

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE

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January 30, 2015
Start: 10:10 a.m.
Recess: 1:00 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm,
14th Fl.

B E F O R E:
FERNANDO CABRERA
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Maria Del Carmen Arroyo
James Vacca
Inez D. Barron
Rory I. Lancman
Ruben Wills

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Jackie Sherman
Associate Commissioner
Juvenile Justice Planning, Policy &
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Department of Youth and Family Justice
Administration for Children's Services

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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Gabrielle Horowitz-Prisco
Director
Juvenile Justice Project
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Dr. John Shaw
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Victoria Sammartino
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Hans Menos
Director of Youth Services
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Darek Robinson
Vice President
Grievances & Legal Services
Social Service Employees Union
Local 371

[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Good morning and welcome to today's Juvenile Justice hearing. My name is Fernando Cabrera and I'm the Chair to the Committee on Juvenile Justice; I wanna thank you all for being here today, as well as welcome Committee members who are present; Maria Del Carmen Arroyo.

Today's hearing will focus on services and programs that DYFJ provides to all youth that are in the Department's custody, both in detention and placement facilities. DYFJ provides a wide range of services to detained youth that include but are not limited to education, health, mental health and discharge planning. The Committee looks forward to examining these services administered by DYFJ, learning how the Department implements the services and examining how we can improve the provision of these services for our youth. Additionally, the Committee is interested in learning the types of cultural and recreational programs provided to remanded youth.

As Councilman and Chair of this Committee, I believe youth are a critical component to their community; they are the community's legacy

1 and the most valuable possession. Sometimes youth
2 get sidetracked; they make mistakes and end up being
3 exposed to the City's juvenile justice system; it is
4 up to us, the City as a whole, to help these youth
5 regain direction as well as to assist them in
6 becoming positive contributors to our society. I
7 look forward to the testimony we are about to hear
8 from representatives of DYFJ, as well as the
9 testimony of the advocates who work so hard to
10 protect these children.
11

12 I will now ask the representatives of the
13 Department to present their testimony and before we
14 get started we have of course the famous affirmation.
15 Do you affirm to tell -- if you'll raise your right
16 hand; I'm sorry; we're required to do this -- but do
17 you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and
18 nothing but the truth in your testimony before this
19 Committee and to respond honestly to the Council
20 Members' questions?

21 JACKIE SHERMAN: Yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: You may begin.

23 JACKIE SHERMAN: Thank you. Good morning
24 Chair Cabrera and members of the Committee on
25 Juvenile Justice. I am Jackie Sherman, Associate

Commissioner of Juvenile Justice Planning, Policy and Performance. With me are Jennifer Romelien, Executive Director of Detention Program Services and Sarah Bass, Executive Director of Residential Placement. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the programs and services that ACS and our partners provide to youth in our juvenile justice residences.

The Administration for Children's Services, Division of Youth and Family Justice oversees a continuum of services and programs for youth at every stage of the juvenile justice process. DYFJ promotes public safety and improves the lives of youth, families and communities by providing child-centered and family-focused services, including therapeutic treatment, safe and secure custodial care, responsive health care, effective re-entry services, and educational opportunities. We and our contracted providers provide these services to youth in secure and non-secure detention facilities, non-secure placement residences and community-based alternative programs.

Each year the Division provides secure and non-secure detention services to young people awaiting the conclusion of their criminal or family

1 court case. In 2014, DYFJ served approximately 2,000
2 youth in our 13 non-secure and 2 secure detention
3 facilities. Approximately two years ago New York
4 City launched Close to Home, a juvenile justice
5 reform initiative that allows New York City youth who
6 are found by a family court judge to have committed
7 delinquent act to receive services in or close to
8 their home communities. ACS collaborates with nine
9 local non-profit agencies to implement non-secure
10 placement and provide services to young people at one
11 of approximately 30 small resource-rich residential
12 programs in or near the five boroughs. In March of
13 this year, ACS will launch limited secure placement.
14 Three providers will operate facilities at six sites
15 in and near New York City, serving young people in
16 need of a higher level of care and structure.

18 While out-of-home placement is a critical
19 component of our system, it should be our last
20 option. ACS offers two community-based alternative
21 programs which allow youth to receive services while
22 remaining at home with their families. The Juvenile
23 Justice Initiative links young people and families
24 with intensive, evidence-based, therapeutic
25

interventions aimed at diverting youth from residential placement.

The Family Assessment Program serves families seeking to file PINS petitions in New York City family courts. Through FAP, ACS works to address the concerns that brought the young people to our attention.

The mission of detention is to ensure on-time court appearances. While young people are in detention we strive to expose them to positive programming and services to encourage them to get on the right path upon discharge from residential care. In contrast to detention, ACS and our provider partners are able to provide more intensive and therapeutic programming to youth in placement, as young people are in our care for a longer period of time. As such, we actively connect; place youth to programming that can be continued in the community while they are on aftercare.

In order to vividly illustrate the type of programs and services that youth receive in our juvenile justice residential programs, we would like to share two examples of a typical day for the youth in our care. We will first share the story of a

young person in a secure detention setting and the second story describes a youth's experience in one of our non-secure residential settings.

It's Tuesday at 6 a.m. at Crossroads Juvenile Center; J, a 14-year-old from Brooklyn who is awaiting adjudication of an allocation of robbery wakes up to prepare for school. Had he been required to appear in court that day, he would have woken up at 5:30 a.m. Breakfast begins at 6:15 a.m. and J gets ready quickly so that he can walk downstairs to the cafeteria with other members of his hall. The group of 10 young men is escorted to the cafeteria for their assigned juvenile counselor. Juvenile counselors, also known as JCs, are direct care staff that assist, coach and engage young people in every aspect of their day. After breakfast a JC escorts J and his hallmates back to their rooms to freshen up after eating breakfast. They gather in the common area so that they can be escorted upstairs to the school floor. Classes begin at 8 a.m. and end at 3 p.m. Each class is comprised of eight students who share similar levels of academic need. Each period lasts 45 minutes. The school day consists of eight periods including lunch. During their time in

detention, J and his peers receive a standard Department of Education curriculum that includes English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. J and his peers also have access to laptops while in the classroom. As the school day comes to a close, J requests a math tutor because he struggled with the day's lesson. In addition to tutors, DOE teachers work with high school students to help them prepare for Regents and English language arts examinations. When J returns to his hall at 3:10 p.m., he has the option to participate in several programs, including working with a DOE teacher to take credit recovery courses, visiting the library to check out a book, playing a group sport, such as basketball, football or baseball, or participating in movie night, bingo games or spades tournaments. Each program is designed to teach youth specific skills, such as leadership, sportsmanship, self-esteem building and engagement in positive activities with their peers. As the evening approaches, J has dinner with his hallmates and then starts to prepare for bedtime. Showers are taken and youth are able to quietly read, watch TV or play games until it's time for lights out at 9:30 p.m.

Now we're gonna shift to a non-secure residential setting. It's Thursday morning at a row house in the Bronx. To the average passerby, the home looks like all of the others on the block; however, the community knows that six justice-involved young women reside in the home. S, a 15-year-old resident, was found by a family court judge to have committed an act of assault. She's been at the residence for three months and expects to be there for three more. S wakes up at 6:45 a.m. to prepare for school and joins her housemates for breakfast in the home's dining room. The overnight staff have prepared breakfast and the youth and staff eat at the table together family style. After breakfast the group heads to the living room for a circle-up exercise in which staff lead the group in a discussion that encourages youth to acknowledge how they are feeling and what their expectations are for the day. These exercises are key components of the Missouri Approach, a highly regarded rehabilitative and therapeutic approach to addressing juvenile justice involved youth. Many of our providers use this approach, which is designed to challenge young people and help them make lasting behavioral changes

that will prepare them for successful transitions back to the community. The approach stresses constant close supervision of youth and features a group treatment process in which each member is held accountable for his or her actions by the other members of the peer group. After the circle-up, the girls board the residence's van and are transported to Bronx Hope, one of two stand-alone DOE schools that exclusively serve justice-involved youth. The group circles up before classes begin at 8:20 a.m. to set expectations for the school day. Throughout the school day S and her housemates transition together among eight classes taught by DOE teachers. Provider agency direct care staff remains with the youth throughout the day and provide support in the classroom. At the end of the school day the group boards the van and is transported back to their residence. Upon arrival at 3:30 p.m., S and her housemates head to the living room for another circle-up to debrief about the day. The residence's morning and evening staff participate in the exercise so that all staff is aware of the triumphs and challenges residents experienced that day. The girls then change out their school clothes, eat snacks at

the dining room table and complete their homework until 5 p.m.; afterwards, the girls participate in a 45-minute group therapy session. S and her housemates are looking forward to their evening programming, which is geared toward building self-esteem, encouraging community engagement and most of all, strengthening family ties. Through positive activities and strong role models, we hope to develop the skills young people need to redirect their lives in a positive direction when they leave our care.

Today Carnegie Hall artists are coming to the residence to work with S and her housemates on a songwriting project that will conclude with the group performing for their families and staff. This program structure is important because it allows the youth to apply coping and social skills to everyday situations, just as they will need to do when their time with us concludes.

At 7 p.m., S and her housemates meet in the dining room for dinner. The residence's cook has prepared dinner for the group and the youth and staff eat together family style. After dinner, the young people complete their chores, which include cleaning the dinner table, mopping the floors, emptying the

1 trash and making sure that the recycling is in the
2 correct bin. After all of the girls have completed
3 their chores, they are able to participate in
4 spiritual services or read in the living room. At 9
5 p.m. S and her housemates move upstairs to take
6 showers, call their family members and get ready for
7 bed.
8

9 ACS and our partners provide a number of
10 services throughout the juvenile justice continuum,
11 including education, health and mental health
12 services. Through our partnership with the
13 Department of Education, all justice-involved youth
14 in residential settings attend classes taught by DOE
15 teachers or receive transferrable DOE credits while
16 attending a state-approved non-public school.

17 ACS meets the range of mental health
18 needs of our youth either by offering mental and
19 behavioral health services on-site or establishing
20 referral and treatment arrangements with community-
21 based mental health providers.

22 We have found that young people thrive
23 when expressing themselves through the arts and
24 humanities. To that end, we have partnered with
25 numerous organizations, such as Voices Unbroken,

which provides writing-based creative workshops and builds literacy skills. We also work with Healing Arts from Montefiore Medical Center to bring together artists and youth to design and paint murals and artwork. Through our partnership with High Five/Art Connection, we bring young people in non-secure residential settings to theatre and productions, as well as museums and other art programs. Our collaboration with Carnegie Hall brings professional musicians to work with youth to compose and produce music culminating in a concert.

To build life skills and empower youth to reach their potential, we partner with the Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence, NYU, New York Cares and Day One to educate young people about intimate partner violence, various forms of abuse, healthy relationships and sexual health.

We also work with the Girl Scouts Council of Greater New York, which provides financial literacy, leadership development, career exploration and college preparation workshops. Columbia University's Literacy Advocacy Program also provides tutoring and develops problem-solving and critical reasoning skills.

Recreational activities are also a critical component of programming for young people. In addition to a range of arts and humanities programs, ACS works with Yoga for Yoga and the Lineage Project to offer weekly yoga sessions. We also partner with Row New York, a unique summer program that introduces youth to rowing and provides academic success programming.

Organizations such as Exalt Youth offer structured classes, individualized support and paid internships while youth are in placement, as well as a supportive alumni network to help prevent further justice system involvement.

Additionally, ACS is collaborating with the Kings County District Attorney's Office to implement the Gender-responsive Re-entry Assistance and Support Program (GRASP) and Evidence-informed Re-entry Program that focuses on transitioning young women from residential placement back to the community. GRASP social workers work with young women in residential care to provide gender-responsive skill-building groups, individual team and group mentoring, educational advocacy and tutoring,

job placement, job readiness training and paid internships.

ACS is committed to supporting our juvenile justice staff; we expect our staff, as well as the staff of our provider agencies, to be examples to the young people in our care. These staff serve as mentors, dinner companions, motivators, mediators, referees, role models and guides on the journey away from the actions that brought young people to our attention. Whether assisting youth with their homework or de-escalating problematic behavior, staff use every opportunity to teach positive behavior and encourage growth. In order to accomplish this, intensive training is provided to staff on a regular basis.

Since 2013, ACS has partnered with Bellevue Hospital and the NYU Langone Medical Center to train all secure detention staff in dealing with the various types of trauma that up to 90 percent of the young people in the juvenile justice system have experienced. The intensive four-week training increases staff's ability to identify trauma exposure and work with traumatized youth and reduces secondary trauma issues among staff. Staff participate in

1 numerous additional training opportunities,
2 addressing topics such as LGBTQ awareness, sexual
3 abuse, commercial sexual exploitation, adolescent
4 development, safe crisis management, safety and
5 security, building relationships, conflict
6 resolution, problem-solving and decision-making,
7 mental health and gang awareness.
8

9 Thank you for the opportunity to share
10 the important work we are doing to address the needs
11 of young people in our juvenile justice system. We
12 appreciate the Council's ongoing support as we
13 continue to strive toward improving services for the
14 City's most vulnerable youth. Our colleague Sonia
15 Galarza, Director of in-kind contributions and pro
16 bono resources, will now present several programs
17 that we provided to justice-involved youth in 2014.
18 We are happy to take your questions at the conclusion
19 of Sonia's presentation.

20 [background comment]

21 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: You need to speak
22 into the mic, 'cause this is being recorded and
23 actually being watched live.

24 [background comment]
25

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Yeah, I think that would be helpful. Or actually, you could... can we have her come her, Sergeant of Arms, right there? [background comment] Yeah; that way she can see what she's presenting. We're flexible, bendable and sendable [sic].

SONIA GALARZA: Okay. I'm very happy and honored to present our programs and recreation that we have our detention facility. When programs become a focus point in which peers and parents and teachers all work together towards the success of a young person participating in activities, it can be a game changer. We leverage our support through community-based organizations in our... [interpose]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: I'm so sorry for interrupting. Do you happen to have extra copies for those of us who struggle... [background comment] yeah, visually challenged; that's the best way to...

SONIA GALARZA: I might have one and I might have another... [interpose]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Even if it's one.

SONIA GALARZA: Okay. No, just one.
'Kay?

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Yeah.

SONIA GALARZA: We leverage our support through community-based organizations and our governing partners to offer high quality services for our youth through funding, monitoring, coaching, capacity building, evaluation and advocacy; supported by partnerships we strive to enhance and expand our sustainability [sic] network of activities. You notice we have theatre groups and usually we have public theatre, we have on and off Broadway plays that the kids can participate in, especially our non-secure detention. We have colleges and universities, we have Medgar Evers College that comes in and does soccer clinics, we have NYU that's here today and they have a program called Skills for Life and we started with the girls; now we're doing the boys as well. We have Columbia University that has a tutoring program called Clap and they come in and actually work with our kids with DOE. And then we have private organizations, and I'll show some of the other pictures of the other programs we have.

Of course, I'm a strong believer that we need to work also with our government partners, because they have a lot to offer and a lot of resources that sometimes we don't reach out and use.

1
2 DYCD, they're phenomenal. I've been work with them
3 for a couple of years, they not only give us programs
4 that they fund, but they also -- about four years ago
5 we launched something called Summer Youth Employment
6 Program where we actually have 15 residents working
7 in Detention and Crossroads and 13 working in
8 Horizons, and that was just an idea that came about
9 because I realized that while our kids are in
10 detention we usually have a window where the kids can
11 enroll in Summer Youth Employment and that's usually
12 between May and April; usually that time they're
13 still in detention, so we decided to enroll them
14 while they were in detention and then we took it
15 further and then we decided, why don't we have them
16 work with us and then when they go home they will
17 continue working in the community. So that was
18 something that was really wonderful that we did.

19 Of course we have the Parks Department,
20 we usually have Olympics; we need permits for
21 tournaments and leagues and clinics that we have, so
22 we usually get permits from them. Public Libraries,
23 they usually come into our facilities and our kids
24 get library cards, they give us books, they have
25 workshops with our kids and either NSD [sic] can go

1 to the library or some of the librarians come to us,
2 which is also very phenomenal. And then New York
3 Sports Commission, Take Me Out to the Ballgame, they
4 usually give us tickets for sports events throughout
5 New York City.
6

7 And these are some of our programs that
8 we've had this summer and last year, Sprout by
9 Design, building a coup and hatching chickens, and
10 you see the first picture; the kid is actually
11 building the coup and then the second picture, the
12 kids are doing gardening [sic] bases and they design
13 them and they put them out in the courtyard. You see
14 the coup, we became grandparents to about five or six
15 little chicks, which were so adorable and more
16 impressing was, or more valuable to me was that you
17 see the kid on the right-hand side, these are
18 juvenile delinquent kids; you see how gentle they
19 were holding the chicks; I found that very
20 impressive. Thank you, next.

21 Teamwork that builds -- there was a lot
22 of teamwork; our youth learning to design, build and
23 decorate. They design a tool shed, 'cause we needed
24 to put things away and they actually painted it. You
25 notice that you see the garden, they are actually

1 building their garden and on the extreme right it was
2 not only Sprout that helped with that garden, but it
3 was also New York Cares.
4

5 Beautifying our facilities, preparing
6 planters for our gardening. As you notice, the kid
7 is very focused on designing their planters, takes a
8 lot of math and a lot of focus to do this; then you
9 notice on the right-hand side our kids were painting
10 the school floor and they're painting and making it
11 prettier.

12 I also work very closely with Bike New
13 York and what they did was actually come in and they
14 taught bike safety and they literally taught them how
15 to ride a bike, as well as turning and signaling out
16 before they pass any traffic. And then I reached out
17 -- oh and they also were taught how to change a tire,
18 very interesting. And then what happened; I reached
19 out to the Department of Transportation and they were
20 giving out helmets out to the public, so when I told
21 them about the program that we were trying to launch
22 in detention, we asked; can we get helmets and they
23 said, no problem; they came in and they measured
24 everybody's head and every kid had a helmet, which
25 they were able to take home, along with a bike road

map. So if they ever decide to get a bike in the community, they knew all the paths that they can use their bike.

Training and preparing, it takes a village; this is Carnegie Hall sound studio where the kids went and actually were actually taught on how sound was prepared and done in Carnegie Hall; very, very, very educational. *My Brother's Keeper* was a film that Obama -- it was a documentary where Obama was addressing some young men, so I showed that video to all our detention facilities, but we added something else and it was called *Tie It Up*, we taught our kids how to tie a tie, which a lot of kids did not know how to do. Art expression, we had a very talented staff in Crossroads, which actually did the sketching and then our kids painted it, almost like a coloring book. The bottom two are the two artwork that we did with Montefiore, which are now at Montefiore Hospital being displayed and we also have two others that are at our facilities; we made copies, and we put them in our visiting area.

And these are all the other partners that we have, we have GEMS, we have Lineage Project, we have Bronx Council of the Art, Hocus Pocus, Einstein,

Yoga for Youth, Young Gen [sic] Society; I mean they're all there. And any questions?

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Thank you so much.

SONIA GALARZA: You're welcome.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: It sounds like you have a very comprehensive program. I have a lot of questions, but... [crosstalk]

SONIA GALARZA: Uh-oh.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: in deference to my colleagues, I'm gonna ask first Council Member Arroyo, she has some questions and follow with Council Member Rory Lancman, who has joined us today.

COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Thank you, Mr. Chair and good morning everyone. Jackie, nice to see you again; always a pleasure; [background comment] ACS is in good hands, I think. [laughter]

I have a couple of overall questions, but I had, and I was sharing with you before the hearing commenced that I had an opportunity to visit Horizons Detention Facility before the New Year and as you're describing, the day of J, [sneeze, background comment] I was able to appreciate the nooks and crannies that this young man would walk through [background comment] in a detention facility, and one

of the things that struck me during that visit is that there's so much about what goes on inside those four walls that we are not really familiar with; you can sit here and testify for hours and hours and I think a visit to those facilities is something that we should all do at some point in order for us to truly appreciate and understand the challenges that the system confronts and those that live in those four walls as well. So from that visit I came away with some thinking and strategy development with my staff around how can we help bring more resources to that facility; it's in my district, it's in the Bronx. And one of the things that we fund through the City Council discretionary budget is CASA grants, and CASA is C A S A and it's an acronym for something that I'm not... think it's Cultural something in Schools or whatever, and there's the school, a DOE school in the facility that I want to research whether or not that program would be eligible to receive a CASA grant that would bring cultural service programming, because of all of the things that I heard in the second presentation, I didn't hear much related to the Bronx, and you know, you collaborate with Kings County District Attorney for

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And capital grants, one of the things that struck me at the facility -- you know I, as a parent I'm going to visit my child and I'm sitting in a waiting room that looks like it's gonna fall down on me, because there's water stains on the ceiling, the walls are peeling off; it just -- you know, they're there, whatever got them there is something that we hope and seek to deal with, but while they're there and their families have to be exposed to that system, we should have the best facilities possible. So I think staff is here who were present at the visit and they know I made a big to do about -- dude, look up to the ceiling. That's all you've gotta do, come into the entrance and look up and you'll get and appreciate what [background comment] what I sensed

from... from... from just being there waiting to be called in and put through security.

On the six providers that are going to be doing the limited secure placement, three providers; who are they?

JACKIE SHERMAN: They are Episcopal Social Services, [background comment] The Children's Village and Leake & Watts Services.

COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Okay. And in New York City where?

JACKIE SHERMAN: Three of the facilities are in the Bronx, one is in Queens, one is in Brooklyn and two cottages are on the campus of The Children's Village in Dobbs Ferry.

COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Okay. So the communities in the Bronx know that this is coming; is this stuff that is already active in the community; are we gonna have to respond to calls from neighbors who say look at what this... again, more dumping in our back yard?

JACKIE SHERMAN: ACS has reached out to all of the communities that will have an LSP facility in their midst; we have met with community boards, we have met with the borough president, all of the local

1
2 elected officials have been informed and we've had
3 meetings... [interpose]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: So since it's new
5 to me, not one in my district, right?

6 JACKIE SHERMAN: There is not one in your
7 district... [crosstalk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Okay. That...
9 [laughter] just... I'm checking. You know the... it's
10 important because I think [background comment] often
11 we have to respond and react to planning that the
12 Administration does and I'm tired of it, so all I'm
13 asking is please don't repeat the same things that we
14 for the last how many years have had to deal with.

15 And on the Family Assessment Programs,
16 the CERS [sic] families seeking to file a PINS
17 application in Family Court, what's the percentage of
18 those in detention that come through as a result of
19 the Family Court PINS application?

20 JACKIE SHERMAN: I don't have that
21 information in front of me, although youth don't
22 directly come to detention when there is a FAP
23 proceeding... [crosstalk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Okay.
25

JACKIE SHERMAN: so there may be youth who have been part of FAP and then come through the Family Court system on a juvenile delinquency action and are in detention, but there's... [interpose]

COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Okay. So the... I'm reacting to the subject of the hearing is overview of the Division of Youth and Family Justice Services and programs for remanded youth. So you talk about PINS in your testimony; I'm assuming, I'm sorry, that you're assuming... that you're re... oh my god, my brain checked out... that you're referencing those in detention as a result of a PINS application.

JACKIE SHERMAN: No. The effort on those programs and you know, we mentioned those programs because it is our firm belief that youth are best served when they're at home with their families in their communities and receiving the supports that they need, so every effort is made with our community-based programs to keep youth out in the community and receiving the services they need to stay out of our custody.

COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: We celebrate that and we look forward to always being a partner with the agencies to make sure that we're able to do that;

1 we don't want 11-year-old boys in Horizons, it's just
2 not a place where an 11-year-old should be, never
3 should be. Kings County is collaborating with you on
4 some programs, the D.A.; what about the Bronx D.A.,
5 where is he, out to lunch?
6

7 JACKIE SHERMAN: No the... the GRASP
8 program -- I can speak a little bit to the GRASP
9 program, which has been around for many years, has
10 been an initiative of the Kings County District
11 Attorney's Office for many years; it was a program
12 that, prior to ACS, assuming responsibility for the
13 placement system; OCSF partnered with the District
14 Attorney's Office on that particular program. I am
15 not familiar with similar programs operated out of
16 the Bronx County District Attorney's Office...
17 [interpose]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: But it would be
19 helpful for us to know whether that's happening or
20 not so we can discuss strategies around making it
21 happen and getting that office involved in the work
22 that's being done.

23 And then the last -- it's a two part
24 question -- the training that staff are receiving to
25 help identify trauma exposure; how many have been

identified as a result of that training, how many youth have been identified as trauma exposed and what's the intervention that you provide for that particular population?

JENNIFER ROMELIEN: Good morning. So youth are not part... they don't... [crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Say your name for the record, please.

JENNIFER ROMELIEN: Jennifer Romelien. Youth do not participate in that training, that training was designed for staff in juvenile justice setting... [crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: I understand that.

JENNIFER ROMELIEN: What we have for the children is a three-group course called STAIR, which doesn't directly discuss trauma that they've experienced, it teaches them coping skills; they create a safety plan so that they know what's happening to them and how to react.

COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Okay. The question is; you train the staff to identify those exposed to trauma; as a result of the staff training, how many youth have been identified as a result of

1 youth. So you should look to figure out how
2 effective that training has been; not that they
3 received it well, 'cause they're in the room because
4 you've forced them to be there and they're gonna tell
5 you what you wanna hear probably, but how can they
6 relate that skill that they learned to identify the
7 youth that is exposed to trauma? Thank you, Mr.
8 Chair.

10 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Thank you so much.
11 Let me follow up a couple of questions and then I'll
12 turn it over to Council Member Lancman and let me
13 recognize Council Member Wills who also has some
14 questions.

15 One, regarding those who have been
16 exposed to trauma, the training, the three day
17 training is not... is the purpose so they could be more
18 sensitive or the purpose is for them to be able to
19 identify and be able to get therapy; what is the goal
20 of the identification?

21 JENNIFER ROMELIEN: So the goal wasn't
22 for them to be able to identify children that have
23 experienced trauma; the goal was for them to have an
24 understanding of the behaviors [background comment]
25 that the children exhibit when they've been affected

1
2 by trauma. In addition to the training, we
3 implemented the groups that are run by a JC, along
4 with a mental health clinician, so they're using
5 those techniques and those skills that they learn in
6 the training in their group sessions. We're trying
7 to build a mil-u-based [sic] teamwork approach in
8 detention where the JCs, along with the counselors,
9 along with our psychiatry staff; our psychology staff
10 are all working on the same page, speaking the same
11 language to these young people.

12 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: I'm happy to hear
13 that, 'cause I would have been afraid if with only
14 three-day training, I mean, somebody licensed, you
15 know... [crosstalk]

16 JENNIFER ROMELIEN: Absolutely.

17 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: should be the one
18 to really identify, to diagnose; it's actually
19 illegal for anybody else to do it, 'cause that's the
20 purpose of license, you know, to make sure that
21 people who know how to do this can actually do it.
22 The question that Council Member Arroyo asked, I'm
23 not sure -- I would like a little bit more detail, so
24 let me ask you in a different way, regarding the
25 services that we receive in Bronx vs. in other

1 places... [background comment] yeah, so we're gonna be
2 biased, of course, we're from the Bronx; I had an
3 opportunity to visit as well the program; how many of
4 the things that we saw, so the activities, events,
5 going to -- you know all the exposures they have; how
6 many of those are not made readily available to the
7 ones in the Bronx?

9 JENNIFER ROMELIEN: So all of the
10 programs that Sonia displayed here today -- the Bike
11 New York, the roller skating, the Sprout by Design --
12 all of those were done in both facilities..
13 [crosstalk]

14 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay.

15 JENNIFER ROMELIEN: both in Crossroads
16 and in Horizons. Many of our programs, such as
17 Voices Unbroken, work in both facilities. We try to
18 expose both facilities to very similar programs when
19 we're able to; a lot of our providers will start out
20 in one and then venture off to go to both.

21 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: So which ones in
22 Horizon, for example, are not -- what is it that
23 they're not getting and Horizon -- whether it is
24 because there's only so much funding for one or
25 whatever; I'm just trying to figure out what services

or activities or programs, you know, that is not in Horizon that's being offered in Crossroads.

[background comment] If you could be... come to the mic. Thank you.

SONIA GALARZA: Two of the things that I mentioned when I go out for programs is that they participate in both, including my non-secure detentions; not just Horizons and Crossroads. And the other thing that I emphasize is that they have a referral system, that when our kids are in detention and then they get this enlightening, right, this enrichment, that they continue this when they go to the community; that's the focus. So I'm hoping that most of my programs have a referral system, like for instance, NYU, they have a program called ROSES, so not only do they work with the kids in detention, but once our kids go home they continue working with that program called ROSES.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: I'm a little confused, 'cause you told me that once you have it in one program then it expands to the other one, so that made it sound, to me, that it was not offered in one. So are you telling me that we have arrived to the place where all of the programs, outside of GRASP,

with the D.A.'s Office, that everything is being offered in both; is that what I'm hearing?

SONIA GALARZA: It is. But sometimes what happens, that some of the programs don't get the funding for both, so what they do; they then can concentrate, like for instance, Voices Unbroken...

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Right.

SONIA GALARZA: they go to the Bronx because they are stationed in the Bronx, but they were coming to Crossroads for a long... like almost a year, but then they didn't have the funds so then they started doing it... [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: So is there... So explain to me... I'm a detail person, concrete... [crosstalk]

SONIA GALARZA: It's okay.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: you know, but explain to me which ones are being offered in Horizon that is not being offered in Crossroads; what's being offered in Crossroads right now, today that is not being offered in Horizon?

SONIA GALARZA: Okay; I can tell you that. [background comment] Alright... [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Feel free, if you would; you can bring up the chair if you would like, it's...

SONIA GALARZA: It's okay.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay.

SONIA GALARZA: See Lineage Project is being offered in detention, where Yoga for Youth is being offered at NSD, but it's still yoga, see? Voices Unbroken is in the Bronx... [background comment] Oh, okay.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Right.

SONIA GALARZA: So that's what I'm saying, Lineage Project is for both... [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay.

SONIA GALARZA: Hocus Pocus is for both. I'll tell you which... [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Just... uh just...

SONIA GALARZA: the one that's not, it's Young... [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: that's not, yeah.

SONIA GALARZA: Young Jin [sp?] Society; they're in Crossroads and not in Horizons, Montefiore Healing Arts is in the Bronx; not in Crossroads...

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: So you have a few.
Okay.

SONIA GALARZA: A few, very few.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: So for the sake of
time, this goes then direct to the budgetary needs;
is this... I would imagine it's a funding issue, so is
this something that ACS is gonna look forward to
putting forth to the Administration to fund these
programs, and I'm sure the applicants are happy with
this question, but so we have equity, full equity?

JENNIFER ROMELIEN: I think that's
something that we are definitely striving towards, is
ensuring that both facilities have exactly the same
programs; they may not be the exact same programs,
but at least the same type of programs.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Right. So when you
mean striving, you mean that you're trying to put
this forth in the next budgetary cycle; it's
something that you identified that you would like to
fill this gap or striving... that you're hoping that
the organizations will find their own private
funding?

JENNIFER ROMELIEN: I think a little bit
of both... [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay. More leaning towards which way?

JENNIFER ROMELIEN: I would say we're always looking for partners that have funding on their own...

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay.

JENNIFER ROMELIEN: but we have funded several programs this year and we hope to be able to continue to do that in the next fiscal year, but like I said, we always try to put the same programs in each facility, even if it's a different vendor so the kids are getting exposure to everything.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: I would encourage the Administration -- I mean, we're not talking about an astronomical amount of monies to run, especially, you know, you go once a week, twice a week, you know after school kind of program; we're not talking about an astronomical amount of funding; that would be something that would be put forth in the marg... [sic] I wanna turn it over to Council Member Lancman; thank you so much for waiting.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: Good morning.

[collective good morning]

COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: I wanna talk a little bit about what efforts are made to make sure that the programming for each young person is, to the extent possible, individually tailored for their needs. Not to be flippant or make light of something that's very, very serious, but reading through your testimony and listening to your description of it, it has somewhat of a summer camp feel to it, but it's not, this is serious stuff. Not every kid is gonna benefit from yoga and not every kid needs arts and not every kid needs x y and z, so what is done to individually assess each young person as they enter the system, whether it's the secured facilities or the non-secured and then how does the programming choices and the educational choices, 'cause I wanna ask about that also, or the educational options, flow from that?

JACKIE SHERMAN: So I'm gonna give it to Sarah Bass, who will speak for a few moments about non-secure placement.

SARAH BASS: Hi. Sarah Bass, Executive Director, Non-Secure Placement. We work very hard when a youth comes in to placement to ensure that they are placed in the correct facility. You know,

1 we have over 30 facilities and the purpose for that
2 is that the individual needs of the youth can be met.
3 Detention has been working very hard to increase
4 their services, as we've heard, about trauma and
5 greater assessment tools and we build on those
6 assessment tools to sort of have a sense of, from an
7 IQ perspective, from a school level perspective, age,
8 being close to home, gender and other specialized
9 needs that we're placing youth in the correct
10 program. So our programs are broken down by age, by
11 schooling. For example, Leake & Watts in the Bronx
12 is a program that serves middle school aged boys, so
13 if you're in that home you're a certain age range and
14 you are of a certain academic level so that you can
15 be an is [sic] group in the home, when you go to
16 school you'll be with your peers and you can get the
17 services you need. As a result, in that program, you
18 would have services that are targeted towards a
19 middle age, you know middle school aged boy
20 population. So they have basketball, they also are
21 part of the Carnegie Hall program. In addition;
22 it's very funny, when I talk to them, they're very
23 interested in snack in Leake & Watts, so that's
24 another thing that they -- you have to sort of
25

1 understand your population. The other piece with all
2 of our programs is in order to be selected to be in
3 non-secure placement program you had to prove that
4 you had an evidence-based or evidence-conformed model
5 that treats this population, works with this
6 population; helps with the issues. So that's the
7 other issue that we're looking at, which is that
8 which model, from which program is gonna serve the
9 needs of the youth and some of that also plays into
10 what the programming is. For example, if you're in
11 a Missouri Approach program, some of our program is
12 gonna be about circle-ups group treatment, doing work
13 such as creating a family timeline, writing a poster
14 of your expectations, just sort of work through some
15 of the issues that brought you into placement so that
16 when you return to the community you're not dealing
17 with the same issues, so.

18
19 COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: So the main
20 triage, and that's probably not the right word, but
21 I'm not in the profession, but the main triage is
22 their age and their education level?

23 SARAH BASS: The first level would be if
24 there's a specialized need. Within placement we do
25 have specialized settings; for example, for youth who

majority of youth in the system who are referred to general programs...

COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: The plain vanilla programs, more or less. Right.

JACKIE SHERMAN: That's right, which are prepared to work with youth who present a broad range of needs.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: And let me just lastly focus on their education and the coordination and collaboration with DOE; I mean most of these youth are not gonna be here for a very long -- they're not gonna be in these facilities or in these placements for a very long period of time and it seems to me that one of the things that will determine whether or not when they leave the facility they ever find themselves back again is how well they're doing in school -- lots of other things going on in their lives, but that's very important. So how do you coordinate and collaborate with DOE so that when they come in they are, as seamlessly as possible, put into whatever educational level they should be and they pick up where they left off and then, you know, equally as important, as when they leave?

SARAH BASS: So again, we're working off of the excellent work that's being done by our team in detention, so by the time we get a youth in placement, DOE's already done an assessment, they've looked at their previous school history, they've done some testing of their own, so we have a sense of did they have an IEP in the community; did they have any additional services; what grade were they in? We have a number of conferences through the approximately six to seven months that a youth is in placement and we work very closely with DOE because most of our youth that come to us weren't connected to school, weren't attending very frequently before they came to us, so it's a huge barrier as far as what's gonna happen in the community. So from the minute a youth comes to us we're trying to think of, okay, what's the school that is the proper place for this youth and if it isn't a general school, do we need to have psycho-educational testing; do we need to do other things in that six to seven months to make this as practical as possible so that when this youth leaves us we have secured a school that meets their academic, behavioral, social; emotional needs. Our partners in District 79 who run most of our

1 schools in placement, they are a partner, they feel
2 that they should be part of the process; they feel
3 that they should be at the table whenever we're
4 meeting for a conference having to do with release
5 and in our process with our case managers, that's one
6 of the major things, does the family have what they
7 need; is school in place; when they get home, do we
8 have everything there so that they can succeed,
9 'cause really what placement is about is never coming
10 back to placement.
11

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: Okay. Thank
13 you.

14 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: I wanna comment
15 with a follow-up question; then I'll turn it over to
16 Council Member Wills and then I'll finally get to the
17 questions that I really wanted to get to.

18 If you have a youth that has a heroin
19 problem, do they end up at the hospital first for
20 detox and then they come to you? What's the process
21 there?

22 SARAH BASS: If we find that a youth has
23 an issue with heroin addiction, the first thing is to
24 make sure that they're medically stable. I will say
25 in New York City finding detoxification services for

an adolescent is a very complicated process, which is a challenge that we have experienced. I know Jen has had some luck when we've had youth in detention with that issue. [background comment] We... [interpose]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: So let's say you're having a difficult time [background comment] and all the programs are full, you know all the beds in the hospital; wherever you're gonna have them detox, what do you do at that point?

[background comment]

JENNIFER ROMELIEN: So I'll speak for the one or two cases that we've seen and I hope we don't see too many more, but the young lady, we sent her to the hospital; [background comment] they held her on the psychiatric ward to detox her; they don't have any beds in the adult detox part of the hospital for children; we worked very closely with their team, she transitioned back to detention; medical followed up with her on a regular basis and we actually secured a bed for her at Phoenix House for her to get in-patient treatment.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: And the other one?

JENNIFER ROMELIEN: The other young man did not need detox, so that was a good thing for...

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay. Let me turn it over to Council Member Wills. Council Member Arroyo with good graces of Council Member Wills.

COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Yeah, 'cause he says he's gonna be a while, so. [laughter]

I don't wanna turn this into a discharge planning conversation, but one of the discussions we had during the visit and has been something on my radar, working with local organizations is, discharge planning for youths who should not be released back into the environment they came from because the environment directly contributed to their being in detention in the first place, whether it's gang affiliation, involvement; fear of retribution coming back home, because... and we do not have an alternative for those young people who have expressed fear of going back to the environment they came from, so we need to have a conversation about alternatives for discharging youth who, if they go back into the original environment, will end up back in detention at some point and/or very seriously hurt in the community because they become the victim of very serious violence at the hands of those who they may not want to associate with anymore because they wanna

1
2 get their life back on a positive track and we
3 submitted a request to Speaker Quinn at the time to
4 create a model program that involved housing, health,
5 mental health components attached to it and we need
6 to have a follow-up conversation because many can
7 benefit from an alternative placement other than
8 their home or community is fine if the community's
9 gonna be a healthy place for them to be. So we have
10 to have follow-up conversations about that. Mr.
11 Chairman, I'm gonna put that one on your plate.

12 JACKIE SHERMAN: We welcome the
13 conversation; thank you for making the point.

14 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Council Member
15 Wills.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Good morning. I
17 wanna speak specific... [audio interference]
18 [background comments] Thank you; I got this one. I
19 wanna speak specifically about the Close to Home. We
20 have a limited secure facility that is being placed
21 in my district as we speak; we had a meeting two
22 weeks ago that many of your staff came out to and you
23 were met with what I would consider extreme
24 opposition to this plan, so I have a few questions.
25

We've had a bunch of advocates that have said that this is really not what this whole program was set up to be; it's more of a bed swap, switching them from Upstate to down in the City facilities; we have stats that say that the money, that \$50 million has not been realized as anticipated savings because of star-up costs, but beyond that, these are supposed to be at-home or close to home like environments, but the security on these limited secure facilities as described to us make that a little disingenuous; they have proposed fence heights that are well out of character for the community, the security itself has nothing to do with having a closer to home or a family type setting with supportive services, so it seems like that is a little disingenuous, but the crux of our argument is; you just placed the Phase 1 of this initiative, the non-secure placements in my district, you placed one at 13325 128th Street and that opened up in 2012 and we've had a bunch of juveniles going AWOL from that facility. The site operator lied to one of the major civics and my office and said that there were no incidents and we have a document of one of the incidents where one of the youth ran away and committed a crime in Brooklyn;

1 that site I believe is no longer there, or the
2 director's no longer there, but the fact is that
3 there was a lie to the community about it. Now you
4 placed a, or you're attempting to place a limited
5 secure facility a block away and in addition to that
6 you have, not you, but DHS, has a single male
7 homeless shelter which when it was changed from a
8 family shelter we said this would be the case;
9 they're warehousing or it has the perception of
10 warehousing level two and three sex offenders less
11 than a block-and-a-half from a school and across the
12 street from a park. So this administration is
13 supposed to be more transparent and it's supposed to
14 deal with social justice, it's supposed to deal with
15 economic justice; I don't see the social justice in
16 perpetuating the sitings of non... well I would hate to
17 use the term negative land uses, but that's what they
18 are in minority communities. Our community is
19 oversaturated. Now you said there is only one
20 limited secure facility going to be placed in Queens;
21 am I correct about that; one... [crosstalk]

22 JACKIE SHERMAN: That is correct.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: and that one you
24 found to be in an area where we already have a
25

homeless shelter with 40 percent of the residents are level two and three sex offenders and a block away, literally, on the next street of one of your other facilities with AWOL clients. How does that in the realm of reason justify what you're doing?

JACKIE SHERMAN: Council Member, I can describe the process through which the site in your community, the limited secure placement site in your community was identified; it was through our negotiated acquisition process for limited secure placement where we specified the types of services that needed to be provided at a site and we looked forward to proposals from non-profit provider agencies qualified to provide the services to propose sites to us; this site was identified as a site that could be converted within the timeframe that we had envisioned [background comment] for the use envisioned, so we moved ahead with this non-profit provider to... [interpose]

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: 'Kay, so the non-profit -- I'm sorry; I don't mean to cut you off in disrespect... [crosstalk]

JACKIE SHERMAN: Sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: but I just have some questions while you're posing these answers. The not-for-profit that you're talking about is Episcopal Services; right, social services? [crosstalk]

JACKIE SHERMAN: That's correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: How did they come about to meet with this land owner to have this site as something that they thought would be appropriate to put this in?

JACKIE SHERMAN: Council Member, I don't have the information; I don't know what their process was by which they identified the site [background comment] as a potentially available site.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: The reason why I'm asking you is because the landowner -- we actually were in negotiations with the City and we had this as open testimony in general welfare about a year-and-a-half ago and we asked the City to look at this site for a program that I think was something developed in the Bronx where they had seniors and there was senior housing and we wanted this site to be senior housing/... it's in your district, right, a beautiful... [background comment] okay. So we wanted this to be a

1 senior center because our senior center was shut down
2 and again, this community was not given those
3 resources back, so we wanted it to be a hybrid
4 center, so it's just a little odd to me that we
5 approached DHS to have something that would benefit
6 our community and then it seems like a bait and
7 switch where we got a negative land use in our
8 community, something that is going to affect property
9 values, something that is going to cause
10 disinvestment from businesses and these are proven
11 things, these are not things that we can just run
12 around with our hands over our head and say this is
13 not proven. Anywhere you have these types of
14 facilities, especially oversaturation, these are the
15 things that follow. So it just seems to me kind of
16 odd that the City zoned in on this piece of property
17 that we had approached the City on for something we
18 need in our community and then it was switched over
19 for something that we don't want. So if you're
20 saying that you don't know how the landlord and
21 Episcopal Services got together, I think we should
22 investigate and find out how that happened, because
23 I'm almost sure somebody in the City, whether it was
24 DHS or someone else, put these two people together.
25

So that's something that I would like to have looked at.

JACKIE SHERMAN: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Also, your ACS does not... you don't have oversight or you don't exercise oversight with the social services providers, as far as the contracts that they're negotiating with the landowner or the property owner?

JACKIE SHERMAN: We exercise oversight over our provider agencies and our provider agencies, through the negotiated acquisition, with the exception of sites that we were leasing directly from OCFS, we're responsible for identifying sites and for negotiating the leases for the site.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Are you aware that this site negotiated this non-secure -- well this limited secure facility in their covenants that are in direct contradiction to the usage of this site in the covenant for the property that he brought?

JACKIE SHERMAN: No, I don't have any information about that.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Okay, so can we look into that, because we do feel that this is a violation of these covenants and the community is

going to look into actions to stop this because of those violations and if Episcopal Social Services understood those covenants and went ahead with this anyway, then there's something wrong with the way they're doing business with the City.

A couple of other things that I wanted to go into were; the fact that the Commissioner, in one of our joint hearings, went into the different definitions of how many of these non-secure placements and how many that are limited secure placements that we were going to have throughout the city, but there was really no oversight or community notification put into this or the legislation that led up to this, and I think it's good intent, I just think it was implemented poorly, which has led to, again, my community and others that you will place this facility into, being felt that we are not true community partners with the City, especially when it comes to this. We feel and rightfully so that you constantly dump these things in our community with no type of community partnership; there's no extra resources going to the schools in our communities -- no, there are not; you're looking surprised?

JACKIE SHERMAN: No.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Oh okay, I thought
3 you looked... okay. I mean there's no partnership with
4 DOE; we've been jumping up and down about that for the
5 last year and change. So there are different issues
6 that we need to discuss, but moving forward,
7 especially in this type of community, when JFK was
8 just cut into my district during the last re-
9 districting and we have a lot of commercial property
10 around JFK that, if you would have come to the table
11 with us we would not have homeowners being... well the
12 American dream of homeownership being jeopardized by
13 an action of the City once again; we have plenty of
14 landowners that have commercial property that would
15 have been more than willing to house this facility,
16 but I do not believe that those actions were -- I know
17 that those actions weren't explored with us and I
18 don't believe that Episcopal Social Services explored
19 those obstacles either; I think that they did it, they
20 were in a hurry to make sure that they met your RFP,
21 there's money to be made, and that's the bottom line.
22 My community can no longer shoulder the brunt of
23 everything; you cannot tell me in the entire borough
24 of Queens that this is the only community or the only
25 place for it and it's a shame that over the last 30 or

1
2 40 years, or at least since the first charter review,
3 the first charter commission was done, and that was
4 done because of the racial slants of negative land
5 uses; you can't tell me that this administration is
6 going to continue this and keeping pushing this into
7 our communities, we're being... it's like we're being
8 preyed upon and that's the best way that I can put it
9 in being politically correct. The emotions that were
10 distributed at that meeting; I stood up for the City;
11 the City has to do things that the State has mandated
12 us to do, but the City does not have to do that and
13 keep injecting these things in our community. I want
14 ACS to really not give us lip service but go to the
15 table and look at the placement of this facility. The
16 one in Staten Island was shut down and I know it was
17 shut down in an election year and I know the Mayor was
18 not on record in the newspaper, but I know he said he
19 was not for that limited secure facility being placed
20 in that type of community. So to me the demographics
21 of the community in Staten Island that it was taken
22 out of and the demographics in my community speak for
23 itself and I really want you to take this into a real
24 lens of compassion, a real lens of social justice and
25 a real lens of allowing people to plan for their lives

1
2 and not have this specter of group homes and jails and
3 homeless shelters with sexual offenders in our
4 community, and I know you don't have the entire bag,
5 you're not over the entire mix of what I said, but you
6 are over two of them. [background comment]

7 JACKIE SHERMAN: Thank you, Council
8 Member. As far as public input into ACS' plans for
9 Close to Home, as specified in the Close to Home
10 legislation, ACS did hold a series of public forums
11 and then a series of public hearings on our draft plan
12 for a limited secure placement, so there was -- I
13 understand your point and your concerns regarding the
14 specifics of your community, but in terms of the sort
15 of broader ACS seeking public input on plans for Close
16 to Home, ACS did, in compliance with the law, hold a
17 series of five community forums and five public
18 hearings in all five of the boroughs and we do look
19 forward to continuing to work with you and your
20 community on ensuring the best planning process we can
21 possible ensure, given the circumstances. I should
22 say that the work at South Ozone Park is proceeding
23 and has proceeded and... [interpose]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Yeah, but I don't
25 believe you can say that you look forward to working

1
2 with our community in the same breath as saying it's
3 going forward, because that's not working with our
4 community; that's pushing, that is saying that this is
5 the way it's going to be no matter what; that is
6 saying you worked on your job for 20 years, you saved
7 up money, you bought a home in a community that you
8 thought would be safe -- ha, ha site; you're the fool;
9 that's what it's saying, it's not saying that you have
10 any respect, and not you personally, [background
11 comment] but it is not saying that the City has any
12 respect for the residents that are there; that...
13 [crosstalk]

14 JACKIE SHERMAN: But...

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: I mean that's just
16 plain... as plain as it can be made. You cannot tell us
17 that a provider can come into a community because you
18 had one meeting in a borough; you sent out a letter in
19 October, the end of October knowing that it was the
20 holiday season, knowing that people are in the hustle
21 and bustle of ending the things for the year; knowing
22 that school is in full swing and people are getting...
23 you cannot say that you are honoring the letter of the
24 law and not honoring the spirit of the law and that's
25 what we've been wrapped up into. The spirit of the

1 law, if it says that we should have community
2 meetings, it is for notification, it is for input; it
3 is not to have a community meeting, like DOE does and
4 just shut something down when nobody is there or just
5 plan it in a certain timeframe; that is not what this
6 is intended to be. When the State Legislature said
7 that they wanted to do this, this was not intended to
8 shove more of this into our communities, it was not
9 intended for that, and again, you cannot tell me in
10 the entire borough of Queens, the entire borough you
11 pick on three distinct districts, you pick on 27, 31
12 and 28 and those districts are minority/majority
13 districts; you do not put these in other districts.
14 We had one homeless shelter that was placed in a non-
15 minority/majority district recently, that was it and
16 they raised holy hell about it. Right? It was in the
17 news and everything else and even then you guys tried
18 -- not you, 'cause that DHS -- pulled back some of the
19 plans. The City is in violation of the law that we
20 have put forth time and time again and this is another
21 example of it. Now the Chair just told me that
22 Episcopal Social Services is going to speak next and
23 the gentleman from Episcopal Social Services, it
24 wasn't you, so I can't say it was you [background

1
2 comments] that spoke at the civic meeting [background
3 comment] -- right -- he knew about the covenants, yet
4 didn't let ACS know about the covenants. Are you
5 aware of the covenants on these properties?
6 [crosstalk] [background comments] No. Okay, so... but
7 no, 'cause I have to go to a conference, 'cause I just
8 wanted to get that out. [background comment] So it's
9 a little disingenuous to me for the City to say we're
10 going to work with you, but take this. We're tired of
11 taking this, taking this, taking this. You have a
12 non-secure facility a block away with AWOL -- do you
13 know the AWOL rates at the non-secure facility that
14 you have a block away from a limited secure facility?

15 JACKIE SHERMAN: I have some information
16 about the total number of AWOL... [interpose]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Please; I was just
18 told to be nice to you, 'cause I know it's not you,
19 but since I see she's very, very influential, so I
20 don't wanna make it seem like all of my angst is
21 coming towards you or my aggravation, but this has
22 happened in our communities and I'm speaking for
23 minority communities across the city, over and over
24 and over again and we're a little tired of it. So I'm

25

1
2 sorry; you can repeat the information. [background
3 comments] I'm sorry; go ahead.

4 JACKIE SHERMAN: So I have information
5 regarding the total number of AWOLs in the calendar
6 year 2014 from the home on 128th Street and that is a
7 total of 10 AWOLs. [background comment] Ten AWOLs.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Ten?

9 JACKIE SHERMAN: This doesn't include
10 information regarding when youth return to the home,
11 although we can... [crosstalk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Okay.

13 JACKIE SHERMAN: we will certainly be
14 able to follow up with you with information. In our
15 experience, in non-secure placement the vast majority
16 of youth who go AWOL from a non-secure placement
17 return to that placement without incident... [interpose]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: And they're not...
19 and the local precincts are not notified that they are
20 AWOL? Our precincts are not... no... no... [crosstalk]

21 JACKIE SHERMAN: The... but when a youth...
22 when a youth goes AWOL, [background comment] the
23 agency, ACS, has the authority to issue an
24 Administrative Warrant and that's what we do. So...
25 [interpose]

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: But... So that means the local precinct is not notified?

JACKIE SHERMAN: We don't directly notify the local precinct [crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Notify the local precinct. And the hearings that you had by law -- and I'm wrapping it up now, Mr. Chair -- the hearings that you had by law for community input, the five hearings, were on the overall inception or conception of the Close to Home initiative; not the actual sightings of the Close to Home initiative; correct?

JACKIE SHERMAN: That's correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: So there was really no notification to the community operating in the letter of the law to say hey, we're going to shove another one in Southeast Queens when you had this meeting. So even if people in Southeast Queens showed up to the meeting, they had no idea that they should be upset for something coming?

JACKIE SHERMAN: At the time the community forums took place the sites had not been identified.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Before I turn it over to Council Member Lancman, when you guys work with the non-profits, do you ever have a level of discussion, talking about the fact [background comments] that neighborhoods like ours, it includes mine, 'cause I'm -- he's oversaturated; I'm super saturated -- a level of discussion talking with these non-profits to locate it, you know, other parts of the city so they could carry an equal load of [background comment] the responsibility, a fair share?

JACKIE SHERMAN: We have made every effort in the identification of appropriate sites for limited secure placement and for our other placement homes to identify homes in or close to the communities from which our youth are coming. So we have made every effort and if you look at non-secure placement facilities, we do have placement facilities located throughout the City of New York; we've made efforts to cover as broad a range of communities in New York City to serve a broad range of youth.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: I really encourage you to really be super conscientious as you move forward, that this... our community boards, our

1 constituents, they are not talking, they're screaming
2 at this point and so we really need the fair share --
3 let me turn it over to Council Member Lancman. Oh by
4 the way, I'm sorry; let me recognize Council Member
5 Inez Barron who has joined us.
6

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: Just a quick --
8 gotta follow up to different angle entirely. In a
9 prior life I had some responsibility for workplace
10 safety issues; had done workplace safety work in the
11 Juvenile Justice System at the state level, and you
12 might now I'm in conversations with ACS about
13 workplace safety issues; a question was put to me
14 that -- I was asked to ask and I wanna do that --
15 what support and training assistance do you provide
16 to your staff so that they are able to deal with
17 residents, youth who are difficult and resistant to
18 participating in programming? I'm not sure that
19 every young person wants to sit there through yoga
20 class or arts and crafts or whatever it might be and
21 what support and training do you provide for the
22 counselors and everyone else there who have got to
23 compel or have some other strategy for getting the
24 youth to comply?
25

JENNIFER ROMELIEN: Detention utilizes a nationally known crisis intervention program known as Safe Crisis Management which includes restraint techniques as well as de-escalation training for all of our counselors in both of the facilities, as well as our non-secure group homes.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: And do you feel that that is sufficient, that that covers [background comments] everything that a staff or counselor needs to know in order to be able to deal with what could be a very difficult situation?

JENNIFER ROMELIEN: We don't deny that dealing with these young people can be extremely difficult and we do feel that it is a good program when the counselor is trained appropriately, so we're making our best efforts to continue training throughout the year so it's not that you go once a year and you don't really -- you use it or lose it. I think staff have to use de-escalation techniques far more than physical restraint techniques; that's the goal, to be able to have the verbal skills... [interpose]

COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: Are they trained to do that and what does that training consist of? I

mean I know you mentioned the program, but what does that training consist of?

JENNIFER ROMELIEN: Uhm... [interpose]

COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: Is it a one-week course; is it an afternoon online seminary?

[background comments]

JACKIE SHERMAN: We can get back to you with the specifics; it is a multiple day training and we can get back to you with the specifics on the curriculum for the training.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: Okay. Well we'd like to do that and follow up on that.

JACKIE SHERMAN: Sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: Thank you.

[background comments]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Council Member Barron.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you Mr. Chair; I wanna thank the panel for coming. As a follow-up to the question that was just asked, we had received a report that the number of restraints are reported by the site and by the category; is the information disaggregated -- so for example, if a child is restrained.. if an agency, if a facility says

1 a child is -- they've had 20 restraints during a
2 month; do we know if those 20 restraints represent 20
3 individuals or 10 people having been restrained
4 twice? We wanna get an idea of a particular
5 situation. So is that information available in a
6 disaggregated format?
7

8 JACKIE SHERMAN: You want that
9 information disaggregated by youth, by a specific
10 instance...? [crosstalk]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: The number of
12 people that it involved; not just the number of
13 incidents, but the number of youth [background
14 comment] that generate that number of incidents.

15 JACKIE SHERMAN: I don't have that
16 information in front of me, but we can follow up with
17 you on -- with what we have in terms of that
18 information and disaggregating it in the way that
19 you're looking for... [crosstalk]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay. And
21 secondly, in terms of those students who have
22 learning disabilities, what is done to identify who
23 they are and what adjustments are made to their
24 learning -- the presentation in which they --
25 learning is presented to them?

issues that we're trying to deal with; we're working very collaboratively with DOE and with our own internal ACS Education Policy of Programming team to see how we can more effectively do... [crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So how can we know the degree of success that you're having in meeting these special needs of students? Silence.

SARAH BASS: No, I mean it's a difficult things to measure; I mean I'm trying to think about how we can more effective... you know... [interpose]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: If we know that a child has a plan, a learning plan that identifies the number of... type of support that's needed and how often, how can we support and confirm that that's being done? We don't want children to fall through the cracks; it's already [background comment] with children who are at home, so in these removed settings, how can we address that issue?

JENNIFER ROMELIEN: I think one way to address that is to look at the child's academic level from when they came into detention, for instance, and... [crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay.

JENNIFER ROMELIEN: a month later that they're reviewed; how is that child doing academically, and their testing scores, whether they're state tests or just regular tests that the teachers are administering on a daily basis. DOE has a variety of staff that come in to work with young people, they have reading coaches for our young people that are not reading at the appropriate level, they have tutors that come in to work with the students; they do Regents preparation prior to taking the examinations. So I think one way really to observe that is; how is that kid doing academically?

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay, that's good. I especially can appreciate the academic performance; I'm not one to be impressed by standardized test scores, you know, because we all know that that's a problem. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Thank you so much. Council Member Wills has one follow-up question.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Yes... yep, uh...

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Then I'll finally get to ask my questions.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Yeah, sorry about that; just give me 10 sec... I have a bad memory; I forgot what I was gonna ask; I mean it's... oh, okay. So the age of accountability will be raised, and rightfully so, but when the age of accountability is raised, that will add an additional year into the minor category. So with that being the case, it won't be 14- to 17-year-olds in these facilities; it'll be 14-18 now, right? So have we looked at... if that's true, have we looked at the increase in numbers and how we're gonna deal with that?

JACKIE SHERMAN: Well there is absolutely legislation now pending at the State level in the budget to raise the age of criminal responsibility.. [crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Responsibility of activity [sic], right.

JACKIE SHERMAN: senior staff of various agencies are in the process of meeting to discuss and plan for potential implementation of the Governor's proposal. In fact, the first meeting is being held today and is being led by the Mayor's Office for Criminal Justice, so there are certainly folks within our agency who have begun to think about these issues

and there are people around the city who are thinking about the issue; we'll continue to keep the Committee informed and updated as we receive additional information.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: But you can foresee the need for more facilities if that age is raised? I mean that's just... [crosstalk]

JACKIE SHERMAN: Passage of the law would have an impact on the population. [crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay. Thank you so much. Let me -- if you could give me just a quick version answer of the questions I'm gonna give you, 'cause we really wanna hear the advocates and appreciate them [background comment] waiting.

First question is; how do we know that the therapies that are being implemented are effective and I know that you're gonna talk about... you may want to talk about the fact that it's worked someplace else, but I wanna know if the therapies that we are implementing are actually working with our young people and how do we know that they are working?

JENNIFER ROMELIEN: Are you looking for a more detention aspect; that's a shorter period of time or the... [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Both.

JENNIFER ROMELIEN: when the child is placed?

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Yeah, both.

JENNIFER ROMELIEN: So I would say how we gauge if treatment is working is we do team meetings on a weekly basis to discuss young people, to discuss their behavior in the facility, to talk with the staff to find out what's going on on the hall with that young person; is the medication working; is the medication not working and we discuss with our chief psychiatrist that's here today, we discuss with them on a regular basis, how can we better treat this young person. But for a short period of time that can be difficult to do; it's more effectively done when the child is with you for a longer period of time where you can see those behaviors and be able to address issues that that child has experienced throughout his or her life.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: So that's very good; you know, when I was in the field we did that,

1 but in terms of psychometrics; any psychometrics
2 being used? And the reason I'm asking is; in other
3 programs out of state that we have pretty much copied
4 their model, they know that their programs work
5 because it's evidence-based, you know type of
6 program, so what evidence do we have that that
7 program is working with us, 'cause sometimes
8 therapists or counselors are not implementing the way
9 the plan works or perhaps the program before, you
10 know a program in another state they have therapists
11 that were partly -- perhaps not even following the
12 model fully and so I'm just curious; do we have any
13 psychometrics in place?

14 JENNIFER ROMELIEN: As far as Close to
15 Home goes, so as far as the placement system goes, we
16 definitely appreciate the question and we are working
17 -- you know the system is still a very young system;
18 we are working to develop a set of metrics and
19 metrics that are really focused on positive outcomes
20 for youth. So we are working -- over the course of
21 this year we are really intensively focusing on
22 developing a set of outcome measures that are
23 designed to look at the positive impact that we have
24 on youth.
25

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: So -- and then I'll move on to my next question -- my humble suggestion; why not use what the best practice programs are using that, you know their psychometrics they were using; that way we could compare apples with apples as well; I'm sure they really thought about it; that's how they became a best practice, so just a suggestion there for you.

Second; this might sound like a mundane question, but for young people this is important, I noticed then -- and I forgot which, if it was non-secure, one of them; that they don't have dinner until 7; is there a particular reason why they're eating dinner at 7? [background comments] Does anybody know? [background comments] We're talking teenagers here, they're hard.. I don't know; when my children were being raised, they're always hungry, you know and so [background comments] and you know, they're in school all day, they have lunch; is there snacks in-between [background comments] so they could eat freely whatever they want in-between in terms of snacks or how does this work?

JACKIE SHERMAN: So the dinner that was reflected in our testimony; it reflected one

particular home, so you know, it wasn't universal to...
[crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: It's not
systematic. Okay.

JACKIE SHERMAN: Right, it wasn't
universal to the placement system and they're... you
know the girls in that vignette did have a snack when
they returned from school, so there wasn't a long
period of time, but you know, it's a fair question to
ask whether the... [interpose]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Can you check on
that; 7 seems like rather late for teenagers are
coming... they're not hungry; they come home saying,
I'm starving, you know so 7:00, it just seems rather
late; maybe there's a reason for it; I don't know,
but. What are the advocates telling you that we
could do better?

[background comments]

JACKIE SHERMAN: So one of the challenges
that I think we've had in starting up the Close to
Home system is in ensuring that we are, to the extent
possible, reaching out across the city and involving
as many really grassroots community-based
organizations as we possibly can... [interpose]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay.

JACKIE SHERMAN: and that when youth, particularly when youth return to their communities we have as full a menu as we possibly can of options for youth to engage in positive, pro-social programming in their communities close to their homes. So that is an issue that we are continuing to work on and we will continue to work on.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Just two more quick questions. What type of interaction does the Justice System have with the foster care system? [background comments] And so for the youth -- just following up with some of the questions that were asked -- for the youth that cannot go home because perhaps of abuse or whatever, you know, indicated reason; what's the interaction taking place and since I'm asking regarding interaction, talk to me also about interaction between your office with the Board of Education.

SARAH BASS: So we interact with sort of the other parts of ACS almost from the beginning; some of the youth that come into placement are crossover youth; they come in that they already are child welfare involved; that requires a great deal of

1 coordination because we're dealing with the foster
2 care agency, now our NSP provider and the family, so
3 that is a coordination effort ensuring that we're
4 putting pressure on the foster care agency to
5 understand that this is a very time-limited placement
6 and they'd better have a bed for this kid as soon as
7 they leave. That's sort of this level. Then I think
8 what you're speaking about is a different sort of
9 issue, which is that through our intensive work with
10 the family and the youth we are realizing that the
11 kid returning home may not be an option; we really
12 try in the six to seven months of our work to figure
13 out what are the family dynamics, what are the
14 barriers from a kid returning home; we also, if we're
15 seeing issues like that, try to broaden what we're
16 talking about as far as family; are there other
17 family members; is there a grandmother; is there an
18 aunt; is there somebody else that the youth could
19 potentially stay with for a short time while these
20 issues are resolved. If that doesn't work, then we
21 may need to look to our partners in Child Protection
22 to see about perhaps a voluntary placement for a
23 youth, because maybe while these issues are being
24
25

worked through this is the best option for some period of time, but we're... [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: And what... I'm sorry. What percentage of youth do not end up returning back to the family; you happen to know that?

[background comments]

SARAH BASS: I don't have... I can get that for you, yeah [sic], absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Can you get us that? Okay. Beautiful. I'm gonna close it here 'cause I really wanna hear the advocates and they've been so patient and I still have a critical mass of council members here; I wanna preserve that, so I wanna thank you; we're gonna... we'd love to get your answers back; we're gonna be following up and also I would love for us to have a meeting with Council Member [backup comment] Wills so we can see if we could have the meeting of the minds. Okay?

[background comment] Thank you so much.

JACKIE SHERMAN: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: At this moment I'm gonna call Gabrielle Horowitz-Prisco, Hans Menos, Victoria Sammartino, Dr. John Shaw and Darek

1 Robinson. [background comments] If you could come
2 forward; we're gonna need extra chairs; Sergeant of
3 Arms, if you could help us. [background comments]
4 We're just gonna have one panel, just for the sake of
5 time. [background comments] You may begin;
6 introduce yourselves and you may begin as soon as...
7 you may begin. Thank you, sir. [background
8 comments]
9

10 GABRIELLE HOROWITZ-PRISCO: Good morning.
11 My name is Gabrielle Horowitz-Prisco; I'm the
12 Director of the Juvenile Justice Project at the
13 Correctional Association of New York, an independent
14 non-profit organization. I also serve as the
15 volunteer chair of the board of directors of a non-
16 profit that provides theater programming inside
17 detention, but I'm here in my capacity as the
18 Director of the Juvenile Justice Project.

19 I know that we have limited time, so I do
20 wanna just start by saying, although I'm not gonna
21 spend a lot of time talking about this, but we really
22 do applaud the Administration, Commissioner Carrion
23 and her staff for the increased focus on programming
24 inside both detention and Close to Home, for the
25 innovative partnership with Bellevue and their work

1 on trauma-informed care and we really cannot
2 overstate the importance of programs and services.
3 In my testimony I detail some of the evidence; you
4 spoke, Chairman Cabrera, about the importance of
5 evidence; the evidence that shows that programs and
6 services are not only good for kids, but they're
7 excellent for public safety, for public taxpayer
8 dollars and for improving kids' lives and community
9 outcomes. So I'm gonna say those as a given and then
10 I'm gonna talk about the areas you had asked,
11 Chairperson Cabrera, where the advocates think
12 improvement might happen and I outline 11 areas in my
13 testimony; I'm gonna briefly address some of those
14 areas now.

16 The first area that I'd like to focus on
17 is the issue of funding for programs and services.
18 It is my understanding, although this information is
19 not public released, that the vast majority, if not
20 almost all of the providers, outside of, for example,
21 the Bellevue partnership, are not funded for their
22 programs and as you heard from the ACS panel, that
23 there is really a preference for providers that come
24 with their own funding. According to the Mayor's
25 Management Report for fiscal year 2014, the average

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We also just feel like it's important to know how those dollars are spent; we would like to be an advocate to the Council and to the City for increased funding for programs, but without knowing how current resources are being used, it's a

challenge to make the strongest case possible for increased funding.

We believe as a result that -- also, ACS needs to really think about the non-profit provider's capacity to provide programs to as many youth as possible throughout the day, when providers are non-profits who may not be able to raise funding to support programs throughout the day, so we saw a lot of impressive programs from, you know working with chickens to drama to art, to a lot of really impress the trauma-informed care, but it's a little bit unclear how often those programs are provided, it's unclear if they're provided throughout the day; it's unclear how many youth participate in them; I think one of the challenges is that the programs seem to be short-term, they change, and that providers are only able to offer them on a limited basis because they're not funded. So we really urge the City to fund providers who are doing this work. We also urge the Council and ACS to undertake an analysis to determine the scope and reach of all programs and where the gaps exist and then to make focused efforts to address those gaps and make sure that all youth are receiving services.

Again, the challenge for this really also is about a lack of public transparency about what's happening inside. So In my testimony; I don't wanna go into a lot of detail here, but I talk about some questions we have around what's happening around programming and we did get some information here, but we really think it would be helpful to have a more granular level of data available to community members and to the public and to yourselves as elected officials about what's happening for kids inside. So we urge ACS to increase its public transparency over day to day operations in youth justice facilities. And I sometimes talk about -- you know my niece goes to private school and my sister has the ability to call her school and find out if she ate her broccoli that day, right, but when kids are locked up behind closed walls, it appears that we often, the government often does not seem to assume that community members and parents and advocates and elected officials have the same inherent right and perhaps an even greater need, because children's liberty has been taken, to know what's happening behind the wall. It's also important to really say that transparency isn't about gotcha, it's not about

The fourth recommendation is that programs should be coordinated and managed to minimize idle time for youth in custody, with a specific focus on restraints and fights, and I appreciated Councilwoman Barron speaking about restraints. In October 2012, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services found an alarming use of restraints and room confinement in ACS secure detention and they placed ACS under corrective action; ACS remains under corrective action to this date and in the most recent report that is required by you all as a body for ACS to release this data, there were 264 physical and 88 mechanical restraints in detention alone. In their review of ACS, OCFS specifically stated that ACS should increase the availability of programming for youth during the day and evening and they also stated that increasing the assortment of activities, including recreational, social, cultural programming and educational and vocational programming would help

The fifth recommendation is that New York City and ACS build upon ACS' incredibly impressive work with LGBTQ youth to: a. ensure adequate funding and capacity for staff training and coaching; b. fully fund the Family Intervention Therapy pilot, which was a successful pilot to help families work with LGBTQ youth and keep them at home and to stop family rejection of youth from their home; that was funded by the Mayor and the funding for the pilot stopped and now the program is unfunded, and c. partner with community stakeholders to provide commercially sexually exploited youth with culturally competent care. I wanna point out that ACS is a leader, both locally and nationally on these issues; we work as an organization very closely with ACS; we have used -- I've spoken nationally about ACS' work with LGBTQ youth and they really have provided

fantastic leadership on this issue, but there are some areas of growth and some areas that require funding and they are outlined in my testimony.

The next recommendation, the sixth, is that ACS should further evaluate how to effectively work with girls in the system; you did hear about one program in Kings County; there is a lot of challenge around the needs of girls in the system, the juvenile justice system in general has been designed for boys and there's often ways that programming is not gender responsive. It's also really important that gender responsive programming not be stereotyped, that girls still be given opportunities to be active, to be mechanical, to do things besides talk about their feelings and that issues of LGBTQ youth and of understanding gender in a nuanced way be incorporated. We believe that ACS is -- we've heard recently that they're going to be doing deeper work on girls and we really look forward to learning more about that and we just wanna highlight and encourage the importance.

The seventh recommendation is that the City Council should increase funding for arts-based programming... [interpose]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: If you could help me; give me the con...

GABRIELLE HOROWITZ-PRISCO: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: densed version, 'cause I know we still have four more... [interpose]

GABRIELLE HOROWITZ-PRISCO: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: and... Okay. Thank you.

GABRIELLE HOROWITZ-PRISCO: Sure.

[crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: It's very informative, uh just...

GABRIELLE HOROWITZ-PRISCO: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay, thank you.

GABRIELLE HOROWITZ-PRISCO: Alright, the super short version -- art is great, art engages kids, it moves them, it moves their spirits and their souls, but it's also good for rehabilitation, it's good for public safety and it's a hope [sic] for kids to get services; the arts programs ACS is doing are great; I've seen a lot of it firsthand and they should do more and you guys should help them get money. [laughter, background comments]

Number eight, short version, City Council should assist ACS in securing funding. Why? To create spaces dedicated to programming within facilities. So there's a need for some architectural revision within facilities in order to really accommodate programming and I outline what that can look like and give some ideas; although I'm not an architect I play one on TV, but -- you guys were supposed to laugh; you didn't laugh -- [laughter] but there is some more in the testimony about the importance of a dedicated space for programming.

The ninth point is about program evaluation; there were questions about this from yourself, Chairman Cabrera; it is very concerning that there does not appear to be a lot of evaluation of what works in both detention and placement; I will say that even though detention is short, with an average length of stay of 29 days, evaluation can still be done; there's ways to hold focus groups with young people, to do interviews before and after programs, there's a way to formalize some of the evaluation mechanisms and my understanding is for local non-profits it's a challenge to raise philanthropic dollars when they can't demonstrate the

1 outcomes of the programs. So not only is it a
2 challenge about are we spending money wisely, it's a
3 fundraising challenge for the non-profits who are
4 asking to do this work without funding when they
5 can't leverage philanthropic dollars without being
6 able to offer data about why their programs are
7 important.
8

9 The tenth is that programs are medicine
10 and they should be seen as such. So we believe that
11 there may be a tendency in facilities when kids act
12 out to withhold programming as punishment; again,
13 we're not in the facilities, so we don't know all the
14 details of this; we understand it's complex, there
15 are security concerns; we understand working in
16 facilities is a challenge; at the same time we really
17 urge the agency to be incredibly mindful of not
18 withholding programming, because programs are
19 medicine; when kids are in programs they do better,
20 they are calmer, they are more peaceful, facilities
21 are safer and kids do better and so it's counter-
22 intuitive to think about reducing programs; we should
23 actually think about how we intensify programs for
24 the kids who are having the deepest behavioral
25 challenges.

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CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay.

DR. JOHN SHAW: Dr. John Shaw; I'm the Mental Health Administrator for Episcopal Social Services; I had the pleasure of testifying last year to the Mental Health Subcommittee. So good morning everyone, Councilman Cabrera, Council people and everyone else.

Let me begin by saying to Councilman Wills; I was afraid you were running out and I wanted to come and let you know that no -- I wasn't involved and can't answer any of those questions; I don't have knowledge of the process; however, you're very real, I heard it; it reminded me of something someone told me many years ago, that if you really wanna know what you're doing, what you think you're doing, what you hope to do, what you intend to do, what you think you're doing is important, but if you really wanna know what you're doing, find out from the person you're doing it with what happened. So I will relay your concerns back to the agency and my executive director to take it from there. I do hope the project can continue, but I hear your concerns.

In a nutshell, I guess I just wanted to do -- I was gonna follow up on what I was talking

1 about last year, about creative arts, it got a lot of
2 attention this morning; we've been working on that
3 for a few years in the agency, but if it would be
4 helpful, I can follow up on some of the questions
5 that were asked of ACS from a provider's perspective.
6 Council Member Arroyo -- yes, we have frequent visits
7 from the Bronx D.A. and judge's office at our
8 facilities; I've been at some of them; there's one
9 coming up I think March 5th, so there is contact
10 going on, both with the attorneys and with the social
11 work support staff, in all three of our facilities.

13 The trauma training, yes, it is geared
14 for awareness for the staff; we are having the
15 identical training at Episcopal; what I did was, I
16 worked with the trainer who's providing it at
17 Horizons to bring it into the agency so that the
18 youth, they are coming from detention to our
19 facilities are going to encounter similar language,
20 they will be carrying the material that they
21 developed in their stay at Horizons to our facilities
22 and our staff will be trained to understand what it
23 is they're receiving and at least begin the program
24 with a similar language. And I agree that the... so
25 many of... I haven't met a kid in these years in the

juvenile justice system, at least 90 percent have had clearly identifiable, off the charts trauma, they've been witness to or a part of, close by. So for the staff it's more a question of not so much identifying the trauma, but understanding how these events are traumatic and their effects and the training is very good for that.

All of the program offerings that ACS mentioned going to non-secure detention -- yes, we do have them in our non-secure detention facilities; I spoke with the program management yesterday and I can't recall which ones, but I recognized a number of the names that you mentioned today that our not-for-profit is participating in.

Individual needs I guess is something I wanted to kinda settle on, because what's very important in individual needs and what we're trying to do is when you get a kid engaged through the arts, when you get somebody's excitement, when you have their attention, when they get into a state of mind that's both relaxed and attentive and fun, that's great and that lasts but it fades, so what we're trying to do from a mental health perspective is once we have that state of mind, and this is why the

creative arts initiative is so important to me, is to what tools can we work on with the youth or something they feel passionate about and it doesn't have to be art, it could be sports, it could be listening to music; it could be debating. Once we work with them on an area they have passion about we can work with the skills needed to really learn something about that passion. Many, many of our kids have what's known as emotional regulation problems, their emotions are either swinging wildly or there's a high level of background range and anger that they are containing all the time; they should get trophies for how much they do contain, 'cause you see what happens when they don't. When you begin to work with a kid with rap, poetry, dance; drama, all of these kids are very responsive to it, they love it, but how do you take that into the program; how do you make it individualized is the test that we're working on. Going out into the LSPs we're using a new model, an evidence-based model, integrated treatment model which is individualized, it's based on very simple, deep, dialectical behavior therapy principles and which focus basically on controlling your emotions, being aware in the moment and how do you bring about

1 a sense of mindfulness for yourself and what you're
2 doing; these are the skills that so many of the youth
3 are lacking that makes education so hard. It could
4 be a learning disability or their learning disability
5 could take the form of an attention span that is
6 very, very short, or focus that is very, very short
7 and a tolerance for frustration beyond that that's
8 very limited. So if we could expand those basic
9 skills, improve them so there's more ability to
10 regulate emotion or more ability to withstand
11 frustration, just moving, expanding that, you will
12 see better attention, you will see better
13 performance. What we're trying to do is use their
14 enthusiasm and passion that they have about the arts,
15 pull that back into an individual program; now how do
16 we lay this out so that you can be a better musician,
17 rapper, poet, get up in front of the mic and do it
18 and we're having tremendous success. So for me it's
19 a pleasure after all these years in mental health as
20 an individual therapist to have an engagement with
21 teenagers that I have not seen before, but I wanna
22 make that -- and the staff are really trying to make
23 that real for the kids.

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The report is my report, it's basically an update from what we were doing last year; it contains some of the things I just mentioned, the two stories at the end are very recent; I know the feel good stories because they feel very good and they are very real; one of which just rounded off the other day as a youth who was discharged from our program a couple of months ago who learned to play guitar in

1
2 the program came back to pick up a stipend check at
3 the office and I had an opportunity to sit down with
4 him for a few minutes and talk with him about his
5 experiences; I refer you to that.

6 One last element I want to mention; we
7 are excited in the coming up LSPs, is having after-
8 care as part of our program, so when the kids leave
9 our program, hopefully after seven months in a
10 discharged home we can continue to work with our
11 program services who are already familiar with the
12 child, with us and their families in the home setting
13 for the duration of the... that is something that we
14 struggled with NSP placements, providing adequate
15 after-care and is built into this new model for LSP,
16 which I'm very happy about too. [background comment]
17 answer any questions.

18 [background comments]

19 VICTORIA SAMMARTINO: Okay. So I'm
20 Victoria San Martino; I'm the Founder and outgoing
21 Executive Director of Voices Unbroken and I did not
22 have... I didn't give you written testimony 'cause my
23 printer wouldn't let me. So Voices Unbroken is a
24 non-profit organization that makes creative writing
25 workshops accessible to vulnerable youth and we work

1 extensively and intentionally with young people who
2 are in the juvenile justice system, about 50 percent
3 of the young people who participate in Voices
4 Unbroken workshops are in the juvenile justice
5 system, specifically in residential facilities,
6 including Horizon and Crossroads and we also work
7 with Episcopal Social Services and some of the other
8 private agencies that provide residential care.
9

10 So as I mentioned, I'm the outgoing
11 Executive Director and after 15 years of running
12 Voices Unbroken -- I know I look obscenely young,
13 right -- but I have the opportunity to think really
14 reflectively about what I've observed in the juvenile
15 justice system and so I really came today to offer
16 some observations.

17 So the first thing I just wanna say is
18 there are people like Sonia Galarza that have been
19 working within what was DJJ and is now ACS, to bring
20 programming in and that now there's a lot of talk
21 about programming, like Gabrielle mentioned, but
22 there really didn't use to be and so I think that the
23 agency itself is struggling a little to understand
24 what it means to support programming. So one thing I
25 -- these are my observations -- So one thing that

1 I've noticed is that programming is often seen as
2 pieces of things, so there's like trauma-informed,
3 then there's a poetry workshop, there's a theatre
4 workshop, there's Carnegie Hall -- these things are
5 all sort of -- and that when there are opportunities
6 for the organizations to come together, and a lot of
7 times that happens organically, like I have coffee
8 with someone who runs an organization and you know --
9 but if the agency would convene those organizations -
10 - and I'm really glad that ACS stayed, 'cause I know
11 a lot of times the staff have to run out, but I do
12 wanna offer myself if I can support that process in
13 any way. I think that a lot of the service providers
14 really would love to come together and share best
15 practices and support each other, but also would love
16 to be in community with the staff in the facilities
17 too. So the other thing that I've observed is that
18 there are some phenomenally supportive juvenile
19 counselors and so I'm speaking for secure detention,
20 and then staff in the private agencies that somewhat
21 organically, like they know how to support
22 programming and I don't know that it's always made
23 clear to them what is expected of them, but I think
24 that the staff that really know how to do it well, if
25

1 they could share with other staff, I think that's
2 probably -- I think training -- we can all talk about
3 -- we've all been to trainings we don't remember,
4 right. So I just feel there can be an over emphasis
5 on the idea of bringing external people in or doing
6 training -- I love trainings, I like to facilitate
7 them, but I also think that bringing people together.
8 Another thing is scheduling and I know this sounds
9 really small and micro, but I know that a lot of you
10 on the panel have like worked at non-profit
11 organizations and like your really get them; how the
12 micro and the macro go together, scheduling. So it's
13 really challenging; a lot of times things are
14 overbooked and so in addition to that being confusing
15 for young people, as an outside service provider that
16 has to fundraise to bring in resources, it's
17 incredibly expensive to have staff going to a
18 facility and then like kids are removed for dinner in
19 the middle of it. A lot of it -- we understand like
20 if a fight happens or something that's completely
21 unexpected and to some extent not preventable, but
22 it's really hard when it stops like kids having
23 dinner in the middle of something, like if the
24 scheduling could.. it could be done more efficiently
25

and I think the staff would appreciate it if they knew like what was coming, when it was coming; why ACS thought it was important, etc.

So quickly, people talk a lot about support; there should be funding, there used to be discretionary City Council funding that was administered through the Department of Juvenile Justice, I believe somewhere around 2008-2009 -- I'm sure Sonia remembers the day -- that was cut; it would be great if that could be reinstated and maybe if the City Council wanted to have control over which organizations or disperse them among the different boroughs and all of that, but there did use to be that funding. So I'm all for city funding; I'm also for private funding and a lot of it -- we keep referencing organizations that don't have funding, meaning they don't have ACS funding, but they have funding from other places. I once had to get a letter -- had to get a letter of support or needed one from ACS for funding purposes; it took me like months -- I love you all, but it took a really long time and a lot of hurdles; I think if a new organization says they wanna do something, you shouldn't make them go through -- but if you have

1 organizations that have been working with the City,
2 if that process could be streamlined to get a really
3 -- by the time I got the letter, the application had
4 been submitted, we'd been turned -- you know what I
5 mean, like a whole process that happened. So I just
6 think like streamlining that. I also think the City
7 could... that ACS and potentially the City Council
8 could think of themselves as conveners, right, like
9 bring together some private funders or a message to
10 private funders, like you should fund programming --
11 again, I can help you with that -- so there's that.
12 And then there's the data piece, so I have run an
13 organization that collects an enormous amount of data
14 from young people and from staff and from our staff,
15 but the things that we don't get from ACS is
16 aggregate data, like a workshop ends at 6:30, in that
17 same hall can we know on the days that there were
18 workshops were there incidents, not who was involved;
19 not the nature of them, but were there incidents
20 between 6:30 at night and the next morning or
21 something. Information like that that there's no way
22 that we could collect would be really helpful and I
23 think a lot of the organizations, if they were
24 convened, probably are looking for the same things
25

1 and so if ACS could provide relatively limited,
2 completely aggregated confidential data, that would
3 really be helpful. And lastly, I'll just make a
4 mention of like -- I think part of it too was that
5 DJJ was always in the position or often in the
6 position of like receiving services; instead of
7 thinking of themselves I think as an agency that
8 chose which services were gonna come in and so I
9 think that for the City Council to think about how
10 ACS chooses which organizations really have an
11 expertise and a desire to really thoughtfully and
12 intentionally work with... and experience working with
13 this population, the young people are never ever,
14 every the challenge, it's always the things around it
15 and our organization's really set up to navigate
16 those. So thank you. I spoke as fast as I could
17 because I'm a New Yorker and I'm from the Bronx.
18 Okay.

19
20 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: And I appreciate
21 that. Come on Bronx.

22 VICTORIA SAMMARTINO: Now I'm gonna take
23 a deep breath.

24 HANS MENOS: Good morning; how are you
25 this morning? My name is Hans Menos; I'm the

1
2 Director of Youth Services at the Center for
3 Community Alternatives. CCA, for those of you who
4 don't know, is a leader in the field of integrative
5 justice and in youth services we provide alternatives
6 to incarceration, alternatives to detention for young
7 people in New York City and we're located in
8 Brooklyn.

9 So many of our youth are similar, about
10 the same as youth that are in facilities or in non-
11 secure and secure facilities and many of them in fact
12 often return to us from these facilities as a
13 condition of their parole or a condition of their
14 release. So we have a great amount of experience
15 working with these young people and in particular we
16 find that they're not unusual in that they are
17 working to face the real challenges of poverty and
18 racism that exist in their communities.

19 So I'll go over some issues that we try
20 and focus on while we work with the young people,
21 because like I said, I thought they're very similar,
22 if not the same youth.

23 So one of the things that we try and
24 focus on is gender specific programming. We want to
25 make sure that our young women and our young men have

1 their own space to discuss issues that are specific
2 to them, based on their gender and in addition, based
3 on their race and their socioeconomic status. And we
4 find that important because they communicate
5 differently when not in a group with the opposite
6 gender and we can help focus on them and I think the
7 issue of individual focus was mentioned here; we can
8 focus on them in a lot more purposeful way when we do
9 separate them by gender and I understand at the
10 facilities clearly they're separated by gender, but
11 I'm not sure if the opportunity is taken to focus on
12 that if you had to speak to them about the challenges
13 that they have. So they're certainly already
14 separated and we could probably easily accomplish
15 that based on that fact.

17 Another issue we try and do is that we
18 try and stimulate the multiple levels of intelligence
19 of our youth; we talked about arts, we talked about
20 debating; we talked about all the other issues that
21 young people strive towards or have real intelligence
22 around, but we try and make sure that it's
23 purposeful. So it is not just that we want to invite
24 Voices Unbroken and to -- [background comment] yes,
25 we have -- just because we believe that it would be

1 fun for them to have some poetry in the afternoon,
2 but because we understand that Voice Unbroken and our
3 partners understand that we agree on the idea that we
4 can use their outlet for poetry to express themselves
5 emotionally, to understand what's going on in their
6 lives and to -- if they don't wanna talk about you
7 know perhaps what they've been through or what
8 they're feeling, they can express that in a different
9 way. So it is not a condemnation on any art form
10 that exists, but rather a push to be purposeful about
11 it, you know, while we're doing it we're not just
12 doing it because we think it's fun or because we
13 wanna decorate the walls, but because we wanna help
14 the young people to express themselves, and I wanna
15 make sure that all of these types of different
16 programs, whether it's debate, whether it's current
17 events is there to help a young person to really
18 express themselves appropriately.

19 So in addition to our community-based
20 work we do do work inside the facilities as well; our
21 CAP prep team is in the secure; non-secure facilities
22 and they do work on HIV and AIDS and team pregnancy
23 and healthy relationships. So in those experiences
24 we found that the gender specific programming inside
25

1 the facilities has been lacking and in addition to
2 that, we have some problems with the transgender
3 population in facilities. So young people, in
4 general, most likely need the notion of gender on pat
5 [sic] for them, the differences between sex and
6 gender and the idea that people can be questioned and
7 are moving towards different aspects of their lives;
8 I mean if we can imagine what being a teenager was,
9 you know, if you were a conforming teenager, I think
10 we can -- even if you are not, if you were a
11 nonconforming person, you can understand what extra
12 challenges exist if you're a nonconforming young
13 adult and then imagine if you were also on top of
14 that incarcerated or otherwise detained. So we
15 really owe a lot to these young people because you
16 know there is evidence that suggests that because of
17 their nonconforming status that they are more likely
18 to be placed in these facilities, so because they are
19 there we do need to understand them and we need to
20 make sure our staff understand them and we need to
21 make sure that we are really meeting their needs and
22 not ignoring, because as I said, it's possible if not
23 likely that they are there because of that status,
24 which is shameful in and of itself.
25

1 I appreciate the idea of mental health
2 and I think that there have been great strides made
3 as far as mental health assessments. I do wonder
4 about the emotional health of our young people and
5 that that is parsed out from their psychiatric needs,
6 but overall I can appreciate what they go through and
7 how thoughtful that process is when they are brought
8 into the facilities.

9 I am concerned about the idea of trauma,
10 so at CCA we make effort to be a trauma-informed
11 agency from top to bottom; we have not just one
12 training, but ongoing trainings through our
13 partnership with St. Luke's Roosevelt Hospital; we're
14 constantly trying to make sure that our staff
15 understands trauma and I applaud all the other
16 agencies, including ACS that seem to be moving
17 towards that.

18 One thing that we seem to do that I'm not
19 entirely clear that ACS or the other agencies are
20 doing, is that also we wanna infuse that into the
21 knowledge of the young people. So if a young
22 person's having what we as the staff have now been
23 trained to understand is traumatic reaction, we're
24 not just gonna say well we understand it, but we're
25

not gonna bother to explain to them why they're maybe reacting in a certain way. So there are physiological responses that we can just communicate to a young person. Right now your heart's beating at a 100 miles per hours, but I don't know that anything happened to you to make you this upset; right now you are panicking, right; you're not thinking clearly; maybe your palms are sweating right now. These are real concrete things that we can explain to a young person to tell them; listen, you're not broken, you're not a bad person, but you have this reaction that -- I'm not even gonna call it dysfunctional, 'cause it maybe actually functional; it was functional at some point in their life, but now you're in a safer place and that is, maybe move towards to, if we're gonna use the word dysfunctional, but doesn't work anymore is a better way to say it. So we try and make that clear to young people through an evidence-based, 10-session, ongoing -- I'm sorry; was not ongoing 10-session, but ongoing in that we have several cycles -- group for young people and I just think it's more logical, if we're going to make sure the staff understands it, to also make sure that young people who are going

1 through it understand and are explained clearly
2 what's going on in their body, in their feelings and
3 their reactions, because I don't know that even most
4 adults who have not been explained to what trauma is
5 can really understand what their reaction is. So one
6 recommendation that I think we should really push
7 forward is if we're going to, as a city, understand
8 that trauma exists in our young people, I don't
9 understand why we would not also make that
10 increasingly aware to them -- this is what's
11 happening to you or this is what I believe is
12 happening to you and we should move forward with
13 that. Since I'm discussing trauma, I wanna jump
14 forward to another part of my recommendations, which
15 can be a trauma screener. I think one question was
16 asked -- how do we know how many young people have
17 trauma in the system? I mean, there are studies upon
18 studies upon studies that talk about this, but if we
19 wanna talk about our city and our agency and our
20 settings, there's several screeners; the one I'm
21 gonna recommend, but you know, if there is -- and you
22 can just probable Google it -- is the UCLA PTSD
23 Trauma Index; it's short, it gets to the point and
24 you can get at least a very similar idea of what's

1 going on. I don't know if that's happening, but if
2 it is happening, I haven't heard about it and I think
3 it's a great place to start to understand, a. who are
4 the traumatized youth and b. now we identified them;
5 we can tell our staff rather than waiting for them to
6 have a traumatic reaction to be identified; we can
7 tell the staff this person was screened to have this
8 trauma and then maybe we can put him a group
9 beforehand; it seems almost like we're waiting to
10 react. We know how to do it when it happens, but
11 we're not gonna go ahead and get ahead of it because
12 even though we have the ability we have to
13 acknowledge it.

14 So I'll move on there for a few moments.
15 And you know as I mentioned, CCA focuses on multiple
16 levels of intelligence and I also mentioned the idea
17 of being purposeful. So if you are a young person
18 who isn't involved in arts, as I mentioned; I think
19 it's a great idea to be purposeful about that, but
20 what if it's sports or what if it's debate? I don't
21 know that if we're having the situation where, as
22 we're told, young people are playing basketball,
23 baseball and chess and other activities, why we're
24 not being purposeful about that; that's a great time
25

1 to talk about the skill-building that exists to play
2 a team sport, to play a game of strategy and to
3 extrapolate that to the other skills we need to build
4 in them. So when I say be purposeful, I want
5 everyone to understand what I mean is, if these
6 things are already happening, then we're not taking
7 full advantage of the time we have with young people
8 to say great, you passed the ball or maybe you didn't
9 pass the ball and why is it necessary to do so.
10 You're playing this game of chess, do you understand
11 what it is; it's a game of strategy and how do you
12 strategically prepare for your life? Simple things
13 that we can do for our young people that I don't know
14 that we're doing now, even they're involved in the
15 activities, they just need an adult or someone who
16 can point out what's necessary there.

17 So I will wrap it up, but I think that
18 we've talked a lot about the other... about funding
19 here and I think that, you know, it is a bit shameful
20 for me to understand that our city relies on
21 basically the charity of other organizations to come
22 in and provide services; I don't know that that's
23 necessary; I don't know that -- I mean obviously if
24 it's possible from outside funding it should be done,
25

but there should be a larger attention brought to it.

I think Miss Prisco made a great point when she

called it medicine; I wanted to write it down; I

thought it was great, because it's so true and we

surely would not be skipping out if someone had a

diagnosed need for medication. I think that the

evidence shows that the young people do have a need

for these programs, so the City really should be

making a push to fund these initiatives for that

exact reason. And again, just to beat this dead

horse in data collection, I can appreciate the idea

that each agency that volunteers; again, to bring

these two points together, has their own data

collection, but as Miss Sammartino pointed out, how

fantastic would it be if over the course of a year we

could say; you know, the young people who were

assigned to this youth counselor have this many less

issues and the people who go to this program on

Tuesdays, Wednesday's a really easy day and that is

the type of thing that only can be looked at if we

collect data in the aggregate and I think it's

doable, we have the technology, we have the ability,

we have the premier criminal justice university in

John Jay in the City; I mean they're literally a

1 subway ride away from all these facilities and they
2 work with us and they are brilliant and it's great to
3 hear them talk about how I can get a picture of what
4 is going on in my agency just by collecting some
5 simple questions and some simple forms three months
6 in a row -- uh sorry, rather every three months and
7 at the course of a year, in a course of a decade I
8 can say, oh here are the trends and as a city we need
9 to get there, I think.

11 So I would be remiss if I didn't... and
12 I'll wrap up here, if I didn't mention the fact that
13 our young people who do return to us, we're not
14 seeing them saying I was terribly treated or I hated
15 everything about being in detention, outside of the
16 fact that they were in detention, so that isn't to
17 say that things are great there, but things are
18 certainly better and I'm happy to speak to them and
19 hear them say; you know, I have some complaints, but
20 overall I'm not fuming, which is really -- I know,
21 maybe it's a low bar, but it's something that I'm
22 happy to report; it's certainly better there; they
23 are certainly not, you know, being terribly
24 mistreated. But I also, on the other hand, don't
25 know that any young person's gonna walk in my office

and say; I really wish they would've taught me more purposeful things while I was there and I really wish data collection was done better. So just a small point there. But anyway, I thank you very much for your time and I appreciate everyone else's this afternoon as well... [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Thank you so much. Last, but not least.

DAREK ROBINSON: Good morning; how's everybody doing? [background comments] My name is Darek Robinson; I'm the Vice President of Grievances and Legal Services for Social Service Employees Union Local 371. On behalf of our President, Anthony Wells, we would like to thank the Chair, Councilman Fernando Cabrera and the Committee on Juvenile Justice for the opportunity to give testimony today.

SSEU Local 371 represents juvenile counselors, children's counselors and congregate care specialists who staff secure and non-secure detention as well as ACS Children's Center. These workers have uniquely difficult jobs. Caring for youth in these programs is a very challenging job that must be done 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year; I myself have done this job for 20 years. Our members

all signed up to make a difference in the lives of at-risk youth. However, we did not sign up to be assaulted by kids whose special needs and challenges are typically kept from us, nor to be suspended and charged with bogus child abuse allegations by overzealous operation managers who don't understand our work, and above all, we did not sign up to be arrested or prosecuted by the New York State Justice Center and frequently flimsy and suspect allegations. Workplace violence is epidemic in our field, both violence by youth on youth and youth on staff aggressions. What is a juvenile counselor to do to protect these kids from each other; us from them also? The current sanctioned physical restraint, model SCM (Safe Crisis Management) does not work, it solely addresses one on one youth and staff interactions when multi-party brawls are commonplace. Safe Crisis Management focuses on the use of de-escalating techniques as primary strategy for managing youth who are not only violent, but because mirrored in the criminal justice system carry tremendous anger and often approach the world as they have nothing to lose. When de-escalating techniques fail to control a situation, when there is simply no

time to de-escalate a violent or aggressively acting out child, what is a juvenile counselor to do? SEM fails to promote workers with guidance on how to handle multiple physical aggressors, such as several youth attacking one youth, riots, coordinated attacks on staff without adequate training; again we ask, what is a juvenile counselor to do? We cannot stress enough the constant potential for violent attacks inherent in daily tour within secure detention. Most recently several residents from various gangs exited their perspective classrooms and attacked each other, as a result, the juvenile counselors who physically intervened sustained multiple injuries and most serious being a concussion. Another more recent incident, a juvenile counselor was punched with so much force that his cheek was torn open by his own tooth. A special officer responding to the aid of one of our members who was under attack himself was rendered comatose after being assaulted by a group of residents. ACS fails to frontline workforce by ignoring guidelines within a Safe Crisis Management model that would enable juvenile counselors to do their jobs more effectively. Specifically, SCM training materials presume and expect our staffers --

1 I'm sorry -- on resident's mental health diagnosis
2 that may impact behavior. Similarly, any prior
3 history of conflict is critically important for us to
4 know as well. SCM correctly espouses that the key to
5 successfully managing residents understand the nature
6 of their diagnosis, recognizing triggers, responding
7 humanely and appropriately. Residents in secure
8 detention often have mental health diagnoses and
9 violent histories known to ACS, but juvenile
10 counselors are not advised of this, nor counseled on
11 how best to approach such residents, while SCM
12 training materials caution and encourages staff to
13 understand how a resident's diagnosis may impact
14 behavior and how to respond appropriately. ACS
15 declines to give staff these tools; instead, juvenile
16 counselors are literally left in the dark. ACS
17 restricts access to very important information that
18 the SCM instructs that we need to have to do our jobs
19 and keep juvenile facilities safe for the staff and
20 residents alike. Our mental health training is
21 minimal and does little good when ACS refuses to let
22 us know how when a resident's mental health may be an
23 important and factor in controlling their outbursts.
24 Recently our members have faced the revamping of New
25

York State system of child abuse oversight, the newly formed New York State Justice Center has swooped in without any opposition, constructive response from ACS. The Justice Center has launched repeated attacks on workers who have already been victimized at work, harshly criticizing, seeking and criminalizing events we are helpless to foresee; so often unable to control. The Justice Center minimizes its commitments of the men and women who have signed up for this most challenging career, threatening their livelihood instead of working with us to improve system for all of its participants. ACS Employment Law Unit has repeatedly taken a position Monday morning quarterbacking as it pertains to its review of significant incidents, which always base towards blame and disciplinary action and never directed towards developing better techniques and procedures for the safety and the wellbeing of all concerned. And practice, when an incident occurs in secure detention at the Children' Center, the video footage is reviewed, every involved juvenile counselor, associate juvenile counselor, children's counselor, congregate care specialist is then investigated and charged. This is an outrage,

particularly since ACS has a leadership, whether at the facility or the executive level; has not presented any solutions nor engaged the union in any constructive dialogue. We are not the enemy, but we are treated that way. And to make matters worse, ACS has approved a behavior modification program, ASPIRE, that assures youth there will be no consequences for their disruptive behavior, thus encouraging more misbehavior. The failure to re-arrest youth in detention after destruction of property, youth on youth assault, youth on staff assault or many forms of aggressive behavior, like spitting on staff, is blamed on the five district attorney offices that ACS does little to nothing to engage. So again and again we ask; what is a juvenile counselor to do? As you imagine, morale is low, the retention rate of staff is low and more and more senior personnel is questioning their career choice. Social Service Employees Union Local 371 is committed to the mission of providing a safe, secure, caring and controlled environment, all participants in non-secure programs, non-secure detention, the Children's Center, as well as secure detention. We need ACS to join us in that mission and to entertain the pleas and concerns of

1
2 veteran and experienced workers as partners; not
3 adversities. Thank you for the opportunity to give
4 this testimony; I would be happy to respond to any
5 questions.

6 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Thank you so much.
7 I'm gonna have Council Member Barron, she has some
8 questions and then I'll follow up with my questions.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I wanna thank the
10 panel and the advocates for coming and presenting
11 their position; it's good to hear about the work that
12 you're doing and to read your suggestions as to how
13 ACS can improve in this field. Particularly
14 regarding the last presentation of testimony, you
15 talked about the juvenile counselors; what's their
16 training; what's the requirement to become a juvenile
17 counselor and where are they stationed; what's the
18 staffing ratio at these secure facilities?

19 DAREK ROBINSON: Okay, we can start out
20 with the staffing; staffing ratio is 1 staff to every
21 8 residents, unless you're on a special support hall;
22 that's 1 staff for every 4 residents.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay. And what
24 would those staff positions be, the ones... [crosstalk]
25

DAREK ROBINSON: Juvenile counselor, some of their tasks would be to work in the halls with these juveniles, transport them back and forth to court, transport them to the programs.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So for every -- what other staff positions are related to the juveniles who are there? How many juveniles would be in a particular facility?

DAREK ROBINSON: Well that's a question I can't answer in terms of how many... [crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay.

DAREK ROBINSON: staff would be; that would be more of an agency question, how many staff - I mean how many residents would be in there, [background comment] that's more of an agency question. But in terms of the juvenile counselors, we have the juvenile counselor series, which is; you start out as a juvenile counselor, associate juvenile counselor, which is the supervisor and the associate juvenile counselor 2, which is the tour commander.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And what are the requirements for the position or the title of a juvenile counselor?

DAREK ROBINSON: The requirements -- first off and foremost is the SCM training, which is only two days; once they complete the SCM training, then they are thrown out to the wolves and you know...

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So what... could anyone... I mean, are there academic requirements, are there social courses [background comment] that they have been taking; I mean how do you go and apply to become a juvenile counselor? What would you need to apply to become a juvenile counselor?

DAREK ROBINSON: Just a high school diploma.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay. And other than that... [crosstalk]

DAREK ROBINSON: And two years experience working with youth, two years experience working with youth... [crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Oh okay. Okay, that's a little better, two years experience with youth. Okay. And I guess the other questions I'd have to get from the agencies -- what other titles are there in those secure facilities, you know besides juvenile counselors, what are the titles and

what's the ratio for these personnel for the staffing? Thank you.

DAREK ROBINSON: You're welcome.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Thank you so much, Council Member; I'm sure ACS, who are here, and thankful they are here to hear our comments and requests, that they could provide us that good information. As a matter of fact, let me work backwards and let me just follow Council Member Barron. Just help me understand, so those in Union 371 who are working, their role, is it as a counselor or is it like a "dean"?

DAREK ROBINSON: Juvenile counselor, juvenile counselor.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: And juvenile counselors are responsible for breaking up fights?

DAREK ROBINSON: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: They are. And so...
[crosstalk]

DAREK ROBINSON: They...

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: let me ask you a...
and I'm comparing it to schools, alright, in schools;
I was a school counselor and I was the spar [sic]
counselor, my first unit was 371, ironically; we were

told that if we got involved in breaking up a fight, we got injured, we were not covered and so your members of your union, are they covered for...

DAREK ROBINSON: Do you mean covered, as in if they get injured?

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Yes.

DAREK ROBINSON: Yes, we're covered in terms of workers' comp, but we cannot compare a juvenile counselor to a counselor for any other agency in New York City. The closest thing to being a juvenile counselor is corrections, the way this is set up... [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: And that's where I was going. Because it seems to me they're ending up, and I know -- I have a director of counseling here -- a dual relationship and actually we're not allowed to do that; I know they're not licensed, but if there... so won't... you used the word counselors; is this very loose term as a counselor; is it like I'm watching you, I'm kind of -- I don't wanna use the word buddy, but you understand; this is somebody who's just overseeing or this is somebody who's really talking to the kids about problems or... it's more like a spar

counselor, you know, I can compare it to a spar
counselor in a school?

DAREK ROBINSON: Pretty much all of the
above; a juvenile counselor is pretty much everything
that the youth is gonna have while he's there, in
terms of his mentor, his counselor, his close person
to speak to... [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: And breaking up
fights.

DAREK ROBINSON: breaking up fights, any
issues, transporting around, transferring to and from
court...

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: That is a very... let
me put it this way, it's an impossible task to ask
somebody to be like a dean and a counselor. I would
love to hear the other advocates; what do you think
about that, Dr...

[background comment]

DR. JOHN SHAW: In our sys... thank you.
In our system, regardless of the name, these are
frontline staff...

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay.

DR. JOHN SHAW: yes, they are responsible
for crisis management when it occurs, but I don't

1 see, nor do they really report a specific kind of
2 conflict in this area, because they are also the
3 people who have the closest relationships with the
4 kids, bar none. The kids see them every day, they
5 can relate to them in terms of their school day,
6 their relationships with the other kids, they're
7 there, they're present as the activities occur, so I
8 do not see... and yet, when things start to pop and
9 they're called into play, they do it very
10 professionally and resolve it, debrief, talk to the
11 kids about it, what happened afterwards and that
12 information does get communicated to other members of
13 the team. So for example, if appropriate, the
14 therapist the next day would follow up, or later that
15 day if they were there, follow up with the youth
16 individually about the incident; not to drum it up
17 again, but to reflect upon it and look at options
18 that might have been there.

19
20 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: So you don't see a
21 dual relationship?

22 DR. JOHN SHAW: Not a... it's a du... well,
23 that's a tricky... [crosstalk]

24 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: It is a tricky
25 question.

1
2 DR. JOHN SHAW: 'cause that implies a
3 conflict. I think it's a blended relationship; now I
4 did visit a secure facility outside of Seattle
5 recently and their staff do not get involved, it's a
6 separate security team, they have alarm buttons that
7 they hit [background comment] when things get -- and
8 then you have, here come the cowboys. So I... and to
9 be fair, I'm coming from a biased point of view, but
10 to me that was something that I questioned because
11 you left the interpersonal contact at a particular
12 point and just called in the heavies and then when
13 that was calmed down you went in. So I really... and
14 I've been a child care worker too, I have been
15 trained in SCM, so if it's done rarely and if it's
16 done properly, everybody knows it's about safety; the
17 kids really wanna get things calmed down for the most
18 part, even the disruptive ones and I've never heard a
19 staff say gee, it's so hard to do both. [background
20 comment] No. [background comments]

21 VICTORIA SAMMARTINO: I'm not a mental
22 health provider, so if I can just offer, like I get...
23 I've had the privilege of spending a lot of time with
24 juvenile counselors and being at facilities; I think
25 that with the merging of the two agencies, and I

1 think a lot of the kind of shift in focus of the
2 agency really -- the agency embracing a youth
3 development perspective, I don't know that the
4 juvenile counselor had been brought into that and I
5 think that the saddest thing for me about your
6 testimony is hearing the idea that there are veteran
7 juvenile counselors who are questioning the decision
8 they made to become a juvenile counselor; what a
9 tragedy, there are some really -- I think what's
10 happened is there are a lot of juvenile counselors,
11 there are number who are like really good and nobody
12 really knows why -- like it hasn't really be
13 identified why or maybe opportunities for them to
14 share what it is that they might do instinctively and
15 so what I also heard you asking for a lot in your
16 testimony is like, what's the answer, like what are
17 we supposed to do. So where I think it speaks again
18 to the shift in... shifts in culture can be stress --
19 change is stressful and so I think like implementing
20 new policies like SCM and implementing a lot of
21 training I think has a... I think training has a place,
22 but I think it's this continued, like how is... how
23 does there start to be new perspectives and new
24 answers; that's a real question; what is a juvenile

1 counselor supposed to do? As outside providers, we
2 are not allowed to get involved, so if a fight were
3 to break out, you know we know legally we can't, you
4 know liability reasons, etc., but juvenile counselors
5 are the ones -- I can't speak to the conflicts,
6 right, 'cause I'm not in the mental health field, but
7 I can say that it's complicated... it really is
8 complicated and I think that it's important that as
9 we think about programming we think about these
10 perspectives; I appreciate that you would share them
11 and I know that there are juvenile counselors who are
12 here and present today and I know it's your time off,
13 right and so I just really appreciate that folks are
14 here and I hope that, you know, these perspectives
15 be taken into account... [crosstalk]

17 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: One... One of the
18 things that I was concerned about, like you know,
19 somebody spitting on somebody, that's considered an
20 assault, right, because the law, so... [crosstalk]

21 DAREK ROBINSON: Exactly.

22 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: So has there... How
23 many of those cases have you seen?

24 DAREK ROBINSON: In 22 years in there
25 there's been hundreds.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Hundreds. And how many of... [crosstalk]

DAREK ROBINSON: Yeah, hundreds.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Well what has been the consequence of somebody spitting on somebody...? [crosstalk]

DAREK ROBINSON: That's one of the issues that we're having; there's no consequences for the kids... [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Ever? Ever or are you... you making a general statement or say you have never ever... [interpose]

DAREK ROBINSON: I'm gonna be specific; some cases they may re-arrest the kid, only when pushed, but most cases you can have a kid spit on a juvenile counselor and he is not to touch that kid, you have to, you know do the SCM, talk to him, talk to him and that's it. You can have a kid attack a juvenile counselor and he is restrained -- people have to realize that the size and form and size of these kids, these kids are a lot stronger than we think, a lot wiry than we think and they are strong; most of the kids are much stronger than the juvenile counselor, so [background comment] a kid my size,

1 which we've had plenty of, and a small staff; how is
2 it possible can you do the SCM; it doesn't work.
3 Somebody my size trying to restrain a smaller kid;
4 how is it possible for me to do the SCM; I cannot
5 restrain the kid 'cause he's too small... [crosstalk]
6

7 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Are there times the
8 Police Department is called in?

9 DAREK ROBINSON: One time, maybe two
10 years ago, when the kids completely took over the
11 facility, it was around eight kids; they barricaded
12 themselves into a room, they assaulted a kid that
13 they had in the room; agency did not know what to do;
14 had no answer for that, so NYPD was called; 10
15 officers came across from the 47th Precinct
16 [background comment] and to do crisis intervention
17 with the kids and have them cleared out of the room
18 [sic]... [crosstalk]

19 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: What was that about
20 [sic]; I'm curious?

21 DAREK ROBINSON: That was Crossroads
22 Juvenile Center.

23 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: It was. Okay.
24 This... wow, this is... [background comment] I would like
25 to have conversations [background comment] offline

and get more detail, but let me move -- and I mean...

[background comment] I mean that, 'cause I'd love to

follow up with that. I did wanna ask -- you

mentioned something about gender based -- if I

understood right, you were talking about maybe having

detention centers or one of the scenarios where you

have just males and females; is that what you were

referring to; did I understand right? [crosstalk]

HANS MENOS: So it's my understanding

that they're already segregated by sex or...

[crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Right.

HANS MENOS: and so what I was suggesting

was that -- again, just to be purposeful and use that

time effectively and to have the appropriate groups

and discussion based on the [background comment]

genders that are there... [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: I gotcha. Okay.

HANS MENOS: so it's more about, 'cause

it's already happening, they're already segregated...

[crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Right.

HANS MENOS: but we can make sure that

we're taking that time to have those conversations,

1
2 to have the focus on the issues that are specific to
3 their gender.

4 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: I was very, very
5 happy to hear from everyone talk about how to connect
6 the dots so it's not just art for art sake or chess
7 for chess; we're not there to entertain the kids,
8 we're really there to help the kids, so to find, for
9 lack of a better word; I think you mentioned it,
10 purpose behind all of this approach and I remember
11 your testimony last year; was very impressed as well,
12 that they're interconnected to each other, so the
13 arts are connected to therapy and then therapy
14 [background comment] could wrap back around and be
15 interconnected to something else, like maybe..
16 [crosstalk]

17 HANS MENOS: So councilman...

18 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: or something
19 productive that they wanna do something in life. You
20 know, I think the sense, a lot them, they go there;
21 they have no purpose and that's the worst thing --
22 you know, that creates hopelessness.

23 HANS MENOS: Thank you. So I think what
24 you're describing is culture change; that we need to
25 really consider everything and I don't wanna nitpick

on anyone's testimony, but you know we can't refer to youth as wolves, you know we can't demonize them and I understand that no one's perfect; that this certainly shouldn't occur, but that's just something that I think that we're discussing; we need to understand what culture change is and what that means from top to bottom and you know, what's being described is a really traumatizing situation; I can't imagine being at work and needing to call the police because I don't know what to do and I have no idea what's going on.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Right.

HANS MENOS: I mean just thinking about that raises my trauma reaction a little bit, so I can only imagine what being in that situation's like. And I can also only imagine how the two weeks after that were for the staff who were deathly afraid it was gonna happen again and the same goes for the youth and I think that we need to understand as a culture when there's a shock to our community how we react, you know that's on a micro, mezzo and macro scale and in this situation, it's interesting and I'm wondering how the counselors were helped through that. In my agency, if a young person is re-arrested

-- I'm talking about a counselor who works really hard with somebody and the young person gets re-arrested and remanded, we talk to them, we say I know that it's tough for you to picture your client in prison and what's going on; how are you; are you okay; what do you need from us? That's one element; I can go on about culture change for quite a while, so I'm not gonna do it...

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Right.

HANS MENOS: but that's one element of supporting the staff and also to... and to point out, you know maybe some viewpoints that are, or some framing of the young people that aren't pro-social, doesn't work towards seeing them as human beings, doesn't work seeing them as damaged individuals; damage is not a word I wanna use, I'm sorry; as individuals who have been through quite a bit, who are traumatized individuals and it's important for me and my agency to always check language, which is why I might nitpicking and also to check how we see our, not only our young people, but our staff and that goes into culture.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: But I think it would be good and I'll close with this, 'cause I know

1 we have gone here for a while, but I think it will be
2 help helpful to have collaboration, to be able to
3 have those who are working there working -- you know
4 'cause you're in -- like you said, they're in the
5 frontline, you know, it's easy to theorize, you know,
6 it's easy to write a book or to talk about it
7 [background comment] and the same time, you come up
8 with the frameworks, you are doing the work, you're
9 working with the kids; you also have leverage with
10 those kids as well; it will be really interesting to
11 see how -- have you ever gotten together for training
12 together with [background comment] the counselors,
13 with the other outside agencies...? [crosstalk]

15 VICTORIA SAMMARTINO: I've offered
16 training, like just for youth development trainings,
17 we facilitated for youth development trainings and
18 juvenile counselors have come like on their time off,
19 voluntarily because they wanted to. I mean I think
20 one thing, just to make sure that you understand, is
21 I think that a lot of the juvenile counselors really
22 -- like you said in your test... they really want... they
23 want to embrace new perspectives, they want to
24 understand why certain things are being implemented,
25 they care about young people, they're from the same

communities as the young people, [background comment]
as am I; you know they -- some of the may even know
the young people outside of facilities, right, like
they have... there's a kind of intimate knowledge that
they have about those young people and I think they
really want to help them, I think wanna help them;
wanna support them; want... and obviously wanna be
present with them, so I think sometimes I think it's
not... I think it's culture shift in the spirit of like
giving people new information so they can operate,
potentially operate a little bit differently, but
also to feel a different kind of security; it saddens
me deeply to know that the adults who choose to spend
the night in facilities with young people who are
away from home, who are scared and who may be lashing
out, right, don't feel that they are appreciated,
don't feel like they have the tools that they
necessarily need to keep themselves safe. So I just
wanted to say, I think there's a lot of organic kind
of things that happen; I think the City Council, if I
can make the budget push, 'cause it's January; like I
think when ACS is bringing their budget before you,
you know their part of the budget before you all, I
think it would really benefit the City Council to

1
2 think about if there are additional funds or ways
3 that you can support ACS and I mean I think
4 collaboration sounds great, but the first thing I
5 think -- that's staff time, that's resources...
6 [crosstalk]

7 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Absolutely.

8 VICTORIA SAMMARTINO: I mean they're
9 volunteering to be here right now, but if we had -- I
10 know it's a party of juvenile counselors, right, I
11 think if there were juvenile counselors who were --
12 if it was overtime that they needed to take and be
13 paid for in order to come to trainings, I just think
14 the City Council should think about that and make
15 resources available you know.

16 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Well we'll take
17 that... [crosstalk]

18 VICTORIA SAMMARTINO: As a taxpayer I'd
19 support that.

20 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Yes and we'll take
21 definitely... that is our strong... [crosstalk]

22 VICTORIA SAMMARTINO: In the Bronx...

23 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: consideration
24 because... Yes, go ahead... [crosstalk]
25

DR. JOHN SHAW: On behalf of ACS and Commissioner Franco, he absolutely, directly and indirectly supports collaboration, [background comment] there's a growing collaborative effort with the school, both in the LSP planning and with the current schools that are bringing the teachers and the staff and the therapists from the programs together; one of the stories in there is about a girl who started with poetry with her therapist...

[interpose]

VICTORIA SAMMARTINO: Published a book.

DR. JOHN SHAW: that published a book...

[interpose]

VICTORIA SAMMARTINO: She was [background comment].

DR. JOHN SHAW: through the teacher at school who the child herself became the circuit by which people started to connect. So there's a lot of energy that people can [background comment] realize they ought [sic] to connect to and sometimes that's better than when you try to impose a structure on it. The other thing I did wanna mention, my staff, my therapists, are trained in SCM, they're not called upon to restrain; they do know and could if they were

1 needed for assistance, but that also is a better
2 playing field; it gives them more sensitivity to what
3 the staff are going through, they're available to
4 talk to the staff following the crisis and they're
5 also an independent eye who knows what the training
6 are and can debrief with the staff if something
7 doesn't go quite by the way it was expected.

8
9 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Well I'm gonna...
10 yes, go ahead in... in closing.

11 DAREK ROBINSON: Yes, in closing; five
12 years ago ACS were used to kids that you protect from
13 society; with the insurgence of DJJ in 2010, now you
14 have kids that society is protecting... you know,
15 protecting against them, so it's a no-win situation;
16 ACS doesn't have an answer for that; that's the
17 problem, because we shouldn't have merged with ACS
18 anyway, but we merged with ACS and it's a problem;
19 they don't have an answer for the problem, so when
20 the juvenile counselors do their job, they are
21 penalized from doing the SCM and it goes wrong
22 sometimes and you know everything is thrown out the
23 window at that point.

24 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: So you know, I'm
25 big on win-win situations; I believe that there are

1
2 enough expertise, capacity, competency, even in this
3 room alone to be able to come in a meeting of the
4 minds and not have tracks overlap each other, but to
5 go side by side so we could accomplish the same goal.

6 I wanna say to the counselors that are
7 here, thank you; thank you for all you do; I know
8 your job is not easy; I used to work with teenagers,
9 I worked in a school; I know what it is to see a
10 teacher get knocked out and be out of school for
11 three months and so I get it, language is very
12 important, sensitivity is very important; how do we
13 get the two working together? The reason why we're
14 going through this, because this is new territory for
15 all of us and we're trying to develop a culture
16 within our institutions and also trying to figure out
17 how we can make each other better and I think that we
18 could accomplish that.

19 I wanna take moment to thank my
20 Legislative Analyst Beth Golub and Policy Analyst
21 William Hongach for all the time to put this together
22 and to get me ready to get you here. Thank you so
23 much; let's [background comments] continue to work
24 together. This was a great, great [applause]
25 committee meeting today.

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COMMITTEE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE

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[gavel]

[background comments]

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date February 4, 2014