



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
NEW YORK, NY 10007

## **Juvenile Justice Realignment Vision Statement**

New York City will submit a plan to the State of New York under Governor Cuomo's "Close to Home" legislation to establish a realigned juvenile justice system that provides services to youth ranging from community-based programming to limited-secure residential care. The City will build on its successful development of programming that decreases recidivism and lessens reliance on residential facilities, while maintaining public safety. The City will create a juvenile justice system where all but the most seriously delinquent New York City youth stay closer to home and family. Here, they will receive the individualized services, supports and opportunities they need; and when youth must be placed in a restrictive environment, they will be close to home, aligned to services, family and community supports and be successfully prepared for re-entry into their community. The most serious young offenders – those sent to secure placement – will continue to be held in State facilities. Realignment builds on Mayor Bloomberg's redesign of the City's juvenile justice detention system and development of alternatives to placement so that youth, whenever possible, may remain at home with intensive services consistent with public safety and risk assessment.

### **The benefits of a realigned system would include:**

- **Safer Communities:** Moving youth closer to home will be the latest in a series of juvenile justice reform initiatives that have successfully reduced recidivism rates, resulting in stronger and safer communities.
- **Better Family Engagement:** Rather than having to travel to distant facilities to visit their children, New York City families will be able to maintain frequent contact with their youth in care, and participate in their youth's rehabilitation, enhancing significantly the youth's likelihood of success once he/she is released.
- **Connection to Community:** Placed youth from New York City will stay in facilities in or close to the City, with the opportunity to take advantage of local programs and opportunities, as well as to connect with community supports.
- **Improved Educational Outcomes:** Youth will attend and receive credits from New York City public schools or schools in which they can earn credits toward graduation.
- **Improved Oversight:** New York City juvenile justice programs will be regulated by staff members of the State Office of Children and Family Services dedicated to the oversight of the City's juvenile placement program. The young people in care will also have the benefit of ready access to their attorneys who will be much closer and easier to consult with than under the current system.

### **The Path To A Realigned System:**

#### **Plan Development**

The City will work intensively with juvenile justice stakeholders, including judges, advocates, attorneys for youth and for the City, elected officials, law enforcement, educators, community representatives, national experts in juvenile placement and in alternatives to placement, and others, to develop a plan for a realigned system of non-secure and limited-secure placement that

will be presented for public input and State approval. As soon as the legislation is adopted, the City will submit a plan for non-secure placement; a plan for limited secure placement will follow. Both plans will be subject to public notice and a hearing. Working with OCFS, the City will also conduct an analysis of the youth that were placed in OCFS facilities last year to more fully determine the residential programming and services that are needed, including capacity and type.

### **Expanded Continuum of Community-Based Programs**

The plan will build upon the current continuum of dispositional options in New York City to expand the use of community-based programs that have a track record of working for youth. The expansion will include graduated levels of probation supervision and services, and a variety of rigorous local programs matched to the youth's risk-level and needs. In order to ensure that youth are being connected to the right services, a state-of-the-art structured decision-making (SDM) model will carefully use risk assessment and offense severity to guide the Department of Probation's dispositional recommendation to the courts. The SDM model will use an objective, validated risk/needs assessment tool to determine the risk level of the youth, thereby ensuring public safety. The development of the structured decision-making model has involved key stakeholders including the Family Court, Law Department, the Legal Aid Society, NYPD, the Department of Probation, the Administration for Children's Services, and other community stakeholders.

### **Non-Secure and Limited-Secure Placement**

The plan will also provide an array of residential care options for those youth who the court determines must be "confined" and therefore cannot be safely served in the community for a period of time. Subject to State legislation, this will include:

- Issuance of a Negotiated Acquisition by the City to identify appropriate providers of quality non-secure and limited-secure placement in the five boroughs;
- Contracting between the City and well-regarded, local non-profit providers who work with youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems to provide safe, high-quality care within the five boroughs; and,
- Use of the NYC Children's Services Quality Assurance System to closely monitor and regularly evaluate provider performance.

The City will have the authority to manage these contracts and the primary role in case management. Discharge planning and case management will begin as soon as youth are placed. While judges will have the discretion to determine initial security level, the City will have the authority to move youth up and down the continuum of residential care, except when moving a youth into the State's secure care system, which will require court approval.

### **Regulatory Oversight**

OCFS will play a significant oversight role in the realigned juvenile justice system. In addition to OCFS, the New York City Council plays an instrumental role in the oversight and development of program priorities for youth currently served in the juvenile justice system by ACS, and will play this role for youth placed in New York City. With the NYC Public Advocate's input, each youth's family and attorney will also ensure that the youth in the City's custody are cared for safely and appropriately.