



**Department of
Youth & Community
Development**

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE ON

YOUTH SERVICES

Oversite Hearing:

The NYC Interagency Coordinating Council on

Youth Services (ICC)

Andrew Miller

Senior Director

External and Intergovernmental Affairs

JANUARY 15, 2019

Good morning Chair Rose and members of the City Council's Youth Services Committee. I am Andrew Miller, Senior Director for External Relations and Intergovernmental Affairs for the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development. I am joined by Eduardo Laboy, Special Advisor for the Interagency Coordinating Council on Youth. On behalf of Commissioner Chong thank you for this opportunity to discuss the NYC Interagency Coordinating Council on Youth Services. We also appreciate the Youth Services Committee's support of the ICC over the years.

Now entering its 30th year, the ICC was established in 1989 to promote interagency collaboration on issues relevant to young people and to support youth and families by utilizing the City's multitude of government resources. This is accomplished through partnerships among city-based agencies that also serve youth, as well as community-based organizations and not-for-profit providers.

As per the NYC Charter, the ICC is comprised of representatives of each of the city's youth serving agencies. These include:

- Administration for Children's Services
- Department for the Aging
- Department of Citywide Administrative Services
- Department of Correction
- Department of Cultural Affairs
- Department of Education
- Department of Environmental Protection
- New York City Fire Department
- Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
- Health + Hospitals
- Department of Homeless Services
- New York City Housing Authority
- Human Resources Administration
- Mayor's Office to **End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence**
- Department of Parks and Recreation
- New York City Police Department
- Department of Probation
- Brooklyn Public Library
- New York Public Library
- Queens Borough Public Library
- Department of Youth and Community Development

Deputy Mayor Thompson is the Chair and Commissioner Chong is the Director of the ICC. Eduardo oversees its day-to-day operations.

The ICC meets quarterly and conducts an annual public hearing as specified by the Charter. The ICC goes beyond this requirement as we invite community-based organizations to participate on the ICC through our two current work groups, Supporting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Youth and Court-Involved Youth. The ICC also holds special events to highlight emerging youth issues.

To exam the prevailing attitudes toward mental health, especially in immigrant communities, the ICC featured an Asian American Federation report “Overcoming Challenges to Mental Health Services for Asian New Yorkers.” Attendees learned more about overcoming the stigma associated with mental illness and how providers and agencies can empower individuals to seek mental health care.

We held a panel discussion on how providing a young person with a role model through mentoring can help them develop into successful adults. Panelists included the Mentoring Program of Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City, Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City, DYCD, and New York Law Department Youth Leadership Council.

Recognizing the positive impact of getting young people involved early in their community, the ICC highlighted civic engagement opportunities. Panelist included representatives from the NYC Campaign Finance Board, the New York City Anti-Violence Project, DYCD’s Cornerstone Youth Advisory Boards and DYCD’s Neighborhood Advisory Board.

In this regard, the ICC gives voice to young people and allow them to directly engage city agencies on their concerns. Last month, for example, at annual hearing we heard from dozens of young people. Their concerns included topics such as access to public transportation to travel to and from after school and weekend activities; transgender rights in public schools; police concerns, and even street lights which aren’t operating near a young person’s school. We asked ICC members to follow-up directly with the young people on their specific topics.

Understanding the need for agencies, providers and organizations to effectively deliver services that meet the distinct needs of clients has led the ICC to administer cultural competency trainings annually.

For example, with the support of the LGBT Center, we offered LGBTQ Cultural Competency Training entitled “Trauma Among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Youth during Pride Month. All ICC members and DYCD-funded Runaway and Homeless Youth providers were invited. Additionally, the NYC Anti-Violence Project also provided trainings on developing LGBTQ-inclusive policies.

We also heard from the Gay Men’s Health Crisis about the struggles faced by trans individuals in areas such as housing and employment; the First Lady’s Office on the Unity Project, the City’s first multi-agency strategy to deliver unique services to LGBTQ youth; Marsha’s House on the services provided to LGBTQ homeless men and women; and Destination Tomorrow, which provides LGBTQ services in the South Bronx.

With the encouragement of City Council Speaker Corey Johnson, DYCD and the ICC collaborated with the Mayor's Office of Media & Entertainment and NewFest-New York's LGBT Film & Media Arts Organization to host a special free screening of "Saturday Church." This film raises awareness of LGBTQ homeless youth in New York City. Following the screening, there was a Q&A with director Damon Czardases and lead actor Luka Kain.

Our Court-Involved Work Group invited several city agencies and community-based organizations to highlight their approach to meet the needs of young people.

For example, *the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence* promoted awareness about services available to victims.

S.O.U.L. Sisters which works to empower young black young women spoke how their efforts to create a space for young women to examine their lives. Concerns include racism, bullying, harassment and career opportunity.

Exalt which works with court-involved youth in downtown Brooklyn, on promoting education over criminal justice engagement.

Community Connections for Youth on their Credible Messenger Justice Center Liaison model to bring together at-risk youth and formerly incarcerated mentors.

Day One on their Relationship Abuse Prevention Program which works in high schools across the city on teen dating violence prevention and intervention.

And the *NYPD Youth Strategies Division* on their programs to reduce youth violence, prevent drug use, promote child safety and improve relationships between police and youth.

The ICC also continued to promote its resource directory "**Coming Home: Transitioning Back into the Community.**" It was designed with the input of young people and includes information about resources for youth leaving detention, including housing, practical assistance, legal rights, drug and alcohol treatment, and job searches. The guide is available for download on DYCD's website and has been circulated to youth in the custody and their parents. Copies were also provided to the library systems for distribution at their branches, to the Law Department, Cultural Affairs, and HRA just to name a few. Based on the great feedback we received, plans are underway to publish a third edition.

The ICC also helps organize community events such as "*Spring into Health.*" This was a joint effort by DYCD, DFTA, NYCHA, NYC Health + Hospitals, Parks, DOHMH and HRA. It brought these ICC member agencies together at 34 locations throughout the city from April 10 through April 14, 2018. The fairs engaged, encouraged, empowered, and exposed community residents to an array of holistic services, local community-based organizations and City agencies in each neighborhood.

We once again thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We are happy to answer your questions.



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TESTIMONY

The New York City Council
Committee on Youth Services
Hon. Deborah Rose, Chair

Oversight - Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC)

January 15, 2019
New York, New York

Prepared by:
Theresa Moser, Staff Attorney
The Legal Aid Society, Juvenile Rights Practice

Introduction

The Legal Aid Society submits this testimony and thanks Chair Rose and the Committee on Youth Services for providing us with an opportunity to share our perspective on the Interagency Coordinating Council on Youth (ICC).

The Legal Aid Society is the nation's largest and oldest provider of legal services to low income families and individuals. The Society operates three major legal practices – Civil, Criminal and Juvenile Rights – providing comprehensive legal services throughout New York City. The Legal Aid Society's Juvenile Rights Practice provides legal representation to children who appear before the New York City Family Courts in all five boroughs, in abuse, neglect, juvenile delinquency, and other proceedings affecting children's rights and welfare. Last year, our Juvenile Rights staff represented some 34,000 children. The Legal Aid Society's Criminal Practice represents young people who are charged in adult courts, and our Civil Practice represents families and children who are among the most disadvantaged in our city in a variety of matters. Our perspective comes from daily contact with children and their families, and frequent interactions with the courts, social service providers, and State and City agencies whose practices impact our clients and their families. In addition to representing many thousands of children each year in trial and appellate courts, The Legal Aid Society pursues impact litigation and other law reform initiatives on behalf of our clients.

Background

The ICC was added to the NYC Charter in 1989.¹ According to the Charter, the ICC consists of representatives of each city agency providing services to youth, representatives of the Department of Youth and Community Development's (DYCD's) Youth Board,² and a representative of the City Council. The Mayor or a designee serves as

¹ NYC Charter § 735.

² NYC Charter § 734. The Youth Board serves as a forum for representatives of disciplines directly concerned with the welfare of youth. It is required to be representative of the community, and to include persons representing the areas of social service, health care, education, business, industry and labor. Although the Youth Board is not per se the subject of today's hearing, we note that the Charter does not require that youth themselves are represented on the Youth Board. This absence of youth voice and perspective stands out in an era when we as a city have recognized the value of youth voice in many youth advisory boards. We hope that this Charter provision can be updated. (We note that the DYCD web page does list two youth members of the Youth Board, but it is unclear whether this information is current.)

the chairperson of the ICC, and the Commissioner of the serves as the director of the ICC. The Charter sets forth ten separate responsibilities for the ICC, but all are related to improving the delivery of services to youth, enhancing collaboration among City agencies, minimizing redundancies and enhancing efficiency in youth services delivery, making information and services more easily accessible to the public, and tracking data, identifying service needs, and developing a comprehensive plan to meet those needs throughout the City. The ICC is required to report annually to the Mayor and the City Council. Each annual report must summarize the ICC's activity during the previous fiscal year and detail recommendations for improving service delivery and coordination, reducing duplication and fragmentation and facilitating the more efficient use of existing resources. Each report must also include data about member agencies' allocations for services to youth and the number of youth served that year, a comprehensive youth services needs assessment, and a two-year proposed agenda consisting of specific issues that the ICC plans to address during the current and subsequent fiscal years.³ Finally, the ICC must hold a public hearing annually. As of this hearing, the ICC has not issued its report for 2018, which was due in October.

Observations

As an initial matter, we note that the De Blasio administration created the NYC Children's Cabinet. The Children's Cabinet is described on its web page as "a multi-agency initiative ... to bolster communication and coordination among city agencies and provide a space to identify and analyze individual and common areas of work that impact child safety and well-being."⁴ The Cabinet is chaired by Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Dr. Herminia Palacio, and is comprised of commissioners and directors from 24 City agencies and Mayoral offices. Although its focus may be somewhat more on child safety than that of the ICC, the missions and goals of the two entities are very similar, emphasizing breaking down silos between City agencies and promoting collaboration to serve the needs of the City's children, especially its neediest.

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dycd/involved/boards-and-councils/yb-members.page>. Either way, the Charter provision should be updated.)

³ NYC Charter § 735(b).

⁴ <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/childrenscabinet/index.page>.

Despite the similarity between the Children’s Cabinet and the ICC – even the constituent agencies of the two substantially overlap – it is not apparent that there has been any effort to ensure that their efforts are aligned and support one another, rather than creating redundancies.

Without careful coordination, there could be duplication of efforts rather than building upon existing efforts. For example, the Children’s Cabinet has created two complementary digital platforms, Growing Up NYC for younger children and Generation NYC for teens and young adults up to age 24.⁵ These platforms are designed to make information about services and programs more accessible to the public. This type of accessibility is exactly what the ICC is charged with creating, and DYCD offers a digital platform for accessing information about City services called Youth Connect.⁶ If it has not already been done, we suggest that Growing Up NYC, Generation NYC and Youth Connect should be evaluated in terms of their effectiveness at simplifying access to information and services. If they are determined to be effective, then the ICC and the Children’s Cabinet should consider collaborating to build on those models, including an evaluation of whether DYCD’s Youth Connect platform should be integrated with Growing Up NYC and Generation NYC.

We have seen some positive initiatives come from the ICC, but they should be enhanced. For example, we first testified before the ICC after its Supporting LGBTQ Youth Work Group was created to implement recommendations identified by the NYC Commission on LGBTQ Runaway and Homeless Youth report “All Our Children: Strategies to Prevent Homelessness, Strengthen Services and Build Support for LGBTQ Youth.” Among the recommendations in that report were advocating to change the state regulations to allow runaway and homeless youth (RHY) shelters to serve youth up to age 24, increasing the number of shelter beds for LGBTQ youth ages 16 to 24, and creating a LGBTQ culturally-competent City work force. The City has expanded services for LGBTQ and other RHY over the past several years; however, it appears that the expansion has largely been in response to the efforts of advocates, RHY provider agencies, and RHY themselves, rather than the ICC. In fact, the City resisted providing shelter beds for RHY

⁵ <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/childrencabinet/initiatives/growing-up-nyc.page>.

⁶ <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dycd/connected/youth-connect.page>.

up to age 24 after the regulations were changed and only a relatively small number have been added. The 2017 ICC report does not indicate that the ICC made any efforts to implement those particular recommendations.⁷ The 2017 report does reflect efforts to increase LGBTQ cultural competency among the City's workforce. However, the efforts described appear to be one-off events rather than systemic efforts, and the efforts are not presented in a manner that permits measurement of the number of workers trained or the impact of the trainings.

In 2016, the ICC's Court-Involved Youth Work Group produced a resource directory called "Coming Home: Transitioning Back into the Community." This publication is available on line, and hard copies are available from a number of City agencies. Its eye-catching design will get attention, but the information the resource directory contains is not presented in a very organized way, nor does it appear to be especially geared toward youth leaving custody as opposed to youth in general. For example, there is one section called "Family/LGBTQ services," and it includes only one entry for LGBTQ youth, the LGBT Center.

Another publication available on the ICC's web page is "A Parent's Guide – Understanding the Maze: If Your Child has Contact with the Law."⁸ This guide is available in five languages, but it is outdated – it must be updated to include information about the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) Division of Youth and Family Justice, which took the place of the Department of Juvenile Justice several years ago in providing secure detention services and also provides a variety of other juvenile justice services. In addition, the guide must be updated to reflect how young people experience the justice system now that New York State has raised the age of criminal responsibility. These are critical updates.

One page of the 2017 ICC report details a number of different initiatives in which two or more of the ICC's constituent agencies collaborated. Many of these efforts appear beneficial, but little information is provided about whether they will be continuing partnerships, or whether any plan exists to evaluate their impact. In our experience as advocates for children involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, we have

⁷ https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/icc_report_2017_final-1-9-18.pdf.

⁸ https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/UndersTheMaze_English.pdf.

seen how true collaboration between agencies can lead to measurable results for our clients. For example, in response to the efforts of The Legal Aid Society and other advocates in recent years, ACS has improved its relationships with DHS, HRA, and NYCHA. This work has resulted in new memoranda of understanding between the agencies, and more importantly, it has reduced the number of young people who become homeless when they age out of foster care, and has made the transition to DHS shelter for children reunifying with their families from foster care less onerous.

Last year, we also participated in the NYC Youth Homelessness Taskforce (YHT) and saw first-hand how City agencies and organizations can come together to identify needs and make recommendations, to reduce youth homelessness. The work of the YHT was focused on RHY, and compressed into a short time frame. But the participants brought energy to the work because they viewed it as an opportunity for the City to get things right. The ICC's work is much broader in scope, for it is charged with, among other things, making an annual, comprehensive assessment of all youth service needs city-wide. To be sure, this is a much greater undertaking. Yet what is not reflected in the 2017 ICC report is any attempt to identify in a systemic way what youth services needs exist, and develop a plan to address those needs in a seamless manner so that the City's children are able to access the services they need, regardless of where they live. For example, the 2017 ICC report does not "[detail] recommendations for improving service delivery and coordination, reducing duplication and fragmentation and facilitating the more efficient use of existing resources" as required by the Charter. In addition, rather than reporting about an "annual comprehensive youth services needs assessment on a citywide, boroughwide and community district basis"⁹ conducted by the ICC, the report merely refers to a compilation of "Community District Needs" produced by City Planning as part of the annual budget process, along with a number of assessments conducted by other entities. Even if it were acceptable to utilize the data produced by these other assessments, the ICC should be synthesizing the various data, including its own, to develop a comprehensive assessment of *youth* service needs. Finally, the annual ICC reports are supposed to include a "two-year proposed agenda consisting of specific issues that the interagency coordinating council

⁹ NYC Charter § 735(b).

plans to address during the current and subsequent fiscal years,” but the 2017 report contains nothing prospective at all.

Conclusion

Thank you again to the Committee on Youth Services for taking an interest in the functioning of the ICC. We hope the ICC will view this hearing as an opportunity to embrace the full scope of its Charter mandate. We are happy to answer any questions.

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Testimony of

Jamie Powlovich
Executive Director
Coalition for Homeless Youth

Before the

The New York City Council
Youth Services Committee

On

Oversight: Interagency Coordinating Council

January 15, 2019

Introduction

Good afternoon. My name is Jamie Powlovich, and I am the Executive Director of the Coalition for Homeless Youth (CHY), also known as the Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services. CHY has advocated for the needs of runaway and homeless youth (RHY) for 40 years. The coalition is comprised of 66 providers of services to homeless youth across New York State, including 29 members in New York City. Our members include providers that are directly contracted to provide services to RHY as well as agencies that intersect with the RHY population within the larger scope of their work.

I would like to thank Chair Rose, and the members of the Youth Services Committee for holding today's hearing.

Background

New York City has never adequately supported the needs of homeless young people or the providers that serve them. Although under the current Administration many positive steps have been made, we are still only touching the surface of meeting the need. Runaway and homeless youth, as a population, are young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who have unique developmental needs and often fall between the cracks of the State's child welfare and adult homeless systems. The Department of Community Development (DYCD) contracts with various social service agencies to provide short-term crisis shelters, transitional living programs, drop-in centers and street outreach programs which offer food, shelter, case management, mental and medical health care, educational and vocational programming, legal services, programs for young mothers and a plethora of other services. Many homeless young people have previous experiences of trauma and with the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems.¹ A large percentage of youth have had both positive and negative experiences in foster care,² many lack a high school diploma or employment,³ and all have experienced neglect by the systems and adults that were supposed to support them and guide them into adulthood. For too long providers have struggled to meet the needs of the homeless youth in New York City with insufficient resources. Although the actual current number of homeless youth in NYC is unknown, a 2007 study by CHY and Columbia University estimated that on any given night there are 3,800 homeless youth sleeping on the streets of New York City.⁴ However, there are currently only 575 beds to offer them.

Being forced to live on the street puts youth at risk of experiencing violence, sexual exploitation and human trafficking. In a 2013 study by Fordham University and Covenant House New York, approximately one fourth of surveyed homeless youth either fit the federal definition of human trafficking or at some point felt they had no choice but to trade sex for food, money, or shelter.⁵ The trafficking survivors explained how pimps and other traffickers often take advantage of the thinly-stretched RHY shelter system, by informing youth that the shelters are full and offering a place to stay which will eventually lead to exploitation and trafficking.

Another critical population over-represented within NYC's homeless youth is LGBTQ people. Nationally, only 5-7% of all youth identify as LGBTQ, but the proportion of homeless youth who identify as LGBTQ is as high as 40%.⁶ Compared to other homeless youth, LGBTQ youth are more likely to be sexually or physically assaulted,

¹Covenant House. 2014. "Homeless Youth - What We Know..." Available at: <http://ny.covenanthouse.org/homeless-youth-what-we-know>;
Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services. 2008. "A Count of Homeless Youth in New York City." Available at: http://www.citylimits.org/images_pdfs/pdfs/HomelessYouth.pdf.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services. 2008. "A Count of Homeless Youth in New York City." Available at: http://www.citylimits.org/images_pdfs/pdfs/HomelessYouth.pdf.

⁵ <http://www.covenanthouse.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Covenant-House-trafficking-study.pdf>

⁶ Durso, L.E., & Gates, G.J. (2012). *Serving Our Youth: Findings from a National Survey of Service Providers Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth who are Homeless or At Risk of Becoming Homeless*. Los Angeles: The Williams Institute with True Colors Fund and The Palette Fund.

more likely to be harassed, robbed, or become victims of hate crimes, and more likely to be forced into survival sex or sexual exploitation.

Without access to basic needs, such as food, clean clothes, and a consistent place to sleep, a young person facing homelessness is less likely to pursue or complete their education, less likely to find and sustain employment, and less able to maintain stable mental and physical health. CHY recently completed a three-year research study with NYU on the Impact of RHY programs on homeless youth and their effectiveness across the state. The study shows how effective RHY programs are at changing the trajectories of youth away from crime, chronic homelessness and public assistance and toward success and self-sufficiency, employment, and education along with building individual skills and increasing supportive relationships⁷.

Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC)

The ICC was created under the New York City Charter in 1989⁸. As per the Charter, the ICC is required to develop recommendations addressing youth service duplication and fragmentation that are informed by its member agencies, among other things. Prior to receiving the notice for today's hearing, CHY had no knowledge of the ICC, which is concerning since runaway and homeless youth fall under its scope of work. In theory, CHY supports the intention of the ICC, but we will limit our testimony to what we were able to learn about the ICC via online research since we have no first-hand knowledge about what they do, or have done, which as we stated above, is a concern. In addition, we will also limit our testimony regarding the ICC as it relates to DYCD's Runway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Programs and will focus on the outcome measures for RHY in the Mayor's Management Report (MMR) as well as the work of the Supporting LGBTQ Youth Work Group.

Mayor's Management Report (MMR)

In the 2017 ICC Annual Report (last report issued by the ICC), they indicate that that the MMR "serves as a public account of the performance of City agencies, measuring whether they are delivering services efficiently, effectively and expeditiously."⁹ However, CHY continues to be concerned about how the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) documents runaway and homeless youth (RHY) being "reunited with family or placed in a suitable environment" in the annual Mayor's Management Report (MMR). CHY has raised these concerns to DYCD and the Mayor's Office since the FY16 MMR was released; however, they have gone unaddressed. Conversation with DYCD and the Mayor's Office have confirmed that the reports include discharge placements that CHY does not believe are "suitable environments," and this must be rectified.

According to the MMR Indicator definitions, DYCD defines the outcome of the number of runaway and homeless youth that are "reunited with family or placed in a suitable environment" from TIL or crisis beds as the following: "The percent of youth, served through the Department's Runaway and Homeless Youth Program [Congregate Care Crisis Shelter programs or independent living sites] shelters, who make the transition to independence or return to their families. Placements reflect known discharges." In the 2018 MMR, DYCD reported that 73% of youth in crisis shelters were "reunited with family or placed in a suitable environment from crisis shelters." However, FOIL'd¹⁰ data on crisis discharges from FY18 show that only a total of 875 (28.6%) of the 3,055 unduplicated-discharges¹¹ from crisis beds returned home, are living with friends/relatives, transitioned to their own apartment, or transitioned to residential care/supportive housing. These are the discharge categories tracked by DYCD that CHY believes fall under the outcome "reunited with family or placed in a suitable environment." DYCD's MMR data reports that 84% of youth discharged from Transitional Independent Living

⁷ Gwadz, M., Freeman, R., Cleland, C.M., Ritchie, A.S., Leonard, N.R., Hughes, C., Powlovich, J., & Schoenberg, J. (2017). *Moving from crisis to independence: The characteristic, quality, and impact of specialized settings for runaway and homeless youth*. New York: Center for Drug Use and HIV Research, NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing.

⁸ New York City Charter § 735.

⁹ Interagency Coordinating Council on Youth 2017 Annual Report https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/icc_report_2017_final-1-9-18.pdf (page 10)

¹⁰ Data released October 19, 2018 through a Freedom of Information Law request to The Department of Youth and Community Development issued by Jamie Powlovich, Executive Director, Coalition for Homeless Youth

¹¹ FOILed data shows there were 3,055 unduplicated discharges from DYCD crisis programs in FY18. The MMR indicates there was 2,267 (not indicted if this is duplicated or unduplicated). For the purpose of this report we will be basing percentages on FOILed data.

(TIL) beds in FY18 were “reunited with family or placed in a suitable environment from TIL centers.” However, the same FOIL’d data referenced above shows that only a total of 261 (48.5%) of 538¹² unduplicated discharges from TIL beds returned home, transitioned to their own apartment, or transitioned to residential care/supportive housing. There were also similarly concerning discrepancies discovered in the 2016 and 2017 MMRs.

Since bringing these concerns to the Mayor’s Office and DYCD, CHY was told by DYCD that for the outcomes reported in the MMR they consider “transition to independence” to mean youth that are discharged from RHY programs to any known location. These locations include hospitalization, incarceration, the DHS shelter system and “Other Adult (not friend/family),” which programs often choose when a youth leaves a program to live with a pimp/trafficker.

CHY recommends that the only Discharge Options that should be available for youth making the "transition to independence or return to their families" as part of the DYCD Indicators related to RHY in the MMR should be as follows:

1. Returned Home
2. Living with Friends/Relatives
3. Own Apartment
4. Supportive Housing
5. Other Residential Care

In addition, we recommend that options #1 and #2 be expanded into two separate categories. Those categories should be:

1. Home with guardian or parent- Permanent / Friends/relative Home - Permanent
2. Home with guardian or parent-Temporary / Friends/relatives Home – Temporary

We also recommend that only the "Permanent" options be considered for the purpose of the indicator. This is based on the fact that there is a vast difference between a young person reunifying with their guardian/parent/friend/relative, and a youth leaving a program to "stay" with a guardian/parent/friend/relative while they consider alternative plans. Most providers are able to make this distinction when documenting the appropriate option in Capricorn.

Supporting LGBTQ Youth Work Group

The Supporting LGBTQ Youth Work Group is tasked with implementing the recommendations identified by the NYC Commission on LGBTQ Runaway and Homeless Youth in the report, “All Our Children: Strategies to Prevent Homelessness, Strengthen Services and Build Support for LGBTQ Youth.”¹³ CHY applauds the ICC for prioritizing the needs of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness, who make up a disproportionate percentage of the overall RHY population; however, we are concerned that since the commission released the report in 2010, there has been minimal progress and that the progress that has been made can be attributed mostly to the advocacy being done by the provider community with the support of City Council and the advocacy by homeless youth themselves, not the work group.

The annual ICC reports show that the Supporting LGBTQ Youth Work Group has spent the vast majority of their efforts screening films, and providing trainings to mostly city agencies. We do not want to downplay the importance of training, but there are many other recommendations that were created to meet the immediate needs of LGBTQ homeless youth that have gone most unaddressed by the ICC, and DYCD specifically. If the ICC, more specifically the Supporting LGBTQ Youth Work Group are tasked with the recommendations created by the commission, why does city council, and advocates, regularly have to address the needs set forth in the recommendation with legislation?

¹² FOILED data indicated there were 538 unduplicated discharges from DYCD TIL programs in FY18. The MMR indicates there was 837 (not indicted if this is duplicated or unduplicated). For the purpose of this report we will be basing percentages on FOILED data.

¹³ NYC Mayor Bloomberg. NYC Commission on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Runaway and Homeless Youth. *All Our Children: Strategies to Prevent Homelessness, Strengthen Services and Build Support for LGBTQ Youth*. Retrieved from http://www.nyc.gov/html/om/pdf/2010/pr267_10_report.pdf.

We recommend that there be better oversight on where the Supporting LGBTQ Youth Work Group is focusing its efforts, and that the advocate and provide community be invited to be partners in ensuring that the needs of all LGBTQ homeless youth be met.

Conclusion

CHY is grateful to the City Council for its ongoing commitment to runaway and homeless youth. We look forward to our continued work together to improve the city's runaway and homeless youth services.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.



Testimony of

Gisele Castro
Executive Director

Oversight - Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC)

Before the
New York City Council
Committee on Youth Services

January 15, 2019

Testimony before the Committee on Youth Services, New York City Council

Chair Deborah Rose, and Council Members, good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to speak on the Interagency Coordinating Council goal of effectively identifying comprehensive services for youth, families and the communities of New York City.

My name is Gisele Castro. I am the Executive Director of Exalt Youth (*exalt*), a non-profit organization that engages court-involved youth from all five boroughs ages 15-19 on a voluntary basis (rather than compliance) by offering life changing opportunities through our proprietary curriculum, individualized planning, and paid internship placements.

I want to begin by thanking Chair Rose for your advocacy on behalf of our young people and for hosting this hearing today. I would also like to thank the City agencies and partnering agencies for investing in comprehensive programming and ensuring that youth are offered meaningful opportunities that positively impact their life trajectories.

exalt Ensuring Effective Services for Youth and our Communities

Designed to address three key factors: criminal justice avoidance, educational attainment and employability, *exalt* was founded in 2006, and it is modeled on an award winning, best-practice designated program developed in 1997 at CASES, New York's oldest alternative-to-incarceration agency. Originally incubated at the Blue Ridge Foundation, *exalt* has made significant strides to fulfill our mission to elevate expectations for New York City's court-involved youth

Our outcomes show that when young people are given the individual agency to participate in their future and choose their path toward success, our schools and communities become safer.

After participating in our model, less than 8% of our young people are reconvicted of a crime and more than 95% remain enrolled in high school and on track to graduate. Moreover, our model has resonated over the last decade within the courts, where over 70% of youth with eligible cases are given sentence reductions.

With this track record proving the effectiveness of our model, we are currently planning a significant scaling and fundraising campaign to that, when completed, will allow us to serve triple the youth we serve today.

ICC Collaboration

Today, *exalt's* Deputy Director of Programs, Brian Lewis, accompanies me, and he and the *exalt* team have attended monthly meetings hosted by the ICC.

As a regular attendee at ICC's meetings, we can attest to the effectiveness and value of convening agencies and advocate organizations. Through our participation we have been able to increase our numbers of internships, form deeper collaborations with city agencies and other non-profit organizations and present our unique model and approach to the ICC to discuss our effective practices working with court-involved youth. As the ICC continues to convene, one recommendation would be to expand on the

benefits of the current meetings by implementing additional opportunities for networking and sharing resources.

exalt's Intersectional Work

At *exalt*, our work is intersectional – we have over 400 referral partners, including schools, legal service organizations, Judges, and court officers. As a result, our stakeholders are as diverse as the needs of our young people. This approach has garnered much success to divert youth from incarceration and prevent high school dropouts. Our referral partners support our efforts in assisting our youth achieve their educational goals and resolve/comply with their legal obligations. We provide weekly progress notes to our referral partners to keep them updated and to plan accordingly with the young person that they referred to *exalt*. Some of our referral sources are: Administration for Children Services, Division of Youth Family Justice; Center for Community Solutions; Legal Aid Society; Kings County District Attorneys Office; Manhattan District Attorneys Office; New York Department of Probation; Redhook Justice Community Center; Graduates who refer friends.

Furthermore, we partner with various businesses and nonprofit organizations to develop internships that require varying and increasing degrees of planning, as well as provide a web of new networks to help our youth reach longer-term goals on their own after program completion. *exalt* prepares youth to access and leverage internship opportunities to develop personally and professionally. Our active internship partners are in the arts; law and community activism; small businesses/entrepreneurship; educational institutions like museums, tutoring and cultural centers; environmentalism; government; medical/ health; restaurants/ culinary; media/ movie production; foundation; social work.

I want to once again thank Chair Deborah Rose and the committee for holding this hearing, and I look forward to continuing to work with our colleagues, the City Council, and city agencies, and the citizens of this great city to ensure that youth have the access to comprehensive services to elevate them toward lifelong success.

Respectfully submitted,



Gisele Castro
Executive Director



CAMBA
Testimony Before the New York City Council
Committee on Youth Services
January 15, 2019
Christie Hodgkins

Council Member Rose and Members of the Committee, my name is Christie Hodgkins and I am a Senior Vice President at CAMBA. I want to thank you for holding today's hearing and affording us the opportunity to testify. CAMBA is one of New York City's largest and most trusted community-based organizations and is unique among peer agencies in scale, quality, and responsiveness. Founded in 1977 as a merchants' block association, the agency has grown in direct response to the needs of the Brooklyn community and beyond. Today, CAMBA provides services to 45,000 individuals and families annually through an integrated set of six program areas: Economic Development, Education and Youth Development, Family Support, Health, Housing, and Legal Services. Through our comprehensive continuum of care, CAMBA provides people with the tools and resources that they need to achieve their full potential.

As you know, the Interagency Coordinating Council on Youth was established to promote interagency collaboration on issues relevant to young people. Today, I would like to address the Committee regarding the need for greater interagency coordination in the implementation of summer camps for youth in New York City. We realize that the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) and the Department of Education (DOE) have been working together to develop a smoother and more timely approval process for these camps; however, greater attention must be paid to a number of problems in order to meet the needs of the system and the children and families that it is meant to serve. COMPASS after-school, Beacon Community Center and many SONYC after-school providers are contractually required by DYCD to operate summer camps in DOE school buildings for youth that must be licensed by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH). Summer camp licenses are distinct from the School-Age Child Care (SACC) licenses that we are required to obtain from DOHMH to run our programs during the school year.

The School Construction Authority undertakes major repairs of school buildings during the summer months. In January, the Authority generally begins deciding which buildings will be closed for renovations during the summer. At about the same time, DOE makes decisions about closing buildings during the summer in order to save money. The result of these decisions is that multiple schools are consolidated in a single building for the summer month. COMPASS, SONYC and Beacon Program providers are supposed to follow their school-year schools to the selected summer sites. However, there is often not enough space in the summer sites because DOE itself is operating multiple summer schools in each site. The result of all of this is that

providers are left scrambling to find out in a timely fashion where they will be located for the summer.

To submit a summer camp license application to DOHMH, a provider must know the location where the camp will operate. If an application is to be submitted by hand, it must be turned in at least 60 days prior to the start of the camp. However, providers typically do not get confirmation of the location of their camps from DYCD and DOE until May or even June. They must then scramble to prepare and submit their license applications to DOH with a July opening date looming in front of them. Reaching out to principals at schools where we have no existing relationships and asking for the floor plans, evacuation plans and certificates of occupancy needed for the DOH applications is an enormous hurdle to overcome. In some cases, because of communication breakdowns within City agencies, providers are the ones advising principals of our siting at their schools. This is clearly problematic, especially when the provider has no existing connection to the school. Frequently, licenses are not issued by the start dates for camps and, as a result, the camps cannot open on time.

CAMBA's experience in 2018 was typical and representative of the chaos that characterizes the current system. DYCD set Thursday, July 5, 2018 as the start date for summer camps. DYCD then did not send its initial summer camp location update until April 26, 2018, less than 50 work days until the start of camp. In that update, the location of all seven of CAMBA's COMPASS camps were listed as pending. We received location confirmations as follows: on May 4, 2018, two camp locations were confirmed about 40 work days from the start of camp; on May 17, 2018 another camp location was confirmed about 30 work days from the start of camp; on May 30, 2018, two more camp locations were confirmed about 20 work days from the start of camp; and on June 6, 2018, the final two camp locations were confirmed less than 20 work days from the start of camp.

When providers do not know in a timely manner where their camps will be sited for the summer, parents are faced with challenge of enrolling their children in camps with no locations. They do not even know if the commute will be workable. At the same time, providers have to hire summer camp employees without being able to tell them the location of their worksites. When camp openings are delayed due to these siting issues, there are further serious and troubling consequences. Parents, most of whom are low-income, need care to be available for their children so that they can go to work and/or school in order to provide for their families. As a practical reality, they cannot rely on DYCD-funded camp providers to open on time and they often make alternative arrangements for their children. In turn, this can result in camps being under-enrolled and, sometimes, penalized by DYCD for not meeting contractual targets.

In the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), providers rely on summer camps as sites for youth to be placed in summer jobs. However, SYEP participants cannot be placed in locations without licenses. This forces us to temporarily relocate participants to other sites, disrupting the continuity of their employment experiences and further burdening SYEP staff. Another result of delayed decision-making and confirmation about which schools will be open is that food service for camps also gets delayed. When school cafeteria managers are not informed about camp program siting decisions, or siting decisions are made very late, the timeframe for

securing breakfast and lunch onsite can also be delayed. This means that we end up opening camps without the ability to provide required meals, seriously impacting the youth that we serve.

When there are multiple camps in a single site for the summer, the summer camp licensing process gets even more complex. A school where a camp is to be operated must be inspected by both DOH and the Fire Department. These inspections are scheduled separately for each provider/camp operator. If several providers are based at the same site, that site ends up having to be inspected multiple times because the inspections are based on the provider and not the building itself. On numerous occasions, we have seen situations where some camps in a building will be open while others will not. This scenario is confusing and frustrating for parents, who often cannot understand why some camps can operate alongside summer schools, while others cannot.

School building consolidation for the summer is a cost-saving measure for DOE, but the result is to shift burdens onto providers, parents, and children instead. With multiple camps being relocated each summer, CAMBA's operations staff cannot undertake all of the moves with in-house resources, especially because these moves must take place in a very tight window between the end of after-school programs and the start of the summer. Instead, we must allocate funds to pay for movers. In addition, our IT Department is burdened with relocating IT infrastructure to the summer sites. Moreover, both the movers and the IT staff must be engaged again at the end of the summer to get us back into our regular buildings. The end of the summer also brings other burdens, such as dealing with school custodians who want us completely out of their buildings on the last day of summer camp, meaning that we end up packing while we are still operating our camps. Furthermore, it happens frequently that summer relocation sites are on different train and/or bus lines from our school-year sites, placing an additional burden on parents. Finally, we have been asked to operate camps for elementary school-aged children in high school buildings where the furniture is not age appropriate.

While we are pleased that there has been a focus on getting air conditioning in all DOE classrooms by 2022, we still have regular experience with being asked to run camps in locations without adequate air conditioning for the hot summer months. Our experience has been that when we are co-located in buildings with DOE summer schools, classrooms with air conditioning are prioritized for the summer school. This is the case even though summer schools generally operate for four hours a day for four days a week, while DYCD-funded camps operate for 10 hours a day for five days a week. To manage extremely hot classrooms, we have resorted to measures such as purchasing industrial-strength fans, moving camp groups to air-conditioned rooms after summer school ends, and moving children every day from one un-air-conditioned room to another based on how much sun comes through the windows. Parents come to providers with their concerns about the hot classrooms and often offer to purchase air-conditioning units for these rooms even though this is not allowed by DOE. We empathize with these parents concerns and encourage them to report them to 311. However, on multiple occasions, 311 has routed these calls to DOHMH, which triggers inspections of our camps and leads to us being issued violations for the heat.

What then can be done to resolve these problems? We would like to offer several recommendations. First, DOE should keep all school buildings open for the summer except those

that truly require closure due to construction, asbestos abatement or other serious situations. We have years of experience with DOE waiting until the 11th hour to open buildings for camps. This should change. In addition, each school district should be required to keep open the appropriate number of suitable school buildings based on the number of DYCD-funded programs in the district that need to be sited for the summer.

Second, DOHMH should move to a system of pre-inspecting and licensing buildings, and not conducting multiple inspections of the same buildings for multiple providers.

Third, DOE and DYCD should know in advance how many classrooms in each school building have working air-conditioning before siting camps in those buildings.

Fourth, the DYCD/DOE summer location work group should be expanded to include some camp providers.

Thank you for allowing us to testify. I hope that our testimony on these vital issues for youth will be helpful to your efforts to ensure the provision of clearer information for parents and the timely start of camps in buildings that are conducive to summer programming.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 1/15/2019

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Theresa Moser

Address: 199 Water St NYC 10038

I represent: The Legal Aid Society

Address: same

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Name: Jarrell Daniels

Address: 1190 Amsterdam Avenue

I represent: NYCD (Center for Justice at Columbia University)

Address: 1190 Amsterdam Avenue New York, NY 10029

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

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Date: 1/15/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jamie Powlovich

Address: 495 Flatbush Ave Brooklyn, NY 11225

I represent: Coalition for Homeless Youth

Address: _____

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(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Gisela Castro

Address: 175 Hansen Street Brooklyn NY

I represent: Exalt Youth

Address: _____

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Date: _____

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Name: Andrew Miller

Address: 123 William St

I represent: DYCD

Address: _____

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Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 1/15/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Eduardo Labay

Address: 123 William Street

I represent: DYCD

Address: _____

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