

CURRENTS

OF THE NEW YORK CITY CHAPTER

National Association of Social Workers



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SPECIAL ISSUE ON CHILD WELFARE IN NEW YORK CITY



Reflections on NASW-NYC's Continuing Education Conference, and the roles of Social Workers in NYC Child Welfare

Candida Brooks-Harrison, LCSW
NASW-NYC President

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NYC Administration for Children's Services: A Look Back and Ahead

David Hansell, Commissioner
NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS)

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The issue will highlight the role of social workers and their responses to the challenges and demands of child welfare policies, through the implementation of innovative ideas/programs, and their recommendations for future trends and policies to enhance children's well-being in New York City.

You will read articles about several current ACS initiatives, including the Family Assessment Response program, the work of the Racial Equity and Cultural Competence Committee and many more.

Also included are articles on a community program and the role of an adoption worker.

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Reflections on NASW-NYC’s Continuing Education Conference, and the roles of Social Workers in NYC Child Welfare

**Candida Brooks-Harrison, LCSW
NASW-NYC President**

The 4th Annual Social Work in the City Conference: Our Transformative Roles in Emerging Times, held on April 4th, 2018, brought together hundreds of professionals serving New Yorkers across Race, Diversity and Intersectionality. As usual the conference was a collective sharing and learning experience that acknowledged the challenges in our society, while highlighting the work that we do to bring equity and best practices to the forefront. The variety of breakout sessions were as broad and as varied as the profession of social work. This year we were able to also provide continuing education for marriage and family counselors, and we welcomed all who serve New Yorkers.

Our morning plenary speaker, Marva Hammons, Executive Vice President of Child and Family Services at the Casey Family Program, brought insights from her work that guide the foundation’s direct practice endeavors toward improving the lives of children and their families. Ms. Hammons introduced herself in relationship to all who came before her. She named each of her ancestors providing a meaningful context to who she is today. Ms. Hammons shared the Casey Family Program’s vision of making foster care, the way we know it, a thing of the past. The idea that no child should remain in placement for more than a year is a reminder that child welfare from a wholistic context centers the child as part of a family, a community, and a history.



Morning plenary speaker, Marva Hammons, Executive Vice President of Child and Family Services at the Casey Family Program.



Senator Jesse Hamilton (right), presents a proclamation from the New York State Senate to NASW-NYC Chapter President Candida Brooks-Harrison (left).



Afternoon keynote speaker, Wes Moore, CEO of Robinhood Foundation.

Our afternoon keynote, Fighting Poverty and Strengthening NYC Communities with Wes Moore, CEO of Robinhood Foundation and bestselling author of the *Work and the Other Wes Moore*, continued the conversation. The Robinhood Foundation works at the intersections of many of our social systems toward bringing about economic equity. Mr. Moore, picked up the earlier charge for social workers and social service professionals to use their role as gatekeepers, to open up systems to benefit the wellbeing of

the people we serve, rather than keep the status quo that perpetuates inequities. He charged us to be “gatecrashers” in the face of inequities.

We were honored to have Senator Jesse Hamilton, make the time to stop in and present a proclamation from the New York State Senate, which I humbly accepted on behalf of all social workers serving people of New York City and State. Senator Hamilton is a strong proponent of New Yorkers, particularly children and youth, being able to access mental health services. Senator Hamilton introduced and champions, the “Licensed Social Worker in Every School” bill (S.7526-A) in the Senate, along with Assembly member Felix Ortiz who is our sponsor on the companion bill (A.9533-A) in the Assembly. We are appreciative of their work to advocate for children and families.

We thank all of you who were able to attend, and those who were not in attendance, for your commitment and dedication to the profession.

Two years ago, in 2016, our Coalition on Race, Diversity and Intersectionality organized its Annual Forum at Fordham University: Spotlight on Children and Families in the City and published a special edition of Currents featuring related policy and practice issues. As child and family welfare professionals continue to reach for innovative and equitable ways to reduce the disparities and disproportionate outcomes that negatively impact children and families at the intersections of race, poverty, gender identity expression, sexual orientation, immigration, and citizenship status, we have asked Commissioner Hansell of the Administration for Children’s Services, as well as others from the private sector, to highlight some of these endeavors for this issue, and also in our next issue of Currents.



From Left: NASW-NYC Board Member-at-Large Brian Romero, NASW-NYC Chapter President Candida Brooks-Harrison NASW-NYC Intern, Tanya Thompson and Senator Luis R. Sepúlveda.

Our next Coalition on Race, Diversity and Intersectionality Annual Forum at Fordham University: Spotlight on Racial Equity Assessment in Legislation (#REALNYS) will be on May 24th at 5:30 p.m., so please save the date. We will examine how laws and policies impact our practices in every social system and how we proactively organize, advocate, and lobby for change. Luis R. Sepúlveda was our Assembly sponsor for this bill. He has now been elected to Senate. Congratulations Senator Sepúlveda!

Once again, NASW-NYC thanks you for your service on behalf of all New Yorkers!



NYC Administration for Children's Services: A Look Back and Ahead

**David Hansell, Commissioner
NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS)**

Thank you for the opportunity to preface the thoughts of some of New York's leading social workers on the innovative work we are doing, why it is important to the field of social work, and the ways in which our work intersects with social justice. To provide context, I looked back on the past year as Commissioner with pride of what we have accomplished so far, and with a commitment to continue to move ACS forward. My job is to build on ACS' accomplishments and the things we are doing well, but also to identify the things we need to do better and to fix what isn't working well enough. I recognize that our success rests on our agency's more than 6,000 committed and courageous staff, so it is imperative that our staff is well equipped and fully supported in their work — whether they are on the frontlines or advancing the agency's mission in another way. I am focused on agency and system-wide issues including data metrics, policies, procedures, tools, trainings, and technology.

When I stepped into this role a year ago, I announced a four-point plan to identify strengths and gaps, and to make necessary changes. First, I initiated a top to bottom review of the agency, particularly our protective and preventive functions. We brought in three outside entities to independently evaluate our work. Second, we conducted a full-scale review of the findings and recommendations from external reviews and reports over the past few years, in order to evaluate our progress implementing those recommendations and identify recommendations that need to be expedited. Third, we restructured our ChildStat quality assurance program, to ensure that our teams are using meaningful data metrics and appropriate accountability to help us identify and respond to issues of risk, safety, and performance. Fourth, we are working more closely with the NYPD, to make sure they are sufficiently involved in our investigations when there are allegations of criminal activity, and to make sure we are maintaining the safety of our staff as they work in the community.

We are most proud of our investment in a broad portfolio of preventive services, which has made us a national model and enabled us to bring the NYC foster care census below 9,000, the lowest number in a quarter of a century. In September of 2017, to build on this preventive approach, ACS also launched the new Division of Child and Family Well-being, it prioritizes strengthening families and communities citywide by providing families with the tools and resources they need to thrive. The new division is working to strengthen ACS' relationship with communities, including launching three new Family Enrichment Centers, which will be open to all members of the community with the goal of stopping maltreatment before it occurs.

In addition to making sure our staff are safe and protected, as they work to make sure our City's children are safe and protected, we are working to expand the use of mobile technology to help equip our staff with the tools they need to do their work, wherever they might be located. We are launching new analytic tools like dashboards to help all our workers access the most relevant information in real time, to help them to make the best decisions possible for the children and families we work with.

Given the many challenges of this work, the agency has also implemented new employee recognition and wellness programs, to make sure that our staff is supported and acknowledged for all the work that

they do for the most vulnerable New Yorkers. And we encourage them to continue their professional education, particularly with regard to advanced social work credentials.

ACS is committed to understanding the challenges that families in New York face and helping them to thrive, and part of that work is building strong relationships with other branches of the Government. We have strengthened our relationship with the HRA and DHS, as we work to address housing insecurity for some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers. We have also worked closely with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to launch awareness campaigns focused on Safe Medication storage and Infant Safe Sleep.

In this special edition of the *NASW-NYC Currents*, you will read articles about several current ACS initiatives, including the Family Assessment Response program, the work of the Racial Equity and Cultural Competence Committee, Developing leadership for Foster Care Youth, Fatherhood Engagement & Male Leadership, and others. These programs demonstrate ACS' commitment to innovation in the field of child welfare.

Strengths-Based Engagement and Motivational Interviewing



Keren Abina-Sotomayor, MA
Senior Director of Learning Programs
NYC ACS, Workforce Institute



Sarah B. Aron-Diaz, LMSW
Director of Learning Programs
NYC ACS, Workforce Institute

The ACS Workforce Institute was established in 2015 as part of the Mayor’s Reform Plan to provide professional development opportunities and support for staff working within the child welfare and juvenile justice sectors. Early on, the Workforce Institute team sought to gather information about the key challenges staff encountered and the kinds of support they needed to overcome these challenges. Through a series of focus groups and interviews with staff, supervisors and administrators in child protection, juvenile justice, preventive services, and foster care, the Workforce Institute learned that frontline employees wanted support in (1) building rapport with families, (2) establishing trust with families, (3) collecting all relevant information to document family histories, and (4) identifying services to make appropriate referrals for family members.

To meet the identified needs, the ACS Workforce Institute developed and offers two foundational learning programs in Motivational Interviewing. It is focused on strengths-based engagement, for professionals working in the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice fields: (1) Motivational Interviewing: A Strengths-Based Practice for NYC Child Welfare Professionals, and (2) Motivational Interviewing: A Strengths-Based Practice for Youth Justice Professionals. Strengths-based engagement is an approach to communication that draws on an individual’s strengths, as opposed to focusing on their problems or deficits. Motivational Interviewing is a collaborative, person-centered approach, to strengthen drive and commitment to change. Strengths-based engagement strategies using Motivational Interviewing are essential for effective communication with children, youth, and families to support their continued goals.

Motivational Interviewing has been identified by the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare as an engagement model whose efficacy is well supported by scientific research evidence. It helps guide a person toward solving their own challenges by building upon their strengths, whereas traditional interviewing is often more problem-focused. Motivational Interviewing helps build trust and an open and honest relationship between a worker and a family, which can assist workers in gathering information to make effective assessments.

The ACS Workforce Institute programs provide learners with the opportunity to practice the spirit, principles, and skills of Motivational Interviewing, and to incorporate strengths-based engagement into their work with children, youth, and families. These foundational courses teach learners to engage families utilizing the OARS skills – open-ended questions, affirmations, reflective listening, and summaries. We believe that these skills will help child welfare and juvenile justice professionals express compassion, partnership, and respect (even in challenging situations), bolstering their engagement with children, youth, and families and, ultimately, improving family outcomes.

Each year, the ACS Workforce Institute conducts a needs assessment to determine areas of focus for the upcoming year. After the foundational courses were rolled out, there was a need identified to further support skill development for staff. As a result, the ACS Workforce Institute developed and offers three different Motivational Interviewing practice courses that provide learners with the opportunity to practice the Motivational Interviewing skills focusing on specific populations: (1) Motivational Interviewing: Engaging Girls and Young Women; (2) Motivational Interviewing: Engaging Fathers; and (3) Motivational Interviewing: Engaging Families with Repeat Involvement in the Child Welfare System. The foundational and practice Motivational Interviewing programs use role plays and other engaging activities to provide learners with an interactive “hands-on” experience that promotes learning and transfer of skills to on-the-job behavior.

All ACS Workforce Institute programs seek to reduce the effects of implicit and explicit bias. Through emphasizing individual strengths, Motivational Interviewing combined with self-reflection can assist staff in identifying and addressing their own biases that can arise in certain situations. This is done, in part, in an effort to address the issues of racial disproportionality that exist in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Our overall mission is to equip staff with the skills needed, so they can positively engage with the children, youth, and families they work with to support them in improving their outcomes.



Prevention Services: New Community Initiatives

Kelly Acevedo, LCSW
Associate Commissioner
NYC ACS, Division of Prevention Services

Since the start of my career in child welfare, as a Child Protective Specialist, to my current position as Associate Commissioner for the Division of Prevention Services at the Administration for Children's Services, I have had the opportunity to serve families in different capacities. Throughout my experiences, I have learned about the challenges of meeting the often complex needs of families by partnering with them, and the providers who serve them. We recognize that families are almost always the best resources children have in their lives. Therefore, we are committed to supporting the whole family by providing prevention services and support, that strengthen the safety and stability of children within their homes.

New York City is one of the few jurisdictions in the country where families have access to a comprehensive, holistic, and fully-funded continuum of services, as well as support to strengthen families and prevent entry into foster care. ACS funds over 200 programs, delivered by 54 contracted provider agencies serving over 12,000 families throughout the City. These services range from low-risk case management to high-risk evidence-based interventions for families experiencing a number of stressors such as housing, mental health, domestic violence, substance use, and other challenges. Our contracted providers are located throughout the five boroughs and are fixtures in the communities they serve.

As access to prevention services has increased, removals into foster care have continued to decline over the last 10 years in NYC. The number of children served by ACS prevention services has grown from 39,400 in 2011 to 45,000 in 2016. ACS prevention services keep children safe. Less than one in 12 families who participate in ACS-funded prevention services have an incident of repeat maltreatment within 6 months after their case is closed. ACS prevention services also reduce the need for foster care. Less than one in 50 families who participate in ACS prevention services have a child removed and placed in foster care within 6 months after their case is closed.

The goal of prevention services is to help at-risk families develop skills to manage crises, maintain safety and stability within the home, and to strengthen the family's ability to thrive within the community. Through our network of providers, ACS delivers prevention services that are child-centered and family-focused, community-based, and culturally competent. This means that services must address the individual needs of the child, and the needs of the family members residing with the child, while recognizing the socio-economic realities which impact their daily lives. All families have access to free services and support. They are delivered by our community partners and address the economic poverty and chronic stress that disproportionately harms the city's most vulnerable children and families.

We are making significant strides in expanding our prevention services continuum to include trauma-focused services for families with young children. Often, our young families are isolated and have limited knowledge on parenting a young child. Through a partnership with Montefiore Medical Center, the Group Attachment-Based Intervention (GABI) program is available as a group therapy for families receiving General Prevention (GP) and Family Treatment and Rehabilitation (FT/R) services. We believe,

and research supports, that promoting organized secure attachments for children ages 0-3 and their parents can reduce and even prevent child maltreatment. This initiative is part of Mayor de Blasio's Thrive NYC initiative.

ACS is also introducing primary prevention services, a community-based approach which engages families and provides support before maltreatment might occur, and prior to involvement in the child welfare system. This spring 2018, ACS will pilot our Family Enrichment Centers in three high-needs neighborhoods. These centers, embedded in the community, and operated by three non-profit organizations, will open their welcoming doors to all families, offering programming, classes, activities, and coaching at no cost. They are designed to promote family strength and stability by building community connections, and helping families meet concrete needs, such as housing, financial management, and health. Although providing families supportive services has always been a priority for ACS, the agency continues to increase investments in prevention services in order to better serve children and families.

The work that ACS and preventive staff carry out every day is extraordinary. The staff who work in prevention services are truly committed to serving highly vulnerable children and families. They are the unsung heroes of child welfare. The work in social services is complicated, and the pay is often low and not equitable to other public/private sectors. However, the act of helping others can be rewarding, and, in many instances, provides a sense of satisfaction in giving back or paying it forward. In these difficult times, where there is much turmoil in the world, our communities need strong advocates and skillful workers to address crises needs and empower our families.

For social workers or others interested, the staffing requirements and career paths in ACS Preventive agencies can differ depending on the type of model or prevention program. For example, some prevention providers employ frontline staff with Associate, Bachelor's, or Master's degrees. Case Planners must have a Bachelor's degree in fields such as Social Work, Psychology, or Sociology, and one or two years of related experience. Some employers are open to other degree types if the individual has the right type of experience. In Specialized Medical and Evidence-Based Models, Case Planners must have a Master's degree, preferably a licensed MSW or Clinical Social Worker, or other graduate degree, such as Therapy and Marriage and Family Counseling.

For those who remain in social services, the career track for advancement of a Case Planner consists of becoming a Case Supervisor followed by a Program Director. Depending on the size of the agency there may be other positions in between these three levels such as Senior Case Planner, Quality Assurance/Improvement staff, and Assistant Program Director. The upper management may include an Executive Director, Vice President, or CEO.

Staff recruitment and retention is a priority for all Prevention Service providers. As child welfare advocates, we must all do more to attract, recruit, and retain helping professionals in our field, and support them in this very difficult work. The staff who work in these programs are dedicated to serving New York City's most vulnerable families. As Associate Commissioner in ACS' Division of Prevention Services, I am honored to be part of the team of child welfare professionals who serve the children and families of New York City.



The NYC Administration for Children's Services Parent Advocate Initiative

Michael Arsham, MSW
Executive Director
NYC ACS, Office of Advocacy

Parent Advocates are community members who have life experience with the public child welfare system. They have been trained to offer peer support and representation to parents currently involved with the system. The participation of Parent Advocates in NYC Administration for Children's Services' (ACS) family-team conferencing began in 2006. Parent Advocates affiliated with the Highbridge Community Partnership staffed what were then called Pre-Placement Decision-Making Meetings in the Bronx. This three-month pilot was deemed successful for a variety of reasons:

- * The Parent Advocates were skilled at engaging other parents in the conference process. They were "credible messengers" who could authentically say "I know how you feel, I've been there, and I think it would be to your best advantage to use this conference process fully." Parents, who might otherwise have been reluctant to come to the table, participated meaningfully.
- * The Parent Advocates had encyclopedic knowledge of community resources, as consumers of services. They were skilled at both recommending and effectuating appropriate referrals.
- * The manifest competence of the Parent Advocates helped enhance ACS's personnel appreciation of the strengths and potential of local parents in general. The converse was also true. As the Parent Advocates came to understand the dedication of ACS personnel, they became goodwill ambassadors for ACS in their home community.

In 2007, ACS and the Child Welfare Organizing Project (CWOP) signed a Memorandum of Understanding agreeing - in effect - that any time ACS was contemplating protective removal of a child from an East Harlem family, other than in an emergency, ACS would first invite CWOP to send a Parent Advocate to an Initial Child Safety Conference (ICSC) at the 125th Street Borough Office. Underwritten by the NY State Office of Children and Family Services, through a subcontract with the Center for Family Representation, this pilot ran from 2007 - 2013. The National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections retained Dr. Marina Lalayants, of the Silberman School of Social Work, to conduct a multi-method evaluation of the pilot. The results of this study - published in 2014 as Parent Representation Model in Child Safety Conferences, *Child Welfare*, Vol. 92, No. 5 - document the value of the model. Based on both empirical support and positive feedback from parents and ACS personnel, ACS made the decision to take the model to scale citywide, and to offer the services of a Parent Advocate to every family seen in an ICSC.

The citywide initiative went live in December 2013. It is overseen by the Office of Advocacy with support from the ACS Division of Policy, Planning & Measurement (DPPM), and integrally involved liaisons in the Division of Child Protection (DCP). Parent Advocates are recruited, trained, deployed, and supervised by two voluntary contractors: The Center for Human Development and Family Services (CHDFS) in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island, and The Jewish Child Care Association, in Brooklyn and Queens.

Four years of data reveal:

- * Parent Advocates staff roughly 10,000 ICSC's per year. When a Parent Advocate was not present, it was most often because a parent was not available to consent.

- * Outcome data consistently reveals a correlation between the presence of a Parent Advocate in the ICSC and a recommendation other than Foster Care placement. We need to be cautious how we frame this. Correlation is not causality, and children are more likely to enter foster care in instances where a parent is unavailable. Nonetheless, the early results are very encouraging, as is the preliminary qualitative data, and derived from structured interviews with DCP personnel, parents, and Parent Advocates.

In September 2015, ACS was awarded a three-year Family Group Decision-Making (FGDM) grant by the federal Administration for Children and Families to pilot an enhanced model of Parent Advocate participation in family conferencing. Based in Bronx South Zone E (Highbridge/Concourse), this pilot is referred to as the Enhanced Family Conferencing Initiative (EFCI). The enhancements, in contrast to the pre-existing citywide initiative, are:

- * Three full-time Parent Advocates employed by CHDFS represent parents in both ICSC's and in Follow-Up Conferences, approximately one month later. During the intervening month, they spend approximately ten hours with the family, working to assure solid initial connections with services recommended in the ICSC.

- * The federal FGDM model requires "private family time." Following opening discussion of safety concerns and measures that might ameliorate them, the family meets privately with the Parent Advocate and develops their own service plan proposal. DCP's commitment is to honor the family's plan, so long as it meaningfully addresses child safety issues.

The federal grant funds a rigorous, multi-method evaluation, developed and implemented by researchers from Silberman and the Kempe Center of the University of Colorado School of Medicine. The evaluation team will assess readiness, fidelity to the FGDM model, provide coaching to staff, contrast outcomes in the pilot units with those in designated control units, track child- and family-specific outcomes longitudinally, and assess cost-effectiveness.

An EFCI Implementation Team co-led by Office of Advocacy and Bronx DCP leadership, comprising representatives of the evaluation team, the Parent Advocates and their CHDFS supervisors, Bronx DCP line staff, Facilitators and their supervisors, and DPPM meets monthly. The ACS Workforce Institute has developed a comprehensive training curriculum in which Parent Advocates and ACS personnel participate jointly. The curriculum features significant content on racial equity in child safety decision-making.

The EFCI model went live in June 2016. Parent Advocates have staffed over 150 EFCI cases at the time of this writing. Feedback from the Borough Office has been very positive. DCP personnel report feeling supported by the Parent Advocates' participation. They are making case-planning decisions jointly with community members and families. Families are more likely to fully engage in service plans that are grounded in their own self-identified needs. There is less of a focus on compliance with generic mandates. As we enter year three, our hope is that - if we can document desirable outcomes and cost effectiveness - the EFCI model may eventually be taken to scale citywide.

Social workers honor principles of client and community self-determination, which has made partnership with Parent Advocates successful. It has been a privilege to help develop a service model that truly

sprang from the grassroots in Harlem, the South Bronx, and Central Brooklyn, developed by parents for parents, working in partnership with child welfare professionals. We are continuing to build the base of evidence in support of this approach, which has grown steadily from a modest pilot project to a citywide initiative, acknowledged and underwritten by the federal Administration for Children and Families as a national model of Family Group Decision-Making. This initiative is living, breathing proof that parents and social workers working together can change the child welfare system for the better, if we are purposeful, persistent, mutually respectful, and focused on shared goals and aspirations.



Developing Leadership for Foster Care Youth

Sabine Chery, LMSW
Assistant Commissioner
NYC ACS, Division of Family Permanency Services
Office of Older Youth Services

Most of my 22 years of experience in the child welfare system has been working with older youth. The focus of my work has been to positively foster the growth of this cohort of young people, specifically Expectant and Parenting Youth (EPY). Despite the odds seemingly stacked against them, these young people have proven to be resilient and determined to break the cycle of absentee parents. Providing learning opportunities that are youth-driven allow young people to gain skills in self-advocacy and self-determination. Currently, I oversee the Teen Specialist Unit (TSU) at the NYC Administration for Children's Services. This unit supports EPY allowing them to have a voice to improve policy and practice, which has a positive impact on theirs and their children's life.

Three years ago, the ACS Division of Family Permanency Services — TSU received a three-year grant through the Center for the Study of Social Policy to work with EPY. This work is inclusive of a Multi-Generational Approach in working with EPY and their children. Last year, TSU worked with 180 EPYs with emphasis on promoting and enhancing resiliency, social connections, and well-being. This work is supported by the collaborative systems of care approach, involving programs such as the Department of Education-District 79 LYFE program, that assist young parents to reengage in school, while ensuring that their children are nurtured and cared for. In addition, the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Nurse Family Partnership, which provides preventive support to first time mothers, assists with their educational needs, medical, and well-being outcomes.

The Teen Specialist Unit contracted with five parenting youths that were either still in care or whom have aged out of foster care. The panel met three times a week to create the Young Parents Speakers Bureau (YPSB). The YPSB provided a peer forum for young parents to continue having conversations with the child welfare community about their experiences and provided guidance regarding strategies to engage fathers and mothers, as well as inform our practice and trigger change around policies and delivery of services to young parents. Significantly, the panel sought to employ an equitable, comprehensive, family-centered, child focused approach to working with EPY, by attempting to shift the child welfare community's perception of young fathers; as traditionally, attention has not always been focused on young fathers and their role in parenting and co-parenting children.

A positive outcome of the YPSB was to allow EPY to develop the skill set in balancing parenting, co-parenting, school, employment, and being a teen. EPYs are not only learning how to navigate life as they raise their own children but are also navigating the growing pains of coping with interrupted development. Partnership between YPSB and TSU has facilitated a smooth transition into getting EPYs more control over their lives. As a result, YPSB played an integral role in creating a protocol on co-parenting, a brochure, and a resource guide in support of other EPY. The partnership between TSU and YPSB helped some YPSB members to hone in some of their leadership development which resulted in one member getting a full scholarship to a University and motivated others to return to school. Another, gained custody of his

children to become a full-time father. Ultimately, all of the young people in the program stepped up to the plate in co-facilitating co-parenting workshops and participated in forums and convening's in states such as California, Washington D.C., and Florida.

We continue to incorporate our alumni parents in our efforts to develop parenting policies, guidebooks, and curriculum that address the needs of our young parents, because we believe they can achieve their goals and go beyond with the continual support of healthy adult connections, education, employment, life skills, and intimate and personal relationships. When young people have a voice in the trajectory of their life, wonderful things happen.

The words "nothing about me, without me" holds true and throughout my work, as I try to provide the opportunity where their voices can be heard, because our youth are an intricate part of our work and are pivotal leaders in developing greater outcomes for not only themselves, but for their children. The goal is to equip our EPYs with the necessary skills to make a smooth transition from foster care to independence. It continues to be my honor and pleasure to oversee such a great program that really empowers our young people to take part in being the change agents, and a voice for others in and aging out of foster care.



Why New York City Kids Deserve Kin

Julie Farber, MSW
Deputy Commissioner
NYC ACS, Division of Family Permanency Services

Kids fare best with kin! It's common sense! Trauma is reduced when children are able to live with someone familiar, and/or someone who is already connected to their family, when they can't be home safe with their parents. In addition to common sense, the research is also unequivocal.

- Children placed with kin have greater placement stability; this is associated with better outcomes. A meta-analysis of kinship care research found that children, and youth in foster care are 2.6 times more likely than children in kinship care to have 3 or more placements and are 1.9 times more likely to experience a placement disruption.
- Kinship care helps to preserve community and family links. Studies in California, New York City, and Illinois indicate that children and youth in kinship care are more likely than children and youth in general foster care to be placed with their siblings, and in close proximity to their home of origin.
- Placement with kin helps reduce trauma and leads to higher rates of behavioral and emotional well-being. A meta-analysis found that children and youth in kinship care are two times more likely than those in foster homes to report positive emotional health.
- Children and youth in kinship care are more likely than children and youth in non-kinship foster care to achieve permanency, overall, through reunification, adoption, or guardianship.
- Kinship care creates the possibility of permanency through KinGAP, and it improves parent-child and sibling visitation rates, which, in turn, improves permanency and well-being.
- Children placed in kinship homes are less likely to re-enter foster care after exiting to permanency.

In addition to the direct benefits for children living with kin, the recruitment of kinship resources also decreases strain on the foster home pool, giving the foster care system more flexibility to make the best possible matches for children who need non-kin placements. This does not mean that every relative or family friend is an appropriate caregiver. However, what it does mean is that, we need to search like crazy and provide the right support to facilitate kinship care for as many children in foster care as possible.

ACS is a national leader in the use of family-based care versus residential care with only 9 percent of children placed in residential care. But within family-based care, there is an opportunity in NYC to increase our use of kinship care. In New York City, 31 percent of children in foster care currently live with relatives or kin. This is lower than kinship care rates in other large jurisdictions such as Los Angeles (38%) and Dallas (41%). Allegheny County (Pittsburgh) has 62% of its children in foster care placed with Kin.

ACS is currently implementing an aggressive set of initiatives to increase kinship care:

- We have set goals for increasing the proportion of children placed immediately with kin, and the proportion of children who are initially placed in non-kin homes, but who are moved to kin within 45 days.

- We have developed kinship specialist positions to work within our investigations to function and be dedicated solely to searching for kin.
- We are partnering with the nationally renowned expert in kin finding and services, A Second Chance, to provide training for ACS staff.
- We have partnered with national child welfare experts, Public Catalyst and Action Research, and are providing intensive technical assistance to our 27 contracted foster care provider agencies.

NYS Kinship Guardianship legislation which came in effect as of March 12, 2018, further expands access to the NYS KinGAP Permanency option, it now allows for fictive kin and extends benefits to age 21 for all youth, regardless of the age at which they achieve Permanency through KinGAP.

In 2017, the American Journal of Public Health published a study estimating that 37 percent of all American children will have their parents investigated for child abuse by age 18. The number for black children was 53 percent. Of the 437,465 children the federal government estimates were in foster care in 2016, nearly one quarter were black, although African-Americans only represent 13 percent of the country's general population (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/afcarsreport24.pdf>)

In New York City in 2016, black children in foster care represented 58 percent of the children, more than twice the percentage of Black children (26%) in the City. In addition, Black children were 7.6 percent more likely to be placed in foster care than white children, and more than twice as likely to be placed than Hispanic children.

This work is and must be focused on both hearts and minds (correcting myths about kin, from the front line all the way up to leadership), and on developing effective business processes, quality assurance, and management strategies that support this work. We expect that, as a result of these initiatives, more NYC children in care will be placed with kin; these children will experience fewer re-placements and re-entries once they leave foster care; and more children will achieve faster, safe permanency, whether through reunification, kinship guardianship, or adoption. We are closely tracking our results. Our kids deserve no less!



Family Assessment Response, NYC

William R. Fletcher, LCSW
Deputy Commissioner
NYC ACS, Division of Child Protection

The New York City Administration for Children's Services, Division of Child Protection (DCP) is charged with investigating all allegations of child abuse and maltreatment concerns received from the New York Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment. Each year the division investigates about 60,000 cases. Given that there are many factors impacting a family's trajectory into the complex, child welfare system, we ensure that each family receives the appropriate intervention and individualized support. Our commitment is to develop a cadre of staff whose focus is cultural sensitivity/cultural competency.

There is an intentional effort around raising awareness of racism, disproportionality, and poverty as it relates to the families that need services from the agency, because these factors often play a role in the overrepresentation of children of color in the child welfare system. We understand that a traditional 60-day child protective investigation can impact a family despite their socioeconomic status. Therefore, we ensure that all families are treated with the same level of dignity and respect. We also recognize that some families may need a different approach.

Differential response (DR), also referred to as Alternative Response (AR), Family Assessment Response (FAR), or multiple track response, was developed to incorporate family-centered, strengths-based practices into child protective services (CPS), primarily, by diverting lower risk families into an assessment track rather than requiring the traditional CPS investigation. Additionally, Family Assessment Response (FAR-NYC) promotes an environment that fosters enhanced family engagement, strong partnerships between families and their FAR Child Protective Specialists. This alliance fosters an opportunity to meaningfully connect families to their community network of support.

To ensure that the children of New York City remain safe, we must continuously adapt with the growing social, mental, and physical needs of the families. FAR/Differential response can be implemented when there are no severe or repeated high-risk allegations of child abuse, which includes sexual abuse and/or physical abuse. The FAR approach allows the caseworker to partner with families on low-risk investigations. This means that families are actively involved in the scheduling of the initial home visit and agree to work with their caseworker in identifying their service needs, rather than being told what their needs are. The family's participation is a key factor in enabling the caseworker to build a bond and work with the family to determine the services they may need to thrive.

The FAR approach allows CPS to collaboratively work with families using a solution-focused technique to encourage families to identify their needs and appropriate services. FAR caseworkers continue to assess safety throughout the FAR relationship for about 60 days. At the end of the relationship, there is no determination of whether there was credible abuse or neglect, which is different from a traditional investigation. We understand that the determinations have long lasting effects for families and their livelihood. Once the FAR engagement concludes, and the concerns have been addressed, the family continues to work with the service providers for continued support.

The FAR approach is a modern-day, child welfare response to meeting the needs of all families. It promotes equality, family stabilization, and empowerment which are all protective factors that support positive outcomes for children and families. At this time, FAR is offered in the Borough of Queens and Brooklyn, and we are hopeful that we can expand and provide services in all boroughs.

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“Children are NOT for \$ale”

Developing a Heightened Response to Identifying and Helping Juvenile Trafficking Victims Within the NYC Child Welfare System

Selina Higgins, LCSW-R

Director

NYC ACS, Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy

The Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution abolished slavery and involuntary servitude except as a punishment for a crime. However, slavery and involuntary servitude occur on a daily basis in New York City, across America, and also throughout the world, through the trafficking of people for sex and labor. Human Trafficking IS slavery. It consists of the selling and buying of people through the use of force (violence), fraud (trickery), or coercion (threats), or through the manipulation of vulnerabilities to recruit victims into the life.

Traffickers often use a “grooming process” to develop an attachment with a vulnerable, often traumatized child to build trust and an emotional connection. They “love bomb” their victims, then create a dependency through a roller-coaster of psychological manipulation, similar to the power and control tactics of perpetrators of domestic violence. The victim believes the exploiter loves them and will do anything to maintain that affection, anything at all. Alternately, some youth, due to homelessness and/or a lack of resources to fulfill basic needs, engage in “survival sex” to have a place to stay, food, or even a coat to wear. It should be clearly understood, that as per the Safe Harbour Act of 2008, no matter what the situation, all children under the age of 18 are victims, and no child should ever be sold for sex or labor, for any reason.

Due to the recognition of the continually increasing number of youth being identified as trafficked or using sex as a means for survival, in 2014, the NYC Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) developed a CSEC Strategic Plan which provided recommendations for improvement and reform based upon research and stakeholder interviews. Resultantly, ACS established its Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy (OCTPP), to lead all aspects of policy and practice concerning trafficked and commercially sexually exploited children, across all of ACS’ divisions and programs. OCTPP manages the annual Safe Harbour grant that funds services for trafficked and at-risk children. These services include: the placement of two Safe Horizon CSEC Consultants at the Nicholas Scoppetta Children’s Center which engages with and assess youth for trafficking; the provision of trafficking awareness groups at the Children’s Center, and the Crossroads and Horizon Detention Centers that are operated by the nationally renowned Girls Educational and Mentoring Services (GEMS); and the development of CSEC prevention services by three agencies with expertise in working with the LGBTQ population to reduce trafficking vulnerability. – Ali Forney Center, Hetrick Martin Institute, and The Door.

To enhance communication and provide linkage between the various staff who work to help children, OCTPP developed and maintains the Child Trafficking Mailbox which accepts notifications and provides technical assistance, guidance, and referrals. OCTPP also maintains the new Child Trafficking Database (CTDB), which effectuates the NYS mandated sex trafficking screenings electronically, thereby, capturing data for future reference and aggregation. OCTPP also develops and provides trainings across NYC to ACS, foster care, preventive services and detention staff, as well as to other City and community agencies, to build awareness of trafficking dynamics and indicators, and to teach skills to help trafficked and at-risk youth. In 2017, OCTPP trained or arranged training for over 2,250 professionals.

OCTPP also increases awareness through its annual “January is National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month” events, which, in 2018, included the first NYC Human Trafficking Awareness Resource Fair, offering representation from over 40 programs to over 300 attendees. The Fair also included a press conference by Commissioner David A. Hansell and Deputy Mayor Herminia Palacio, to unveil the purchase and distribution of “I am Little Red,” a ten-minute animated video highlighting exploiter techniques for the middle school population. “Little Red” will be distributed across ACS, foster care, preventive and detention sites. 2018 also brought forth the commencement of a new media campaign - “Children are NOT for \$ale,” through the use of four striking posters for distribution, a planned brochure, NYC Trafficking Prevention Agency Resource Directory, and many other trainings and events.

Further, in recognition of the need to provide closer connection and support to the agencies that care daily for trafficked and at-risk of trafficking children, ACS relocated OCTPP under the Division of Family Permanency Services' (FPS) Office of Older Youth Services (OYS). Although housed within FPS, OCTPP will continue to lead all aspects of ACS' policy and practice concerning trafficked and commercially sexually exploited children across all of ACS' divisions and programs.

Yes, children should NEVER be for \$ale, and ACS' OCTPP is working diligently to help children and providers develop awareness of exploiter tactics and provide the skills needed to help mitigate and move trafficked children out of the life to safety and permanency.

And so you ask, how can YOU help? Social workers can play an integral part in helping trafficked youth move from exploitation to safety. First, develop an awareness of the red flags that indicate trafficking. Keep in mind that the adolescent brain is not fully developed, which tends to result in impulsive and reactionary behavior, as well as the misinterpretation of social cues, that makes them vulnerable to trauma bonding. Most trafficked and at-risk youth have also been impacted by multiple aggregating risk factors (poverty, sexual abuse, substance abuse, etc.) which influence choices. When working with trafficked children, be mindful that asking for details about traumatic experiences can be intrusive and may evoke resistance due to feelings of embarrassment, shame, self-blame, fear, or anger. Unless in a therapeutic relationship, only ask for details if it is a necessary requirement for your job (i.e., filing a report). Otherwise, knowing specific details is not necessary to provide help. Finally, please report all trafficking victims to the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 888-373-7000 and share that number widely.

If you want to learn about upcoming OCTPP trainings, email Traffickingtraining@acs.nyc.gov for notifications.

Manipulation
Intimidation
Seduction
Humiliation
Money
Threats
Fear
Coercion
Exploitation

CHILDREN ARE NOT FOR \$ALE

**Which children
are at higher
risk of being
trafficked?**

RUNAWAY AND
HOMELESS YOUTH

CHILDREN IN THE
FOSTER CARE
SYSTEM

YOUTH IN THE
JUVENILE JUSTICE
SYSTEM

CHILDREN WITH
HISTORIES OF ABUSE

CHILDREN WITH
HISTORIES OF
SUBSTANCE ABUSE

CHILDREN WITH
DISABILITIES

LGBTQ YOUTH

REFUGEES,
IMMIGRANTS & NON-
ENGLISH SPEAKING
PERSONS

Human Trafficking is Modern-Day Slavery

If you or someone you know is a victim of human trafficking, contact
The National Human Trafficking Hotline **(888) 373-7888** or text **233733** or
NYPD Special Victims/Human Trafficking Hotline **(646) 610-7272**

Help Us Stop Child Trafficking

NAVY BLUE
is the official color
for Human Trafficking
Awareness and Prevention.
By wearing a navy blue
ribbon we help raise
awareness of human
trafficking and child
sexual exploitation.



NYC
Administration for
Children's Services



Developing an Implicit Bias Learning Program for New York City Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Professionals

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NYC ACS, Workforce Institute

The New York City child welfare system acknowledges the racial disproportionality and disparities that are documented. This is not an issue unique to New York City. Across the nation, data show that Black, Latino, and Native American children are placed in the child welfare and juvenile justice system programs at higher rates than White children. Despite research showing maltreatment rates are similar between Black and White families, Black youth are placed in foster care at higher rates than their white counterparts. In 2014, Black children comprised less than 30% of the child population in New York City. Among children in foster care, Black children made up 58.6% of the population. In addition to placement in foster care, racial disproportionality exists within the juvenile justice system as well. Black children made up 27.6% of the New York City youth population between the ages of 7 - 18 year old in 2014. However, the same population comprised 67% of the youth placed in Non-Secure Placement and 67.2% of the youth admitted to Detention. The racial disproportionality can be attributed to implicit bias. Implicit bias is the unconscious judgements influenced by images and life experiences that shape how we perceive others. These biases can be both positive or negative. In order to alleviate the disparity within human services, the Office of the Mayor passed measures requiring the NYC Administration for Children's Services to train all of their staff about implicit bias. In response to this measure, the NYC ACS Workforce Institute is developing learning programs for ACS staff and their contract provider agencies.

The Workforce Institute will introduce their Understanding and Undoing Implicit Bias learning program that will provide learners with a clear definition of implicit bias, the science behind implicit bias and strategies for recognizing and reducing one's biases. This multicomponent course will consist of an eLearning module and a one-day instructor led training. The eLearning module will serve as a standalone training, as well as a prerequisite for the instructor led training. All ACS employees will be required to complete the eLearning module. Through the eLearning module, participants will explore a variety of media to further their understanding of implicit bias, the link between microaggressions and implicit bias, different strategies for recognizing and addressing implicit bias. Learners will complete knowledge checks, branching scenarios and brief case studies that will enhance their knowledge of implicit bias and how it works. In addition to learning personal strategies for eliminating biases, learners will be introduced to critical institutional strategies for identifying and eliminating bias within organizational practices. Each module will provide a learner with key things to remember, summarizing the critical points from each section. The eLearning module will consist of six modules.

After completing the eLearning module, child welfare and juvenile justice staff will be eligible to participate in the instructor led training. This portion of the course will focus on how implicit bias influences decision making. Trained facilitators will guide learners through exercises that will build on the knowledge obtained from the eLearning model. Group work, gaming, lecturettes, and case scenarios will allow learners to develop skills to address implicit bias within their decision-making.

After completing this learning program, learners will receive resources that will allow them to continue

their learning on implicit bias. Since education and developing awareness of one's implicit biases are some key debiasing strategies, the Workforce Institute wants to support learners in their journey to alter their implicit biases.

Providing child welfare and juvenile justice professionals with training is a start to addressing the implicit bias within the New York City child welfare system. In order to prevent implicit bias from influencing how child welfare professionals determine which children enter the system, staff must be able to recognize its signs. Additionally, child welfare institutions must adopt practices that will support efforts to reduce opportunities for implicit bias to impact work. This includes supporting training around implicit bias, examining hiring practices and reviewing policies to ensure they do not contributing to the disproportionality that exists within our system.

Casting New Light on the Long Shadow of Racial Disproportionality & Disparity in New York City Child Welfare System



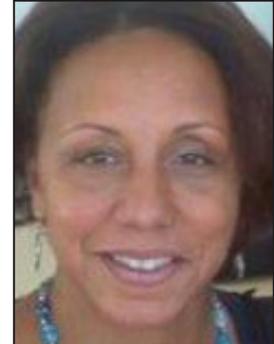
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Responsible for investigating all reported allegations of child abuse and neglect in New York City, the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) believes every child and family served by ACS will be strong, nurtured, safe, and part of a supportive community. Its mission is to support communities, strengthen families, protect children, and promote healthy child development, ensuring that young people flourish as they grow into adulthood. A core foundational value is equity. ACS seeks to counter the economic poverty and chronic stress that disproportionately harms the city’s children and families of color.

Research and data have consistently shown that, at key decision making points in the child welfare continuum, the outcomes for children of color differ when compared to White children. The depiction of racial/ethnic distribution of children in the population, at key points in the path through the NYC child welfare system, indicates Black children are more likely to be reported to the child abuse hotline, have a substantiated report of abuse or neglect, are less likely (compared to Hispanic children) to receive in-home preventive services, and more likely to enter foster care, and remain in foster care longer.

ACS has undertaken various efforts and activities since 2006 to bring to light the systemic issues contributing to racial disproportionality and disparity, to change how we view race, ethnicity, culture, and sexual orientation in terms of client services and staff relationships. These efforts are led, in large part, by the ACS Racial Equity and Cultural Competence Committee (RECCC) which has employed a variety of strategies to raise awareness and understanding, as well as build knowledge and develop skills to impact change with measurable results.

ACS established the Taskforce on Racial Equity and Cultural Competency in 2006 (renamed Racial Equity and Cultural Competence Committee — RECCC, in 2011) to promote racial equity throughout the NYC child welfare, juvenile justice, and early care and education systems. The overarching goal of the RECCC to achieve a racially equitable child welfare system for all children and families, a goal closely aligned with the social work core values of dignity and worth of the person and social justice. Membership includes a representation of ACS staff, external stakeholders and professionals committed to educating and raising awareness of institutional racism and implicit bias. There are four subcommittees: training, media/ outreach, data, and policy.

ACS has long recognized the importance of having a well-informed and trained workforce in order to promote system improvements. Most of the racial equity work in the early years included hosting guest speakers such as Joyce James, Khatib Waheed, and Dr. Shawn Marsh, who are national experts in racial equity work, as well as learning from other jurisdictions who had registered some success in reducing racial disproportionality. Many of the senior leadership and members of the RECCC attended the Undoing Racism workshop facilitated by the People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond (<http://www.pisab.org/>). This two and a half day workshop was the impetus for the core work that took place between 2006 and 2011. Established in 2012, the Office of LGBTQ Policy & Practice works to improve the overall outcomes for LGBTQ children, young people, and adults involved with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. The Office is charged with carrying out the agency’s vision of creating an environment where all young people – including LGBTQ young people – are respected, affirmed, and empowered to thrive into healthy and happy adults. In order to realize this vision, the LGBTQ Office implements the Agency’s LGBTQ Policy & translates it into everyday best practices.

Over the last 5 years, the RECCC has been engaged in a series of coordinated efforts focused on training for newly hired staff, supervisors and managers, convening healing circle groups, hosting video seminars, addressing policies, and the creation of an exhibit based on social service and child welfare policies illustrating institutional and systemic racism (The Historical Child Welfare Timeline: A Transformational Experience).. Mostly, the activities have targeted ACS staff.

Acknowledging the overrepresentation of children of color in the child welfare continuum, from who gets reported to the child abuse hotline to entrance and length of stay in foster care, the Racial Equity Cultural Competence Committee (RECCC) embarked on several strategies to engage agency staff, partners, and other stakeholders on issues of institutional and structural racism, and implicit bias. This approach has had three foci of analysis: The Individual/Agency level, the Institutional level, and the Structural level, with lessons learned in each arena.

Individual/Agency Focus

Staff members exposed to training indicated an increased awareness and knowledge of disproportionality and disparity in child welfare, and a willingness to incorporate lessons learned from the workshop into their practice with children, and families, and colleagues. Where organizational support existed, staff incorporated workshop and training content into their practice. Staff also stated that practice and policy changes required the support of their supervisors and agency leadership to be more effective.

Institutional Focus

ACS is a wide and expansive agency serving the five counties in New York State that comprise NYC. While most of the focus on racial equity work in ACS has been guided by the RECCC and toward enhancing individual staff understanding of implicit bias and institutional and structural racism, one challenge has been bridging the silos across the multiple divisions: early care and education, child protection, prevention, foster care, and youth & family justice divisions to develop an agency-wide coordinated strategy in reducing disparate outcomes for children and families. There remains a need, on the organizational level, for dedicated and committed resources within the agency’s structure, to intentionally focus on this work, in order to promote and sustain the investments made to date.

Structural Focus

The causes of disproportionality are multi-faceted and deeply rooted. They include political, social, economic, and structural components as well as individual bias (Casey 2009; Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2009). The child welfare system does not exist in a vacuum; it is interconnected with

other systems and includes other disciplines and stakeholders. Central to reducing disparate outcomes is collaboration, partnership, and communication across the systems that touch the lives of children and families of color served by the child welfare system. This includes working with schools of social work, the family court system, the public/private education systems, health and mental health systems, and the community, among others, to raise their awareness of the scope of the challenges, as well as engage them as partners in change. The Historical Child Welfare Timeline has been an excellent tool for addressing this focus with other systems.

Collectively, these and other approaches by the RECCC have positioned ACS to advance racial equity and culturally responsive practices across multiple divisions and staff. The RECCC uses the same strategies to address disproportionality and disparities that ACS uses to improve child welfare for all children and families. These strategies are strongly supported by the senior leadership, engaged by all levels of the workforce, our community, and institutional stakeholders.



NYC ACS staff presenting The Historical Child Welfare Timeline exhibit at the NASW-NYC *Social Work in the City* Conference. From the left: Robert Martinez, Sam Sills, Jacqueline Martin, Alexis Howard, Christiana Best-Giacomini, Cylvia Springer, and Ancil Payne.



The Historical Child Welfare Timeline exhibit focuses on the legislative history of the child welfare system from the 1800s to present day. It emphasizes racial disproportionality and disparity within the child welfare system.

Building Coaching Competency for Supervisors and Managers in NYC's Child Welfare System



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The Administration for Children's Services (ACS) Workforce Institute was developed in 2015 with the vision of offering frontline staff across the child and family services' sector in New York City the learning, coaching, and support necessary to perform their roles to the highest standards, provide high quality services to child and families in the care of ACS, and to manage stress and other challenges related to vicarious trauma. The development of the Workforce Institute came after a review of critical incidents, and a comprehensive self-analysis by ACS. ACS identified several areas in need of improvement and reform within the NYC child welfare system. One of the areas identified was a need to strengthen and support frontline supervision and coaching.

Building Coaching Competency (BCC), one of two foundational learning programs at the ACS Workforce Institute, was piloted and launched in 2016 to support NYC child welfare supervisors and managers in being able to enhance their supervisory practice with frontline staff. BCC is a two-day in-person learning program designed to build strong, capable, and well-trained supervisors and managers, that can use effective coaching strategies with staff to ensure that children and families receive the highest quality of care. In the BCC program, supervisors and managers learn and practice effective strategies to create a collaborative strength-based culture with their staff. The program introduces skills and concepts that contribute to the long-term professional development of supervisors and staff and helps to build confidence, boost morale, and encourage critical thinking skills amongst staff members (Administration of Children's Services Workforce Institute, 2016).

With the recognition that shifting the child welfare culture to a strengths-based learning community that supports coaching, also requires that coaching be valued by the administrators of the organization; the ACS Workforce Institute has also developed a modified BCC learning program for child welfare Senior Administrators. This learning program allows leadership to gain a better understanding of the coaching process and better supports supervisors in the implementation of coaching.

To demonstrate its ongoing commitment to creating a coaching culture and support, the transfer of learning from training to on-the-job application, the ACS Workforce Institute has developed a multi-level coaching program that supports implementation and is made easily accessible to supervisory and managerial staff. Supporting implementation of coaching is essential, as research shows that coaching within child welfare leads to improvements in practice, quality of work, and success in working with children and families. The ACS Workforce Institute also recognizes that successful implementation of coaching requires repetition, time, application and reflection (Mink, Owen & Mink, 1993). In addition to BCC, our two day foundational learning program, the coaching implementation support offered by the ACS Workforce Institute, includes a 30 minute e-Learn video that introduces learners to the coaching concepts, in person

coaching collaboratives designed to build learner confidence and commitment to using the coach approach, monthly conference calls to support staff that is not able to attend an in person workshop, onsite technical assistance to support learners in overcoming barriers to implementation, and a series of skill refreshers that aim to increase learner proficiency in using each of the coaching skills. Each stage of the coaching program is designed to increase enthusiasm around coaching and provide ongoing learning and practice opportunities.

This year, additional resources have been allocated for the ACS Workforce Institute, in collaboration with their partners in child protection and juvenile justice, to integrate program based coaches to further support ACS supervisors and managers to competently and consistently use the coach approach as part of supervision with their teams, and create opportunities for staff to practice core foundational skills including strengths-based engagement, motivational interviewing, and safety and risk assessment, and decision making. Program based coaches will work closely with ACS leadership to implement an array of research-based transfer of learning strategies to support the competent and consistent use of these critical foundational skills. Consistent skill practice coupled with strengths-based feedback promotes the transfer of learning to daily practice with families. We believe, competent and consistent use of these critical skills will foster positive family engagement with the right match of services and help families to build on their strengths to keep their children safe.

According to research by Joyce and Showers (2002), only when coaching is provided, is it reasonable to expect that staff members be able to adapt and master new strategies learned in training, fit new strategies/skills to existing setting and skills, increase specific skills and abilities to reach specific outcomes and enhance performance. Through coaching, child welfare supervisory and managerial staff will understand their essential role in promoting staff to apply newly learned skills and knowledge into their everyday practice. The long-term outcome of these efforts is that frontline staff have the necessary knowledge and skills to engage children and families, better assess safety and risk, make sound casework decisions, and provide high quality services to the children and families.

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Parents Helping Parents: ICL's Family Resource Center Continue to Make a Difference

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Chief Networking and Relationship Officer
Institute for Community Living, Inc

ICL serves people of New York, who are racially, culturally and linguistically diverse; differing in abilities, largely low-income, under or even unemployed. Issues related to immigration, sexual orientation, gender identity expression, as well as varying levels of trauma are often present. ICL is committed to move beyond cultural competency and to work diligently in connecting with communities and to build trusting relationships.

Peer-to-peer support is the heart of the work going on at the very busy, but always welcoming Family Resource Center (FRC) on Rockaway Avenue in East New York. Reflecting the model first developed in New York State in the early 2000's, "peer-to-peer" means that FRC is run BY and FOR parents with a child who has or is at risk of having a disability, particularly the classification of Social Emotional Disturbance (SED) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Section 504.

The goal at ICL's FRC is to support parents (primary caregivers) in their own decision-making as they set goals on behalf of their children. Program Director, Terri Johnson explains, "Parents are helped to find their voice and to ensure that their voices are heard." This is exceptionally important in racially and ethnically diverse communities where children have historically and presently been disproportionately overrepresented in receiving this disability classification. Parents and communities can feel marginalized within the education, mental health and social service systems. When parents come to FRC they are not told what to do – instead they work with their advocate to figure out what they want and need to do." Together, parent and advocate set goals, come up with a plan and continually check in on the efficacy of that plan."

Each FRC also has on-site clinical partners to address the complexities of their child and family's situations, through special workshops and one-on-one counseling. The children, youth and young adults served are from age 0 to 26 and considered "at-risk." The majority have been involved in the foster care system or the mental health residential system; many have been exposed to or been the victims of domestic violence.

The FRC model also works in helping parents feel less overwhelmed, more skilled at supporting their children, more connected to their communities, and in empowering themselves as experts in their own lives. Parents learn about services that can benefit their children and gain skills that help them be more effective in navigating the mental health, education, and other child-serving systems in New York City.

Specially trained youth advocates are another key component of the FRC. They too have first-hand experiences of receiving services through child-serving systems. Youth advocates work with their peers in groups and individual collaboration to lend support toward feeling successful and understood.

There are many social and recreational outings built in to the FRC program that help strengthen bonds and provide families the opportunities to relax and enjoy activities that often seem out of reach – trips to Broadway shows, summer camp, or holiday celebrations and gift-giving. The ICL-FRC will be able to offer

an even more enriching experience for families, as of June when it joins other ICL local clinical programs and moves into a brand-new integrated health hub. ICL's behavioral health services, working in close collaboration with its medical services partner, CHN, will be located in the Hub.

The beautiful, light-filled 40,000 square foot building will offer, as per Terri Johnson, "one stop shopping" the convenience of which cannot be overstated for parents usually forced to travel to disparate locations for health and mental health support. The Hub will provide more accessible services to the seven high need neighborhoods.. After extensive community input that continues through an active Community Health Advisory Council, the Hub is dedicated to improving the overall health of the community through care that moves beyond cultural competence and where all people are made to feel welcome and comfortable to receive support. This is especially important during stressful and challenging times. Community members are encouraged to engage with services as they move forward on their chosen path to obtain physical and emotional wellbeing for themselves and their families.

Terri Johnson is excited about the move and feels that it will allow the FRC program to better serve the seven high need areas it is charged with helping – East New York, Brownsville, Bedford Stuyvesant, Bushwick and Canarsie.

ICL provides trauma-informed, recovery-oriented, integrated, and person-centered care helping some 10,000 people each year through 106 programs throughout New York City – a range of supportive housing, counseling and other support services for people living with serious mental illness, substance abuse or developmental disabilities. David Woodlock, ICL CEO, is committed to the work at FRC; it's a program that was developed under his leadership at the New York State Office of Mental Health where he worked to make children and families a public priority. He advocated for the State to commit significant resources for family support and for family and youth peer advocacy across the State. He fully understands what FRC services can mean to families. "The FRC helps each family that comes through its doors create their own narrative of resilience." Resilience allows people to strive until they are able thrive.



The Critical Role of Adoption Specialists throughout the Adoption Process

Kristina Daley, LMSW
Adoption Specialist

For over 25 years, as a Social Worker, pre and post license, I have had the privilege of helping families grow through adoption. Many families choose to grow their family through adoption due to infertility, being related to a child that is in need of a permanent family, or because they have always wanted to parent through adoption. There are three pathways to adoption - fostering to adopt, private domestic adoption, and international adoption.

Adoption Social Workers engage skills specific to adoption which include knowing numerous grief process, the impact of loss and trauma on child development, complex trauma, helping families develop a plan to manage child behavior, and preparing parents to bond and help their child attach to them through training before and post adoption. Lastly, Adoption Social Workers are prepared to provide therapy to the child or parent, and parent coaching in the moment or through family therapy.

Regardless of the adoption path a family takes, all prospective adoptive parents are required to meet federal and local child welfare laws which govern adoptive placement of children rooted in keeping children safe. Therefore, Adoption Social Workers, whether they work for a private or public agency, must assess the ability of a prospective adoptive family to keep a child physically and emotionally safe. Throughout the assessment process, the lens of loss and trauma, attachment and bonding, and child development are used to determine the strengths of a prospective adoptive parent, and what might be a challenge for them once they are parenting. Hence, many Adoption Specialists' also provide play therapy, family therapy, or individual therapy to children who have been adopted, or to their adoptive and birth parents.

As licensed Social Workers, Adoption Social Workers/Specialists are trained to conduct these distinct assessments through a process called a home study. The home study has three goals that must be achieved to approve a family for adoption: 1). Collect documents, 2). Assess the family's potential to raise a child and 3). Ensure permanency through providing post adoption services. The documents collected, and the assessment are required by child welfare law for all adoption pathways, federally and locally. Providing post adoption services varies depending on the family's adoption path. Once a family is approved to adopt a child, the Adoption Social Worker supports them through the "waiting to be matched with a child" period and counsels them on a potential match. They also provide post placement or post adoption support, when the adoptive parents bring their child or children home.

As an Adoption Social Worker, I work with families post adoption as a parent coach, as a child and family therapist, or as a resource for post adoption services. I assess families' abilities to meet the needs of a child who has experienced loss and trauma due to abuse and neglect, and experience alternative forms of care. I support adoptive parents by engaging the parenting style that promotes bonding and attachment with their adoptive child and helping a child feel emotionally secure in the care of their parents.

SPRING CONTINUING EDUCATION WORKSHOPS

Creating Coherent Client Narratives

Gail Noppe-Brandon, LLC, LCSW, MPA, MA
Saturday, April 28, 2018
10:00 AM - 5:00 PM
6 CE Contact Hours

Cornerstones to Successful Couples Therapy: The Art of Intimacy and Connection

Carole Gladstone-Ramos, LCSW, CASAC
Monday, April 30, 2018
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM
3 CE Contact Hours

Perinatal Mood Disorders: Causes, Symptoms, Treatment and Legislative Initiatives

Susan Dowd Stone, LCSW
Saturday, May 5, 2018
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM
4 CE Contact Hours

Building Trauma-Competent Organizations

Benjamin Sher, LMSW
Thursday, May 10, 2018
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM
3 CE Contact Hours

Palliative Care: Facilitating Quality Care for Patients and Families

Christine Wilkins, Ph.D., LCSW
Tuesday & Wednesday, May 15-16
(Must attend both days)
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM
6 CE Contact Hours

Undoing Racism Workshop: Antiracism Training for Social Workers

Kimberley Richards EdD
May 17 and 18, 2018
(Must attend both days)
9:00 AM - 6:00 PM
16 CE Contact Hours

Social Work Ethics and the Age of Technology

Joe Barker, LMSW
Tuesday, May 22, 2018
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
2 CE Contact Hours

Empowering the Social Work Practitioner: Building Resilience Through Self Awareness to Mitigate Stress From Client Trauma and the Workplace

Robert Schachter, DSW, LMSW
Wednesday, May 23, 2018
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM
3 CE Contact Hours

An Introduction to a Gestalt Therapy Approach to Social Work Practice

Evan Senreich, Ph.D., LCSW, CASAC
Thursday, May 24, 2018
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM
3 CE Contact Hours

Positive Psychology: Building Resilience, Hope and Happiness in our Clients, and Ourselves

Reji Mathew, PhD, LCSW
Saturday, June 2, 2018
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
6 CE Contact Hours

Dialectical Behavior Therapy – Applying DBT Skills When Emotion Dysregulation Thwarts Treatment Depression & Trauma

Susan Dowd Stone, LCSW
Sunday, June 3, 2018
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
6 CE Contact Hours
Location TBD

Psychopharmacology: Best Practices and Navigating Your Relationships with Your Client's Psychiatrist

Ina Becker, MD
Saturday, June 9, 2018
10:00 AM - 5:00 PM
6 CE Contact Hours

Exploring Reentry for Prison: Strengths, Obstacles, Challenges

Carl Mazza, DSW, LMSW, ACSW
Tuesday, June 12, 2018
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM
3 CE Contact Hours

Interpersonal Psychotherapy

Kathleen Clougherty, LCSW
Dr. Myrna Weissman
Saturday, June 16, 2018
10:00 AM - 5:00 PM
6 CE Contact Hours

Sustaining Conversations on Racism, Identity & Our Mutual Humanity

Linda Lausell Bryant, MSW, Ph.D
Mohan Vinjamuri, MSW, Ph.D
Wednesday, June 20, 2018
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM
3 CE Contact Hours

Introducing Vicarious Resilience: Reframing the Impact of Working with Individuals and Communities Surviving Trauma and Loss

Madelyn Miller, PhD, LCSW
Thursday, June 21, 2018
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM
3 CE Contact Hours

Enhancing Therapeutic Presence and Effectiveness with Mindfulness

Donald Fleck, LCSW-R
Sunday, June 24, 2018
10:00 AM - 5:00 PM
6 CE Contact Hours
Location: TBD

Isolation of Aging Individuals: A Family Problem

Molly Fogel, LCSW
Thursday, June 28, 2018
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM
3 CE Contact Hours

Reaching Children: How to Use Play Therapy in Clinical Practice

Robin Donath, LCSW
Saturday, June 30, 2018
10:00 AM - 5:00 PM
6 CE Contact Hours

***Workshops indicated in red are eligible for LMFT and Social Work Continuing Education Contact Hours. LMFTs will only receive CE contact hours for the workshops indicated in red. Social Work CE contact hours are available for all workshops.**

Click here for more information and how to register

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LMSW TEST PREP WORKSHOP

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