000 care days during FY23 and FY24, maintaining the downward trend seen over the last few years.

The number of children in residential settings has decreased significantly, reaching a 10-year low of 554 children in FY24 down from 929 children in FY15.

### Identifying and Preventing Child Trafficking

ACS has trained over 3,800 staff to screen children and youth who come to our attention for possible involvement in trafficking. ACS and provider agency staff will continue to be trained online and through ACS's monthly 3-hour live training

### Reprocuring the NYC Juvenile Placement System

In March 2024, ACS recommended five providers for awards to provide placement services for justice involved youth who have been determined by a judge to need residential placement. New Close to Home contracts began on July 1, 2024, and are geared toward increasing education, mental health, substance use, housing and workforce supports to young people.

### Supporting Provider Partners to Help Young People Heal and Benefit from Therapeutic Resources

- ACS's Senior Advisor for Medicaid Services is training ACS staff and provider agencies on the full continuum of Medicaid services offered so a wider number of NYC children, youth and families can access therapeutic resources.
- ACS continues to advocate to the State Office of Mental Health to ensure NYC staff can access services for youth.

### Child-Centric Social Security Benefits Initiative

In July 2022, ACS updated our approach to using Social Security benefits of an eligible foster youth to offset costs of care. We are currently saving funds for eligible youth to access upon discharge from foster care or reaching adulthood.



## ORGANIZATION

### Continuing to Focus on Reducing Disparities in the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Systems

- Implementation of the ACS Race Equity Action Plan

In compliance with Local Law 174 - Equity Assessments, ACS submitted an updated Race Equity Action Plan report update. We are pleased to continue progress in the following areas: reducing unnecessary SCR reports, providing upfront supports to parents via our primary prevention work, child safety campaigns on newborn safe sleep, safe storage of medication, and the implementation of restorative justice interventions as part of behavior management programs in secure detention and in Close to Home.

- Implementation of the ACS LGBTQAI+ Equity Action Plan

In the fall of 2023, ACS conducted our annual Youth Experience Survey, which includes five questions concerning sexual orientation and gender identity and expression that will help us assess the experiences of LGBTQAI+ youth in ACS care. 1,126 youth completed the survey, and a summary of the responses are available in the [2024 Youth Experience Survey report](#).

### Providing Workforce with Technology and Tools to Do Their Jobs Safely and Effectively

ACS staff who work in the community have a Safety App - a smartphone application to enhance safety while conducting home visits. In addition, 16 contracted agencies use the App, which extends this option to over 1,100 provider staff who are serving families across all five boroughs.