

TESTIMONY BEFORE
THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

HEARING

ON

RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS SERVICES FOR SEXUALLY-EXPLOITED YOUTH

PRESENTED BY
ROBYN CAUSEY, DIRECTOR OF YOUTH INITIATIVES

NEW YORK CITY
DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 2009

Good morning Chairman Lewis Fidler and members of the City Council's Youth Services Committee. My name is Robyn Causey, Director of Youth Initiatives for the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD). On behalf of DYCD's Commissioner, Jeanne B. Mullgrav, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the provision of services to sexually exploited youth.

Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY)

For youth without a place of shelter where supervision and care are available, their problems become overwhelming. These conditions put young people at risk for a range of problems including substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, chronic medical conditions, and mental illnesses – such as depression and post-traumatic stress. Once homeless, youth are at increased risk for physical abuse, violent victimization and sexual exploitation, including “survival sex” and prostitution. The negative consequences associated with homelessness make it imperative to respond effectively to the needs of runaway and homeless youth, and to focus on family reunification and prevention.

DYCD's Continuum of Care for Vulnerable Youth

As you know, in 2006 DYCD strengthened its Runaway and Homeless Services by establishing a continuum of care to better meet the needs of runaway and homeless youth. The model includes a drop-in center in each borough, street outreach and transportation services, specialized residential services and additional housing options. This revised system has made it easier for youth to access needed services, and improved coordination of resources. It also offers specialized housing options for sexually-exploited youth, pregnant and parenting youth, and lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender and questioning youth.

In December 2008, DYCD issued an RFP for new contracts to refine the continuum of care that offers four main services for RHY: Drop-In Centers in each borough, Street Outreach Services, Crisis Shelters where a young person can stay for up to 30 days, and Transitional Independent Living programs for young people who need longer term residential care.

As you know Chairman Fidler, DYCD is in the final stages of contract development with agencies that have been offered awards for new contracts that will begin on July 1, 2009. We are pleased to report that through this RFP we have continued to expand residential options for young people. Where we previously funded three facilities for Crisis Shelter, we plan to fund four. Where we previously funded five facilities to provide Transitional Independent Living (TIL) Programs, we plan to fund six. This enables DYCD to provide even more diverse programs in additional locations across the City. We are grateful for the significant support from this committee and City Council which supports additional services not funded through the RFP.

Services for Sexually Exploited Youth

DYCD's community-based partners are equipped to support vulnerable young people who are facing a range of personal issues and barriers to success, including sexually-exploitation. Each of the four-funded service areas has an important role in assessing young people's individualized needs and directing them to appropriate care. While every aspect of our RHY system is designed to address the varied needs of RHY, today I would like to share some examples with you in regards to how we meet the needs of sexually-exploited youth:

- Street Outreach - Street outreach vans go to areas where homeless youth are known to assemble and to engage in "survival sex." Our trained outreach workers help each young person they encounter, assess their individual situation, and encourage them to access services. In addition, outreach staff provides information and resources on safer sex practices.
- Drop-In Center -- Safe Space, which operates the Queens Drop-In Center and a TIL program, also has a program operating in Manhattan for sex workers, primarily boys, offering vocational training and harm reduction services.
- Crisis Shelter -- In DYCD-funded crisis facilities, each youth works with a master's level staff member to create an Individualized Service Plan. These plans outline a young person's short and long-term goals. In addition, all youth receive comprehensive assessments which help us to identify their needs in regards to medical and mental health care, substance abuse prevention and family mediation. It was through this process last year that 42 young people identified themselves as victims of sexual exploitation. However, we know that many more young people are afraid or ashamed to admit that they were victimized at this stage.
- Transitional Independent Living -- For young women who identify themselves as being sexually exploited, DYCD funds Girls Educational and Mentoring Services, or GEMS to provide long term specialized residential services. We are pleased that we will continue to partner with GEMS with a new contract starting on July 1, 2009. GEMS helps sexually-exploited youth to stabilize their lives and work toward developing an independent lifestyle, free from the control of an exploiting adult.

Partnerships

In addition to continuing to broaden our services within the continuum, we have also strengthened our collaborations other City agencies. Some examples resulting from our partnerships include:

- Sharing of data with other city agencies that interact with vulnerable youth. A match with the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) shows that in Fiscal 2007 and 2008 seven and eight percent, respectively, of youth who entered our RHY system had been at DJJ. We are also able to look at the demographics

of those most likely to end up in shelter care. This helps both systems target resources better to reduce detention usage, enhance family engagement and prevent homelessness.

- A pilot program with Department of Homeless Services to provide up to 50 Section 8 vouchers each year to vulnerable youth exiting our Transitional Independent Living (TIL) programs.
- Coordinating resources with HRA, to help some RHY more efficiently access needed benefits.
- And serve on the Criminal Justice Coordinator's Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force which works with city agencies and community-based organizations to better coordinate services for victims of human trafficking.

In addition to these partnerships we are very excited that for the first time vulnerable youth, including runaway and homeless, will be prioritized for jobs this summer through DYCD's Summer Youth Employment Program. This is particularly noteworthy because employment is an important milestone for a young person to achieve independent living.

In closing, I would like to thank you, again, for this opportunity to discuss DYCD services for vulnerable youth. I am pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Sexual Exploitation and Runaway and Homeless Youth Hearing

April 29, 2009

Testimony by John Welch, Safe Horizon Streetwork Lower East Side

Good Morning, and thank you for this opportunity to testify. I am John Welch, Program Director at Streetwork Lower East Side, a Program of Safe Horizon serving homeless and street-involved young people. Safe Horizon is a victim assistance organization, providing services and support to over 350,000 people a year whose lives have been touched by violence.

I would like to tell the committee about the services we offer, our experience with young adults whose lives intersect with sexual exploitation, our plan to reduce services in light of the current economic crisis, and our strong support for Resolution 1227-A.

Streetwork's two drop-in programs on the Lower East Side and in Central Harlem offer support to between 80 and 120 homeless young people up to age 24 each day in a non-judgmental style, with the goal of helping them access services at their own pace. Our caseload includes just over 500 individuals a month, and we provided services to about 1600 individuals in calendar year 2008. Our two shelter programs, offering 36 beds in all, are full each night and there are more than 100 names on our waiting list.

Our services include concrete support: food, clothing, laundry facilities, showers and emotional as well as practical support: one-on-one counseling, case management, support groups, educational programming, HIV prevention, psychiatry, medical services, syringe exchange and emergency housing.

Our clients come to us with multiple, complex problems and nearly all have experienced extreme trauma at the hands of the people they were supposed to be able to trust.

Several studies done over the years at Streetwork have shown that between 80 and 87 percent of our clients are involved in the in the sex trade. I use the term "sex trade" to highlight the spectrum of young peoples' involvement in sexual exchanges to meet survival needs. While some of our young peoples' exploitation fits into a familiar prostitution paradigm in which experienced adult pimps force naïve young people into ongoing prostitution using any means from trickery to kidnapping to extreme violence, the majority of youth we see enter the sex trade through peers and sometime on their own.

However, this does not mean that they are not being exploited. They are exploited because they have no other means of making money, nowhere to stay and many have histories of sexual abuse that condition them to believe that their value in the world lies in their willingness to meet others' sexual needs. There are as many forms of involvement in the sex trade as there are people involved, but what these young people have in common is lack of opportunity, lack of employment, lack of income, and a lack of safety that comes with homelessness and leads young people to sell sex.

Indeed, a 2008 study done through John Jay College of Criminal Justice surveying sexually exploited youth in New York City, found that the vast majority of homeless young people involved in the sex trade did not fall into the familiar pimp/exploited prostitute paradigm though this form of prostitution is also prevalent. Yet all too often, this is the image we think of when we imagine sexually exploited youth, allowing us to ignore more common experiences of life in the sex trade that are dangerous, exploitative and, over time, emotionally devastating to those who sell sex.

To reach this majority whose exploitation is more subtle and systemic, it is crucial to continue to offer low threshold, non-judgmental services where concrete components like showers, meals and easy-access to a safe, open space form the background for more intensive work offered through case management and other professionalized services.

Unfortunately, the current economic crisis will reduce Streetwork's ability to offer this kind of service to this population and provide an alternative to the streets where inducements to enter the sex trade are everywhere. We have been forced to end 7 staff positions in our Uptown Drop-In Center, 3 positions in our Crisis Shelter Program and 5 positions in our Lower East Side Drop-In Center. In addition, Streetwork programs will be significantly reducing hours of service and client to staff ratios. This represents a devastating loss of services for runaway and homeless youth at the time they need our help the most.

We are in full support of Res 1227-A, particularly the notion of providing a continuum of care to homeless young people through age 24 that recognizes the varied services needed without targeting specific risk factors. We know that homeless young people, ages 18 – 24 are a unique population that is not served adequately by the city's homeless adult programs.

They tell us that they would rather sleep on the train or in a park than go to an adult shelter where they're often intimidated, harassed and robbed.

We appreciate your commitment to this population of disenfranchised young people and urge whatever action possible to bring funding to NYC programs that service this population. Thank you for holding this hearing and please feel free to ask me any questions and/or contact us if we can be of any help working together for homeless young people.

Oversight: Federal and State Legislative Issues Regarding Runaway and Homeless Youth
Proposed Resolution Number: 1227A
Testimony: Meredith Dank

My name is Meredith Dank, Ph.D. and I am an adjunct professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and a research associate at the Center for Community Alternatives. From January 2006-November 2008, I was the senior research associate for a NIJ-funded study through John Jay College on the commercial sexual exploitation of children in New York City (Curtis, Terry, Dank, Kahn, Dombrowski, 2008). The primary goal of the study was to provide a reliable and ethnographically rich description of the local CSEC population, including its size, characteristics, experiences, and service needs. Below is a summary of the methodology employed by the research team at John Jay College, some of the key findings, and lastly, several policy implications borne out of the study.

Population Estimate and Description

To elicit a representative sample of CSEC youth, the study adopted a subject recruitment method known as "Respondent Driven Sampling" (RDS). This method has previously been effective in recruiting representative samples of hard-to-reach groups by taking advantage of intra-group social connections to build a sample pool (Abdul-Quader, Heckathorn, Sabin, and Saidel 2006; Heckathorn 1997, 2002; Heckathorn, Semaan, Broadhead, and Hughes 2002; Robinson et al. 2006).

In this study, the basic mechanics of RDS recruitment were as follows: With the assistance of a number of local service agencies, the research team identified a small number of initial subjects (or "seeds"). These subjects were interviewed, paid for their time and effort (\$20), and given sequentially numbered coupons to pass along to other friends or associates who also participate in CSEC markets. The coupons indicated how to contact the research team for an interview, and for each one redeemed, the referral source received an additional incentive (\$10). Subjects referred in this fashion were provided with additional coupons, spawning multiple waves of research subjects drawn from an increasingly broad network. Although the subjects came from across the city, most of the interviews were conducted in a public park in lower Manhattan.

According to the previous literature, RDS can produce a representative sample of the population of interest (Heckathorn 1997; Heckathorn et al. 2002, Abdul-Quader et al. 2006, Robinson et al. 2006). Based on that literature, we initially planned to interview 200 youth. However, that number appeared to under-represent some portions of the CSEC population that were known to exist (especially girls with pimps). Partially for that reason, as well as because the youth were easier to refer than originally thought, the project extended its recruitment goal beyond the original target. More than 400 interviews were ultimately conducted with 329 youth (some were interviewed twice). The research team then excluded 80 of these youth (leaving a final N of 249) after becoming convinced that they did not meet one of the two eligibility criteria: (1) 18 years of age or younger and (2) participated in CSEC-related activities.

Key Findings on the CSEC Population in New York City

Population Size

Through application of RDS statistical techniques, we estimate that there are currently 3,946 CSEC victims citywide. This number does not include those youth that could not be referred via RDS methods (e.g., girls trafficked into the country that are tightly controlled by adults in indoor environments and that have cultural and linguistic barriers that make it impossible for them to socialize with other youth). A method known as “capture-recapture” was used to derive the estimate, which was based on a comparison of arrest records in the final RDS-generated sample (N = 249) and official arrest records provided by the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). A special seed component was added to the RDS recruitment process, which provided another way to estimate the overall size of the population. The mean value of the population estimate obtained by using the special seeds was 3,769, which is comparable to the population estimate obtained by the traditional capture-recapture technique.

Demographics

- *Gender and age distribution:* The final sample of 249 youth was 48% female, 45% male, and 8% transgender; and the average age of entry into the market was 15.29 years.
- *Race/ethnicity:* African-American and “mixed race” youth made up nearly half of the sample (48%), while just over a quarter of the youth were white (24%) or Hispanic (23%).
- *Place of birth:* The majority of the youth said that they were born in New York City (56%), and less than one in ten (8%) said that they were born outside one of the 50 states.
- *Living situation:* Many of the youth were currently homeless, with 32% characterizing their housing situation as “living in the street,” 24% stating that they lived in a shelter and 6% lived in a squat, although girls were more likely to describe themselves as living in their “family home,” in a “friend’s home,” or in “another home.”

Interaction with Peers

- *Network size:* Some of the youth were involved in quite extensive CSEC youth networks; more than one quarter (27%) claimed to know 20 or more other CSEC youth, and an additional 20% said that they knew between 10 and 20 CSEC youth.
- *Peer influence at point of entry:* Girls, boys, and transgender youth all reported high percentages of their “friends” as responsible for their entry (46%, 44%, and 68% respectively), although some of these “friends” seemed to be acting as surrogate recruiters for pimps.

Interaction with Market Facilitators

- *Prevalence:* We did not find that market facilitators, or “pimps,” were key actors for initiating youth into the market (8%) or controlling them once they were in the market. Only 10% of the sample (6% of the boys and 14% of girls) reported that they had a market facilitator at the time of the interview.
- *Characteristics of the facilitators:* Of the 41 youth with a market facilitator, 37 (90%) reported that their facilitator was male.
- *Size of facilitator operations:* Of the 41 youth with a market facilitator, 31 (76%) reported that their facilitator had more than two other youth working for him.

Service Participation and Needs

- *Frequency of service contacts:* More than two-thirds of the youth (68%) reported that they had visited a youth service agency, and of those, most had experience with more than one agency.
- *Need for employment:* Virtually all of those interviewed (95%) reported trading sex for money. Many of the youth expressed deep concerns about finding legal employment and making as much money as they were currently making; more than half (60%) identified finding stable employment as necessary for them to leave their current life.
- *Other service needs:* Besides employment, 51% cited education and 41% cited stable housing as necessary for them to leave their current life.
- *Role of family dislocations:* Less than 10% of the youth said that they could go to a parent if they were in trouble. Furthermore, only 17% said that they could rely on other family members or family friends to help them out, and another 17% said that they had “no one” who could assist them in times of trouble or doubt.

Reflections on “the Life”

- *Normalization of prostitution:* For many of the youth who were interviewed, the language of prostitution had been normalized. Although several said that they felt “peer pressure” to join in, their narratives were generally less about being “pressured” to participate in CSEC markets as they were about economic necessity, fascination, and curiosity with what appeared to be an emerging “lifestyle.”
- *Threat of violence:* Many of the youth reported contending with violence at the hands of customers, pimps, and other CSEC youth on a daily basis. Customers posed the greatest threat, as some told harrowing stories of being kidnapped and held hostage by customers.
- *Desire to exit:* Despite the normalization process referenced above, 87% expressed a desire to leave “the life.”

Policy Implications

Based on the information that is now known about commercially sexually exploited youth, the following suggestions could help implement more successful and effective policy changes to the existing legislation:

- As boys and transgender youth make up a significant portion of the CSEC population, the focus can no longer be solely on girls. Services that are currently available to prostituted girls also need to be offered to prostituted boys and transgenders, which include: emergency shelter, long-term housing, intensive counseling, medical services, educational opportunities, life-skills and job training and employment opportunities.
- Mandating youth, either through the court system or by law enforcement, to partake in services will most likely not result in the youth exiting the life. As demonstrated by this study, prostituted youth are significantly influenced by their peers, whether it is through recruitment into the market or reasons to remain in the life. Thus, finding ways to infiltrate the youths' social networks will be instrumental in effectively delivering much needed services. One possible way to do this is to find, with the help of existing youth agencies, individuals with the largest and most diverse CSEC network and have them conduct outreach to their peers.
- Training youth agency staff and law enforcement will be key to gaining the trust of prostituted youth. Without the proper training, agency staff and law enforcement officials could discourage a youth from ever seeking help again. Almost, if not, all sexually exploited youth have severe, deep-seated issues with adults and authority, and if they are not approached in a non-judgmental and sympathetic manner, they will see no reason to leave the life.
- To ensure that any and all policy changes are properly implemented, both the state and federal government will be required to set aside appropriate funding for both housing and services. This will not be an inexpensive endeavor, and will require a dedicated team of professionals to map out an efficient and reliable plan.

One fascinating outcome of interviewing the youth was the degree to which the study opened the door on what had been a taboo subject at some of the social service agencies where many of these youth were clients. About a month after the project began interviewing, the director of one agency that had referred some of the initial "seeds" to the project, commented that the interviews had broken the ice on the topic of prostitution, which had never been openly discussed in their group therapy sessions. The interviews, according to him, had opened a floodgate of discussion, but it remained unclear as to whether the reluctance to talk about this topic at social service agencies was because of the shame and the stigma that youth felt, or whether staff members at the agency had been reluctant to bring up the topic for fear of alienating their clients. Yet, with properly trained professionals, the topic of commercial sexual exploitation can be properly

broached, and the youth can seek and ultimately receive the help they need without having to worry about being judged or further stigmatized.

A better understanding of the issues and needs surrounding commercially sexually exploited youth will require changing the mindset of not only policymakers, advocates and law enforcement, but also the public at large. If we continue to treat prostituted youth as offenders rather than victims, we will never succeed in combating this issue. Most importantly, more needs to be done to educate criminal justice administrators and the public about the harms of criminalizing the behavior of those who are most vulnerable to being exploited by adults.

NYC City Council
Youth Services Committee & Committee on Sexual Exploration
Joint Oversight Hearing on Runaway/Homeless Youth and Mental Health
April 29, 2009



Green Chimneys Children's Services: NYC Division
RHY Transitional Programs for LGBTQ Youth
Program Director, Carmen Quiñones
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The NYC Division of Green Chimneys operates 2 transitional programs for LGBTQ RHY, the federally funded TLP and the DYCD funded TIL. Both programs focus on preparing youth for healthy, self-sufficient adulthood within 18 months. In this time frame, the focus for each young person is on employment and education, with accompanying life skills training, which has an intense focus on budgeting/saving.

The programs aim to mimic what it would be like to live on one's own; apartments are leased by the program in "real" apartment buildings in order to provide youth the experience of living in the community while still having program supports in place. This type of living atmosphere requires a high level of stability and functioning on the part of the youth.

Sexual victimization emerges significantly as a cause of homelessness which has become an existing trait of life on the streets. Instead of finding the refuge they seek, once on the street, they are further exposed to a multitude of risks including rape, sexual victimization, prostitution and commercial sexual exploitation. Due to the fact that they are disconnected and disenfranchised from community and lack access to schools, health care, identification, and other supportive services many are forced to turn to survival strategies including engaging in survival sex or the trading of sex to meet basic, substantive needs, leading to increased risk of HIV, STDs, or other health problems. The homeless youth we work with at Green Chimneys are more vulnerable to homophobia, stereotyping and discrimination, increasing their susceptibility to problems within these domains. Transgender homeless youth are more likely than other homeless youth to engage in survival sex, which is sex in exchange for money, shelter, food, drugs or hormones. Some transgender homeless youth will trade sex just to have a place to stay for the night.

There should be more to prevent youth homelessness and provide a pathway towards self-sufficiency when youth fall through the cracks. We can do a better

job of partnering with State and local governments, nonprofits organizations to provide assistance to vulnerable youth.

We are asking City Council to advocate for funding from The Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) to the Department of Homeless Services for 3 million dollars for sub-contractors and agencies that currently work with homeless youth, the 3 million or 5% that would aid at least 10% of the homeless population in New York City.

Recommendations:

- We need more transitional programs, more bed, GED programs for transgender youth who engage in sex work.
- Development of better case management as we need to see youth as individuals; who have amazing strengths, resiliency and are often incredibly sensitive, caring young people who have been given a bad break in life but given the chance and services can rise above their current situations.

INWOOD HOUSE

We Help Teens Take Charge of Their Lives

**Testimony of Mary G. Adams
Assistant Executive Director for Programs
Inwood House
City Council Hearing
on Sexually Exploited Homeless & Runaway Youth
April 28th, 2009**

Good morning. I am Mary Adams, Assistant Executive Director for Programs at Inwood House. Firstly, I would like to thank Chairman Lew Fidler for his continuing dedication to ensuring services are available for vulnerable youth in New York City and his tireless efforts to ensure their needs and voices continue to be heard by our government and the public. I would also like to thank the New York City Council for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of the sexually exploited runaway and homeless youth and specifically on the needs of pregnant and parenting youth who are homeless and have been sexually exploited.

Inwood House has been serving pregnant and parenting teens in New York City for 179 years. Our services include residential care and a full continuum of service for approximately 200 pregnant and parenting teens who are homeless, in foster care or aging out of foster care from throughout New York City. We also provide community-based family support services to pregnant and parenting teens in the South Bronx, a community with New York's highest teen pregnancy rates. Funding for our services is provided by Administration for Children's Services, the Dept. of Youth & Community Development through the City Council Runaway and Homeless Youth Initiative, and private foundations.

Nationally, teen pregnancy is a critical link to persistent poverty. 70% of teen mother's drop out of high school and 80% rely on public assistance. Young people in New York City are especially vulnerable as New York City has one of the highest teen birth rates in the nation. Approximately 8,000 teens deliver babies each year. Unfortunately only 45% of teen mothers receive pre-natal care in their first trimester and correlating statistics indicate that babies born to teen mothers are more likely to: have low birth weight, develop cognitive and behavioral disorders, do poorly in school and suffer from abuse and neglect. In New York City, almost half the female heads of household currently residing in homeless shelters were teen moms.

Yet, there is a paucity of services for pregnant and parenting youth in NYC. Whether the need be housing, medical care, mental health care, education or employment – the services offered require planning and execution skills generally beyond a teen's developmental stage, and are thus not easily accessible, putting the pregnant teen or teen parent and her baby at great risk. Inwood House always has a waiting list for our residential program for homeless pregnant teens.

In 2006, Inwood House released data from a four-year study of the pregnant teens residing in our residential program. The average age of first sexual intercourse was 14, and one in 10 reporting that their first sexual encounter was forced. Nearly half (48%) reported that they had been physically abused by a parent, a quarter (26%) had been physically abused by a partner or someone they were dating, and a more than a third (35%) reported that they had ever been sexually molested.

The data underscored what we believed to be true; that many of the young women we were serving had serious histories of sexual abuse and exploitation. Such trauma and exploitation further exasperated the stressors these youth were already under from their separation from family and the normal challenges of adolescent development and impacted their overall wellbeing and ability to reach developmental milestones. It also underscored the special challenges that they face in approaching early parenthood and their need for comprehensive medical, mental health, education, and social support services.

While the need to provide services and care for vulnerable runaway and homeless youth in New York City may seem obvious and urgent, that need becomes even more urgent when it relates to providing care and services for homeless youth who are pregnant and parenting and in need of specialized medical care for mother and child. Add the complicating factor of sexual exploitation, and the result is a trifecta of intersecting risks and needs. Developmentally, adolescents are prone to risk taking behavior but separation from family, histories of trauma and loss can leave them hopeless and push them closer to high risk behaviors and actions. Sexual exploitation of youth already struggling with loss and abandonment further impacts their intra-psychic development and can lead to a loss of faith in their own future and the possibility of a different life, including healthy relationships, love and a healthy family.

For the sexually exploited pregnant young adult the incredibly high risk for sexually transmitted disease and HIV/AIDS has obvious and immediate implications for the health of the baby. Beyond the human toll, the financial cost of not intervening simply becomes too high; for the young adult, the infant and for our city.

The profile of a pregnant teen too often reflects a history of life in a poor and violent household and community; school disengagement and low academic performance, few positive role models and relationships with caring adults, lack of positive peer support, low self-esteem, lack of orientation towards future goals, lack of opportunities for meaningful employment and lack of information and use of birth control.

In light of these experiences, pregnancy can become an option of hope – an attempt to "do their lives over" and recreate a family and the accompanying love they no longer have. It is critical we are there to offer them a hand at this crossroad. Pregnancy and early stages of parenthood are the optimal points in time to intervene to improve the long-term outcomes for the teens and their children. The added challenge of helping young people with a history of sexual exploitation does not negate their chances of

success, as long as we can provide the safety and on-going services they need. Without timely and appropriate intervention, their determination to do well for their child can be quickly undermined by decisions made in haste, ignorance or the despair.

In January 2009, with the support of City Council Runaway and Homeless Youth Initiative funding and the assistance of the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, Inwood House opened a special residential program for pregnant and parenting runaway and homeless youth in New York City. At our Victor Street Residence, young homeless and runaway pregnant girls can enter the program and be guaranteed safety and a full range of services to support and assist them through their pregnancy and their entrance into parenthood.

Unlike other programs in New York, these young adults do not have to leave and move to another program once they've had their child, but can remain for 18 months. This allows us to plan and implement logistics for their long-term living situation and provide the on-going services, supervision and support during the crucial post-partum period. This is especially important as we have seen a marked increase in the number of young women with mental health problems and the need for medication, as well as those recently released from the juvenile justice system.

Young women who have experienced sexual exploitation can have particularly difficult issues related to trust, healthy relationships and other dynamics that can seriously impact the ability to bond with and parent a child. The Victor Street Residence offers a unique setting wherein the young women themselves become valuable and supportive community members who offer each young woman the ability to see positive change for themselves within reach. The young women serve as models, mentors and supporters to each other throughout their pregnancies, child birth and parenting.

The result is a community wherein real acceptance is the norm and genuine healing takes place. The ability to keenly and intimately relate to each others pain and experiences, the benefits of 24-hour supervision and support by positive adults, and comprehensive maternal and parenting services in a safe environment provides an antidote which gently undoes the trauma and damage from their experience and allows them to break cycles of loss, abuse and sadness that might otherwise absorb their life and the life of their child, and future children.

The challenges of meeting the needs of a youth who have experienced the loss and trauma that all runaway and homeless youth have faced may seem daunting, and when coupled with the multiple needs of pregnancy and sexual exploitation it may seem almost untenable. I am here today to urge continued support for programming to meet the unique needs of the pregnant and parenting, runaway and homeless, sexually exploited youth. Primarily because it is our responsibility both for the teen and the baby, but also because providing such services breaks devastating cycles of persistent poverty for our most vulnerable youth and young children – and enables them to play an important role in the future of our City.

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METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF NEW YORK

SYLVIA'S PLACE: EMERGENCY SHELTER AND DROP-IN SERVICES

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Testimony of MCCNY Homeless Youth Services:

Sexual Exploitation of LGBTQ Runaway and Homeless Youth

For 6 Years, MCCNY Homeless Youth Services has been serving one of New York City's most vulnerable and overlooked populations; runaway and homeless LGBTQ youth and young adults. Operating in midtown Manhattan, our drop-in program and shelter sees about 1,000 clients per year and meets the needs of LGBTQ identified homeless young people aged 16-24, but have had clients as young as 13 years old. While our clients' issues and needs are as varied as any population can expect, one common thread is the shocking lack of services that continues to shrink as government and private funding sources dry up. We fully support and are encouraged by recent Proposed Resolution No. 1227-A, which among other things, seeks to identify LGBTQ youth as a unique population when developing policy and programming for the general runaway and homeless youth population.

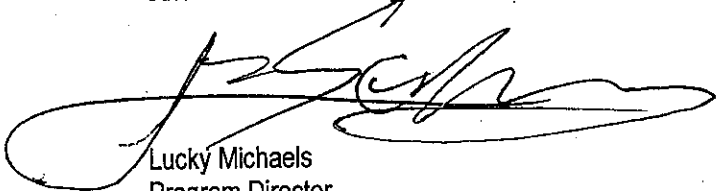
One alarming trend that our staff has witnessed among our youth is their increased risk and instances of sexual exploitation. LGBTQ individuals have an identifiable vulnerability which manifests at very early stages of childhood development. Sexual predators have and continue to identify this trait among young people, which leads to higher rates of sexual abuse and exploitation of minors often before the LGBTQ individual has had an opportunity to go through the adolescent development and self-identification stages leading up to adulthood.

Survival sex within the LGBTQ homeless youth population has become a massive problem and requires immediate attention from leaders of the local and state community. Young people dealing with sexual orientation and gender identity issues are more vulnerable to verbal, physical, and especially to sexual abuse because of their increased tendency to turn to survival sex due to the overwhelming lack of food, shelter and other services designed to meet their unique needs during this critical final stage in their development into adulthood.

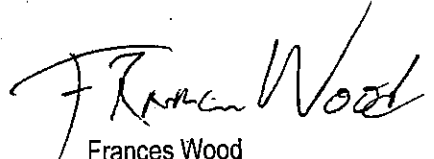
The trauma of becoming homeless is undeniable, and this specific population reports experiencing a more complicated history of trauma than their straight counterparts. On any given night, there are as many as 3,200 youth on the streets of New York, and recent statistics suggest that as many as 40% of those youth are LGBTQ identified and 10% did not identify a gender, which is vastly disproportional to the general population. Currently, there are 75 beds appropriate for LGBTQ homeless youth and that number is soon to drop to 65, because of DYCD funding cuts which have eliminated some of the LGBTQ specific programming that New York City service providers has spent the past 6 years creating. That leaves over 650 LGBTQ young people fending for their lives on the streets and searching for ways to survive in the harsh New York City environment. These young people are turning to adults offering them shelter, food, and/or money in exchange for sex. Because these youth are in such dire situations, they are often coaxed into dangerous sexual situations including rape and unprotected sex. Our program is seeing the numbers of HIV positive youth rising dramatically and more youth are testing positive for other STIs. The stories of many of our clients include long histories of family abuse, domestic abuse, substance abuse, hostile home environments, unsafe foster care situations, and involvement in the criminal justice system. When they find themselves homeless, these

patterns of abuse continue and increase exponentially as many of them use survival sex as a way to stay afloat because they are not being provided adequate food and shelter which are basic survival needs.

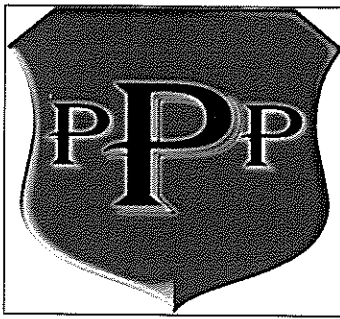
MCCNY Homeless Youth Services reaches many clients in a year, but for every one LGBTQ homeless youth we serve in a year, there are countless others attempting to find their way on the streets. Without agencies to lead them into stable, housing, employment, education, and proper medical services, survival sex often falsely emerges as their only option. Survival sex greatly increases a person risk of turning to sex work as a profession. Until the basic survival needs are addressed, we as a community will not be able to adequately address the high risk behavior of sex work. Sexual exploitation of our youth and young adults needs to stop now and our agency is joining others in the community to advocate for solutions to this growing problem.



Lucky Michaels
Program Director
MCCNY Homeless Youth Services



Frances Wood
Administrator
MCCNY Charities



FOR THE RECORD

Political Parent Party

www.politicalparentparty.com

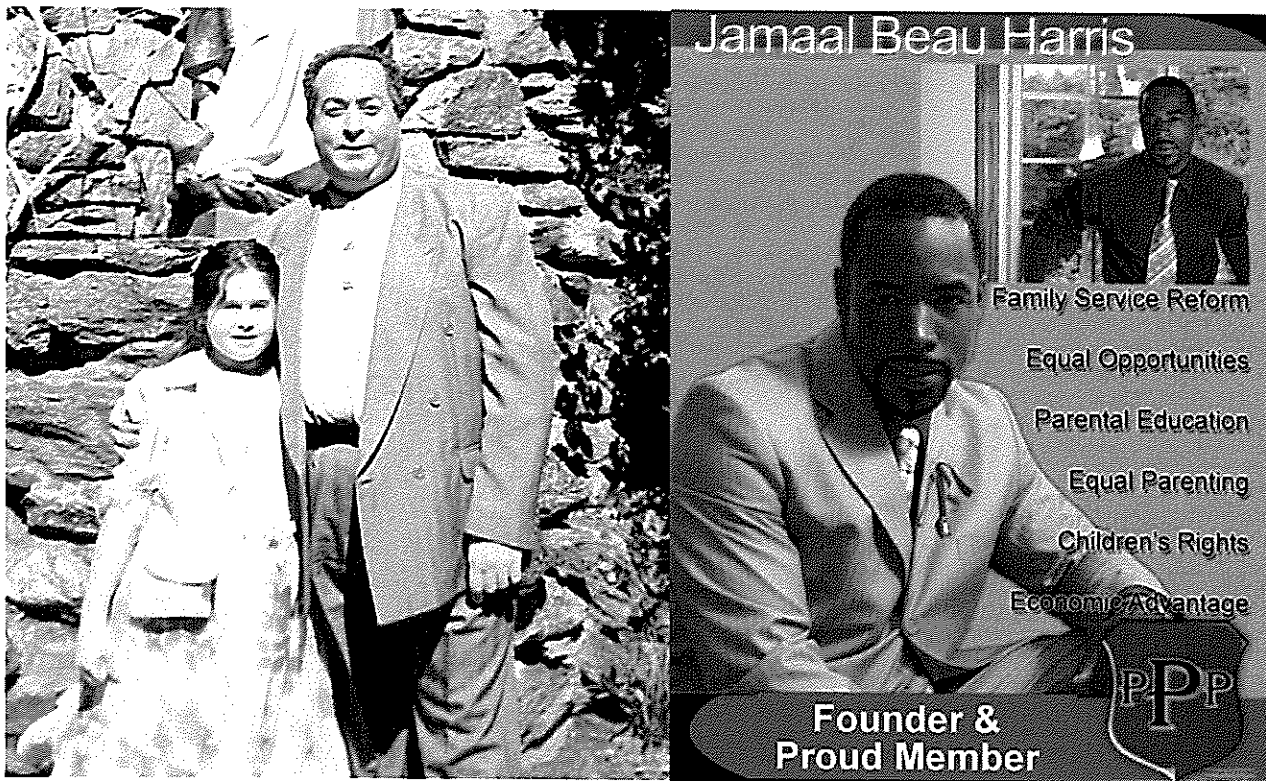
(917) 566-3133 (718) 652-7278 E-Mail: mrod2001@optonline.net

3448 Steenwick Avenue Bronx, NY 10475

Mark Rodriguez for NYS Assembly 83rd District – Bronx in 2010
Minister Beau Harris for NYC Council 28th District – Queens in 2009

Please join and support our coalition! Donate to our Pro-Family Campaign!
We are available for speaking engagements!

Please share your opinions and issues with us as we promote reform and legislation!



Mark Rodriguez and Daughter, Esmeralda

If you cannot dream about life, then you are living in a nightmare.....

- [About the PPP](#)
- [I want to VOTE](#)
- [PPP Board](#)

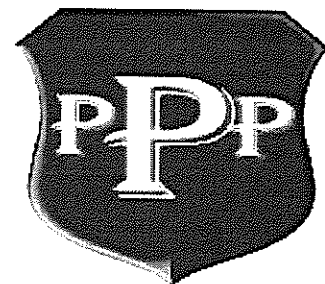
Political Parent Party

The Political Parent Party (PPP) is a group that focuses on political issues related directly to families and children. Family units are the fundamental cores of society. A society that prioritizes healthy families benefits from psychologically stable children who feel loved. Children who feel loved go on to learn life, live their potential and become productive members of society. As the world stands by to witness the dawn of a new America, with policies implemented by newly elected President Barack Obama, the country has been reenergized with political consciousness and responsiveness on varying levels. The Political Parent Party's mission is to endorse policies and programs that aid and assist the optimization of healthy family life. Our strategy is to network community and affiliate organizations to simultaneously highlight individual campaigns for the purpose of promoting public awareness to relevant issues or battling contradiction with government officials and agencies. The Political Parent Party is dedicated to the project of revamping systems in America such as family court, foster care and welfare systems, which work to destroy the value of the family unit. America's families and children should not be sacrificed in order for such corruption to thrive. We must fight back. The task calls for change: Change in the laws to encourage family unity and growth rather than its separation and demise. Change in the laws to encourage the creation of small business, quality public education, college affordability, affordable health insurance, healthy environments, job availability and opportunities for low- and middle-income citizens to raise their standards of living. The Political Parent Party believes that change begins with you: A politically and socially conscious American citizen who is motivated to see that constructive family policies implemented. Exercise your individual power by getting involved in shaping the rules that are applied to your family and your children. Individually, your concerns and considerations are opinions. Collectively, with the alliance of PPP, they are acknowledgements that influence the legal decision-making process. Be a part of creating solutions to the problems that plague our families and children.

“The question of world peace, the question of family peace, the question of peace between wife and husband, or peace between parents and children, everything is dependent on that feeling of love and warmheartedness.”

Dahlai Lama

The PPP Team:
Minister Jamaal Harris
Mark Rodriguez



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www.cambrianyc.info/rdl

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: PAUL SEARLY

Address: 450 PRINCE AVENUE BROOKLYN N.Y. 11208

I represent: SCO FAMILY OF SERVICES

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: CYRIL FORNEY

Address: _____

I represent: GEMS

Address: 25

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

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 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Cynthia

Address: _____

I represent: GEMS

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 4/19/09

Name: Rachel Cloud & 2 Youth leaders
(PLEASE PRINT)

Address: GEMS, 1298B W 149th St

I represent: GEMS

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: John Welch
(PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 240 N. 5th St, BK, NY

I represent: Safe Horizon Streetwork

Address: 33 Essex St, NYC 10002

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 4/29/09

Name: Keratta Taiste
(PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 446 West 36th St NYC NY 10015

I represent: Sylvia's Place

Address: 446 West 36th St NYC NY 10015

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 4/29/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: LUCKY S. MICHAELS

Address: 446 West 36th Street

I represent: MCCNY Homeless Youth Services

Address: 446 West 36th Street

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 1227A

in favor in opposition

Date: 4/2/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Meredith Dank

Address: 248 W. 17th St Apt 106 NY, NY 10011

I represent: John Jay College

Address: 899 Tenth Avenue NY NY 10019

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 4-29-2009

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MARY ADAMS

Address: 320 E. 82nd St. NYC 10028

I represent: INWOOD HOUSE

Address: SAME AS ABOVE

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 4/09

in favor in opposition

Date: 4/29/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Frances Ward

Address: 414 1/2 West 21st Street 10018

I represent: MICNY Homeless Youth Services

Address: 414 1/2 West 21st Street 10018

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ROBYN CAUSEY

Address: _____

I represent: DHCD

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nancy Downing

Address: _____

I represent: Covenant House

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 4/29/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Carmen P. Jones

Address: 19 Potter Lane, Levittown, NY

I represent: Green Chimneys Children's Services

Address: 49 Alexander Ave Bk NY.

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: April 29, 2009

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mark Rodriguez

Address: 3448 Steenwick Ave Bronx, NY 10475

I represent: Political Parent Party

Address: _____

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