



## Department of Investigation

### *Press Release*

**DOI, BRONX DA & ACS ANNOUNCE DRUG ARRESTS OF 3 EMPLOYEES  
AT CROSSROADS FOSTER CARE FACILITY FOLLOWING UNDERCOVER PROBE**  
*ACS Overhauls Group Home Services For Foster Youth;  
Crossroads Staff Transferred And Facility Closed Pending Internal Inquiry*

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 1999 -- Department of Investigation (DOI) Commissioner EDWARD J. KURIANSKY, Bronx District Attorney ROBERT T. JOHNSON, and Administration for Children's Services (ACS) Commissioner NICHOLAS SCOPPETTA today announced that 3 ACS employees assigned to the Crossroads Congregate Care Group Home in the Edenwald section of the Bronx have been charged with buying heroin and cocaine for a DOI undercover agent posing as an employee at the home.

The three employees -- CLEO EVERETT, JAMES MCKOY, and ALPHONSO FERGUS -- worked as houseparents and were responsible for supervising adolescents at the home. It is alleged that, while on duty, they left the Crossroads facility on at least six (6) occasions to purchase drugs for themselves or others, thereby unlawfully neglecting the children under their direct supervision.

As a result of the ongoing investigation, ACS has temporarily closed Crossroads and moved the facility's 16 residents, ranging in age from 16 to 21, to other City group homes. Furthermore, ACS has suspended the arrested workers without pay; removed the Division Director, Deputy Division Director, and Site Director; and transferred the other approximately 25 Crossroads managers and staff, pending the completion of an internal investigation. ACS will install a new management team upon the facility's reopening.

Commissioner Kuriansky said, "The purchase and possession of illegal drugs by any City employee is deplorable. It is especially abhorrent when committed by those whose job it is to act as surrogate parents for troubled youngsters, set a good example for them, and do everything possible to keep them out of harm's way. I sincerely thank Commissioner Scoppetta for bringing this matter to our attention and District Attorney Johnson for his expeditious prosecution. And I particularly applaud the demanding, dangerous, and extraordinarily professional detective work of the DOI Investigative Squad that finally brought this outrageous conduct to an end."

District Attorney Johnson said, "ACS and DOI are to be congratulated for taking immediate action. These defendants were expected to be role models, not to add negativity into the lives of these young people. For the sake of the children, I am pleased that our office could assist ACS and DOI in rooting out this unfortunate problem."

Commissioner Scoppetta said, "We thank the Department of Investigation for responding to our concerns about possible criminal misconduct at Crossroads and for conducting and completing such a thorough and comprehensive investigation. We also thank District Attorney Johnson for his help and cooperation on this investigation. ACS has zero tolerance for any drug activity on the part of its employees and will take aggressive action when it is discovered. ACS is implementing a new drug-testing policy for applicants seeking

positions at ACS that involve contact with children. We will continue to monitor and audit other group home facilities to ensure that children are not placed at risk while in foster care."

DOI initiated the investigation this past January at the request of Commissioner Scoppetta, who was concerned that there might be illegal drug use and transactions at the facility. ACS arranged for DOI to place an undercover officer in the facility and ensured that he was assigned the appropriate work shifts. During the course of the undercover probe, other allegations of potential wrongdoing at the facility also surfaced -- including the possible presence of firearms, widespread marijuana and alcohol use by residents and staff, 'phantom' school attendance, lax supervision, and theft of petty cash and supplies.

Commissioner Kuriansky noted that the investigation of these additional allegations is continuing with the full cooperation and assistance of ACS.

According to the charges filed in today's criminal cases, it is alleged that EVERETT, while on duty at Crossroads between May 6 and August 20, 1999, purchased heroin on three occasions, and cocaine on another occasion, on behalf of a DOI undercover posing as an employee of the group home. McKOY and FERGUS are each charged with providing cocaine on one occasion each between June and July 1999 to the same undercover officer. In each instance, the defendants allegedly endangered the children in their care by leaving the group home for hours at a time to purchase drugs in Manhattan, and thereafter failed to note their absences from the facility on their official time sheets.

CLEO EVERETT, 48, of the Bronx, has been employed by the City since 1989, and has worked at ACS for the last three years. JAMES McKOY, 29, of Manhattan, has been employed by ACS since January 1997. ALPHONSO FERGUS, 59, of Manhattan, has been employed by the City since 1995, and has worked at ACS for the last three years. The three defendants have each been charged with the crimes of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Seventh Degree, Endangering the Welfare of a Child, and Petit Larceny. If convicted, they each face up to 4 years in prison.

ACS has planned and intends to now move forward with a personnel action plan that will completely reorganize the staffing of the 30 City-operated congregate care facilities.

"This plan will nearly double the current staff in the facilities from more than 200 to more than 400, will raise the eligibility requirements and training for group home workers, will reduce group home work shifts from 60 hours per week to 35 hours per week, will expand medical and recreational services and will upgrade City-owned facilities," said Commissioner Scoppetta. "I want to thank the Mayor for his approval of this plan, which we believe will transform a primarily custodial staff into a professional workforce that can better meet the complex emotional, psychological, and educational needs of the adolescents who come into our care."

ACS operates 30 foster care facilities for adolescents between the ages of 12 and 21, with most of the residents being between 16 and 19 years old. Approximately 250 adolescents presently live in ACS-operated residential programs. ACS's personnel action plan, which will be phased in over two years, will cost over \$7 million gross, including \$2 million in City funds. An additional \$8 million has been allocated for physical renovation of the City-owned facilities.

The investigation was conducted jointly by Gerard Hoey, DOI's Inspector General for ACS, and NYPD Captain Robert Kelly, Commander of the DOI Investigative Squad, and their staffs. Also assisting in the investigation were ACS Deputy Commissioner and General Counsel Gerald Harris and ACS Associate

DOI, BRONX DA, AND ACS ARREST 3 EMPLOYEES AT CROSSROADS FOSTER DARE FACILITY

Commissioner Harry Bryan.

Assistant Bronx District Attorney Linda Tacoma is handling the prosecution under the supervision of Richard Baker, Chief of District Attorney Johnson's Arson and Economic Crimes Unit.