

**LOCAL LAW 41 of 2016:
2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

**NEW YORK CITY ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN’S SERVICES
DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

A. INTRODUCTION

Local Law 41 of 2016 requires an annual report to the Speaker of the City Council, documenting the number Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) in contact with DYCD or its contracted providers and youth in contact with ACS “who are referred as, self-report as, or who the department (DYCD) or ACS later determines to be sexually exploited children, disaggregated by age, gender and whether the children had contact with either DYCD or ACS or both agencies.” The law also requires DYCD and ACS to provide a “description of the services provided by the department and ACS to meet the needs of youth who are or have been sexually exploited.” Lastly, the law requires DYCD and ACS to document their methods for collecting data regarding this population.

The New York City (NYC) Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) and Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) are jointly submitting this Calendar Year 2023 (“2023”) report, which contains the following information as required:

- A. The number of youth in contact with the department’s (DYCD’s) runaway and homeless youth services or ACS who are referred as, self-report as, or who the department (DYCD) or ACS later determine to be sexually exploited*
- B. Data disaggregated by age, utilizing the following ranges:
 - A. under 12 years old;*
 - B. 12-15 years old;*
 - C. 16-18 years old; and*
 - D. over 18 years old;*and disaggregated by gender, and by whether such children had contact with the department or ACS.*

- C. *The number of sexually exploited children identified as having received services from DYCD and/or ACS.*
- D. *A description of services provided by DYCD and ACS to meet the needs of youth who are or have been sexually exploited children including but not limited to the number of beds designated for such children and the types of mental health and health services provided to such children.*
- E. *The methods DYCD and ACS utilized to collect data regarding the number of sexually exploited children.*

2023 DATA SUMMARY:

In 2023, ACS, DYCD and the Safe Harbour providers served a total of 760 youth referred as, self-reported as, or determined to be sexually exploited, or at-risk for sexual exploitation.

Table 1. Youth referred as, self-reported as, or determined to be sexually exploited or at-risk for sexual exploitation served by ACS and DYCD in 2023: 760	
Safe Harbour Providers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Trafficking Mailbox - 124 • Child Trafficking Database - 16 • Safe Horizon Counselors at the Children’s Center -37 • Children’s Village Counselors at the Children’s Center - 17 • Hetrick Martin Institute Internships – 12 • Hetrick Martin Institute Groups - 40 • Hetrick Martin Individual Services - 12 • Foster Care Unplugged Groups – 15 • Emergency Funds - 65 	338
DYCD Runaway and Homeless Youth Services	126
ACS Prevention Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-Advocate Prevention Cases - 0ⁱ 	239

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate Prevention Only (ADVPO) Cases – 57ⁱⁱ • Family Assessment Program (Advocate) Cases - 182 	
ACS Placement Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JCCA Gateways Program – 20 • Children’s Village Empower House - 4 	24
Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) Confirmed Victims of Human Trafficking	33ⁱⁱⁱ
Total Exploited or at Risk for Exploitation Youth Served in 2023	760

It should be noted that the overall number of youths identified as “trafficked or at-risk for trafficking” increased by fifty-seven (57) youth between 2022 (703 youth identified) and 2023 (760 youth identified).

In 2023, the number of youth identified to the ACS Child Trafficking Mailbox increased slightly as compared to 2022 (124 in 2023 compared to 117 in 2022). The number of Child Trafficking Database (CTDB) notifications for 2023 mirrored those for 2022 (16 for both years). However, a greater percentage of overall OCTPP youth (Mailbox and CTDB combined) met the Federal Definition level in 2023 (30% in 2023 compared to 25.5% in 2022). Additionally, a greater number of children were identified as trafficked or at-risk in Advocate Prevention Only (ADVPO) (56 at-risk and 1 Federal level in 2023 vs 40 at-risk and 1 Federal level in 2022) and significantly in Family Assessment Program (FAP) (178 at-risk and 4 Federal level in 2023 vs 87 at-risk and 2 Federal level in 2022) cases.

Therefore, not only were more youth identified to the Safe Harbour Program overall in 2023 (760 in 2023 compared to 703 in 2022), a higher percentage (30%) of the 140 youth identified to the Child Trafficking Mailbox and Child Trafficking Database screenings in 2023 met the Federal Definition of Sex Trafficking. This compares to 25.5% in 2022. Additionally, Family Assessment Program (FAP) providers completed 747 more screenings in 2023 compared to 2022 (2,916 total screenings in 2023 vs. 2,169 total screenings in 2022). Twice as many youth were identified as At-Risk in 2023 (178 youth identified as At-Risk in 2023 compared to 89 in 2022) and twice as many identified at the Federal level (4 in 2023

compared to 2 in 2022). The increase in the number of screenings may have assisted in identifying more At-Risk and Federal level youth.

It is important to note that the actual determination as to whether some youth are at-risk for exploitation or have been exploited is significantly challenging. Many youth who are considered at-risk for exploitation may have actually been trafficked, but chose not to disclose that information, or even outright deny exploitation, despite a proliferation of indicators. Therefore, the data in this report captures both exploited youth and youth determined to be at-risk for exploitation and these categories cannot be disaggregated. It should also be noted that there may be overlap between provider data and victim confirmations by the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), whose information is confidential. There is no means to determine whether or how frequently this occurred.

Provider Breakdown:

In 2023, programs funded by, or affiliated with the NYC Safe Harbour Program served 760 Youth Exploited or At-Risk of Exploitation:

- Through the State's Safe Harbour funding, ACS contracted with Safe Horizon to provide services at the ACS Nicholas Scoppetta Children's Center. Through this program, Safe Horizon provided services to 37 new youth who were either exploited or at-risk of exploitation, another 9 new youth who were notified to the Child Trafficking Mailbox (not counted towards total for 2023 to avoid duplication) and 7 additional youth who had been previously identified as trafficked or at risk of trafficking (also not counted to avoid duplication). The Safe Horizon Counselors specialized in working with commercially sexually exploited children (CSEC) and youth at risk of trafficking.^{iv} The contract with Safe Horizon ended on June 30, 2023. On July 1, 2023, a new contract commenced with the Children's Village Empower House.
- Children's Village Empower House's Counselors, who also specialized in working with commercially sexually exploited children (CSEC) and youth at risk of trafficking, provided services to 17 new youth who were either exploited or at-risk of exploitation.
- An additional 124 newly identified sexually exploited youth, or youth at-risk for exploitation, were brought to the attention of ACS' Child Trafficking Mailbox.

Furthermore, 133 previously identified trafficked or at-risk youth also received services (but were not counted to avoid duplication). See Section 1B on Data Capture Methodology for details.^v

- Sixteen (16) newly identified sexually exploited youth were screened at the Federal level through ACS' Child Trafficking Database (CTDB). Report data for the Child Trafficking Database only includes screenings at the Federal Definition of Sex Trafficking level, which are automatically notified to OCTPP.
- Twelve (12) youth were served through Hetrick Martin Institute's Tau Gamma Internship Program.
- Forty (40) youth were served through Hetrick Martin Institute's Trans Treats Group.
- Twelve (12) youth who self-identified as having experienced trafficking received individual level services from the Hetrick Martin Institute.
- Fifteen (15) youth were served through trafficking awareness and skills focused groupwork by Foster Care Unplugged in partnership with ACS' Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy (OCTPP).
- 65 youth received Safe Harbour subsidized emergency funds and supportive resources to prevent alternate and less safe ways to obtain needed items.

The NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) Confirmed 33 Exploited Youth:

- 33 youth between the ages 0 and 23 were confirmed as sexually exploited by The NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA).

In 2023, DYCD Served 126 Exploited and/or At-Risk for Exploitation Youth Through Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Programs:

- 65 youth received Crisis Services Programs.
- 23 youth received services from Transitional Independent Living Programs (TILS).
- 38 youth received services at Drop-in Centers.
- 16 youth served by DYCD-funded providers disclosed that they also receive some form of service from ACS.

- Gender: 26 males; 73 females; 4 Gender Non-Conforming (GNC) youth and 23 youth who did not disclose their gender. Within those gender categories, 6 transgender youth were served: Drop-in Centers served 3 transgender youth, Crisis Services assisted 3 transgender youth, and TILS served 0 transgender youth.
- Ages: 0 children between ages 12 and 15; 7 children between ages 16 and 18; 119 youth over age 18.
- 78 youth received Mental Health referrals.
- 63 youth received Mental Health counseling.

Details are provided in Section C-1: DYCD Contracted Programs and Services to Meet the Needs of Sexually Exploited Children.

ACS Foster Care Placement and Advocate Providers Services Served 24 Exploited and/or At-Risk for Exploitation Youth:

- ACS Foster Care Placement Services served total of 26:
 - The Jewish Child Care Association's (JCCA) Gateways Program served 20 Sexually Exploited Youth in 2023.
 - Children's Village's Empower House served 4 Sexually Exploited Youth in 2023.
- Advocate Prevention Only (ADVPO) providers served 57 total: 56 youth identified as at-risk and 1 youth identified as trafficked.
- ACS Family Assessment Program (PINS Diversion/Advocate) served 182 total: 178 youth identified as at-risk and 4 youth identified as trafficked.

Table 2. Delineation of Data by Required Local Law 41		
Categories: Total = 760		
By Age:	Under 12 years old:	12
	12 to 15 years old:	121
	16 to 18 years old:	135
	Over 18 years old:	256
	Age unknown ^{vi}	236
By Gender: Note: DYCD RHY served 6 Trans youth who were counted within M/F.	Male:	73
	Female:	372
	Transgender Female:	12
	Transgender Male	7
	Gender Non-Conforming	38
	Gender Undisclosed ^{vi}	258
By Contact With DYCD or ACS:		
ACS only		0
DYCD only		110
Both ACS and DYCD		16
Unknown		634
Breakdown of Advocate Case Youth Not at the Federal Definition Level (age and gender data provided only for Federal level, not for youth At-Risk.	ADVPO Prevention Services – 56 Family Assessment Program - 178	(234) These youth were encompassed in the Age Unknown and Gender Not Disclosed categories (See footnote vi.)

B. DATA CAPTURE METHODOLOGY

1. ACS Data Capture Methodology:

In 2023, ACS obtained demographic data of young people served by New York State Safe Harbour-funded programs from the Safe Harbour funded providers. Primarily, ACS obtained data through its Child Trafficking Mailbox, which served as a vehicle for ACS and provider agency staff to send notifications of trafficked children, ask questions, request resources and receive case practice guidance. External stakeholders, including the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), other City agencies and community providers also use the Child Trafficking Mailbox for notifications to, and communication with OCTPP.^{vii} The Child Trafficking Mailbox is monitored by twelve (12) professionals^{viii} within or affiliated with the ACS Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy, who have extensive experience in child welfare and clinical service provision or law enforcement. OCTPP staff obtain updates on status, services and safety planning and collect demographic data.

OCTPP staff also directly respond to every Federal Level screening notification generated by the Child Trafficking Database (CTDB). Every Mailbox and CTDB response consists of a series of emails and telephone contacts to ensure identification of youth, assessment of trafficking indicators and safety planning efforts, provision of guidance, arrangement for conference participation, provision of resources and meeting any other trafficking related need. OCTPP staff also attend and provide guidance at Multi-Disciplinary, Child Safety Conferences, Emergency Risk Conferences and individual case consultations, and also to Safe Harbour non-child welfare case assistance requests.

In 2023, the Child Trafficking Mailbox received 3,817 emails, which identified a total of 124 children newly identified as trafficked, or at-risk of trafficking, and also received emails for, and provided support to another 133 youth, all of whom had previously been identified as trafficked or at-risk. OCTPP also received notification of, and assessed 198 additional youth who were determined to not be trafficked or at-risk, or not enough information was provided for a determination. ACS also accumulated data through electronic sex trafficking screenings in its Child Trafficking Database (CTDB), which sends an automatic notification whenever a child screened meets the

Federal Definition level of sex trafficking. In 2023, the CTDB electronic sex trafficking screening process identified 16 children at the Federal Definition of Trafficking level^{ix}. Of the total 140 children identified to the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy (OCTPP) (124 to the Child Trafficking Mailbox and 16 through CTDB screenings), 42 met the Federal Definition level. An additional 27 youth identified to the Mailbox met the High Risk level and 71 youth met the Medium Risk level and 198 youth met the No-Risk level or there was not enough information provided for a determination. OCTPP provided guidance for screeners and resources for youth for both the 140 newly identified and also the 133 previously identified youth, many of whom had met the Federal level. The increased percentage of identified Federal Definition level youth in 2023 as compared to 2022 (30% of youth identified at the Federal level in 2023 as compared with 25.5% of youth so identified in 2022) may serve to illustrate the greater awareness of trafficking indicator recognition by ACS and provider agency staff. This greater awareness may be the result of an increased number of training attendees in 2023 (7,212 training seats filled in 2023 compared to 3,928 seats filled in 2022). See Section IIA for details. ^x

Screening Youth for Trafficking: OCFS Screening Tools and the ACS Child Trafficking Database (CTDB)

In 2023, ACS continued to follow its *Policy and Procedure 2020/05: Identifying Assessing and Safety Planning with Child Sex and Labor Trafficking Victims*, ACS' first agency-wide trafficking policy. This policy, based upon NYS Office of Children and Families (OCFS) Administrative Directive, *15-OCFS-ADM-16: Requirements to Identify, Document, Report and Provide Services to Child Sex Trafficking Victims* (September 1, 2015; Revised March 30, 2016), with its required screening and reporting tools:

- a. OCFS 3921:Rapid Indicator Tool to Identify Children Who May Be Sex Trafficking Victims or At-Risk of Bring a Sex Trafficking Victim
- b. OCFS 3920: Child Sex Trafficking Indicators Tool (also known as the "Comprehensive Tool," a higher level of screening which follows when the Rapid Tool identifies a child as at-risk for

trafficking)

c. OCFS 3922: Law Enforcement Report of a Child Sex Trafficking Victim

mandates the use of the Child Trafficking Database (CTDB) for all sex trafficking screenings (except Advocate Prevention Only and Family Assessment Program cases) and contact with the Office of Child Trafficking for any child that meets the Federal Definition of Sex Trafficking level.^{xi} The cloud-based CTDB permits staff and providers to not only screen electronically, but to also document service referrals relevant to the screening results and to generate two types of reports (Child Screening History Report, Area Compliance Report). Utilizing the CTDB is more beneficial than using paper screening tools, as paper tools cannot aggregate data, nor display a longitudinal history of the evolution of a child’s entry into trafficking. A detailed description of the CTDB and the plans for the Phase III upgrade is included in Appendix C.

OCTPP team members manually input quantitative data from Mailbox and CTDB notifications into the NYS Office of Children and Family Services’ (OCFS) Safe Harbour Program’s standardized Excel spreadsheet. This data capture tool helped to gather uniform statistics from providers and thereby facilitated the ability for quarterly and annual data aggregation.

Table 3: Summary of 2023 Data Collected by the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy Through the Child Trafficking Mailbox and the Child Trafficking Database (CTDB):	
# Newly Identified Youth to the Child Trafficking Mailbox in 2023	124
# Newly Identified Youth to the CTDB in 2023	16
# Newly Identified Youth to Both the Mailbox and CTDB in 2023 (documented as CTDB only to avoid duplication)	(9)
Total Number of Newly Identified Youth to OCTPP in 2023 (Child Trafficking Mailbox and CTDB):	140
# New Youth Identified at the Federal Definition of Trafficking in 2023	42

# New Youth Identified as At-Risk for Trafficking in 2023	98
# Previously Identified Youth Involved in 2023 Emails to the Child Trafficking Mailbox	133
# Newly identified youth for whom OCTPP received initial notifications, but upon assessment, were determined to not be at risk, or insufficient information was provided for determination	198
Total Number of Emails to the Child Trafficking Mailbox	3,817^{xii}

It is important to note that collecting data on trafficked and at-risk youth can be challenging and complex for many reasons, including:

- a. Many youth do not disclose traumatic experiences upon initial engagement. It can take an extended period of time to build trust and establish an environment wherein the youth feels safe to disclose.
- b. Reluctance to provide information to an authority figure who might impact upon their life.
- c. Traumatic reaction due to thinking, and thereby reliving victimization (often diagnosed as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder - PTSD).
- d. Fear of threats or retribution by the trafficker.
- e. Fear of being taken from familiar people or places.
- f. Embarrassed by, or ashamed of the exploitation and the abuse.
- g. Cultural norms that may make talking about traumatic sexually exploitive experiences difficult for children.
- h. Developmental delays that make it difficult to understand what has actually occurred.
- i. Many victims do not recognize they are in an abusive relationship and do not identify as trafficked. They truly believe their exploiter loves them and have become “trauma bonded”^{xiii} to the exploiter. Many victims who leave their exploiter return. Some never disclose or leave at all.

DYCD Data Capture Methodology:

The RHY providers are instructed to complete the Safe Harbour (CSEC) report for each new reported case of CSEC as soon as the cases are reported. Every month, providers are asked to confirm no reports. The reports are made by DYCD’s contracted RHY providers in the electronic DYCD Connect, Participant Tracking System.

Table 4. NYC 2023 Safe Harbour Data Table, as Delineated by Agency and Indicator: An expanded view of this table is located in Appendix B.

NYC Administration for Children's Services																
2023 NYC Safe Harbour Data: Newly Identified Exploited Children and Children At-Risk of Exploitation																
as reported by ACS, DYCD and Safe Harbour Providers																
Safe Harbour Provider	Total Youth	Cis M	Cis F	Trans F	Trans M	No G Discd	GNC	<12	12-15	16-18	>18	Age unk	ACS only	DYCD only	ACS+DYCD	Unk
Child Trafficking Mailbox* ****	124	17	104	3	0	0	0	6	55	53	10	0	0	0	0	124
Child Trafficking Database****	16	2	13	1	0	0	0	2	8	5	1	0	0	0	0	16
Safe Horizon at Children's Center* ****	37	2	35	0	0	0	0	1	20	16	0	0	0	0	0	37
Children's Village at Children's Center	17	1	16	0	0	0	0	3	7	6	1	0	0	0	0	17
DYCD RHY Programs	126	26	73	0	0	23	4	0	0	7	119	0	0	110	16	0
OTDA Confirmations (0 - 23)	33	2	31	0	0	0	0	0	10	10	13	0	0	0	0	33
JCCA Gateways (Placement)	20	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	7	12	1	0	0	0	0	20
CV Empower House (Placement)	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Preventive Advocate Cases	57	0	1	0	0	56	0	0	0	1	0	56	0	0	0	57
Family Assessment Program (Advocate)	182	1	3	0	0	178	0	0	2	2	0	178	0	0	0	182
Hetrick Martin Institute Internships	12	1	3	1	0	0	7	0	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	12
Hetrick Martin Institute Groups	40	5	3	3	6	1	22	0	0	7	33	0	0	0	0	40
Hetrick Martin Institute Individual	12	2	1	4	0	0	5	0	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	12
Foster Care Unplugged Groups	15	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	5	7	1	2	0	0	0	15
Emergency Fund Provision	65	14	50	0	1	0	0	0	3	9	53	0	0	0	0	65
Totals:	760	73	372	12	7	258	38	12	121	135	256	236	0	110	16	634
Section Totals:	760				760					760					760	

* 9 additional youth notified to the Child Trafficking Mailbox were also screened through the CTDB. These youth were counted only as CTDB to avoid duplication.
** 9 additional youth identified by Children's Center Counselors were notified to the Child Trafficking Mailbox. These youth were counted only as Mailbox to avoid duplication.
***ACS' Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy (OCTPP) also assisted 133 previously identified youth and Safe Horizon Counselors assisted 7 previously identified youth.
**** Data for the Child Trafficking Database only includes screenings at the Federal Definition of Sex Trafficking level, which are automatically notified to OCTPP, not for High or Medium Risk levels.
ACS' OCTPP also received notification of, and assessed 198 additional youth who were determined to not be trafficked or at-risk, or not enough information was provided for a determination.
DYCD RHY Crisis Services and TILs serve youth ages 16-20, as well as young adults ages 21 to 24. Drop-in Centers serve young people ages 14-24.
DYCD RHY served 6 transgender (TG) youth (included within the other gender categories). Drop Ins served 3 TG youth, Crisis Shelters served 3 TG youth, TILs served 0 TG youth. See report for details.
OTDA collects data on confirmed victims of all ages, but only data from ages 0 to 23 was used as 23 is when all youth would have exited the child welfare system.
Preventive Advocate Cases: 50 youth screened as Medium Risk and 6 youth screened as High Risk. 1 youth identified at the Federal Level, so demographics provided for the 1.
Family Assessment Program Advocate Cases: 117 youth screened as Medium Risk and 61 youth screened as High Risk. 4 youth identified at the Federal Level, so demographics provided for the 4.
Hetrick Martin Institute provided groupwork, internships and individual services for LGBTQAI+ youth and young adults.
Foster Care Unplugged and OCTPP provided Mitigating Trauma Through Drama psychoeducational groups virtually for youth at one foster care agency.

C. SERVICE PROVISION FOR SEXUALLY EXPLOITED YOUTH

1. DYCD Contracted Programs and Services to Meet the Needs of Sexually Exploited Children

The central responsibility of DYCD is to administer City, state, and federal funds to community-based organizations that serve New York City's youth and families. DYCD funds a range of programs including immigration, afterschool, literacy, jobs and internships, parenting, and runaway and homeless youth programs and services.

DYCD's funded Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) services are designed to protect young people, and whenever possible, encourage family reunification. In cases where reunification is not possible, these programs help youth progress from crisis and transitional care to independent living arrangements. Youth who participate in DYCD-funded programs receive comprehensive services geared toward developing independent living skills, and strengthening their problem solving, decision making and communication abilities. This wide range of services includes food and clothing;

medical services; substance abuse education; housing assistance; educational services; counseling; independent living skills training; employment counseling and assistance; recreation; legal assistance; and transportation assistance.

Services are provided to at-risk youth through Crisis Services programs (serving youth ages 16-20, as well as young adults ages 21-24^{xiv}) which offer emergency, voluntary short-term residential programs. Youth in need of longer-term residential services may obtain a referral through the Crisis Services programs to DYCD-funded Transitional Independent Living (TIL) programs (serving youth ages 16-20, as well as young adults ages 21-24^{xv}) which assist youth in establishing independence through services such as educational and vocational programming, job placement, and counseling.

DYCD programs offer specialized services for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning (LGBTQ) youth, pregnant and parenting youth and young adults, and sexually exploited youth. Over the past few years, the City funded a significant expansion of residential programs, followed by an expansion of Drop-in Center services, and including additional resources for mental health services and LGBTQ supports. DYCD's aggregate data is provided in Appendix A.

- a. **Crisis Services Programs*** – DYCD contracts with providers to offer a total of 258 beds for youth 16 to 20 years old plus an additional 35 beds for young adults 21-24 years old for a total of 293 beds. Crisis Services programs offer emergency shelter for runaway and homeless youth age 16 - 20. These voluntary, short-term residential programs provide emergency shelter and crisis intervention services aimed at reuniting youth with their families. If family reunification is not possible, Crisis Services programs help arrange appropriate transitional and long-term placements
- b. **Drop-in Centers*** – DYCD also funds emergency intervention services at eight drop-in centers across the five boroughs. Three drop-in centers are located in Manhattan and one each in Brooklyn, Staten Island, and the Bronx and two in

Queens. Each borough has one 24/7 drop-in center. These programs serve youth ages 14 through 24^{xvi} with essentials such as food, clothing, and immediate shelter as well as access to counseling, support, and referrals to relevant services.

- c. **Street Outreach Program*** – DYCD also funds street outreach to reach at-risk youth where they are. Currently, the street outreach is conducted by the contracted provider, Safe Horizon’s Streetwork Project, with the use of vans. The Street Outreach’s vehicle-based outreach program focuses on locations where youth are known to congregate. By going directly to where at-risk youth are, such as subway stations and transportation hubs, the Street Outreach Program, with the assistance of street outreach workers, develops rapport with youth and provides contact by disseminating information about RHY services, providing food, clothing and other resources; making referrals to other service providers; and transporting youth back to their homes or relatives, to Crisis Services programs, or to other safe locations.

- d. **Transitional Independent Living (TIL) Programs*** – DYCD contracts with providers to offer a total of 495 Transitional Independent Living support beds for youth 16 - 20 years old plus an additional 25 beds for young adults 21 - 24 years old for a total of 520 beds. In addition to the services that are offered to all youth in the RHY continuum, those who are specifically identified as sexually exploited and in need of specialized services can be referred to Girls Educational and Mentoring Services’ (GEMS) Transitional Independent Living program, when appropriate. The GEMS TIL program specializes in services specifically for female identifying youth who have experienced sexual exploitation. All young people residing in any of the DYCD-funded programs will receive ongoing case management and counseling to address individualized needs, including exploitation. As each young person’s experience is different, the service providers make referrals, as appropriate, to outside services. Program staff take care to engage youth in services when the youth is ready to address this sensitive issue.

II. New York State Safe Harbour-Funded Programs to Meet the Needs of Sexually Exploited Children

In 2023, New York State's Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) provided \$88,900 in funding to the Administration for Children's Services, New York City (NYC), so that NYC could continue to develop and implement a child welfare response to sex trafficking. ACS also contributed additional funding and dedicated full-time resources.^{xvii} Following is a summary of Safe Harbour-funded programs:

A. ACS' Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy (OCTPP)

In 2015, ACS launched the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention & Policy (OCTPP), which works to raise awareness of trafficking and helps to identify and provide appropriate services available to help youth at-risk and victims of commercial sexual exploitation and their families^{xviii}.

OCTPP coordinates the application of ACS' *Identifying, Assessing, and Safety Planning with Child Sex and Labor Trafficking Victims* policy launched in 2020. This policy articulates guidelines and procedures for ACS and provider agency staff in identifying children and youth, who are in the care, custody, care and custody, maintenance, or supervision of the ACS, who are survivors of, or at risk of, sex and/or labor trafficking. Additionally, this policy mandates the use of the CTDB for sex trafficking screenings and contact with OCTPP for all cases that meet the Federal Definition level, with the option for contact with OCTPP for at-risk cases, and provides guidance and procedures for ACS and provider agency staff in working towards keeping trafficked children and youth or at-risk children and youth safe and supported through safety planning, coordinating with law enforcement, and making referrals for appropriate services.

Training on the policy and the use of the Child Trafficking Database as mandated by the policy for sex trafficking screenings is integral to staff ability to understand, screen and follow up with law enforcement referrals, access and provide resources and ensure other safety-focused aspects of practice. During 2023, OCTPP staff provided eleven (11) virtual 3-hour trainings on the policy and CTDB screening skills to 1,081 ACS and

provider agency staff. OCTPP also provided a workshop for the CTDB eLearning launch for 137 attendees, a CTDB training specifically for Preventive and Homemaking Directors (174 attendees) and a training on paper screening tools for 34 Family Assessment Program (FAP) advocate case staff for a total of 1,425 trained on the NYC screening process. Additionally, the one-hour animated CTDB eLearning launched on January 26, 2023. A total of 746 child welfare staff attended the eLearning between January 26 and December 31, 2023. The 3-hour Policy-CTDB Skills training will continue on a regular schedule throughout 2024. Additionally for 2024, OCTPP will partner with the Division of Family Permanency's Office of Shared Response for individual foster care agency CTDB trainings and with the Division Prevention Services' Office of Operations & Systems to provide individual prevention agency CTDB trainings.

OCTPP's training provision is not limited to policy awareness and CTDB skills. In 2023, the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy (OCTPP) worked diligently and continually to provide the highest quality of training, alone or in partnership with other trafficking related professionals, presenting and/or facilitating a total of forty-nine (49) trafficking related trainings which filled 7,212 training seats. This included the premier of a newly developed training created in partnership with the Hetrick Martin Institute: *Working with LGBTQ+ Youth Who Have Experienced or are At-Risk of Sex Trafficking*. A Train the Trainer session was provided in October for twenty-four (24) child welfare professionals. OCTPP, partnering with ACS' Office of LGBTQAI+ Equity Strategies, initiated the workshop during OCTPP's Fall Training Series in November. In 2023, training attendees included ACS, foster care, prevention and juvenile justice staff, plus other City agencies, State agencies, community and faith-based agencies, law enforcement, criminal justice, medical providers and anti-trafficking professionals and community members from across the United States and Canada. OCTPP provided a wide variety of unique, self-developed trainings, the expertise for which was also featured at professional conferences. Additionally, ACS' Division of Youth and Family Justice (DYFJ) Juvenile Justice trainers filled 196 training seats with newly hired Youth Development Specialists. Between OCTPP's attendees (7,212), Youth Development Specialists trained (196) and CTDB eLearning

attendance (746), ACS' 2023 trafficking awareness and skills training seats totaled 8,154.^{xix}

OCTPP also manages the NYC Safe Harbour Program, provides consultation on cases, produces trainings and events, analyzes data, provides a variety of trafficking prevention group work models (some self-designed), and maintains six e-mailboxes for communication with staff and external professionals on a variety of topics: Trafficked/At-Risk Children, CTDB Issues, Training Requests, Tattoo Removal Referrals, Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting Case Reporting and Credible Messenger Program requests. OCTPP has an additional e-mailbox which receives auto-generated notification from the CTDB anytime a child is screened at the Federal Definition of sex trafficking level. OCTPP team members use this email notification to promptly reach out to the screener to provide support.

In 2018, OCTPP developed “Movin’ On”: The NYC Child Tattoo Eradication Project and Network to assist trafficking victims and former gang members in positively moving forward with their lives through the provision of trauma informed tattoo removal and the provision of relevant support. In 2019, ACS developed youth focused palm cards advertising the tattoo removal service, translated them into twelve (12) languages, and posted a program descriptive video on YouTube.^{xx} During 2023, OCTPP received 10 tattoo removal inquiries and provided referrals for 7 of the inquiries. Additional information on “Movin’ On” is available in section IV (C).

In 2023, OCTPP continued its direct service groupwork initiative. OCTPP again partnered with Foster Care Unplugged to provide the 8-session “Mitigating Trauma Through Drama” psychodrama therapeutic/trafficking awareness groupwork model. Mitigating Trauma through Drama received approval of its renewed grant funding on February 2, 2023, and after completing the consultant vetting process subsequently served fifteen (15) youth in 2023.

In 2023, OCTPP continued its Credible Messenger Program which specifically addresses safety and behavioral aspects of youth in care, using the video produced in 2021

to develop recruitment awareness and support recognition. All of these projects will be described in detail in section in section IV: Community Support and Awareness Building.

B. Safe Horizon at the Nicholas Scoppetta Children’s Center

Safe Horizon, a leading service provider in the field of commercial sexual exploitation, provided expert service through the provision of Licensed Master Social Workers (LMSW) who worked as Commercially Sexually Exploited Child (CSEC) Consultants at the Nicholas Scoppetta Children’s Center. The social workers, who are employed through Safe Horizon’s Streetwork Project, screened and assessed youth for trafficking indicators, assisted staff in identifying exploited youth, engaged with and advocated for youth, and provided trafficking relevant service recommendations and referrals. In addition to their work with exploited children and other vulnerable populations, the consultants provided safe sex awareness groups and healthy relationships workshops for all youth and technical support for staff. Safe Horizon’s contract expired on June 30, 2023. During 2023, the social workers served 37 new youth referred as, self-reported as, or determined to be sexually exploited or at risk for exploitation. They also served an additional 7 youth who had been previously referred to them and 9 new youth whose information was forwarded to the Child Trafficking Mailbox and therefore aggregated within that data set, for a total of 53 assessments during 2023.

C. The Children’s Village’s Empower House at the Nicholas Scoppetta Children’s Center

The Children’s Village, also a leading service provider in the field of commercial sexual exploitation, was awarded the Children’s Center contract as of July 1, 2023 with the intention to provide expert service through the provision of Licensed Master Social Workers (LMSW) working as Commercially Sexually Exploited Child (CSEC) Consultants at the Nicholas Scoppetta Children’s Center. The Project Supervisor began immediately after contract implementation, working with the Empower House Director, with additional launch support provided by OCTPP. The social workers, who are employed through The Children’s Village’s Empower Program, were hired in November 2023 and January 2024, screen and assess youth for trafficking indicators,

assist staff in identifying exploited youth, engage with and advocate for youth, and provide trafficking relevant service recommendations and referrals. In addition to their work with exploited children and other vulnerable populations, the consultants provided trafficking awareness groups and healthy relationships workshops for all youth and technical/training support for staff. During 2023, the social workers served 17 new youth referred as, self-reported as, or determined to be sexually exploited or at risk for exploitation.

D. Hetrick Martin Institute’s Tau Gamma Internships, Trans Treats Groups and Individual Level Services

“Common Voices: Together on Shared Ground Surviving the Elements” is the Hetrick Martin Institute’s (HMI) support group for trafficked and at-risk youth and youth with histories of trafficking. The group was developed at HMI in 2014 by a group of transgender women from HMI’s Counseling and Outreach Teams, and in partnership with a group of peer youth leaders, with support from Safe Harbor funding provided to HMI through the NYC Administration for Children’s Services’ Safe Harbour Program.

In the fall of 2023, rather than run a single cycle of Common Voice groups, HMI ran two concurrent groups for transgender and gender non-binary youth, and integrated Common Voices curriculum and discussions into those two groups with an aim to engage trafficked and at-risk youth, which in HMI’s experience are “typically transgender women of color. The “Trans Treats” group provided weekly psychoeducational support group for forty (40) Transgender and Gender Non-Binary youth. Led by a transgender member of HMI’s counseling team and co-facilitated by a graduate student intern from a school of social work, a total of 40 unduplicated youth attended the group, all self-identifying as transgender or gender non-conforming (or Gender Non-Binary). Two youth identified as trafficked, but most of the youth are vulnerable to trafficking due to housing instability and transgender identity.

Twelve (12) additional youth attended the Tau Gamma internship, which focused on job readiness and career exploration, meeting multiple afternoons per week

with the Coordinator of Job Readiness Programs and with a Counselor for additional support. As part of the internship, the participants complete a job experience activity with one of HMI's corporate or foundation partner organizations. Group participants also attend a group "field trip" day to go shopping for interview clothing. Staff bring youth to HMI's clothing pantry to select interview clothing, and then take them shopping at a store to round out their interview wardrobe. Participants engage in interview practice sessions and refined their resumes and LinkedIn profiles.

In addition to youth served in groups, HMI provided services to 12 youth who self-identified as having a history of trafficking. During the funded period, these youth members received Individual Level Services at HMI including hot meals, visits to the Pantry (clothing, showers, laundry, food, gender-affirming items), and referrals, as well as:

- Counseling & Case Management Services: 76 sessions
- High School Equivalency Outreach/Engagement: 10 services
- Job Readiness/Employment Assistance: 12 sessions
- Health Services Navigation: 84 Interactions
- College Prep/Academic Case Management: 1 session

E. Foster Care Unplugged

Foster Care Unplugged (FCUP), a 501(c)(3) is an agency founded in 2016 by Melody Centeno, LMSW, to focus on enriching the lives of youth in foster care and youth at risk of being placed in the child welfare system by promoting positive spiritual, emotional and physical outcomes for disadvantaged individuals. The organization's mission is to identify foster care youth, meet them where they are in their life journey, and help develop their emotional-social skills as they build resiliency into adulthood. In 2023, FCUP continued its partnership with the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy and New Yorkers for Children for the Mitigating Trauma through Drama groupwork model through its third year of funding from the New York Community Trust and the 2023 NYC Safe Harbour grant. Ms. Centeno and OCTPP Executive Director (ED) Selina

Higgins, who together co-wrote the curriculum, completed the original six grant-funded cohorts in 2021-2022. Mitigating Trauma through Drama received approval of its renewed grant funding and completed the initial group with youth residing at a group home in the Fall of 2023. The timing was chosen to ensure optimal participation and engagement from the fifteen (15) youth involved in the program. All sessions were provided virtually to accommodate the agency.

F. Provision of Emergency Funds

Many older youth, who are no longer in foster care, have ongoing concrete needs, including diapers and formula for their infants or job interview preparation. Other youth have in-the-moment needs. Some youth are active with ACS through the Supervision to 21 Program which provides support and resources to youth who have left foster care. Other youth (both in and after discharge from care) participate in a variety of supportive programs, to include the Youth Leadership Council, the College Internship Program and Foster America that provide incentives in recognition to the youth's time and efforts with these projects.

OCTPP assisted youth with their needs and acknowledged their participation through provision of emergency funds with multiple \$25 Visa gift cards purchased with Safe Harbour funding based upon specific documented need (formula, diapers, interview outfit). ACS is required to support youth no longer in foster care up to the age of 21. Most of the youth who received emergency funds fell into this category, others might be part of the Youth Leadership Council or another youth supportive event who need additional support. Some youth received additional gift cards at multiple events or due to reoccurring needs.

Additionally, OCTPP provided one \$25 gift card for an in-the-moment need, to include lunch and/or grooming items to tide a youth over until their next stipend. The gift cards are provided as "compensation" for completing a trafficking awareness survey ("Sex and Labor Trafficking: It Can Happen to Anyone!"), which also contains NYC Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) Drop In Center information and the National Human Trafficking Hotline number. Youth who select responses that are indicative of trafficking received follow up contact. Any youth who did not want to complete the survey but had a need received the gift card without survey completion. In 2023, OCTPP provided emergency funds to a total of sixty-five (65) non duplicated youth.

III. ACS Contracted Placement Programs and Preventive Advocate Screenings to Meet the Needs of Sexually Exploited Children

In addition to services funded by the NYS Safe Harbour grant, ACS also contracts for specialized placement programs as part of its continuum of services for at-risk youth and victims of sexual exploitation. OCTPP works with contracted prevention programs concerning Advocates Preventive-Only (ADVPO) Cases to provide requested referrals without violating the confidentiality of the Advocate's Agreement.

A. Preventive and Family Assessment Program Advocate Cases:

The ACS Division of Prevention Services obtained redacted sex trafficking screening data for Advocates Preventive-Only (ADVPO) Cases from its contracted preventive agencies. Similarly, ACS' Family Assessment Program (FAP), a Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS) diversion program obtained redacted Advocate data from its contracted service providers.

Advocate cases provide voluntarily requested prevention services (ADVPO) or PINS diversion services (FAP) for cases not involving a child in foster care or being referred to foster care, and not under investigation or having an open indicated child protective services report. ACS' contracted prevention and PINS diversion agencies do not transmit a breakdown of data on these confidential cases beyond a total number of children and their screened risk levels. Children screened at the Federal Definition of Trafficking level are identified to OCTPP, but only by age, gender and borough. Advocate case sex trafficking screenings are not captured within the CTDB but are completed with paper templates. 2023 data provided by the Advocate agencies identified:

- Preventive ADVPO Screenings:
 - 6,895 total Rapid Indicator screenings, of which 57 youth screened as at-risk and thereby received further screening with the Comprehensive tool:
 - 6 youth screened at High-Risk for trafficking

- 50 youth screened at Medium-Risk for trafficking
 - 1 youth screened at the Federal level
- Family Assessment Program Advocate Screenings:
 - 2,916 total Rapid Indicator screenings, of which 182 youth screened as at-risk and thereby received further screening with the Comprehensive tool:
 - 117 youth screened as Medium-Risk for trafficking
 - 61 youth screened as High Risk for trafficking
 - 4 youth screened at the Federal level

Note: these are cases where parents pro-actively reached out to seek services to strengthen their family prior to full crisis escalation, which may account for a higher percentage of youth being assessed as at-risk for trafficking rather than meeting the Federal Definition level.

B. Placement:

1. The Jewish Child Care Association’s Gateways Program:

The Jewish Child Care Association (JCCA) is an ACS contractor that provides foster home, residential, community, mental health and prevention services. Between 2011 and June 20, 2023, ACS contracted with JCCA for services provided at the Gateways Program, an intensive, specialized residential program for female trafficking victims ages 12 to 16. In 2023, Gateways served a total of 20 girls, using the Sanctuary trauma-informed care model, as well as a four-phase system of treatment that involves assessment, individual and family therapy, and peer counseling. Gateways maintained 12 child welfare beds specifically for sexually exploited girls who have indicated that they are willing to leave “the life.”

2. The Children’s Village Empower House

The Children’s Village is an ACS contractor that provides foster home, residential, community, mental health and prevention services. The Childrens Village has two (2) Empower House Agency Operated Boarding Home (AOBH) Programs:

- Empower House Westchester: A five (5) bed facility that serves ACS youth, as well as youth from Westchester, Suffolk, Rockland, and other referring municipalities. Since 2022, ACS has placed children at Empower House Westchester as a non-contracted facility.
- Empower House NYC: As of July 1, 2023, The Children’s Village’s six (6) bed Empower House is the contracted ACS residential provider for trafficked youth. It will open in early 2024 in Flushing, Queens.

Empower House serves all genders and sexual orientations. Although they predominately have served females, they also have bed availability for males, gender non-conforming, and transgender youth. All Empower Programs are required to serve youth without discrimination. Empower House provides an intensely clinical, safety oriented program, often utilizing Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) for youth to develop an understanding and acceptance of difficult feelings resulting from trauma experienced, along with coping skills. They also use Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT). In 2023, Empower House Westchester served a total of four (4) girls, with two (2) referred during 2023 and two (2) continuing services from 2022.

IV. Community Support and Awareness Building

A. Virtual Conferences, Virtual Human Trafficking Prevention Resource Fair and Trafficked Youth Web Pages with Downloadable Resources

In recognition of January as National Human Trafficking Prevention Month, OCTPP traditionally held a Human Trafficking Awareness Exposition on “Human

Trafficking Awareness Day.” Due to continued COVID related safety concerns in January 2023 and to the remarkable ability to reach professionals and community members across and beyond the United States, OCTPP again produced a large-scale virtual conference facilitated by national and local experts - *The 2023 NYC Child Trafficking Prevention Conference: Survivor Voices, Technological Revelations and Trauma-Informed Guidance: 13 Virtual, Participatory Workshops*, which provided awareness and skills focused workshops on a variety of trafficking related topics. The conference filled over 3,700 training seats, whose workshops were attended by child welfare professionals, community members, other City agencies, parents, foster parents, and external attendees from across the nation and Canada. OCTPP produced an additional two virtual conferences in 2023: *The April is Child Abuse Prevention Month Spring Training Series* (six workshops which filled over 1,100 training seats) and the *Back to School Fall Training Series* (four workshops which filled over 900 seats).

OCTPP’s ED also worked with ACS’ Webmaster to update the five Trafficked Youth awareness and prevention webpages to provide information and downloadable resources. An additional webpage which provides access to the annual Local Law 41 Reports (2023 onward) was also developed. ACS’ Marketing Department worked with OCTPP to develop six new “Children are NOT for \$ale” awareness campaign posters, and a new matching look for the “Understanding Child Trafficking and What YOU Can Do” brochure. The posters and brochure, similar to the tattoo removal palm cards, are all available in twelve (12) languages.

ACS Preventing Youth Trafficking webpages with downloadable resources:

- Preventing Youth Trafficking Main Page – includes OCTPP’s training schedule: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/youth/traffickedyouth.page>
- Resources for Professionals Page – training and other resource downloads: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/about/child-trafficking/resources.page>
- What to Do and Who To Contact When Identifying a Trafficked Youth: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/youth/identify.page>

- NYC ACS – Human Trafficking Virtual Resource Fair – provider information and links: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/youth/virtualresourcefair.page>
- Data & Reports: <https://www.nyc.gov/site/acs/about/child-trafficking/data.page>

B. Continuation of the NYC Trafficking Prevention App to provide the electronic version of “Child Trafficking and What YOU Can Do About It: A Guide for NYC Child Welfare Professionals” and other resources.

In 2019, ACS released a 40 page, spiral bound. Pocket sized “toolkit” entitled: “Child Trafficking and What YOU Can Do About It: Tools for NYC Child Welfare Professionals.” Five thousand (5,000) copies were printed and distributed to ACS and contract agency staff and to other trafficking related professionals to assist in improved identification of trafficking indicators and dynamics, skills enhancement, resource identification and service provision to trafficked and at-risk children. In 2020, OCTPP updated the toolkit to include information about the new policy and additional guidance and resources, with printing of 5,000 additional copies through Safe Harbour grant funding. In 2021, development began on a free, downloadable app to provide an electronic version of Child Trafficking and What YOU Can Do About It: A Toolkit for NYC Child Welfare Professionals.

The NYC Trafficking Prevention app, originally launched in January 2022, continued availability through 2023. The app features ACS’ awareness materials (brochures, training handouts, posters, tattoo removal palm cards), tattoo removal and other videos, ACS’ trafficking policy and other relevant materials. The app is available for free from the Google and Apple Play Stores and download is encouraged at all OCTPP trainings.

C. Continuation of Tattoo Removals Referrals Through “Movin’ On”: The NYC Child Tattoo Eradication Network and Project

Exploiter brandings such as tattoos inhibit emotional healing, affect physical safety and employment opportunities, and impede the ability to “move on” with life. For this reason, in 2018, the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy developed a network of doctors and tattoo artists to help youth remove or alter exploiter tattoos, along with a trauma-informed counseling component to provide the support needed for life changing decisions by trafficked and gang-involved youth. During 2023, OCTPP received nine (9) initial tattoo removal requests and one (1) reporting assistance request:

- 7 returned the waiver and received referral information
- 1 inquiry did not follow up with requested information after initial contact
- 1 youth did not want their tattoos removed
- 1 inquiry involved reporting a tattoo artist in another county who tattoos underage children without consent forms

D. Continuation of Trafficking Prevention Group Work for Youth

In 2018, OCTPP initiated direct service provision to trafficked and at-risk youth through facilitation of a variety of trafficking awareness and empowerment groupwork models. In 2019, OCTPP expanded its groupwork initiative, providing direct trafficking awareness groups to vulnerable youth at the Nicholas Scoppetta Children’s Center and at Residential facilities. In 2020 and 2021, OCTPP continued its expansion, through the development of new groupwork models and a Credible Messenger Program to specifically address safety and behavioral aspects of youth in care, including increased virtual exposure to predators due to COVID-19 isolation. In 2023, OCTPP and Foster Care Unplugged continued co-facilitating their original model: *“Mitigating Trauma Through Drama: Developing Positive Pathways for Lives Through Expressive Arts”* for trafficked and at-risk youth in foster care placements.

Mitigating Trauma through Drama: Developing Positive

Pathways for Lives Through Expressive Arts is an eight-session psychodrama and anti-trafficking model for 8 to 10 youth created by OCTPP Executive Director Selina Higgins and Melody Centeno, Founder and CEO of Foster Care Unplugged. This model, funded for its third year by the New York Community Trust and the 2023 NYC Safe Harbour grant, utilizes psychodrama, a performance-based approach, to provide a trauma-informed mechanism to identify and express feelings and learn positive strategies to heal from past experiences. Each session provides trafficking awareness and guides youth in applying the psychodrama exercises to trafficking related or voluntarily selected scenarios to provide opportunity for expression and/or disclosure and safety planning in a safe milieu. Two-hour virtual sessions were held weekly, co-facilitated by Ms. Centeno and Ms. Higgins. Monetary and food gift cards are provided to all group members as reinforcement for attendance and participation.

F. “Here for You” The Trafficked Youth Credible Messenger Program:

Credible Messengers are individuals who are able to connect with and motivate youth to successfully challenge and transform destructive thinking, attitudes and actions. As the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy focuses upon helping prevent sexual and labor exploitation of youth under age 18, or over age 18 while in foster care, an adult, former foster youth/trafficking survivor Credible Messenger who shares their story with youth reluctant to leave the life or a risky environment and benefit from a stable, supportive trafficking interventive placement can be highly influential. “Here for You” was developed to provide trafficked youth within the NYC child welfare system with trauma-informed support by adult survivor leaders with prior child welfare history. Empathetic engagement by one who has faced and overcome similar challenges to live a healthy and safe life will help youth recognize that no matter what situation they are currently involved in, there is hope and many other possibilities available if they are willing to try. In March 2023, OCTPP received notification of a new agency policy: Guidelines for Working with Outside

Researchers and Consultants (February 27, 2023), which involved a new consultant vetting process. One of the two messengers received approval on July 1, with ID card pick up by August 31. The other Messenger withdrew their application due to the timeliness and intricacy of the vetting process. As a result, other than a non-contact presentation at a Youth Health Fair, mentorship availability began in the Fall, at which time OCTPP also began outreach for an additional mentor. OCTPP has continued to showcase the Credible Messenger video featuring current and former Messengers and their stories to help youth recognize that others have had the same difficult experiences and to model that it is okay to reach out for help. The Credible Messenger Program and its video was successfully presented as a panel presentation at the 2023 NYC Child Trafficking Prevention Conference, and also shown at the end of the Mitigating Trauma through Drama model for youth in placement.

Conclusion

Over the past ten years, through the Safe Harbour affiliation, ACS and DYCD have worked together to systemically recognize and address the needs of sexually exploited young people. The Safe Harbour Act with state and local agency resources have allowed us to strengthen our work in this area by enhancing existing services and developing increased specialized services for this population, training staff, and evaluating mechanisms to improve our efforts to identify and document sexually exploited youth.

For eleven years (2013 to 2023), NYC has been the recipient of Safe Harbour grant funding from NYS OCFS as follows:

Year	Funding
2013	\$622,220
2014	\$550,000
2015	\$550,000
2016	\$448,000
2017	\$374,000
2018	\$88,900
2019	\$88,900
2020	\$88,900
2021	\$66,000
2022	\$88,900
2023	\$88,900

The original 5-year Safe Harbour grant funding to New York City was drastically reduced by the State to a baseline amount in 2018, and further reduced in 2021, although it increased back to the mean baseline in 2022. ACS has asked the State to continue and

hopefully increase this critical funding as this reduction places key services and interventions at risk.

We acknowledge the COVID-19 crisis which originated in 2020 and the impact it may still have had on our youth, staff, and communities during 2023. ACS' OCTPP has been fully operational and available for response to all inquiries, and for the provision of guidance, technical assistance, groupwork provision, resource referrals and tattoo removal requests seamlessly throughout the year. Case consultation is available through a variety of virtual platforms and by telephone, and multi-disciplinary consultations are often provided. Trainings remained virtual in 2023 due to the ability to reach a larger number of participants across an extended number of locations. DYCD Residential programs remained open to serve youth in need, while making adjustments to ensure space for social distancing and isolation as needed. Drop-in Centers continued to offer in person services, including: referrals to housing and health care; providing on-line supports such as counseling and support for coping during the pandemic, clinical support for anxiety or depression; as well as recreational activities to maintain social connections during this time.

ACS, DYCD, and our partner agencies remain committed to helping ensure youth are as safe and stable as possible as the unprecedented challenges related to the crisis have continued to unfold. We greatly appreciate the Council's attention to this vulnerable population of children and look forward to discussing how the Council can provide additional support for ongoing work to help the trafficked and sexually exploited children of NYC.

Appendix A: NYC DYCD 2023 Safe Harbour Data

DYCD 2023 Safe Harbor Data for New York City: Exploited Children and Children At-Risk of Exploitation																		
DYCD Program	Total Youth	Cis M	Cis F	Trans F	Trans M	No G Discd	GNC	<12	12 to 15	16-18	>18	Age unk	ACS only	DYCD only	ACS+DYCD	Unk	MH Referrals	MH Counseling
DYCD Drop Ins	38	3	22	0	0	9	4	0	0	1	37	0	0	31	7	0	19	8
DYCD Crisis	65	23	35	0	0	7	0	0	0	5	60	0	0	61	4	0	38	38
DYCD TILS	23	0	16	0	0	7	0	0	0	1	22	0	0	18	5	0	21	17
Total	126	26	73	0	0	23	4	0	0	7	119	0	0	110	16	0	78	63

In 2023, DYCD Served 126 Exploited and/or At-Risk for Exploitation Youth Through Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Programs:

- 65 youth received Crisis Services Programs.
- 23 youth received services from Transitional Independent Living Programs (TILS).
- 38 youth received services at Drop-in Centers.
- 16 youth served by DYCD-funded providers disclosed that they also receive some form of service from ACS.
- Gender: 26 males; 73 females; 4 Gender Non-Conforming (GNC) youth and 23 youth who did not disclose their gender. Within those gender categories, 6 transgender youth were served: Drop-in Centers served 3 transgender youth, Crisis Services assisted 3 transgender youth, and TILS served 0 transgender youth.
- Ages: 0 children between ages 12 and 15; 7 children between ages 16 and 18; 119 youth over age 18.
- 78 youth received Mental Health referrals.
- 63 youth received Mental Health counseling.

Appendix B: All NYC 2023 Safe Harbour Provider Data

NYC Administration for Children's Services																	
2023 NYC Safe Harbour Data: Newly Identified Exploited Children and Children At-Risk of Exploitation																	
as reported by ACS, DYCD and Safe Harbour Providers																	
Safe Harbour Provider	Total Youth	Cis M	Cis F	Trans F	Trans M	No G Discl	GNC	<12	12-15	16-18	>18	Age unk	ACS only	DYCD only	ACS+DYCD	Unk	
Child Trafficking Mailbox* ***	124	17	104	3	0	0	0	6	55	53	10	0	0	0	0	124	
Child Trafficking Database****	16	2	13	1	0	0	0	2	8	5	1	0	0	0	0	16	
Safe Horizon at Children's Center ** ***	37	2	35	0	0	0	0	1	20	16	0	0	0	0	0	37	
Children's Village at Children's Center	17	1	16	0	0	0	0	3	7	6	1	0	0	0	0	17	
DYCD RHY Programs	126	26	73	0	0	23	4	0	0	7	119	0	0	110	16	0	
OTDA Confirmations (0 - 23)	33	2	31	0	0	0	0	0	10	10	13	0	0	0	0	33	
JCCA Gateways (Placement)	20	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	7	12	1	0	0	0	0	20	
CV Empower House (Placement)	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	
Preventive Advocate Cases	57	0	1	0	0	56	0	0	0	1	0	56	0	0	0	57	
Family Assessment Program (Advocate)	182	1	3	0	0	178	0	0	2	2	0	178	0	0	0	182	
Hetrick Martin Institute Internships	12	1	3	1	0	0	7	0	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	12	
Hetrick Martin Institute Groups	40	5	3	3	6	1	22	0	0	7	33	0	0	0	0	40	
Hetrick Martin Institute Individual	12	2	1	4	0	0	5	0	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	12	
Foster Care Unplugged Groups	15	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	5	7	1	2	0	0	0	15	
Emergency Fund Provision	65	14	50	0	1	0	0	0	3	9	53	0	0	0	0	65	
Totals:	760	73	372	12	7	258	38	12	121	135	256	236	0	110	16	634	
Section Totals:	760	760						760					760				
<p>* 9 additional youth notified to the Child Trafficking Mailbox were also screened through the CTDB. These youth were counted only as CTDB to avoid duplication.</p> <p>** 9 additional youth identified by Children's Center Counselors were notified to the Child Trafficking Mailbox. These youth were counted only as Mailbox to avoid duplication.</p> <p>***ACS' Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy (OCTPP) also assisted 133 previously identified youth and Safe Horizon Counselors assisted 7 previously identified youth.</p> <p>**** Data for the Child Trafficking Database only includes screenings at the Federal Definition of Sex Trafficking level, which are automatically notified to OCTPP, not for High or Medium Risk levels.</p> <p>ACS' OCTPP also received notification of, and assessed 198 additional youth who were determined to not be trafficked or at-risk, or not enough information was provided for a determination.</p> <p>DYCD RHY Crisis Services and TILs serve youth ages 16-20, as well as young adults ages 21 to 24. Drop-in Centers serve young people ages 14-24.</p> <p>DYCD RHY served 6 transgender (TG) youth (included within the other gender categories). Drop Ins served 3 TG youth, Crisis Shelters served 3 TG youth, TILs served 0 TG youth. See report for details.</p> <p>OTDA collects data on confirmed victims of all ages, but only data from ages 0 to 23 was used as 23 is when all youth would have exited the child welfare system.</p> <p>Preventive Advocate Cases: 50 youth screened as Medium Risk and 6 youth screened as High Risk. 1 youth identified at the Federal Level, so demographics provided for the 1.</p> <p>Family Assessment Program Advocate Cases: 117 youth screened as Medium Risk and 61 youth screened as High Risk. 4 youth identified at the Federal Level, so demographics provided for the 4.</p> <p>Hetrick Martin Institute provided groupwork, internships and individual services for LGBTQAI+ youth and young adults.</p> <p>Foster Care Unplugged and OCTPP provided Mitigating Trauma Through Drama psychoeducational groups virtually for youth at one foster care agency.</p>																	

Appendix C:

NYC Administration for Children's Services' Child Trafficking Database (CTDB)

Administered by ACS' Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy (OCTPP), and platformed in Microsoft Dynamics, the Child Trafficking Database (CTDB) allows assigned staff to electronically complete the mandated OCFS sex trafficking screening tools, thereby alleviating the use of paper tools. As per ACS' 2020 policy, all children under investigation, in the care of ACS contracted foster care agencies, and receiving services from preventive service agencies and juvenile detention providers are required to be screened using the CTDB. The only exception to use of the CTDB for sex trafficking screening is for Advocates Prevention Only (ADVPO) cases and Family Assessment Program (FAP) cases, which require the use of paper screening tools to maintain the confidentiality required by the Advocate's Agreement.

The CTDB allows staff to view child trafficking screening histories of children on their caseload, input screenings and view caseload demographics relevant to screenings assigned, enter service referrals and generate two types of reports (Child Screening History Report and Area Compliance Report). The CTDB permits every screening to be recorded and saved in the system for future access by a worker assigned to a child (and only when a worker is assigned to a child), and for administrative research and reporting needs, as required by Federal and State legislation.

The development of the CTDB had been divided into two phases - Phase 1: Child Trafficking Screening Tool and Phase 2: Demographic and Service Data and Reports. In 2023, OCTPP and ACS' Office of Information Technology (OIT) began planning for CTDB Phase III. Phase III will consist of upgrades to Phase II implementations and the development of additional report capability. Phase III is expected to launch in early to mid-2024.

OCTPP conducts 3-hour monthly trainings on how to use the CTDB, including an overview of the policy, a walk-through of the CTDB screening process and a live, virtual demonstration of all screening functions. On January 26, 2023, through collaboration with OCTPP, ACS' Workforce Institute (WFI) launched a 1-hour animated CTDB eLearning, which is continually available to all ACS and provider agency staff. In 2023, 746 child welfare staff completed the eLearning.

END NOTES

ⁱ Mt. Sinai-St. Luke's New Beginnings Preventive Program's intake closed on December 3, 2019 as the program ramped down and the program closed on March 31, 2020, with the last case closed on 4/6/20. In the newly awarded prevention services continuum, ACS did not fund programs that exclusively serve sexually exploited youth. Instead, ACS has ensured a range of therapeutic models are available in every borough and neighborhood across New York City, including those that are equipped to serve sexually exploited youth. All prevention services programs are required to screen all children for history or risk of trafficking in persons. Therefore, there is no data for a program that only serves sexually abused/sexually trafficked youth.

ⁱⁱ OCTPP receives redacted sex trafficking screening data for Advocate (ADVPO) cases, which totaled 234 children determined to be at-risk of exploitation and 4 children at the Federal Definition level during Calendar Year 2023. Preventive Services Advocate cases identified 56 children at-risk for exploitation and 1 child at the Federal Definition level, and Family Assessment Program Advocate cases identified 178 children to be at-risk of sexual exploitation and 4 children at the Federal Definition level. For children deemed at-risk for trafficking, ACS' contracted Preventive and Family Assessment Program agencies do not transmit a breakdown of data on ADVPO cases beyond a total number of children and their risk levels. For children determined to be exploited, only age, gender and borough are provided.

ⁱⁱⁱ As documented in 17-OCFS-INF-03: New York State Processes Related to Notifications of Victims of Human Trafficking (March 17, 2017), the NYS Anti-Trafficking Law (2007) requires the New York State (NYS) Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) and the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) to accept referrals of potential victims from local law enforcement agencies or local district attorneys' offices. In 2015, the ability to refer potential victims of human trafficking expanded to include established legal and social services provider. OTDA and DCJS are charged with confirming or denying referrals of victims made to their agencies to allow access to services. Additionally, OTDA manages the New York State Response to Human Trafficking Program (RHTP). DCJS, in consultation with OTDA, must determine whether to confirm the referred person as a human trafficking victim (HTV) under statutory and regulatory guidelines. Once confirmed, victims are directed to either the LDSS or the RHTP service provider network. OTDA confirmation is confidential, and OTDA will only provide the number of confirmed victims, their age and gender. Some of the victims may be duplicative of reporting by other providers, but this is impossible to actually ascertain due to the confidentiality requirement. While OTDA collects data for victims of all ages, only data from ages 0 through 23 was utilized, as age 23 is when all youth are required to exit the child welfare system and receive adult services.

^{iv} Many of the youth worked with by the CSEC Counselors at the ACS Children's Center received multiple and/or extended sessions. Some youth received individual sessions, and also participated in groups. Some youth had been previously referred and met again with the counselors upon return to the Children's Center. Some youth at the Children's Center who screened at the Federal Definition of sex trafficking level were referred to the Child Trafficking Mailbox (but only counted as Mailbox to avoid duplication).

^v 124 newly identified sexually exploited youth, or youth at-risk for exploitation were brought to the attention of ACS' Child Trafficking Mailbox. However, the Child Trafficking Mailbox also received notification of 133 additional youth who had been previously identified as exploited or at-risk for exploitation prior to 2023. The total number of youth addressed through the Child Trafficking Mailbox is documented in Section B: Data Capture Methodology.

^{vi} Fifty-six (56) age non-disclosures were from the Advocate Prevention Only (ADVPO) screenings, which only provide age if the child meets the Federal Definition level, but not for the at-risk level. Additionally, 178 age non-disclosures were from the Family Assessment Program (FAP) screenings, which only provide age if the child meets the Federal Definition level, but not for the at-risk level. Due to the confidentiality of the Advocate's Agreement, ADVPO and FAP cases do not provide any identifying information unless the youth is identified as trafficked and then only age, gender and borough.

vii In 2023, ACS continued its partnership with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), which notifies the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy when NYC youth (both in care and not in care) are identified by sharing relevant intelligence through the Child Trafficking Mailbox. This information sharing has provided an additional opportunity to offer services to trafficked youth both affiliated and not affiliated with the child welfare system. ACS and NCMEC attendees participate in a virtual quarterly meeting to discuss cases, policies, procedures and provided cross trainings.

viii The Child Trafficking Mailbox provides access to and/or auto forwards emails to:

- Selina Higgins, LCSW-R, Executive Director, OCTPP
- Shereene McDermott-Green, LMSW. Supervisor II, OCTPP
- Clifton Robertson, LMSW, Residential Social Worker, OCTPP
- Carmen Sanchez, LCSW, Social Worker, OCTPP
- Veronica Moreno, LMSW, Social Worker, OCTPP
- Monique Townsend, MSW, Supervisor I, OCTPP
- Shyla Eubanks, MSW Intern, OCTPP
- Sabine Chery, LMSW, Associate Commissioner, Office of Older Youth Services
- James Fey, Senior Advisor for Investigations to the Commissioner
- James Ciccotelli, Operations Manager, ACS Investigative Consultation Program
- James Maloy. Supervisor, ACS AWOC Recovery Team
- Peter Alexander, ACS Criminal Justice Coordinator

ix The CTDB only automatically notifies OCTPP for Federal level screenings. Many more youth are screened within the CTDB at the High Risk and Medium Risk levels, but guidance for work and services for the at-risk level youth are elucidated in 16-OCFS-ADM 15 and ACS' trafficking policy. These youth are not captured on the 2023 data table due to the enormity of resources that would be needed to extract the data from thousands of screenings. OCTPP and ACS' IT Department have been strategizing on how this can occur.

x The overall number of youth identified as "trafficked or at-risk for trafficking" decreased slightly by eight (8) youth between 2022 (703 youth identified) and 2023 (695 youth identified). However, 2023 demonstrated an increase in the number of Federal level youth identified to the ACS Child Trafficking Mailbox and CTDB (42 of 140 youth). The increased number of Federal level youth identified in 2023 may serve to illustrate the greater awareness of trafficking indicator recognition by ACS and provider agency staff. The greater awareness of trafficking indicators may be due to an increase in training attendance, with 7,212 training seats filled during OCTPP's 49 trainings in 2023 compared to 3,928 seats filled during the 49 trainings provided in 2022.

xi Identifying Assessing and Safety Planning with Child Sex and Labor Trafficking Victims. ACS Policy and Procedure 2020/05 released September 18, 2020.

xii The number of emails sent to the Child Trafficking Mailbox does not include additional trafficked or at-risk youth emails sent directly to the Executive Director of OCTPP or to other OCTPP team members (not copied to the Mailbox), nor does it include the emails sent to the CTDB Mailbox, the Training Mailbox, the Tattoo Removal Mailbox, the FGM/C Mailbox or the Credible Messenger Program Mailbox.

xiii Trauma bonding occurs due to an ongoing cycle of abuse during which intermittent punishment and reward develop a powerful emotional bond which is highly resistant to change. The lessons and punishments become more severe over time, and the victim's compliance increases to maintain the affection of the abuser.

xiv DYCD Crisis Services provide services to youth ages 16 – 20, as well as young adults ages 21-24.

xv DYCD Transitional Independent Living (TIL) programs provide services to youth ages 16 – 20, as well as young adults ages 21-24.

^{xvi} DYCD Drop-in Centers serve young people ages 14 to 24.

^{xvii} In 2023, ACS expanded the staff of its Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy (OCTPP) and plans to continue expansion to increase its ability to reach young people who are at-risk or victims of sexual exploitation.

^{xviii} In December 2017, ACS moved OCTPP from the ACS Investigations Unit to the Division of Family Permanency Services' Office of Older Youth Services (OYS), to enhance linkage and communication with the foster care agencies, who often help identify trafficked youth via screening and casework. One example of the benefits of the move of OCTPP to OYS is that OCTPP is now leveraging resources by working closely and in coordination with other OYS programs that work with children and staff in residential foster care programs: the Residential Care Permanency Planning Unit (RCPPU), and the Missing Children's Outreach Unit (MCOU). OCTPP and RCPPU continue to work together to increase outreach and communication with trafficked youth and their case planners in residential programs and to provide trainings to planners on how to use the Child Trafficking Database to screen youth. The Missing Children's Outreach Unit (MCOU) works with foster care agencies to help locate youth who leave their placements without consent ("AWOC") towards mitigating the risks of trafficking. OCTPP also works with the ACS Investigative Consultation (IC) Program (comprised of former law enforcement personnel) and its AWOC Recovery Team who locate, engage with, and return these vulnerable youth.

^{xix} In 2022, the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy (OCTPP) worked diligently and continually to provide the highest quality of training, alone or in partnership with other trafficking related professionals, filling and/or facilitating a total of 3,928 trafficking awareness and skills related training seats, targeting a wide audience that included ACS, foster care, prevention and juvenile justice staff, plus other City agencies, State agencies and community and faith-based agencies. To maximize safety for large training audiences, OCTPP continued virtual training in 2023, utilizing a variety of platforms to reach widely across NYC and beyond, with attendees from many states and Canada.

Of the total 7,212 training seats OCTPP provided in 2023:

- 3,782 seats were filled through during the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy's 2023 NYC Child Trafficking Prevention Conference (virtual)
- 1,134 seats were filled during OCTPP's Child Trafficking Prevention Spring Training Series (virtual)
- 946 seats were filled during OCTPP's Child Trafficking Prevention Fall Training Series (virtual)
- 1,350 training seats were filled through additional trainings provided by the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy
- An additional 196 training seats were filled through trainings facilitated by graduates of the NYS Office of Children and Families Services (OCFS) Train the Trainer course facilitated by the Executive Director in January 2020. These trainers work within ACS' Division of Youth and Family Justice (DYFJ), training the Youth Development Specialists (YDS) who work in the secure detention facilities.
- Moreover, 746 child welfare staff completed the CTDB eLearning between January 26 and December 31, 2023.

In 2023, OCTPP continued to develop, update and provide a variety of original and partnered specialized trainings, including the launch of a new training specifically for working with LGBTQ+ youth:

- Working with LGBTQ+ Youth Who Have Experienced or are At-Risk for Trafficking
- Understanding Child Trafficking Dynamics: A Bio-Psycho-Social Perspective
- Safety Planning WITH Trafficked Youth
- Endorsing Exploitation: The Influence of Media on the Developing Vulnerable Adolescent
- NYC's Child Welfare Trafficking Policy and Screening Children for Sex Trafficking in ACS' Child Trafficking Database (CTDB)

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- Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): Overview, Engagement Strategies and Resources
 - Trauma-Informed Art Therapy for Kids
 - Survivor Voices: The ACS Credible Messenger Program
 - Re-victimizing the Victim: Sara's Law and the Preventing Unfair Sentencing Act - Case Review and Panel
 - The Sound of NYC Freedom: Recovery Operations

Additionally, OCTPP's Executive Director, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW-R) presented/co-presented professionally at virtual conferences and other venues which provided for the sharing of subject expertise and lessons learned in NYC with other jurisdictions, including:

- Northwell Heart for Human Trafficking 2023 Conference
- 2023 NYS Safe Harbour Coordinators Meeting in Lake George
- Office of the District Attorney, Richmond County
- Office of the District Attorney, Queens County
- NYC Department of Education's Office of Foster Care Inaugural Conference
- Wyoming County Safe Harbour Awareness Event
- Wagner College
- Heartshare Human Services Youth Health Fair

^{**} The tattoo removal palm cards are available in Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, English, French, Haitian Creole, Korean, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Urdu, Yiddish. The YouTube video is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGUMtzplo48>