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DOC AND ACS ANNOUNCE CHANGES TO ENCOURAGE GREATER SAFETY AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AT HORIZON JUVENILE FACILITY

NEW YORK— Following the implementation of “Raise the Age” reforms and the transfer of 16- and 17-year-olds out of adult jail facilities into an age-appropriate juvenile justice system, the Administration for Children’s Services and the Department of Correction today unveiled a series of safety measures and programming designed to ease the transition of youth and officers to the Horizon Juvenile Center. As the city adapts to a new facility, these actions are being taken as part of overall improvements at Horizon. Now that these safety measures have been put into place, incidents have decreased and everyone at the facility—youth and staff alike—are adjusting to the new environment.

The unprecedented “Raise the Age” reforms involved extensive renovation of this youth facility to house every 16- and 17-year old coming off of Rikers, investments in programming and case management, and special training for staff to ensure that youth remain safe and receive the appropriate services to get back on the right track. Since moving into the facility, ACS and DOC have been working side-by-side to make this transition as smooth as possible. Several immediate changes have been put into place to further enhance staff and youth safety at Horizon. In addition to these actions, the state has also granted the temporary use of OC spray at Horizon, which we are now working to operationalize. Both ACS and DOC are also trained in Safe Crisis Management techniques and de-escalation strategies that focus on reducing violence.

The improvements from ACS and DOC include:

- Securing classroom furniture to the floor
- Frosting classroom windows to limit distractions during class
- Providing additional program staff and increased programming hours to keep youth engaged

- Implementing a new school schedule that minimizes movement and streamlines learning
- Expediting visits for residents and family
- Limiting the number of residents escorted at a time to reduce any unnecessary congestion and possible fights

ACS and DOC are also working to implement a new adolescent classification tool, which will help the facility to house youth in a manner that minimizes risk, and a new incentive program to encourage positive behavior and engagement.

New York City successfully transferred all 16- and 17-year-olds off of Rikers Island and into renovated facilities, with enhanced age-appropriate services, including education and counseling, designed to reduce re-offending. Challenges have arisen since the move, which we are quickly addressing with these series of safety measures. We are now moving in a positive direction and continuously working to modify procedures as necessary to ensure a safe atmosphere at Horizon.