



Strategic Priorities

Fall 2025 Update

NYC Children

November 23, 2025

Dear ACS Staff, Provider Partners, and Fellow New Yorkers,

I am pleased to share with you ACS's progress, together with communities and provider partners, in contributing to a safer, more just, and more equitable New York City for children and families in this Fall 2025 update to our FY25-FY26 Strategic Priorities.

With the understanding that safety and support are inextricably linked, we have been working to reshape our system. ACS has trained over 25,000 mandated reporters through nearly 400 sessions, strengthening their ability to recognize when a child protection response is warranted and when families can be better served through supportive community connections. As a result, calls to the ACS Support Line – where social workers partner with families to identify the right supports – have increased exponentially. Today, it receives 400 calls per month.

Affordable, high-quality child care nurtures children's development, while allowing parents to pursue their education and career goals. It also reduces parental stress, which can reduce risks of child maltreatment. Over the past three years, the number of children receiving care via an ACS-issued voucher increased by an astonishing 900%, from 7,400 in the summer of 2022 to more than 75,000 in the summer of 2025, a level we are eager to maintain and grow. ACS will launch our thirtieth Family Enrichment Center in January 2026, which will serve the Bronx neighborhoods of Pelham Parkway and Morris Park. This completes a four-year city-wide expansion of these co-designed with community centers that promote protective factors and access to concrete resources. In 2026, ACS is re-procuring our Community Partnership Program – contracts with 11 community-based organizations that build and maintain neighborhood-based coalitions to drive coordinated service delivery.

At the same time, our frontline staff in the Division of Child Protection have deepened their ability to engage with families, responding with urgency when a child's safety is at risk, and employing less intrusive measures when a child can safely be at home. We have significantly increased our capacity to rapidly deploy intensive family supports through an expansion of our Family Preservation Program. Over the past three years, ACS has expanded the use of CARES – a child welfare response for lower risk allegations that prioritizes partnership with the family. New CARES cases increased 92% between 2022 and 2025. Currently, we respond to nearly 20% of maltreatment allegations via this pathway. Perhaps most importantly, we have driven down caseloads of our hard-working Child Protection Specialists so they can thoughtfully engage children and families, and make strong assessments and sound decisions in an effort to get it right every time.

ACS is also fortunate to support our staff with many different types of expertise. Over 100 former NYPD detectives with invaluable knowledge of investigations and law enforcement increase the physical safety of the families we respond to and of the staff who do this complex work. And in January 2026, we will launch new contracts that will bring clinical expertise directly to families as they navigate substance use, intimate partner violence and mental health challenges.

ACS continues to invest in a state-of-the-art training and workforce development team that supports excellence and strengthens practice. Through expanded coaching and supervision, we are enhancing staff capacity to determine the appropriate response, and to execute it with clarity and empathy. We ground all of this work in data, continuously learning and responding to sustained trends with updated approaches.

As a result of a months-long planning process with many of our non-profit providers and our staff, our Family Services Division (FSD) has a new name (from the Division of Prevention Services) and enhanced priorities. We are embedding the perspectives of families, building a more flexible and responsive system, and expanding community engagement and trust in our provider partners. Just in the past few months, we seen a 20% increase in families accessing services as a result of the work of Family Service Division and our non-profit partners.

The number of children who must come into foster care declined 10% from 2022 to 2025. Today, fewer than 6,500 NYC children and youth are in foster care, compared to nearly 45,000 in the 1990s. Over the past few months, as a result of the hard work of provider agency and ACS staff, we have seen the fewest number of children awaiting foster care placement at the Nicholas Scoppetta Children's Center in several years. When they come into our care, ACS and our provider partners focus on their safety, stability, and improved well-being. We are training every foster parent in trauma-informed approaches to care and increasing the resources young people in foster care can access by dramatically expanding coaching and sustaining investments in education and career supports.

In the 2025 State of the City address, NYC committed to expand five successful ACS programs that engage at-risk youth: Fair Futures, College Choice, Career Choice, GirlsJustUs, and Assertive Community Engagement & Success. Now a reality, this investment of \$163 million over five fiscal years, ACS will serve a total of 8,000 youth across these programs.

For youth who are arrested and come into our care and custody, we work every day to meet their educational, health, mental health and safety needs. Despite a rising census, driven largely by older youth facing serious charges, we have reduced violence in the facilities by focusing on core strategies to promote safety and security. External monitors to the NYC criminal justice system recently noted that "The various reforms implemented by ACS have decreased violence and improved safety and have showcased ACS's and facility leadership's commitment to design and sustain a durable vision for the facility's operation that addresses youth's individual needs and supports the staff who work at Horizon."

These and so many other achievements are possible because ACS has robust and nimble support systems. Rarely visible to the public, our dedicated civil servants are clear in their vision: to create the environments – whether physical, legal, digital or fiscal – that are reliable, secure, and designed to meet the needs of children and families every day. Our provider non-profit partners are staffed by dedicated public servants lifting youth and families across NYC. Our Human Resources team tirelessly recruits and expedites complex hiring processes to create a strong and prepared frontline.

Our Division of Administration is in constant motion: designing and constructing our buildings; transporting our staff and young people; and tending to our collective safety. ACS Financial Services models prudent financial stewardship of city resources and intensive support to our contracted partners. Our Office of Information Technology creates a modern and secure digital environment that allows staff to serve families in the office, in court, in the community, or when necessary, from home. Our External Affairs team ensures we communicate our values, learning and efforts to ACS staff, provider agencies, elected officials, media and constituents.

ACS remains dedicated to building towards 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 as they carry out this critical work. As we look ahead, ACS remains deeply committed to collaboration—with our communities, our providers, and partners across government – towards a vision for NYC where every child is safe, every family is supported, and every community has what it needs to flourish. Thank you for all you do to serve NYC's children and families and for your ongoing commitment to listen, learn and evolve to meet their needs and support their success.

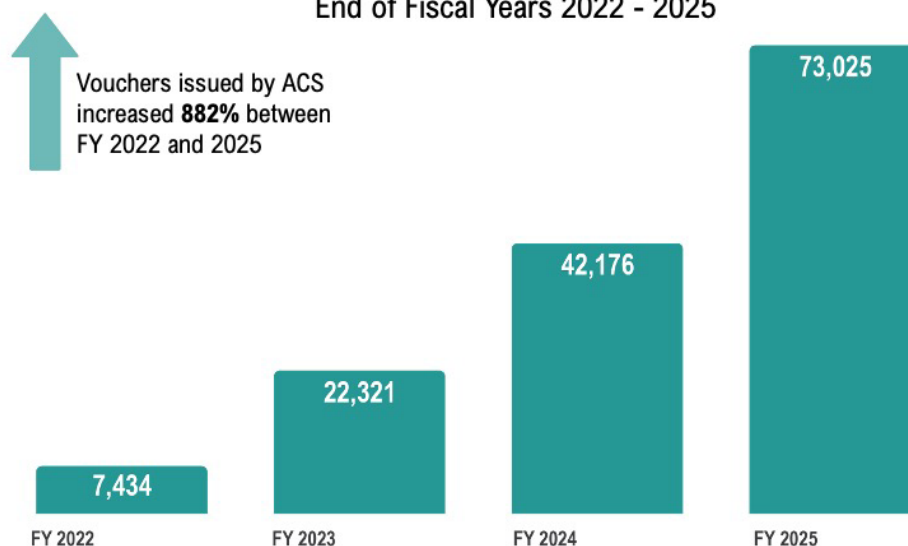
Sincerely,



Jess Dannhauser,
Commissioner

Children Using ACS-Issued Low-Income Child Care Vouchers*

End of Fiscal Years 2022 - 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).

FAMILIES

↑ Sustaining Access to Subsidized Child Care. Beginning in 2022, ACS rapidly expanded child care assistance for low-income families, providing vouchers that cover the cost of care. This initiative has made child care affordable for thousands more families across NYC. The number of children enrolled in care with an ACS-issued low-income voucher climbed by 900% from 7,400 in the summer of 2022 to more than 75,000 in the summer of 2025. During this period, ACS also expanded access in the 17 community districts with the highest poverty and unemployment rates, which also have faced inadequate access to child care. Enrollments of children from these neighborhoods via low-income vouchers increased 1300%, from 1,500 to nearly 22,000. ACS is no longer able to enroll new applicants due to funding limitations, and while advocating for additional State funding, is prioritizing continuity of care to families that currently use vouchers, namely families that have income below 300% of the State Income Standard, are unhoused, or have a child with special needs.

Early Childhood – Partnership with NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) - ACS and DOHMH are collaborating to enhance maternal health, early childhood development and attachment, family stability and well-being. Through an intracity agreement, DOHMH will expand eligibility for the Nurse Family Partnership home visiting program, hire additional staff with expertise in perinatal mental health and/or substance use disorder and bolster non-clinical supports (e.g. peer advocates, supports for families served in DOHMH's perinatal and early childhood mental health clinics, and training and workforce development opportunities.)

Supporting Families Managing Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities – The ACS Developmental Disabilities Unit (DDU) helps parents and children with suspected or diagnosed intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) access the services and supports they need to keep families safe and stable. ACS staff and contracted providers are now referring eligible parents to DDU's Essential Parenting Supports – Parenting Skills Training Program. The DDU is expanding its training team by adding three staff to manage referrals, track services, and support families. These efforts strengthen parents' caregiving abilities and help prevent

unnecessary family separation. Looking ahead, DDU is partnering with New York City Public Schools to develop policy around residential school placements for children in foster care, ensuring educational decisions are thoughtful and coordinated. DDU is also developing a Centralized Data System to improve service tracking and identify future needs.

Completing Expansion of Family Enrichment Centers (FECs) – FECs are warm, inviting spaces co-designed with community and open to community members. They promote five protective factors: social connection, parental resilience, parental knowledge of child development, social emotional competence of children, and access to concrete resources. Research confirms that these factors contribute to healthy child development while also reducing risks related to child maltreatment. There are 29 FECs across the five boroughs of New York City, all in varying stages of implementation. Some are open and operating, while 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. The contract for the thirtieth FEC will begin in January 2026 to serve Pelham Parkway and Morris Park.

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. The PAC and ACS held summer 2025 Parent Day events in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens – engaging over 600 families across the city and providing them with necessities such as produce and pantry items and resources such as backpacks, clothing, and other support. The PAC will continue to implement family-centered events for the community in 2026. This fall the PAC has been providing input on new policies and protocols being developed by the Family Permanency Services division relating to family time and discharge grants for families.

■ **Parents Empowering Parents (PEP)**

PEP involves parent advocates with lived experience of the child welfare system working with case planning teams to support parents who are on the path to reunification with their children. Parent advocates have a unique ability to build relationships with parents, offer guidance about how to navigate child welfare processes, and elevate parents' voices in the case planning process. PEP has increased to nearly 80 Parent Advocates systemwide.

■ **Youth Justice Parent Advocates**

To better support families of youth who become involved with the juvenile justice system, ACS has engaged parent advocates in secure and nonsecure detention and in Close to Home placement programs. These staff, who have lived experience with child-serving systems, help families understand the process and expectations of the justice system

from arrest to placement so they can make informed decisions about their child. Parent advocates also assist with securing concrete supports – such as housing and benefits – to strengthen the family and prepare for their child's return, and they attend meetings and conferences to elevate family voice in planning decisions.

■ **FSD Parent Advisor** - ACS's newly renamed "Family Services Division" (formerly known as the Division of Prevention Services) is actively recruiting for a Parent Advisor, who will sit on their leadership team to offer on-going expertise and improve parent-focused work.

■ **The ACS Youth Leadership Council (YLC)** - Composed of youth with lived experience in our systems, the YLC is working closely with ACS on helping youth in and out of foster care and juvenile justice to better understand their rights. The YLC is recruiting new members and advocating for youth currently in and transitioning out of foster care. The YLC provides information sessions to give youth a comprehensive understanding of the supports and services ACS offers, including housing. In FY25, the YLC facilitated six sessions and partnered with OCFS to support the annual statewide Youth Summit. Additionally, the YLC collaborates with the Fair Futures Youth Advisory Board to host quarterly meetings, gathering feedback from youth across 25 agencies on the services and supports they are receiving and identifying additional needs.

■ **The Fair Futures Youth Advisory Board (YAB)** is seeking representation from youth affiliated with all 25 foster care provider agencies. The YAB is currently focused on advocating for safe, high-quality housing in integrated and desirable neighborhoods, addressing housing discrimination, and improving voucher processes to increase the

number of youth aging out of care into stable housing. Additionally, the YAB has launched a Know Your Rights campaign for transition-aged youth, which streamlines documents and communication to ensure young people ages 13 and older have the information they need to make informed decisions.

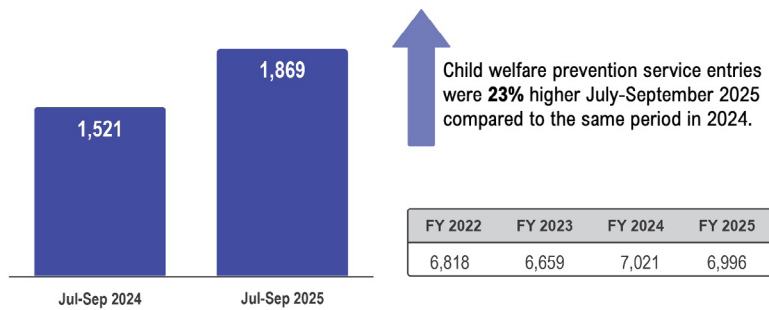
Expanding Concrete Support for ACS-Involved Families:

■ **Securing Stable Housing for ACS-Involved Youth and Families** - ACS supports housing stability and homelessness prevention through several resources, including by supporting them to secure homes in NYCHA buildings and in supportive housing. An increasing number use rental vouchers (supported by federal and/or city-funded subsidies). Youth and or families with vouchers can access ACS' contracted professional housing navigation and stability services, which help them to secure and maintain stable affordable housing. ACS has referred over 400 households to these services, of which 208 have moved into new homes and 123 have recertified their vouchers and renewed their leases after a year of stability.

■ **Increasing Access to Basic Economic and Concrete Resources** ACS and the Department of Social Services (DSS) are collaborating to support the economic stability and upward mobility of families and youth in, or at-risk of entering, the child welfare and youth justice systems. With input from dozens of collaborators - including families and young people with direct experience with child welfare and youth justice services – ACS, DSS, and our partners are improving access for NYC families and youth to economic and concrete resources they need to maintain stability and achieve success.

Families Entering Support Services

Fiscal Years 2022 - 2025



↑ Connecting Families to Services

ACS contracts with 40+ community-based nonprofit organizations offering 140+ programs in every borough. These providers offer case management, homemaking services, and intensive therapeutic services. In 2023, ACS established the ACS Support Line to connect families to services without a child protection response. Social workers who staff the line respond to inquiries from mandated reporters, service providers, and often, parents themselves, and connect NYC families to stabilizing supports that help them

thrive. Child welfare prevention served 23% more families in July-September 2025 compared to that period in 2024.

The increase is due to a combination of efforts: First, ACS provided each program with a target number of families to serve. To meet their targets, providers increased outreach to communities and continued to receive referrals from the Pathways to Prevention Team via the Support Line, which has seen increased call volume over the past several months. Additionally, the 16 School Based Early Support programs – each with partnerships with elementary and

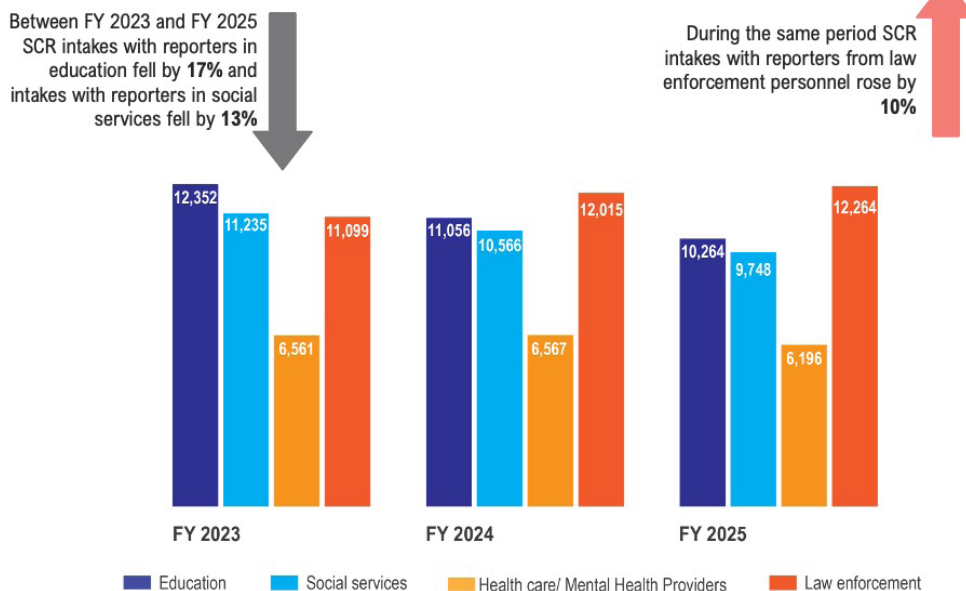
middle schools in specific school districts are working to engage families with the ultimate goal of preventing further involvement in child welfare system.

Decreasing Unnecessary SCR Reports and Increasing Supports Directly Accessed, without the SCR

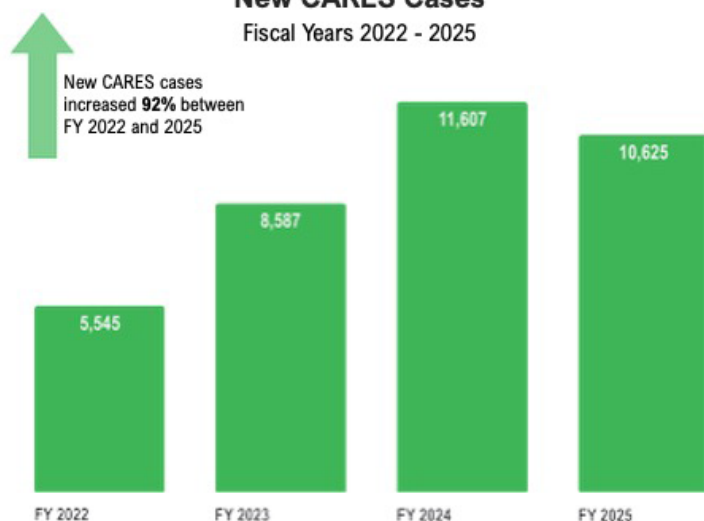
ACS continues to shift messaging to mandated reporters. Since January 2023 we have collaborated across city agencies and private organizations to educate mandated reporters about when a report to the SCR is and is not necessary, and how to take steps to support a family. As a result of new state training on the topic, as well as the nearly 400 presentations reaching over 24,000 mandated reporters that ACS has conducted, NYC has seen a reduction in reports from education, health, and social service sectors. The ACS Support Line has received an increase in requests for assistance. Since FY22, the number of SCR reports from education and social service-based personnel have decreased by 17% and 13% respectively; reports from health and mental health providers have declined 6%. The ACS Support Line now receives nearly 400 calls per month from families and staff who are working with families.

SCR Reports by Mandated Reporters

Fiscal Years 2023 - 2025



New CARES Cases Fiscal Years 2022 - 2025



Promoting Safety for Children and Families:

▪ **↓ Caseloads** - Through collaboration and education, ACS continues to strengthen how we support families and ensure child safety. Our Child Protective Specialist (CPS) teams are conducting timely assessments, and making collateral contacts earlier to better inform decision-making and connect families with appropriate supports. At the same time, ACS is helping mandated reporters better distinguish between situations that require child protection involvement and those that can be addressed through supportive community services. In addition, we have been able to hire frontline CPS staff ahead of attrition and have undertaken focused retention efforts. These initiatives, alongside ACS's focus on reducing the unwarranted system involvement of Black and Latino families, have contributed to more appropriate referrals and a meaningful decline in caseloads citywide. As a result of our combined efforts, between FY23 and FY25, the average CPS caseload declined from 9.7 to 7.0.

Supporting Families:

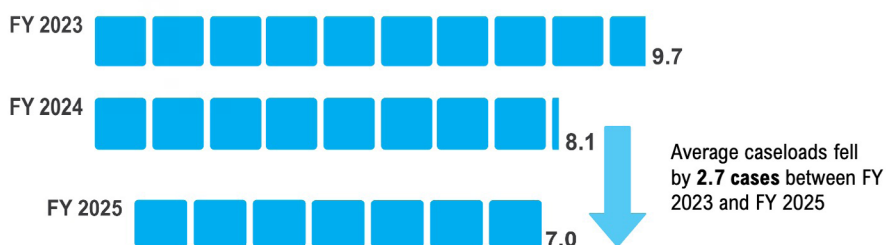
▪ **↑ CARES (Collaborative Assessment, Response, Engagement and Support)** is a state-authorized, non-investigative child protection response in which specially trained child protective staff assess the safety of the children and then partner with the family to identify their needs, empower the family to make decisions that address their needs and the needs of their children, and connect families to appropriate services. CARES cases account for about 20% 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.

▪ **Expediting Connection to Evidence-Based Services** - Families with youth experiencing serious behavioral and mental health challenges need real-time crisis intervention. The Family Services Division is partnering with Multisystemic Therapy (MST) and

Functional Family Therapy (FFT) providers to quickly connect these families to in-home services. New referral processes will match service providers to families within hours, giving parents and caretakers the support needed to safely care for these youth at home. Ongoing, evidence-based services will help to stabilize the family and prevent deepening involvement with child welfare and juvenile justice systems. If a brief period of separation is required to stabilize the family, the family will be matched with a respite provider. ACS is also exploring opportunities to increase the types of respite services that are available.

CPS Caseloads

Fiscal Years 2023 - 2025



▪ **Accelerated Safety Analysis Protocol (ASAP)** - The Child Protection Quality Assurance (QA) team reviews hundreds of the city's highest-risk cases (in either the investigative or CARES tracks) identifying early indicators of abuse or neglect to ensure timely interventions. These reviews also offer staff real-time coaching and highlight systemwide training needs. We recently extended coaching to include Emergency Children's Services (ECS) — the CPS teams responsible during evenings, weekends, and holidays — to enhance practice quality and improve outcomes for children and families. ASAP is also revising the QA tool to better capture practice strengths, areas for growth, and the complexity of our cases.

▪ **Redesign of the Clinical Support Program** - 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 use. ACS has awarded new contracts to five nonprofit providers who will use a refined approach in how they support our child protective teams and directly engage with families to assess the service needs and support options. New borough-based contracts commence in January 2026.

▪ **Enhancements to Family Service Units (FSU)** - FSU is involved when a New York State Family Court

judge orders ACS to supervise a families' engagement in service plans that are designed to mitigate safety concerns. FSU have been trained on engagement tools and strategies that allow CPS to obtain more knowledge about family members, resources and dynamics and to better connect families with services that promote child safety and family stability.

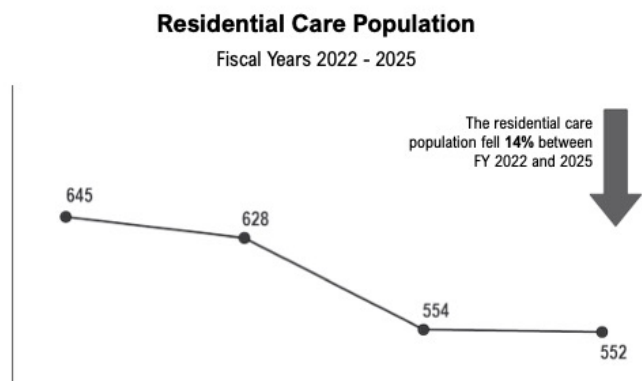
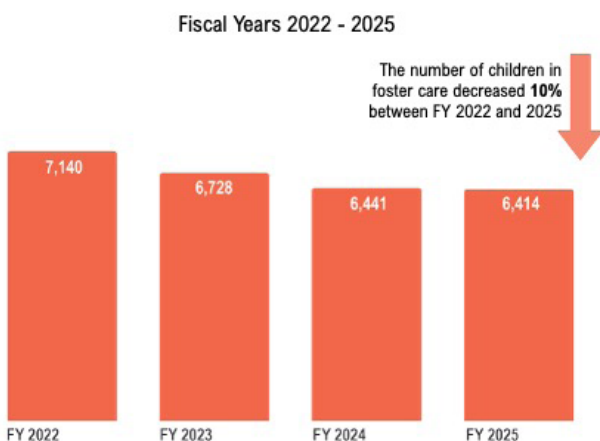
▪ **Expansion of the Family Preservation Program (FPP)** - FPP is an intensive program designed to support families to increase safety and offset risk. As of July 2024, FPP units are assigned to every borough. FPP staff, called "preservationists," help families access emergency housing resources, accompany them to appointments, advocate for the family (e.g., school meetings, housing concerns, benefits applications, etc.), help organize, budget, and/or improve skills to maintain their home, and connect them to other services. We have streamlined the FPP referral process, and a preservationist responds within hours with a home visit.

↓ **Safely Ending ACS Involvement and Promoting Family Reunification** - The number of children and young people in NYC foster care continues to decline, a 10% decrease from FY22 to FY25 (from 7,140 children to fewer than 6,400). The number of those children who were in residential care decreased 14% over the same time period, from 645 in FY22 to fewer than 550 in FY25.

For those youth who do come into care, ACS remains committed to supporting families on the path to reunification. As part of that effort, we are continuing two key initiatives: the expansion of the Parent Engagement Program (PEP), as noted above, and Third Thursdays, which brings ACS and provider agency case planning staff for robust, topic-focused sessions every third Thursday of the month. Since launching in 2024, nearly 150 participants have joined these sessions to discuss connecting families to prevention services and partnering with Fair Futures coaches, among other topics. In addition, ACS has launched a new framework focused on permanency, which examines both agency-specific and system-level data to identify best practices and inform process improvements.

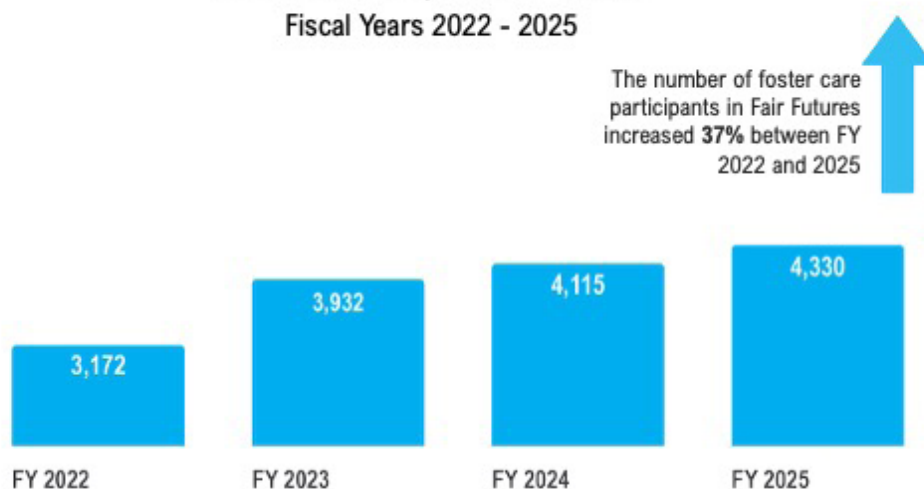
YOUTH

Supporting the Success of Young People - As announced in the 2025 State of the City, New York City invested over \$163 million over 5 years in the Youth Safety and Success Initiative (YSSI), which expands four successful programs currently being implemented and one new program, Career Choice. These programs will reach nearly 8,000 participants (an expansion of almost 3,000) and connect more youth in foster care and juvenile justice programs with counseling, careers, college opportunities, and more.



Fair Futures, Foster Care

Fiscal Years 2022 - 2025



- **↑ Expanding and Sustaining Fair Futures.** This professional coaching program is guided by youth voice and serves over 4,300 young people. The program supports youth ages 11–26 with tutoring and coaching services through collaboration with the Center for Fair Futures and ACS contracted nonprofits. With a City-funded investment of over \$30 million per year, Fair Futures has grown to over \$54 million starting in FY27. This recent investment allows the program to serve an additional 2,000 youth. The Fair Futures program also supports youth who come to the City's attention through the Mayor's Gun Violence Prevention Task Force, matching them with a coach/caring adult. As the juvenile detention population has risen, Fair Futures coaches have met that need as well. In 2022, Fair Futures served 3,000 young people in foster care between the ages of 11-26. During FY25, coaches served over 4,300 youth in foster care and juvenile justice, over 600 of whom were middle school-aged.

- Launched in 2022, the **College Choice** program provides young people in foster care with tuition assistance, room and board, individualized support, and stipends to help them succeed in college. The program supported over 400 students in 2024, and is projected to serve over 500 students by FY27. As of September 2025, 541 applications for College Choice were received and 460 students were enrolled.

- **Career Choice** - Building off the success of College Choice, this initiative connects young people in foster care who are participating in vocational and job readiness training with social and financial support, including a daily cash stipend. This funding will also allow for an expansion to the Department of Youth and Community Development's (DYCD) Advance and Earn program beginning in FY26.

- **Girls JustUs** - This is a highly successful gender-responsive juvenile justice diversion program that currently operates in Brooklyn and the Bronx serving 80 girls and LGBTQIA+ Youth. JustUs will expand to Queens in FY27 to serve a total of 120 youth.

- **Assertive Community Engages Services (ACES)** - Through this program, ACS provides evidence-based services to high-risk youth with prior involvement in the justice system. The ACES program provides social pathways away from gang and gun violence to young people ages 16-24, and will expand to serve over 400 young people annually in FY27.

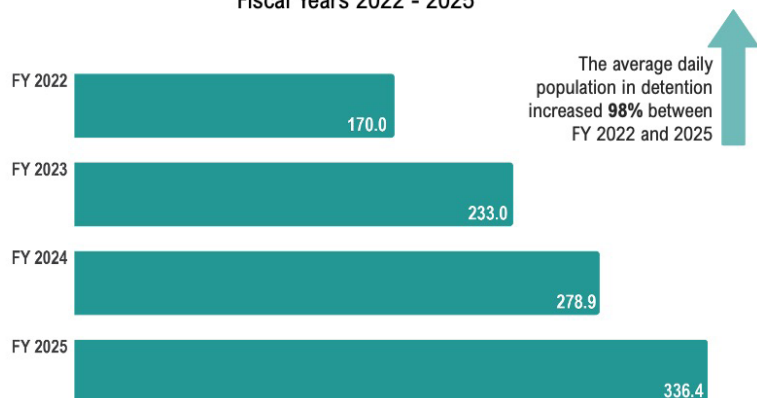
Trauma Training for All Foster Parents and Staff - ACS partners with our contracted family foster care agencies to ensure that all foster parents and staff are trained in the National Training and Development Curriculum (NTDC) and the Trauma-

Responsive Informed Parenting Program (TRIPP). NTDC is a learning program that tackles separation, loss, grief, trauma, and differences of race and culture in foster care and adoption. TRIPP is designed to increase foster parent and staff capacity to support children and youth with complex needs. As of September 2025, 99% of the system's non-kinship foster parents were therapeutically trained. Across the system, 196 trainers have completed training of trainers for NTDC with TRIPP.

Addressing the Needs of LGBTQIA+ Youth - All ACS and provider agency direct services staff and supervisors must take the ACS LGBTQIA+ staff training upon being hired and every two years subsequently. The training covers best practices for engagement, outlines the ACS LGBTQIA+ policy, and provides staff with affirming language. Foster parents also take a LGBTQIA+ training that teaches about sexual orientation and gender identity via a childhood developmental lens and provides language on how to speak to children/adolescents about these issues. Within the Division of Child Protection, every borough office has LGBTQIA+ liaisons to support, in partnership with ACS' Office of Equity Strategies (OES), investigations involving LGBTQIA+ youth and/or families.

Average Daily Census in Detention

Fiscal Years 2022 - 2025



in mid-2025. Additional planning and design work is also underway to add capacity in the interim, with ACS and DDC collaborating to add more bedrooms that can be brought online quickly on our existing Brooklyn campus.

▪ **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. All youth in custody are offered mental health services and 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 and retain skilled clinicians.

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. In FY22, the average daily population was 170 young people; in FY25, there is an average of 336 young people in secure detention.

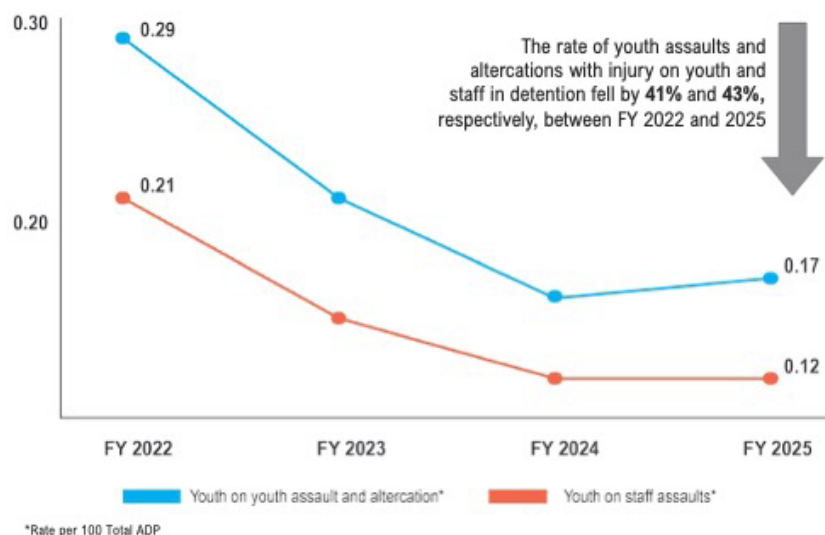
Despite a rising census, most safety indicators have improved and facility staff have reduced violence in the facilities by focusing on core strategies to promote safety and security, including: training staff in crisis prevention and de-escalation techniques, hiring and equipping staff to mentor and coach newer Youth Development Specialists, fostering open communication among leadership, staff, and unions about safety concerns, enhanced search protocols and state of the art equipment, a youth-centered behavior management system; expanded programming and academic opportunities; and the addition of a trauma informed social emotional learning curriculum. The rate of youth assaults and altercations with injury on youth and staff in detention fell by 41% and 43%, respectively, between FY22 and FY25.

▪ Creating Space for Older Youth

To meet the particular needs of the increased number of older youth in ACS's custody due to Raise the Age, ACS is adding capacity to our Bronx campus. With the NYC Department of Design and Construction (DDC), ACS is building a safe, secure, and youth-centered annex to Horizon Juvenile Detention Center. By 2029, the new annex will add residential and educational space, expanded kitchen/dining areas, 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 — began

Detention Assault and Altercation with Injury

Fiscal Years 2022 - 2025



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 on issues related to juvenile justice. In February 2025, the JJAB released its first annual report, summarizing its preliminary work identifying education and mental health as areas of focus. Next year, the JJAB will survey detained youth about their life experiences and stressors, experiences and challenges. The JJAB will use the collected information to identify gaps in the existing service continuum and inform its continued work.

↓ **Reducing Stays at the Children’s Center** – Pre-placement at the NYC Children’s Center is intended to be a short-term approach while an appropriate foster care placement is identified. Finding kin such as relatives, close family friends, or other resources is one of our key strategies for shortening stays at the Children’s Center. We are also increasing foster home capacity, which grew by over 500 newly recruited foster homes

in FY25, and are increasing the timeliness of non-kin placements. Due to these and other efforts – including expedited placements for young children, intensive services and concrete resources that help prevent emergency removals, leadership involvement on emergencies, and stronger coordination to make the most appropriate placements – the population at the Children’s Center continues to decline. In September 2025, there were 30% fewer children and youth at the Children’s Center than in September 2024.

Organization

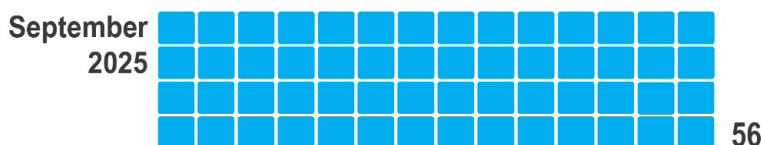
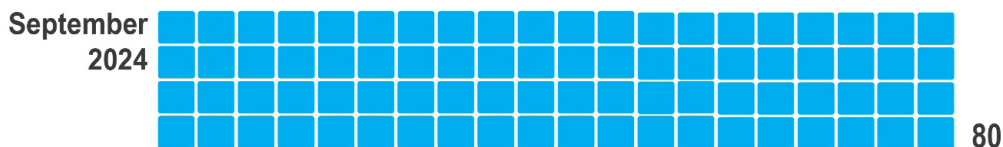
Five-Year Disability Access Plan
ACS developed a five-year plan to ensure our workplaces, programs, and services are accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities in compliance with Local Law 12 of 2023. The Office of Equal Employment Opportunity (OEEO) is advancing the plan by distributing American’s with Disabilities Act educational materials, presenting the plan to ACS leadership, auditing access, and sharing federal

and local accessibility guidelines. These efforts help ensure that families can access services, receive information in ways they can understand, and fully participate in ACS programs. Our 2026 initiatives include releasing a Disability Resource Directory, training staff on accessible communication practices, reviewing programmatic access data, and conducting physical accessibility assessments at 18 ACS locations. These efforts aim to remove barriers, promote equity, and ensure that all families can engage with ACS services with dignity and ease.

Investing in ACS and Provider Workforce:

- **Continuing Fiscal Support to Human Service Providers** – ACS is strengthening the Human Services workforce through sustained, multi-year investments totaling \$45.3 million investment across Fiscal Years 2025–2027. This includes \$23.2 million in Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) funding, \$16.4 million through the Workforce Enhancement Initiative (WEI), and \$5.7 million to support Indirect Cost Rate (ICR) reimbursement increases. Developed in partnership with the Office of Management and Budget,

Children’s Center Population September 2024 and 2025



↓ The population at the Children’s Center was **30%** lower in September of 2025 compared to the previous year

these initiatives build on prior City commitments to advance wage equity, strengthen fiscal stability, and support long-term sustainability for providers. The FY27 COLA marks the final phase of this investment cycle, ensuring continued support for provider agencies delivering critical services to New York City's children and families.

- **Engaging with Provider Partners** - Through partnership with the Council on Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA) and other channels, ACS leadership regularly communicates with provider agencies to ensure that their experience working with children and families informs ACS policy. The Mayor's Office of Nonprofit Services (MONs) regularly reviews ACS data related to contract registration, budget modifications, invoice submission and payments to identify and resolve pending actions.

- **Strategic Reinvestment to Strengthen Prevention Services** - After an assessment of our contracted prevention services system, ACS made modest adjustments to make services more flexible and capable of serving an increased number of families. Through this process, ACS made \$8 million available for providers to reinvest in their workforce and implement strategies to meet families' concrete needs. Providers proposed program-specific or agency-wide strategies, and funds will be allocated to their budgets by the end of this year.

- **Advancing Scholarship Opportunities** - In June 2023, ACS extended our scholarship program to provider agency staff who are pursuing a master's degree in social work. Since FY19, we have awarded scholarships to nearly 400 staff from ACS and 69 Provider Agencies totaling

more than four million dollars. In FY25 alone, 94 scholarships worth over one million dollars were awarded. In addition to advanced degrees, this funding supports mentorship and staff development, as well as preparatory classes for the social work licensing exam.

Workforce Development Support

- The ACS Workforce Institute (WI) is redesigning core trainings for child protection, foster care, and juvenile justice, and implementing Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) trainings to support implementation and claiming for evidence-based models in prevention. The Workforce Institute continues to collaborate with our partners to build a learning continuum that supports workforce development, organizational effectiveness, and practice innovation.

- **Foster Care Onboarding Program** - In collaboration with the Family Permanency Services Division, WI is developing a nine-day Foster Care Onboarding program designed to strengthen new staff's understanding of the foster care continuum and enhance their ability to support children, youth, and families. The pilot is planned for early next year.

- **Motivational Interviewing (MI) Connect** - To support the implementation of Motivational Interviewing (MI) as an evidence-informed practice, WI is developing two new training programs. MI Connect Supervisor Training is focused on equipping supervisors to coach and sustain staff use of MI, while reinforcing the supervisor's critical role in promoting engagement and trust with families. MI Connect Group Skills Practice provides structured practice sessions for staff to strengthen and maintain MI skills, ensuring ongoing adherence to fidelity standards.

Enhancing the Safety of

Investigations

- ACS employs over 100 Investigative Consultants (ICs), retired detectives and supervisors who are an invaluable resource to ACS staff. Among many tasks, they help to assess family violence, locate missing young people and coordinate with the New York City Police Department (NYPD).

- **Collaboration with NYPD** - ACS continues to work with the NYPD to ensure support for safe and timely CPS investigations. NYPD provided ACS access to a citywide phone line to expedite the request for police assistance for CPS working in the community, which has contributed to faster response times to assist CPS. ICs and CPS completed a citywide training to inform them about the best practices for requesting police assistance.

- **Support with Safety App** - ICs follow up on all instances in which CPS activate a Safety Application, designed to request an immediate police response. Investigations Staff are now reviewing and following-up on all Employee Critical Incident Reports filed by CPS for assaults and threats to staff members.

- **Collaboration with OCME** - The Office of Investigations is also working with the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME), allowing for ACS staff to receive timely notification for all child fatalities in New York City, and providing relevant and lawful information to Medical Examiners.

Hiring Frontline ACS Staff Ahead of Attrition

– Since January 2025, ACS has strengthened frontline capacity by hiring 762 new employees, improving hiring rates and reducing attrition. This includes 158 Youth Development Specialists; 20 Special Officers securing detention operations and other ACS facilities; and 361 Child Protective Specialists. To reach qualified candidates quickly, we hosted hiring hall events focused on key frontline roles and partnered with the Deputy Mayor of Public Safety's Office to bring frontline opportunities to multiple hiring events across all five boroughs. We simplified our application and refreshed materials to link directly to job postings, enabling candidates to apply on the spot. To improve retention, we analyzed feedback from exiting employees, who expressed strong gratitude and job satisfaction, with opportunities to strengthen trust, reduce stress, and enhance workplace culture.

Supporting a Continuous Learning and Improvement Culture

– The Division of Policy, Planning and Measurement continues to promote an ACS and provider agency workforce that is adaptive, forward thinking and committed to continuous quality improvement.

- **Child Stat** – One of the agency's key management accountability and quality improvement processes, ChildStat focuses on child safety and ensuring staff have the skills, training and tools needed to work effectively. The discussions use data and lessons from individual cases to drive system-level changes to improve outcomes for children and families. In 2025, ACS will hold 31 ChildStat sessions. Additionally, ACS conducts Zone-Based Reviews of child protection on a regular basis; findings highlight areas where the zones are doing well as well as areas that could be strengthened. The reviews are then used in our Collaborative Quality Improvement process to create improvement plans.

Performance Management of Child Welfare Case Practice

Last year, the Office of Quality Improvement, the Office of Agency Program Assistance, and the Provider Agency Measurement System units reviewed thousands of cases and supported ACS child protection teams and provider agency Prevention and Foster Care teams as they developed and implemented annual quality improvement plans. By assessing and supporting practice to the highest standards, above that required by policy and regulation, ACS consistently strengthens its services to better support the city's children and families.

ACS Institute for Leadership Development (ILD)

Launched in 2023, ILD serves 250 ACS emerging leaders each year by providing executive coaching and leadership development through the Learning and Exploring through Development (LEAD) curriculum. The framework provides knowledge and skills to advance professional growth. Currently, LEAD has two active cohorts. The first phase for each cohort includes courses on five domains: Fundamentals of Leadership, Leading Change, Leading in Context, Leading for Results, and Leading People.

Committing to Smart, Safe, and Secure Technology Solutions

– The ACS Office of Information Technology (OIT) is reimagining digital tools to free staff from administrative burdens and allow them to focus more on family engagement; providing enhanced performance dashboards that integrate real-time data and new performance indicators; advancing cybersecurity by maintaining compliance with training, which has led to a 35% decrease in incidents over the past quarter; modernizing infrastructure by transitioning to an advanced data center, which has contributed to a two-thirds reduction in system downtime in the last quarter; and refreshing all agency desktop systems and securing over 4,500 mobile devices. OIT is also building a

culture of digital learning by offering staff practical guidance on using digital tools securely and enhancing service delivery by increasing transparency and improving response times.

Safety and Security – ACS Police have installed and upgraded cameras at entry and exit points, conference rooms, and reception areas at borough office locations. To prevent the entry of contraband and ensure safety we installed new monitoring systems at the Nicholas Scoppetta Children's Center and ACS's Juvenile Detention Centers.

Strategic Response Team (SRT)

– ACS Police's newly created special operations team responds immediately to high-risk situations at our congregate facilities. Currently, 15 Officers and Supervisors have been trained in strategic response by NYC Department of Correction.

K-9 Narcotics and Contraband Unit

– This newly created team will help prevent narcotics and other contraband from entering facilities. Both a sergeant and canine completed the formal K-9 Training Program. A special vehicle was assigned to the unit courtesy of the Department of Transportation.

Training – ACS continues to partner with the NYPD and Suffolk County Sheriff's Office to enhance safety-focused training and leadership development programs, including Safe Crisis Management (120 participants) and other de-escalation techniques. Additionally, ACS staff and officers participated in a hybrid Active Shooter Training (400 participants).

Transportation Services – ACS is enhancing transportation services for frontline staff who serve families, including making vehicle requests and authorization processes more efficient, using trip data to develop focused service schedules and modifying vehicle locations throughout the five boroughs. These steps have improved responsiveness and reduced waiting times.

Goods and Services for Families -

ACS continues to fulfill requests for clothing, cribs, furniture, heavy duty cleaning, school uniforms, etc. Since the beginning of 2025, we processed over 53,000 requests. Each request for a family may include multiple items and services. ACS also coordinates lock change services for domestic violence survivors, allowing them to stay in their homes and near their established support systems. Year-to-date, we have processed 430 lock changes.

Repair, Maintenance and

Construction Projects: Child protective borough offices continue to be upgraded, including new paint, blinds, flooring, and furniture.

- At the **Nicholas Scoppetta Children's Center**, we created a music room, a soundproof recording studio and new sleeping spaces for pre-teens. We have also created new dining and meeting spaces.

- **In Secure Detention**, we continue ongoing maintenance, repair, and upgrades, including restrooms, building boilers, doors, laundry and kitchen appliances. Kitchen staff received training from the Mayor's Office of Food Policy and introduced new menu items, including plant-based meals and increased Halal options. These activities contribute to the safety, and well-being of residents and staff.
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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.