

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE

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September 21, 2016

Start: 1:50 p.m.

Recess: 2:40 p.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

B E F O R E:

FERNANDO CABRERA
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Inez D. Barron
Rory I. Lancman
Barry S. Grodenchik
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.

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

Charles Barrios
Associate Commissioner of
Juvenile Justice Programs & Services
Division of Youth & Family Justice
New York City Administration for
Children's Services

Stephanie Prussack
Associate Commissioner for
Detention Services
New York City Administration for
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John Dixon
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Close to Home
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Dana Kaplan
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Naomi Cavanaugh
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Community Alternatives

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

Christine Bella
Attorney
Juvenile Rights Practice
The Legal Aid Society

Rebecca Kinsella
Adolescent Social Worker
Brooklyn Defender Services

Dr. Jeremy Kohomban
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The Children's Village,
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Sheltering Arms Children and
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Laurel Rinaldi
Director of Client Development
Center for Community Alternatives

Sally Sanchez
Director
Queens Youth Justice Center,
Center for Court Innovation

[sound check]

[pause]

[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Good afternoon, I am Council Member Fernando Cabrera, Chairperson of the Juvenile Justice Committee. I would like to thank you all for being here today to discuss our oversight hearing topic on family engagement in the juvenile justice system. I would also like to take a moment before we get started to thank staff -- Beth Golub and Williams Hongach.

We cannot overemphasize the impact families have on youth rehabilitation; as we all know, at times families need assistance in order to carry out the proper care for their children who are involved in the juvenile justice system. The task to properly provide court-involved youth with the specific needs to address their issues can be daunting for parents, especially if they are raising their child as a single parent.

Today we are going to examine DYFJ's efforts to keep families informed of their youth progress; how the agencies incorporate the family's input in assessing the needs of the youth; what it

1
2 does to promote family participation in a youth's
3 rehabilitation, and how it provides therapeutic
4 services and support to family members.

5 The Committee is interested in reviewing
6 and understanding the various approaches taken by
7 DYFJ to address the needs of families who have
8 children involved in the juvenile justice system.
9 The Committee would like to examine the ways in which
10 families play a critical role in the youth
11 rehabilitation and the impact such engagement has on
12 the outcome of the youth.

13 Additionally, we hope to look at specific
14 programs administered or supervised by DYFJ, as well
15 as aftercare programs and see how such programs help
16 foster family engagement.

17 Closing, I feel that such a matter for
18 this hearing is timely, considering ACS' plans to
19 renovate their secure detention facilities and with
20 DYFJ now operating both non-secure and limited secure
21 placement facilities. I look forward to hearing more
22 about DYFJ's engagement with families of court-
23 involved youth and the strides DYFJ has made in
24 administering program specific to the needs of our
25 children involved in the justice system.

1
2 I would now like to ask members of the
3 Administration to testify before us here today to
4 state your names for the record, but first we will
5 now swear you in and then ask you to proceed with
6 your testimony.

7 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
8 whole truth and nothing but the truth in your
9 testimony before this committee and to respond
10 honestly to council member questions?

11 CHARLES BARRIOS: We do.

12 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: You may begin.

13 CHARLES BARRIOS: Thank you.

14 Good morning Chair Cabrera and members of
15 the Committee on Juvenile Justice. I am Charles
16 Barrios, Associate Commissioner of Juvenile Justice
17 Programs and Services in the Division of Youth and
18 Family Justice (DYFJ) at the New York City
19 Administration for Children's Services. With me
20 today are Stephanie Prussack, Associate Commissioner
21 for Detention Services, and John Dixon, Associate
22 Commissioner for Close to Home. On behalf of Deputy
23 Commissioner Felipe Franco, thank you for the
24 opportunity to testify about the important work we
25 are doing to promote and facilitate family engagement

1
2 for young people in detention and Close to Home
3 placement.

4 DYFJ oversees a continuum of services and
5 programs for youth at every stage of the juvenile
6 justice process. Our Mission is to improve outcomes
7 for young people who come into our care. Each of the
8 juvenile justice programs run or overseen by DYFJ
9 focuses on engaging the family throughout the entire
10 juvenile justice continuum -- from preventive
11 services, to intake, to the time the youth spends in
12 detention and/or placement, and through their
13 transition back to the community.

14 First and foremost, we aim to divert
15 youth from the justice system. The number of young
16 people entering the juvenile justice system has
17 continued to decline since the year 2012. We think
18 this is attributable in part to the decreases we have
19 seen in juvenile arrests across the city, but we also
20 believe that the intensive preventive services that
21 ACS provides to help prevent young people from ever
22 entering the system in the first place have also
23 contributed significantly.

24 ACS' Family Assessment Program (FAP) is
25 available to all families and supports parents and

1 guardians who are struggling to address difficult
2 teenage behaviors. FAP offers intensive in-home
3 therapeutic services that are designed to improve
4 family functioning and avoid involvement in the
5 Persons In Need of Supervision (PINS) system. FAP
6 services offer parents skills to support their
7 children, enforce limits and steer them towards
8 positive activities. FAP consistently reaches out to
9 our sister City agencies and community groups to
10 inform communities and families about the services
11 and interventions that are available.
12

13 We know that the best way to intervene in
14 the lives of these youth and to decrease recidivism
15 is to treat the whole family and to support parents.
16 When a young person is adjudicated by the Family
17 Court as a juvenile delinquent, the judge may mandate
18 participation in an alternative program instead of
19 ordering the youth into residential placement. Our
20 Juvenile Justice Initiative (JJI) is the largest
21 alternative to placement program in the City. JJI
22 uses evidence-based in-home therapies to help
23 families support their children while allowing youth
24 to remain at home with their families. JJI's
25 spectrum of services includes a number of different

1
2 therapeutic approaches. By engaging families instead
3 of automatically incarcerating children, we can meet
4 the families' needs without separating young people
5 from their families.

6 In order for JJI to be successful we must
7 engage families from the very start. JJI staff
8 explain the basics of the program to the family, and
9 also discuss the youth's strengths and issues that
10 are of concern to the caregiver. They talk about
11 formal and informal supports that the youth may have,
12 interventions that may meet the caregiver's concerns
13 as well as the needs of the youth, and they discuss
14 JJI's expectations for the family. Evidence shows
15 that the family treatment interventions offered by
16 JJI are only effective if the parent, caregiver,
17 and/or other family members are engaged and directly
18 involved in the treatment sessions, thus the first
19 state of the intervention focuses intensively on
20 engaging the family and gaining their support in
21 changing a young person's behavior.

22 As the Committee has heard, the term
23 "crossover youth" describes a young person who enters
24 the justice system while involved in the child
25 welfare system. These young people, also referred to

1 as "dually involved" youth, essentially cross over
2 from the child welfare system into the juvenile
3 justice system. Permanency planning for crossover
4 youth is a collaborative effort between various
5 parties across both systems and requires ACS to pay
6 careful attention to the way we incorporate the young
7 person's family or other supports.
8

9 To promote effective family engagement
10 and permanency planning for crossover youth, ACS
11 employs the Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM),
12 which allows the numerous agencies working with the
13 crossover youth (ACS, the Department of Probation,
14 the New York City Law Department, among others) to
15 share information (with the consent of the youth and
16 their parent or guardian), collaborate on solutions,
17 and involve young people and their families in order
18 to prevent further involvement in either system.

19 ACS provides secure and nonsecure
20 detention services to youth who have been arrested
21 and are waiting for judges to hear their case in
22 court. DYFJ directly operates two secure facilities
23 and also oversees 11 not-for-profit provider agency-
24 operated NSD group homes across the city. Generally
25 the detention length of stay of juvenile delinquents

1
2 is relatively short -- on average, 39 days as of
3 September 16, 2016 -- whereas juvenile offenders tend
4 to stay for longer due to the more prolonged progress
5 of cases in Criminal Court -- an average of 203 days
6 as of September 16, 2016. Engaging families at
7 intake is critical for ensuring their involvement
8 throughout the young person's time in detention. We
9 make sure that young people in detention -- and the
10 staff who work with them -- remain accessible to
11 families for the duration of the young person's stay.

12 Naturally, families are concerned about
13 how frequently they will be able to call and visit
14 children while they are in detention. Our secure
15 facilities offer visiting hours four days a week
16 including weekdays, evenings and weekends. Our NSD
17 group homes schedule visits by appointment and are
18 required to offer the opportunity at least twice a
19 week. We encourage family members -- parents,
20 grandparents, brothers, sisters, and the children of
21 youth -- to visit frequently. We also have days when
22 other family members, such as aunts and uncles, can
23 visit. In addition, youth in detention are able to
24 call their families at least once weekly. The length
25 of the phone calls is determined by the youth's level

1
2 in the ASPIRE behavior modification program. Youth
3 are also able to write and receive letters to and
4 from their families.

5 Each facility hosts a monthly family day
6 with food and structured activities for families, as
7 well as special events where family members are able
8 to visit and participate in events, such as
9 barbeques, performances, games and other activities.

10 Some of our most exciting efforts at encouraging
11 family engagement have been through the cultural and
12 arts programs offered at our detention facilities.

13 To briefly highlight one:

14 Our youth have participated in several
15 mural programs with artists from Create Art Works.
16 These murals depict messages of hope and
17 transformation from our youth and are displayed
18 throughout both secure detention facilities. This
19 past August, DYFJ hosted unveiling ceremonies at each
20 secure facility to showcase murals that were created
21 by the young people in our Summer Youth Employment
22 Program in collaboration with Create Art Works.
23 Families and other invited guests listened as our
24 young people described the meaning of their artwork.
25 The young people posed for photos with their families

1 in front of the mural, and the families received
2 copies of the photos to take home.

3
4 As you know, approximately four years ago
5 New York City launched Close to Home, a juvenile
6 justice reform initiative that allows New York City
7 youth who have been adjudicated juvenile delinquents
8 to be placed in residential care with ACS near their
9 home communities. Close to Home affords young people
10 the benefit of rehabilitative services and regular
11 visits with their families, so that families can
12 participate meaningfully in the youth's
13 rehabilitation and stimulate a new trajectory away
14 from crime into adult success.

15 The Family Court generally places youth
16 in Close to Home for 12- or 18-month periods, thus
17 our nonprofit partners offer a lengthier timeline of
18 intensive and therapeutic programming to youth in
19 placement, including aftercare services. Currently,
20 ACS contracts with eight nonprofit partners who
21 operate 24 nonsecure placement residences, and five
22 limited secure placement residences.

23 Close to Home provider agencies recognize
24 the key role that families play in children's lives
25 and work to incorporate the family's voice in all

1
2 aspects of their programs. Our providers encourage
3 family visits and, if needed, transport families to
4 the residences for visitation, meetings and other
5 activities. Our providers routinely hold Family Days
6 and other special events at the residences and invite
7 families to attend, which in turn fosters positive
8 interactions between the youth, their families and
9 staff.

10 In addition to visits at the residence,
11 youth in nonsecure placement may also receive home
12 passes, which are integral to each youth's treatment
13 and transition back to the community. They give
14 youth opportunities to practice newly acquired
15 skills, identify and participate in community
16 services and activities, and reintegrate into the
17 family unit. Families play a critical role in the
18 home pass process by coordinating with the youth's
19 worker to plan for the pass, supervising the young
20 person while they are on a pass, and by providing
21 feedback and input on how the pass went and how
22 future passes will be structured.

23 DYFJ recently adopted the family
24 conferencing model in Close to Home and now employs
25 Family Engagement Conference Facilitators, which are

1 trained clinicians who facilitate planning and
2 support meetings with family. When youth are
3 struggling in Close to Home, these facilitators hold
4 conferences that bring together the youth, the family
5 and all relevant stakeholders to assist the young
6 person through his or her difficulties. In addition,
7 every young person in placement is assigned a DYFJ
8 Permanency Planning Specialist (PPS) that address
9 parents' questions and concerns regarding their
10 child. Planning for family reunification begins on
11 the very first day of a young person's placement in
12 Close to Home, and continues for the entire duration
13 of the youth's placement and transition to aftercare
14 in the community. The PPS maintains at least monthly
15 contact with the family while the youth is in
16 residential placement. Subsequent aftercare
17 supervision by PPS allows the workers to help and
18 encourage young people to practice and enhance the
19 skills they learn while in placement so that youth
20 may successfully remain home with their families.

22 Most of our young people return to their
23 home communities on aftercare following their Close
24 to Home residential placement. Families and youth
25 receive intensive support from the assigned PPS and

1
2 aftercare resources. All of our young people and
3 their families are considered for intensive evidence-
4 based in-home services, such as functional family
5 therapy or multi-systemic therapy. These services
6 begin while the youth is in residential placement and
7 are designed to support the family during the youth's
8 transition home. Clinical staff works with families
9 and youth to facilitate joint understanding of issues
10 and work to ensure that positive ongoing patterns of
11 communication are established and maintained. LSP
12 youth benefit from the added continuity of having
13 aftercare services provided by the residential
14 placement provider.

15 Thank you for the opportunity to discuss
16 the important work we are doing to keep families
17 engaged and actively involved in the treatment and
18 rehabilitation of the young people in ACS' juvenile
19 justice continuum. We know that the success of a
20 young person's transition from the juvenile justice
21 system back to their home and into the community
22 often rests on the strength of the connection between
23 the youth and his or her family, so we as an agency
24 continue to think about how we can better incorporate
25 parents and families in the work we do. One idea

1
2 that DYFJ is currently exploring is the integration
3 of parent advocates in our practice in much the way
4 parent advocates are currently integrated in the
5 child welfare system and in the work of our sister
6 agency, the Department of Probation. We appreciate
7 the Council's ongoing support as we continue to
8 strive toward improving services for the city's most
9 vulnerable youth and strengthening family engagement.
10 We, as well as the other City agencies represented
11 here, are happy to take your questions.

12 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Thank you so much
13 for your testimony. And I want to acknowledge that
14 we've been joined by Council Member Rory Lancman and
15 Council Member Salamanca. I have a few questions
16 before I turn it over to my colleagues.

17 Wanted to ask you -- please guide us
18 through the timeline and also the process when it
19 comes down to Horizon and Crossroads; are you
20 planning to renovate both; if you are; which one is
21 closing down first? And then the second follow-up
22 question with that -- what are we gonna do with
23 parents that will have to come all the way from
24 Brooklyn, for example, being able to go all the way
25 to the Bronx to be able to see their children and to

1
2 have the support services that they're gonna need and
3 the continuation that you've been doing so far, but
4 with the traveling challenges, as you can imagine,
5 being over an hour, whether they're traveling by
6 vehicle or by the subway, either way it's gonna be
7 about an hour; how do we maintain that level of
8 parental involvement?

9 [background comments]

10 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Is your... Is your
11 microphone on? Is the light... Is the red light on?

12 DANA KAPLAN: Huh... problem solved. Thank
13 you... [crosstalk]

14 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Oh okay, now they
15 can hear you on television. Go ahead... [crosstalk]

16 DANA KAPLAN: Dana Kaplan with the
17 Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice; I'm the Executive
18 Director of Youth and Strategic Initiatives and I'm
19 happy to speak to this issue.

20 So as you know, the City is in the very,
21 very earliest stages of deliberation on a process to
22 move the adolescents from Rikers Island, off island;
23 that is a commitment that the City has made, both
24 because of our recognition that 16- and 17-year-olds
25 are more like the juvenile system, even though New

1
2 York State Law treats them differently; you know, we
3 have supported "raise the age" legislation and hope
4 that that will pass at some point.

5 So because of the fact that there has
6 been a significant decline in the ACS population, as
7 has been spoken to, we are in the early stages of a
8 feasibility study that would look at the
9 consolidation of ACS youth in one facility and the
10 transfer of adolescents from Rikers Island to
11 another, and we are looking at adolescents from
12 Rikers going to Horizon.

13 Now it is the earliest stages of a
14 feasibility study only at this point and so we are
15 very early in the process; the entire process will be
16 about 48 months at the point at which it moves
17 forward and a lot of the details are still to be
18 determined. But I will say that the importance of
19 family engagement is very central and key and has
20 been discussed as one of the major components that
21 any plan will have to address. We certainly
22 understand that it is better for young people to have
23 contact with their family and want to ensure that the
24 level of family engagement that ACS has been
25 providing is something that's maintained and we are

1
2 committed to a process to work with the stakeholders
3 on how that will look.

4 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: You mentioned the
5 whole process will take 48 months; how long before we
6 see the feasibility study; are you making this
7 feasibility study public, and if so, how are you
8 gonna make it public?

9 DANA KAPLAN: So we expect that we'll
10 have some conclusions from the feasibility study by
11 winter, the end of winter, and we would certainly be
12 happy to share the findings and would absolutely want
13 to brief you on what the determinations are.

14 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Are you speaking
15 with advocate groups and nonprofits that are engaged
16 in all aspects of -- well actually, your presentation
17 today of all the groups that have been involved --
18 have you spoken to them; are they involved and their
19 input involved in this study?

20 DANA KAPLAN: We have -- so the
21 feasibility study is very much kind of around the
22 design and facilities...

23 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Oh okay.

24 DANA KAPLAN: but our office and the
25 agencies have been in communication with a number of

1
2 advocacy organizations, both children's advocate
3 groups, groups that work on juvenile and criminal
4 justice. Again, we're at the early stages of the
5 process overall, but you know, I'm sure that we will
6 want to continue to grow that list of who we've been
7 in communication with, but we have certainly been
8 having conversations from the beginning and are
9 committed to continue those and make sure that we are
10 reaching out to all of the stakeholders who we should
11 be talking to.

12 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: I think it's
13 important to -- I just wanna accentuate that point --
14 to talk to the nonprofits, because facilities provide
15 function, functionality for their programming; a lot
16 of times you go into a building and the building,
17 it's not really suitable; might look great on paper
18 and the architectural design could be very beautiful,
19 but it might not suite the needs of the programming
20 that is taking place, and also, future programming --
21 will the building have the flexibility to bring about
22 new types of programming that might be necessary in
23 the future -- and so I think this is why I think it's
24 very important to talk to them.

1
2 DANA KAPLAN: I agree with you fully on
3 that, and you know, I think that this is an
4 opportunity and you know, I will share that some of
5 the things that we have talked about is the
6 importance of this facility having a significant
7 amount of programming space; that it's an opportunity
8 to have additional programming space; that community
9 partnerships are central to that, and we also do
10 wanna think about flexibility long-term at the same
11 time, so that will certainly be a central
12 consideration as we continue this.

13 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Glad to hear that.
14 Let me ask you a question; are there any special
15 programming that focus on fathers, engaging fathers,
16 specifically when fathers get engaged with the youth
17 population?

18 CHARLES BARRIOS: There are initiatives
19 that are currently being managed within the child
20 welfare system that specifically target young fathers
21 and internally within DYFJ we've been looking at ways
22 that we can leverage those resources and adapt some
23 of those resources to address the needs of young
24 fathers in our system.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: But currently there
3 is no special programming within your facilities,
4 whether secure or nonsecure, that is specifically
5 addressing the engagement of fathers? The reason I'm
6 asking is because, as many people who are sitting
7 behind you who work with the young people and many
8 others who are involved, you know a lot of these
9 children have father issues, you know, and whether
10 it's rejection or whatever category of trauma they're
11 dealing with, a lot of it is stemming from fathers;
12 I'm just curious as to if there is or are there
13 future plans to make this part of your programming,
14 and I noticed that you have two types -- if I
15 remember right -- two types of family approach to
16 therapy here, and if so, how is that integrated; is
17 that something that gets flagged through the
18 assessment tools that you're implementing?

19 CHARLES BARRIOS: So we have, Councilman,
20 been involved in the Mayor's Office Fatherhood
21 Initiative, and there is specific programming
22 available for young fathers; we can get back to you
23 with more specific information about how that
24 **[inaudible]**... [crosstalk]

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: I'm very familiar
3 with the program; I'm just looking to see how -- is
4 there a bridge there? I mean we could have a nice
5 program, hundreds of thousands of dollars involved;
6 are children in our facilities, are they availing
7 themselves of that benefit? And if not, you know,
8 it'll be something to look at, you know, something
9 that we could explore, you know. I'm very proud of
10 all the work that you do; let me just give you the
11 pretext there, and it's amazing, I think we, New York
12 City are on the cutting edge nationwide with what we
13 do, but I'm always looking to go to the next level so
14 we could be in the forefront of that.

15 I'm gonna... [pause] Okay. I wanted to
16 ask you also; in terms of... how do you assess success
17 when it comes down to working with families? What do
18 you deem success?

19 JOHN DIXON: If I may. I think there are
20 several different benchmarks we use. Certainly one
21 is participation in planning processes, 'cause that's
22 integral to the kids' success. So any time that we
23 are meeting to plan for services based upon our
24 assessments of kids, families involved in that
25 process, and when I say involved, it's not just a

1
2 matter of inviting, it's a matter of reaching out,
3 identifying all relevant resources, and then making
4 every effort to engage those families. Frequently
5 our families have gone through a lot with these young
6 people and feel frustrated, feel alienated, and so
7 our providers, our staff work very closely to
8 identify who the family resources are and get them to
9 the table; that could include transporting folks to
10 planning sessions or anything like that as well.

11 In addition, all of our provider agencies
12 offer a multitude of different sort of activities
13 that engage families and bring families to the table,
14 and you know that's really key in terms of getting..
15 reshaping that relationship which was really stressed
16 at the time that the child came to us. So we use
17 those activities to begin to leverage a different
18 relationship with the families and staff actively
19 participate and facilitate better communication
20 amongst family and child.

21 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: So talk to me a
22 little bit more about your outreach towards family;
23 give me a specific example; what does that look like
24 in the real world?

1
2 JOHN DIXON: Sure. I had the good
3 fortune of being out at one of our limited secure
4 sites this morning for a permanency hearing, or not a
5 hearing; permanency meeting, planning meeting for a
6 young man in our care, and this young man has had
7 pretty consistent engagement from his mother but it
8 has fluctuated over the course of his stay with us,
9 and in the meantime, while we've been working very
10 closely and while our provider agency has been
11 working very closely to gain her support in this
12 process and assist her in terms of stabilizing her
13 housing situation, we've reached out to other family
14 members who have become supports and have come in to
15 visit and support this young man while he's there, so
16 we've had grandma at the table, we've had an aunt at
17 the table as well as then enlisting the support of
18 other siblings that this young man has. So it's not
19 just going with that one identified resource; it's
20 reaching out and making sure we identify all those,
21 so if there are lapses, that child still stays
22 connected to their greater family.

23 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: It was mentioned in
24 your testimony, and I think it was a good
25 observation; whenever parents or caretakers are not

1 involved that, you know we have less success; what
2 happens at that moment; is there a different
3 strategy? I mean it's very -- family assistance, uh
4 therapy type of approaches work when you have
5 families engaged in that process, so what happens
6 when you only have a child, the youth and nobody
7 else, you know, is in the picture, nobody else wants
8 to get in the picture and they say, we don't wanna
9 deal with this youth, he's a troublemaker; he made
10 our life impossible; what happens at that point;
11 **[inaudible]** changes?

13 JOHN DIXON: So... [background comments]
14 Mr. Barrios just prompted me -- you know our
15 engagement with families starts very early on, so
16 when our system first touches kids or kids first come
17 into the system through detention or anywhere, that
18 we really do make a concerted effort tot identify all
19 family resources and reach out. What you're asking,
20 you know, it take various shapes -- you know, it
21 looks differently for different kids; sometimes
22 during the course of our time with a kid we have an
23 identified family member who is planning with us and
24 sometimes that relationship breaks down, and
25 sometimes we get kids who come into our system and

1
2 they're already foster care kids. I think that we've
3 made great strides, particularly in Close to Home, in
4 terms of not settling for looking at foster care,
5 even if foster care is the first resource or if it
6 looks like foster care is becoming more and more of a
7 realistic option for kids, and we make sure that at
8 the very least we are always thinking of concurrent
9 planning and identifying other family resources,
10 wherever they may be. We really believe that any
11 family in a kid's life is gonna alter that kid's
12 outcome in a positive way.

13 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: But do you have
14 situations where there is just no engagement
15 whatsoever from family members?

16 JOHN DIXON: We do have that.

17 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Like out of 100
18 kids, how many are we talking about?

19 JOHN DIXON: You know, out of the 100
20 kids, almost all kids have some degree of family
21 engagement, so it's a smaller portion. I can tell
22 you that about -- currently, in Close to Home -- I'm
23 speaking for Close to Home -- about 20-25 of our
24 kids, they're traditional foster care youth; not just
25 foster care youth 'cause they've come in to nonsecure

1 placement, so that's about the percentage we're
2 dealing with there. In those cases, we still want
3 kids to have the opportunities to participate in
4 different events and activities and our staff, our
5 provider agency staff then step in and support that
6 child so that they can, so they serve de facto in
7 terms of family members for those types of
8 situations. But we're constantly working to try to
9 identify bringing in maybe that one untapped family
10 resource so that we can make that connection for that
11 child.
12

13 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Let me switch gears
14 here; I'm gonna ask an unusual question, 'cause I
15 really don't know the answer to this; talk to me
16 about the PINS program, PINS. How is that different
17 now from let's say 10 years ago? And then how does
18 that translate to the topic that we're talking about
19 today; how is it better; what are the challenges; how
20 we can make it better?

21 Before you start; let me just acknowledge
22 we've been joined by Council Member Grodenchik.

23 NAOMI CAVANAUGH: Hi. I'm Naomi
24 Cavanaugh from DYFJ, Community Alternatives. The FAP
25 program's changed over the years; we have a lot more

1
2 levels of care, so now, when a family comes in, we
3 assess the family and then choose sort of what level
4 of care that they need, so we can meet their needs
5 very differently now than we **[inaudible]**... [crosstalk]

6 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: So let me stop you
7 there. The parent gets to choose the level of care?

8 NAOMI CAVANAUGH: No, our FAP specialists
9 meet with families and [interpose]

10 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay.

11 NAOMI CAVANAUGH: discuss the options of
12 care and figure out sort of what level of involvement
13 is necessary to intervene in this child and help the
14 family support them.

15 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: And how old does
16 the child need to be in order to be in PINS?

17 NAOMI CAVANAUGH: The...

18 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: How old does the
19 child need to be in order to be in PINS program?

20 NAOMI CAVANAUGH: I actually do not know
21 that. Sorry; I'm not over... I don't oversee the FAP
22 program specifically, so I don't know that...

23 [interpose]

24 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: I think somebody
25 over there knows the answer. [background comments]

1
2 She can whisper it, yes; it's okay. [background
3 comments] Okay, you can switch. If you could
4 identify yourself. Thank you.

5 CLAUDETTE THOMPSON: I'm Claudette
6 Thompson; I'm the Program Director for JJI.

7 So for the FAP program; how it's
8 different, as Naomi stated earlier -- now there's a
9 whole continuum of services; there's old evidence-
10 based programs, there's FFT, MFT, family
11 stabilization programs -- what else do you have --
12 respite. And so usually when a family comes in to
13 FAP, it depends on the service, so if for instance,
14 the FFT, the assessment tool that's done with the FFS
15 worker and the family, and if they fit in a criteria
16 that they can be better served by a certain model; it
17 depends on the model. For instance, if it's an FFT
18 family, they can take them at an age of 11 years old;
19 12 -- you know, it depends on what model they fit..

20 [crosstalk]

21 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: You said 8 years
22 old?

23 CLAUDETTE THOMPSON: No, 11, 12, yeah...

24 [crosstalk]

1
2 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Oh 11... 11 years
3 old?

4 CLAUDETTE THOMPSON: Yeah.

5 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Ten years ago you
6 had to be 15, right, something like that...?

7 [crosstalk]

8 CLAUDETTE THOMPSON: Yeah, so -- that
9 then you do **[inaudible]**; you remember **[inaudible]**, so
10 they would make referrals and then they will make
11 referrals outside to different providers, but now FAP
12 has a whole... like five different evidence-based
13 models that they actually refer to themselves.

14 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: And you find it
15 better now, this system...

16 CLAUDETTE THOMPSON: Yeah.

17 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: to flow to... to the
18 services... [crosstalk]

19 CLAUDETTE THOMPSON: Yes...

20 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: to the services
21 that they need?

22 CLAUDETTE THOMPSON: Yes. Because it's
23 all... and the services are in-home treatment, so the
24 providers actually go into the home and provide the
25 services with the families there.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Thank you. I
3 wanted to ask you, uh because they were mentioned,
4 the nonsecure sites; you mentioned there were 24 or
5 25?

6 CHARLES BARRIOS: Twenty-four.

7 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Twenty-four. Can
8 you give me a breakdown by borough?

9 JOHN DIXON: Yes we can. We have four in
10 Brooklyn, six in the Bronx, nine in Queens, one in
11 Staten Island, and five in Westchester County. And..
12 [interpose]

13 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Can you mention
14 those again? I'm sorry... [crosstalk]

15 JOHN DIXON: Actually... That totals 25, so
16 I'm trying to like figure out where we got the extra
17 one, so let me... [crosstalk]

18 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Right.

19 JOHN DIXON: I'll give you the 25 and
20 then we'll try to figure out where the discrepancy
21 is. We have four in Brooklyn, six in the Bronx, nine
22 in Queens, one in Staten Island, and five in
23 Westchester County.

24 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: So question -- most
25 of the youth are coming, would you say from Brooklyn?

1
2 JOHN DIXON: You know, we -- if we're
3 speaking of Close to Home, I can tell you that we've
4 seen a little bit a shift in terms of -- most of the
5 kids early on were from the Bronx and we've seen an
6 increase in terms of intakes in Queens and Brooklyn,
7 so it's pretty spread out across those three
8 boroughs.

9 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: And I just noticed
10 that it is double of... who has nine?

11 JOHN DIXON: Queens.

12 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Queens -- and
13 Brooklyn, just being such a much larger borough, and
14 with all the things that I see in the media, I would
15 think that we would have a lot more kids coming from
16 Brooklyn. Do you have a breakdown by borough how
17 many youth are coming by borough?

18 JOHN DIXON: I don't have that
19 information, but we can certainly get that to you.

20 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Can you get... I
21 think that's a point of important information [sic].

22 JOHN DIXON: Absolutely.

23 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Alrighty. I have
24 no more questions from my colleagues; I wanna thank
25 you for all the work that you're doing, especially in

1
2 dealing with the families. And now I'm gonna call
3 upon on advocates -- Dr. Jeremy Kohomban, Rebecca
4 Kinsella and Christine Bella. Christine Bella from
5 The Legal Aid Society, Rebecca Kinsella from Brooklyn
6 Defender Services, and Dr. Jeremy Kohomban from The
7 Children's Village.

8 [background comments]

9 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay, you may
10 begin.

11 [background comments]

12 CHRISTINE BELLA: Hi, good afternoon.
13 Thank you Chair Cabrera. My name is Christine Bella
14 and I am here from The Legal Aid Society; I'm an
15 attorney with the Juvenile Rights Practice.

16 Much of what our written testimony
17 includes has been discussed either in the ACS
18 testimony or through your informative Q&A with the
19 agency, so I'll try not to regurgitate that
20 information, but I, you know, encourage you to look
21 at our testimony; there are some important cites
22 there with respect to studies and research that
23 support how important family engagement is to youth.

24 So let me begin with -- our perspective,
25 as you know, comes from our daily interactions with

1
2 youth and families in the Family Courts throughout
3 the city, as well in the Criminal Court. We have
4 daily interactions with children, youth, court, ACS
5 staff at all levels, as well as community-based
6 organizations and social services providers.

7 We are greatly encouraged that we have
8 finally completed the final phase of the landmark
9 2012 Close to Home Initiative which requires now that
10 all New York City youth that are placed by the Family
11 Courts as juvenile delinquents be placed in
12 facilities in or near New York City, as you've heard.
13 So now you know the New York City youth that are
14 sentenced to limited secure placement are no longer
15 sent to distant Upstate OCFS facilities; they're now
16 here in and around New York City. Our youth now
17 benefit from being close to their families, their
18 communities and their lawyers; this proximity allows
19 for greater access to their families for family
20 engagement and also enables youth to transition back
21 to their communities much more smoothly and we would
22 say certainly will be more successful.

23 The family engagement also provides an
24 added layer of oversight, which is not to be
25 underestimated or undervalued; incarcerated youth can

1
2 now more readily access their families to voice any
3 concerns they have about their care while in
4 placement.

5 Now we know family engagement works,
6 you've heard -- I'm sure you've done the research
7 yourself -- according to the Vera Institute of
8 Justice, it is proven to be effective for better
9 youth outcomes and among other things, serves as a
10 buffer against negative influences and enables
11 parents to build stronger relationships with their
12 youth, and ultimately reduces the rate of
13 reoffending.

14 But family engagement should not be
15 limited to incarcerated youth; we feel strongly that
16 it should be a process at all points in the juvenile
17 justice system, including with police, probation,
18 court staff, judges, attorneys such as ours,
19 prosecutors, and detention as well as placement
20 staff. This is an opportune time to ensure that
21 family engagement is a key feature across all DYFJ
22 programs and services for youth and their families.

23 The needs of the detained and placed
24 youth are far greater than those of youth in the
25 general population and not surprisingly, the mental

1 health and educational needs of youth in ACS
2 facilities are significant. While a greater
3 percentage of youth have been diverted from court or
4 diverted to community-based programs, the needs of
5 youth in placement and detention have certainly
6 intensified.

7
8 Additionally, LGBTQ youth are
9 overrepresented in the juvenile justice population
10 and family engagement for this group of youth is
11 particularly important. You have heard, I'm sure,
12 discrimination and rejection from families and
13 caregivers can result in depression, suicidality,
14 isolation, and self-harming behaviors and
15 homelessness; that may also lead to involvement in
16 mental health system as well as the criminal justice
17 and juvenile justice systems. It's important to note
18 that studies do show that when families are accepting
19 of the youth's sexual orientation and gender identity
20 and expression, the likelihood of negative outcomes
21 for the youth decrease significantly.

22 So we certainly wanna start our
23 discussion of this topic of family engagement by
24 making the point that wherever possible, youth should
25 remain with their families and in their communities.

1
2 Detention and out of home placement should be rarely
3 invoked. Once a child is remanded to detention or
4 sentenced to placement, it then becomes difficult for
5 the parent to connect with his or her child.

6 Logistical challenges such as transportation costs
7 and scheduling conflict, as well as caregiver's other
8 commitments create barriers. Parents of incarcerated
9 youth also cope, as you heard, with their own
10 emotional issues regarding a child's incarceration --
11 frustration, stress, fear, anger -- to name a few.

12 So we're encouraged that ACS is
13 explicitly acknowledging the importance of family
14 engagement and we have seen they have made great
15 strides in this area; we certainly see the language
16 set forth in their detention and placement visitation
17 policies, and all of this is encouraging.

18 Some key components that we would like to
19 just reiterate. Family engagement requires
20 communication, it requires trust, it requires that
21 parents be made known of the expectations that will
22 be place on the parent and the child as early on as
23 possible, families should be invited to participate
24 in all treatment planning, including family therapy
25 as early on as possible, whenever practical in person

1
2 or via conference or video conferencing, if
3 necessary, so technology should be developed to
4 enhance those areas.

5 Parental peer support and peer advocacy
6 should be provided to parents and we did hear from
7 ACS that they are looking into this as a process and
8 we believe that the practice has demonstrated to be
9 effective in this area; parents need peer advocates
10 to help them navigate the juvenile justice system.
11 Each parent or caregiver should have contact
12 information for not only case planners, but also
13 educational staff.

14 Now research shows that family visitation
15 is associated with better behavior and improved
16 academic performance. So that will have a direct
17 impact on the wellbeing of the young person in
18 detention or placement. We are told, and I
19 understand the policy for visits in detention is that
20 it's currently limited to one hour; we would ask for
21 longer visits to be arranged and we would like to see
22 more activities to be provided so that youth can
23 engage with their parents and caregivers during
24 visits. We submit that visits should be frequent,
25 inclusive and flexible, according to the schedules

1
2 and needs of the families. Family should be defined
3 broadly -- we did hear testimony about that and we're
4 encouraged. Visits should include siblings,
5 incarcerated youth's children, if they're parenting
6 while in detention or placement, and a topic that you
7 raised, Chair Cabrera, that co-parents or expectant
8 fathers should be invited to visits as well. The
9 inclusion of others beyond the parent or caretaker
10 reminds the child that he or she is part of a larger
11 family or community and can alleviate the pressure on
12 what might already be a strained parent-child
13 relationship.

14 Just wanna comment on services for LGBTQ
15 youth -- they should be tailored to meet their unique
16 needs, including providing culturally competent
17 services and a focus on developing family acceptance.
18 I'm told that New York City DYCD had a program that
19 had been funded with a goal towards working on family
20 engagement for reunification for LGBTQ youth, but
21 that the City no longer funds this effort and we
22 would urge ACS to evaluate the need for such services
23 and ensure that they are providing specific services
24 for this population.

1 answer is, it depends; that sometimes it depends on
2 the case planner and sometimes it depends on the
3 agency, and that's not an acceptable outcome and I
4 know you touched on this, Chair Cabrera, but it's
5 really important that ACS demand excellence among all
6 providers and one way to drive performance and make
7 sure that appropriate remediation is offered, where
8 needed, is to have a quality assurance improvement
9 program in place that can assess practices across all
10 of the agencies; as you know, there are many involved
11 now through the various contracts, not only under the
12 Close to Home providers, but also under nonsecure
13 detention, which we didn't talk a whole lot about
14 today, but they are also provided by contracts.

16 We also summon anecdotal information from
17 youth, which I think is important to share with the
18 Committee. When asked about family engagement, youth
19 consistently ask us to talk to you and to others --
20 and we shared this information with ACS as well --
21 they ask for more time to visit, more access to phone
22 calls, more day passes; more opportunities to visit
23 with your families outside the facilities.

24 So I appreciate the opportunity to
25 testify today about this important topic and I'm

1
2 happy to answer any questions that the Committee
3 might have.

4 REBECCA KINSELLA: Good afternoon. My
5 name is Rebecca Kinsella and I am an adolescent
6 social worker at Brooklyn Defender Services, in our
7 specialized adolescent unit. Our team represents
8 over two thousand youth ages 13-21 each year, and as
9 such, I work with detained youth at both Crossroads
10 and Rikers. I'm grateful for the opportunity to
11 speak with you all today about family engagement,
12 because family engagement during detention is often
13 the difference between future criminal justice
14 involvement, homelessness and successful reentry into
15 the home.

16 I'd like to share a short client story;
17 I'll call my client B.

18 B was arrested at just 15 years old; he's
19 been detained for 17 months at Crossroads, awaiting a
20 disposition or trial, and while he's been incredibly
21 active in programming there -- and we've actually
22 seen a lot of growth from him as a result of the rich
23 programming at Crossroads, the staff had reported
24 periods of depression for him, acknowledging that
25 because of limited visits with his mother -- mother

1
2 has several young children and is the sole caretaker
3 of those children -- she has barriers to
4 transportation and barriers to childcare, and you
5 know, the times available in her visits have created
6 barriers as well -- and as a result of that lack of
7 visits, the staff has acknowledged that that is part
8 of the problem with B's depression.

9 And in my experience I've seen many
10 children come out of the juvenile justice system
11 having an experience like B's, who eventually come
12 home, have not had proper family engagement and
13 therefore end up arrested again with a full order of
14 protection; rendering them homeless and away from
15 their families. And I think this anecdote speaks to
16 a few of the problems that we've identified and
17 offered solutions for:

18 Restrictions on -- and I believe many of
19 these have been acknowledged by Legal Aid Society --
20 restrictions on who may visit, limiting opportunities
21 for family engagement. It's my understanding that
22 oftentimes only a biological parent can bring in
23 siblings of the young people that are detained and
24 must present a birth certificate, and therefore we
25 ask the City to call upon ACS to allow people to

1
2 define their own families, to allow them broader
3 definitions of family, and also consider funding
4 childcare during visiting hours in an effort to allow
5 very young siblings into the facility.

6 Additionally, you pointed out the
7 visiting times are limited and inaccessible for many
8 parents. While there are many different times
9 offered, they oftentimes create barriers to parents
10 trying to visit possibly in the morning; other times
11 with young children, so we'd ask for a greater
12 variety of visiting times to accommodate all of these
13 different working and caregiving schedules.

14 Third, Crossroads specifically can be far
15 away from subways and other public transportation,
16 particularly for parents that may be in other
17 boroughs. Therefore, we'd recommend possibly a van
18 or shuttle system that would meet somewhere in the
19 communities to allow parents and siblings access to
20 the facilities directly.

21 And finally, a lack of privacy during
22 visits and phone calls. The lack of privacy for many
23 of the children, we know that oftentimes a case
24 manager sits with them during phone calls and we
25 believe that there is oftentimes very private

1
2 information that a young person would like to share,
3 but they don't have the opportunity because of the
4 need to have someone present.

5 And I want to remind the Committee also
6 about the horrors that our young people are facing on
7 Rikers, as we acknowledged, the 16- and 17-year-olds
8 are there, and who are no different from their 14-
9 and 15-year-old peers at Crossroads, except that they
10 and their families face substantially more physical
11 harm and sexual abuse and trauma at Rikers. And we
12 are happy to hear that the Administration is looking
13 to move 16- and 17-year-olds to the other facilities
14 and we hope that they will call us and other
15 defenders who represent these young people. We also
16 urge the City to move these kids as quickly as
17 possible, as 48 months is far too long, given the
18 extreme level of harm that the youth and their
19 parents are facing on Rikers Island.

20 So thank you for the opportunity and look
21 forward to any questions.

22 DR. JEREMY KOHOMBAN: Good afternoon
23 Chair Cabrera and members of the Council. Thank you
24 for the opportunity.

1
2 I am Dr. Jeremy Kohomban, the President
3 and CEO of The Children's Village, Harlem Dowling and
4 Inwood House.

5 The Children's Village, founded in 1851
6 in New York as the New York Juvenile Asylum, offers
7 some of the earliest examples of juvenile detention
8 and juvenile justice residential programs in the
9 nation. Today, we provide the broadest continuum of
10 juvenile justice programs in New York. Our continuum
11 includes evidence-based diversion programs to keep
12 at-risk teens with their families, nonsecure
13 detention when out-of-home care is needed, limited
14 secure, and aftercare to help youth return to their
15 community successfully. Aftercare often includes
16 short-term intensive services followed by our
17 uniquely privately-funded long-term aftercare that
18 extends to age 25. All of these interventions rely
19 heavily on family engagement and I should add that we
20 do the same work in Iraq, Australia and the
21 Netherlands, so we have some international
22 benchmarking that we've used in our programming.

23 Our long history and recent experience
24 confirm what research has shown -- family engagement

1
2 is critical to the long-term success of juveniles in
3 detention.

4 Let me give you three quick examples of
5 very recent research that we believe is relevant and
6 three short recommendations that actually capture
7 what everyone has said here, for the most part.

8 The first is -- in 2012 Grant Duwe and
9 Valerie Clark came out with a groundbreaking study
10 that showed that incarcerated adults who had the most
11 visitors while in custody were least likely to
12 reoffend upon release. They also found that visits
13 from a wide variety of people correlated with a lower
14 rate of recidivism for these same adults. In 2011,
15 Goldweber and Cauffman added to our knowledge with
16 their findings that incarcerated youth who received
17 regular visits from family showed significant reduced
18 signs of depression and generally did better than
19 those who did not have family visitation. And
20 finally, and most interesting, here and recently,
21 2015, the evaluation of the Juvenile Drug Courts by
22 the US Department of Justice found that youth with
23 substance abuse disorders benefited greatly from
24 family engagement and here is the additional piece --
25 these youth experienced decreased drug use and showed

1
2 reduced risk for committing personal and property
3 crimes upon release.

4 Let me start my recommendations by
5 stating the obvious -- in New York and in most urban
6 areas of the United States, the juvenile system is
7 predominantly one of color, with black children
8 penetrating the system at faster rates and waiting
9 longer in the system; that's across the board.

10 So our first recommendation -- and this
11 is completely commonsense -- it is critical that we
12 actively encourage family engagement and that we
13 define family as broadly as possible, to include
14 extended family, mentors and any responsible adult
15 who has a positive relationship and cares and is
16 willing to be engaged with the juvenile.

17 So let's step away from the limitations
18 of what we believe family should be, because what
19 matters for our young people is that they have
20 someone in their life, that they have someone in
21 their life.

22 Second, engagement with families has to
23 begin at the earliest possible opportunity. It is
24 incumbent on us to own that responsibility for
25 creating an organizational culture that welcomes

1 family engagement. Delays and unnecessary separation
2 from family hurt our youth.

3
4 So let me tie back to your question, Mr.
5 Chair, about fathers. When we -- Children's Village
6 -- when we fail to engage a father, we miss out on
7 50% of the family that that child has, and in a
8 system where fathers, because of color and race, have
9 been denied access and sometimes are simply unable to
10 get to us, engaging fathers should be a full-time job
11 that cannot be delegated to anyone else; that is our
12 job and every time we fail, we fail that child.

13 Third and finally, while it's not too
14 easy, as a system and as individual providers we must
15 find ways to engage families in the decision-making
16 process. The juveniles in our custody do not belong
17 to us and they should not belong to a system.

18 A big problem that we continue to have in
19 New York is kids that are crossing over -- as you
20 heard from Deputy Commissioner Barrios -- they are
21 crossing over from child welfare, from a lifetime
22 often in child welfare; now to young adulthood in
23 juvenile justice, and so we need to change this
24 dynamic, we need to tell our families and our
25 children that they don't belong to us and they

1 certainly don't belong to a system. Success --
2 getting back to your question -- is only assured when
3 each juvenile has at least one appropriate and
4 willing adult relationship that provides
5 unconditional belonging. That person doesn't need to
6 be rich, educated, you know, they just need to
7 provide unconditional belonging. When our kids have
8 one person in their life that provides that, we are
9 almost assured of success. In our experience, this
10 relationship of unconditional belonging is most often
11 found within the family. In those rare instances --
12 we think it's in about 15% of our population, and so
13 it's relatively rare -- in those rare instances when
14 immediate family fails to provide us that
15 appropriate, willing adult willing to make
16 unconditional belonging, bear [sic] responsibility;
17 then it is our job to create a relationship that does
18 and we often find foster families and mentors that
19 are willing to take on this role. Let me stop there.

21 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Thank you so much
22 for that wealth of information. I couldn't agree
23 with all of you, in your assessment of when it comes
24 to family relationships; it comes down to meaningful
25 relationships. Who can survive without meaningful

1 relationships, especially when we have youth going
2 through the most developmental years where they're
3 trying to figure out who am I, why am I here, all of
4 those existential questions that many of us are still
5 asking, but I think even more important, for someone
6 who could be very vulnerable during that stage of
7 their life.
8

9 I wanted to ask -- you all mentioned
10 expanding the definition of family; how do we -- and
11 I would imagine the concern of detention centers and
12 for the Administration is: how do we make sure that
13 as we're expanding the definition of family here that
14 the wrong person does not squeeze in? You know what
15 I mean; that they end up having phone calls with
16 somebody who's gonna be a negative influence in their
17 life. How do we vet this?

18 DR. JEREMY KOHOMBAN: Since we have kids
19 in detention; let me take a stab at that.
20 Councilmember, there are always risks to this work;
21 it's not perfect...

22 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: True.

23 DR. JEREMY KOHOMBAN: there's always the
24 risk that despite all the background checks that we
25 do, including FBI clearances often, that someone will

1
2 get through, but that risk is minor compared to the
3 risk of a child growing up in a government-funded
4 system and possibly graduating into an adult
5 incarceration system; it's a minor risk. And I know
6 we live in a world where people want us to do the
7 most difficult work and make no mistakes; that's
8 unreal. I mean, will someone get through? Yeah.
9 But do we have great systems that for the most part
10 prevent that from happening? Of course we do.

11 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: And alongside with
12 that; you had mentioned about privacy and the phone
13 calls. What would that look like; that means there
14 would be nobody around; is there somebody checking on
15 the other line or they should and... give me more
16 details.

17 REBECCA KINSELLA: Sure. It's my
18 understanding that any time a young person in one of
19 the detention facilities does make a phone call home
20 that they're doing so with a case manager sitting
21 next to them, even the case manager dialing the phone
22 to confirm that it is a parent. What exactly that
23 looks like I'm unsure, but I do know that what we'd
24 like to see is more privacy to allow those very
25 sensitive conversations with parents, particularly

1
2 around young people making decisions about their
3 cases, their criminal cases, which weigh on the rest
4 of their lives, and so we'd ask for just possibly
5 whether that's an alone time for the young person on
6 the phone, whether that's some sort of phone booth;
7 whatever it may be, but just an opportunity each week
8 to engage their parents without having someone
9 sitting next to them monitoring everything they're
10 saying.

11 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: So let me ask the
12 lawyer. When do they by right have that privacy
13 moment right now? When can they demand and say hey,
14 I have a right to privacy right now? I mean I'm sure
15 with your lawyer and is there any other moment that..

16 CHRISTINE BELLA: From the youth's point
17 of view or from the.. from the.. [crosstalk]

18 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Yeah.

19 CHRISTINE BELLA: Okay. So I honestly
20 can't tell you off the top of my head, and certainly
21 the right to counsel affords them the right to
22 confidentiality and privacy, so there should be no
23 recording or you know observation or eavesdropping or
24 listening in on that conversation, whether in person,
25 over the phone, via mail communications; anything

1
2 like that. You know parent-child, the relationship
3 is really **[inaudible]** and it should be protected at
4 all costs; this is certainly a fundamental right,
5 both of the child and of the parent. Now these are
6 youth in settings where there is some perceived risk
7 to public safety and so the agency has to do their
8 balancing of what's in the best interest of the child
9 and while also balancing the need for the protection
10 for the public good. So you know, I think that's a
11 question posed for ACS; I'd like to hear when they
12 think they have the right to infringe upon that
13 privacy and then I can see if I could poke holes in
14 it. Honestly, I do think that, from certainly a
15 family integrity point of view, an individual
16 integrity point of view that should be encouraged; I
17 think the more secure the setting the less likely
18 they're going to do it liberally, but certainly not
19 as regard in case... decisions about what's happening
20 on Criminal and Family Court cases should be done in
21 a way that allows a child to speak freely and
22 privately with a parent, as well as other issues that
23 come up with regard to you know relationships,
24 emotional problems; certainly the young person could
25 be having a problem with staff and wanna talk about a

1
2 particular problematic interaction he had with staff
3 that could've led to injury or you know, other
4 difficulty, a retaliation and the youth certainly
5 would not feel free to do that with another staff
6 member in the room.

7 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: But when do you
8 tell your client that you could... I'm sure you tell
9 your clients, this is when you have a right to
10 privacy; is it just when you're with legal counsel;
11 is there any other time that you tell them
12 specifically when do you have a lack of privacy?

13 CHRISTINE BELLA: In the facilities...

14 [crosstalk]

15 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: In the facility.

16 CHRISTINE BELLA: it's very difficult for
17 us to tell them; we are not in the business of
18 operating the facilities, so certainly we encourage
19 youth and their families to ask for that time; I
20 certainly, if I ever call a facility, ask for that or
21 make arrangements in advance of any visits that it
22 will be assured, but parents and **[inaudible]** aren't
23 as empowered and certainly don't have the explicit
24 protection of right to counsel governing that. But I

1
2 mean I'd be happy to look into that and even brief
3 something for you.

4 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: I'm just curious if
5 anybody ever brought this question up **[inaudible]**...
6 [crosstalk]

7 CHRISTINE BELLA: Uh I mean it... I think...
8 you know we see it as a balancing, because of the
9 agency's operational, so-called operational needs
10 versus the youth's integrity.

11 DR. JEREMY KOHOMBAN: It's rare, Council
12 Member Cabrera, that a child would be denied privacy
13 with a parent... [crosstalk]

14 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay.

15 DR. JEREMY KOHOMBAN: and in those
16 occasions when it needs to happen, it absolutely
17 needs to include the entire team, including the City,
18 in a decision as to why it may be appropriate to deny
19 privacy. The State also has an ombudsman that comes
20 in to each facility and interviews children in
21 private and there's an 800 number that they can call
22 at any time directly to the ombudsperson's office if
23 they have a concern about anything; not just privacy.
24 So there are some checks and balances, but overall it
25 seems to work, in most cases that children, when it

1
2 comes to their parents, they have the privacy that
3 they need.

4 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: And my last
5 question -- I don't know if my colleagues have
6 questions, but -- you have one? [background comment]
7 So as a matter of fact, I'm gonna turn it over to
8 you; I'm gonna leave the question for last.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: We move
10 children, unfortunately, along and what percentage
11 currently -- you know, I don't need to know up-to-
12 date, but relatively recent information -- go from
13 the juvenile justice system to the next system, adult
14 system is the recidivism; is it 50%; is it 60%; is it
15 25%? I'm just curious if uh...

16 CHRISTINE BELLA: So the figure that I've
17 seen, you know that's been sort of shared time and
18 time again in publications and testimony, was a
19 figure that came out, gosh, in the late 80s or early
20 90s, because it involved a longitudinal study, right,
21 so in order to look at recidivism you have to look
22 over a long period time and the OCFS facilities I
23 believe had an 89% recidivism rate for youth leaving
24 OCFS facilities and within three years being
25 rearrested as adults, uh you know, entering the

1 criminal justice system. So it was an abysmal [sic]
2 rate, an 11% success rate; an 89% failure rate. I
3 haven't seen anything more recently, in terms of like
4 a wholesale look at Close to Home **[inaudible]** and I
5 think it's because they haven't been in place for
6 very long, but I'd like to hear if basically they're
7 doing their own internal look at this.

8
9 DR. JEREMY KOHOMBAN: We do... Council
10 Member, the OCFS data is the reason why we asked for
11 Close to Home. We don't have the kind of research,
12 simply because Close to Home is only in its third
13 year and LSP is simply in its first year at this
14 point, seven months at this point. But on Close to
15 Home, first two years of data, the recidivism rate,
16 that we know of in our teams, at the end of two
17 years, is under 13%; now that may not -- and we've
18 looked at this a couple times... [crosstalk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: **[inaudible]**

20 DR. JEREMY KOHOMBAN: I must say there
21 are some margins here we need to take into
22 consideration; one is, kids entering maybe the mental
23 health system and not being reported, so it's
24 probably a number between 13 and maybe 22 at this
25 point is my guess.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Okay. Thank
3 you Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much; I'm just
4 curious about that number, 'cause woo, 89 is... that's
5 pretty bad [background comments].

6 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Thank you so much.
7 My last question is in regards to video conferencing
8 that you were referring to; what would be an idea
9 setting situation -- how many hours should they get...?
10 [crosstalk]

11 CHRISTINE BELLA: Right. Well I mean I
12 certainly would want to see it not as like a first
13 course of action; it would really be for exceptional
14 circumstances, maybe of a parent with a disability or
15 a parent who has not been able to, for a variety of
16 reasons, been able to make it to the facility; maybe
17 many other children, so I think the technology should
18 be used only when all other means of face to face
19 interaction have been tried and not unveiled [sic].
20 So you know honestly, OCFS may be a model for this; I
21 know that they have created video conferencing in
22 recent years for the same reason that the parents
23 were not able to reach their youth in five- or ten-
24 hour roundtrip visits to see their youth in the
25 facilities, so they did actually kind of master this;

1
2 they had an office her in New York City where the
3 parents would attend; this would require creating
4 remote access to the families in the communities
5 where they are -- I mean Skype -- there are things
6 out there that are really publicly available that
7 could be tapped into; it doesn't mean creating a
8 whole new system.

9 DR. JEREMY KOHOMBAN: We use video,
10 especially for our families that have children with
11 us on Staten Island; I know Staten Island is a
12 borough of New York, but sometimes families from the
13 Bronx find it difficult to get out there and we've
14 used Skype quite effectively to not just have a
15 conversation between the young person and the family
16 member, but also when the family wants to have a
17 conversation with our team.

18 REBECCA KINSELLA: And additionally, I do
19 know, in my experience in working with clients at
20 Rikers Island, there are one or two different
21 agencies that offer video conferences at public
22 libraries where particularly parents at Rikers, young
23 parents at Rikers can engage with their family, so
24 that's possible another model of community engagement
25 from the community where a family resides.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Well thank you so
3 much **[inaudible]**... [crosstalk]

4 CHRISTINE BELLA: Thank you. Could I
5 just make one last point **[inaudible]**... [crosstalk]

6 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Yeah.

7 CHRISTINE BELLA: My understanding is
8 that, you know, from the numbers of... both NSPs and
9 LSPs are both under capacity and we're very pleased
10 with that; we don't want to see them fill those beds,
11 but the fact that they are fully staffed suggests
12 that there are more staff available now to sort of do
13 some of the extra work, some of this more
14 aspirational work and family engagement is one area
15 in particular with this sort of excess human power
16 that they have that they can really work towards
17 making these logistical arrangements for families
18 through transportation and conferencing and therapy
19 and all of that.

20 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Well thank you and
21 definitely are gonna be taking some of your points
22 into action points. Thank you so much.

23 CHRISTINE BELLA: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: And now we're gonna
25 have the last panel -- Laurel Kinaldi [sic] from the

1
2 Center for Community Alternatives; Josefina Perez
3 from Sheltering Arms, and Sally Sanchez from the
4 Center for Court Innovation. [pause] You may begin
5 as soon as you're ready.

6 [pause]

7 JOSEFINA PEREZ: Uhm-hm. [background
8 comment] Sure.

9 Good afternoon. Thank you Chair Cabrera
10 and members of the New York City Council Committee on
11 Juvenile Justice for the opportunity to provide
12 testimony on the impact of family engagement for our
13 city's detained and placed youth. Sheltering Arms
14 Children and Family Services runs two limited secure
15 placement homes, four nonsecure placement homes and
16 the arch of mentoring programs for our youth on
17 probation. We are one of the City's leading
18 providers of innovative education, youth development
19 and community and family wellbeing programs. We
20 reach over 24,000 people every year in our city's
21 most disenfranchised communities and provide
22 opportunities for children and families to attain
23 life-changing success.

24 In 2012, we were the first organization
25 in New York City to operate a Close to Home facility;

1
2 in the past four years we have seen remarkable levels
3 of achievements and transformation among the youth we
4 serve. We've seen youth become more peaceful, more
5 engaged in academics, more accountable for their
6 behavior, and more ready for positive, successful
7 transition into their community. Our success resolve
8 [sic] from the core tenets of Close to Home and
9 Sheltering Arms philosophy for community programming.
10 We offer dignity to the people we serve, provide
11 opportunity for positive change and partner with all
12 necessary stakeholders to facilitate a holistic
13 improvement.

14 The family is the center of these tenets;
15 for youth and families involved in the justice
16 system, the experience frequently feels dehumanizing,
17 counterproductive and adversarial. Youth are treated
18 as they have no hope for the future and the families
19 are left behind to put together the pieces and
20 reconcile a broken home. Most facilities don't
21 provide opportunities for youth to improve, which
22 leads to youth feeling more agitated, falling behind
23 in school and developing distress toward the people
24 in institutions; the result is a crippling cycle of
25 recidivism and families being torn apart.

1
2 We start our family engagement process by
3 allowing youth and families to surface their emotions
4 in a compassionate way. When we meet with families,
5 our case planner and visitation specialist in all of
6 our facilities will allow caregivers to vent about
7 the difficulties with their children; it's a
8 nonjudgmental forum and our staff takes time to
9 validate emotions and understand the feelings of the
10 caregivers by showing compassion for the struggles
11 faced by the family members and acknowledging their
12 guilt, anger, sadness; disappointment that they face.
13 We are able to create an empathetic relationship.
14 This is the core for future support from the
15 families; it also helps us to gain insight into the
16 experience of a child. If you bypass this critical
17 step, the youth will live in isolation and only grow
18 in frustration, as we know.

19 Limited family engagement increases the
20 risk of recidivism, foster care and other adverse
21 consequences. Once we have the family's attention
22 and trust, we go deep into their relationship with
23 their child and the experience of the child while in
24 placement. For example, when families visit our NSP
25 homes, which they're allowed to visit on a weekly

1 basis, we hold counseling sessions with the caregiver
2 and youth can express how they have been hurting in
3 the past. Since many of our families and youth have
4 never had this type of conversation in the past, we
5 help them with identifying the right words and
6 tactics to progressively connect with one another;
7 it's one of the many steps we take to rebuild trust
8 between the family and the child while we enforce on
9 the foundation of values of communication and
10 empathy. Families become engaged when they believe
11 that you have their best interest at heart and you're
12 not out to enforce punitive measures on the child.

14 To that end, we invite families into our
15 facilities to see our programs and how they operate;
16 they see the myriad ways we help youth to learn
17 mindfulness skills, to manage impulsivity, anxiety,
18 and problem-solve. Families gain first-hand
19 knowledge of emotional regulation which we teach our
20 youth in order for them to control their anger,
21 frustration, shame, and instability. They also see
22 youth completing homework after school, engage in art
23 projects, working side by side with other youth to do
24 chores and growing into leaders. A highlight of this
25 effort is our creative arts therapy program, where we

1
2 utilize music and other expressive arts to help youth
3 to positively express themselves; it is one of our
4 core mental health practices and through private
5 funding we are able to offer this innovative program
6 to all of our youth. The program culminates in
7 several showcased events where youth present original
8 works of music, dance and poetry along themes of
9 African American history and women's rights and more.
10 These events are powerful reminders of the potential
11 of our youth and every room is usually filled with
12 parents clapping, smiling and videotaping their
13 child. We invite all members of the Committee to
14 attend one of these events so you can see the tears
15 and celebration and pride that the caregivers witness
16 as they're seeing their child in a light that they
17 never thought existed.

18 Sustaining these gains is critical and
19 requires a wide range of stakeholders. Our staff
20 weekly treatment teaming is a forum to share what
21 we've learned about the child and their family, which
22 improves our ability to provide individualized
23 support. We also work closely with families so they
24 can facilitate positive transitions for their child
25 and serve as empowered advocates. Caregivers learn

1
2 the same systems of expectations and accountability
3 that we use and we equip them with knowledge and
4 tools so they are able to make sound decisions about
5 schooling, health, jobs and more.

6 The best place to learn about the impact
7 of family engagement and juvenile justice is to visit
8 one of our homes. You'll learn about youth like
9 Nishawn [sp?], a youth who came to us from Rikers
10 Island with high resistance in change [sic] and
11 inability to comply with any form of structure.
12 Seven months later he reached 90% attendance in
13 school, hasn't been arrested, reduce of [sic]
14 substance abuse, started working through summer youth
15 employment and he's attending his probation
16 appointments regularly.

17 You will also learn about youth like
18 Tiffany, a young woman who lost contact with her
19 father and wasn't being visited at the facility,
20 while staff gathered information about her father and
21 managed to make contact with him and ultimately
22 brought him back into her life so that she should
23 successfully rehabilitate and reunify.

24 These are just a few of the success
25 stories we've seen in our juvenile justice program

1 and family engagement has played a major role. We
2 strongly urge you to not only prioritize family
3 engagement in theory, but also fund the **[inaudible]**
4 and activities that are necessary to make this impact
5 happen. For too long the juvenile justice system has
6 stripped youth of their hope before they even hit the
7 age of 18; programs like Close to Home are helping to
8 change the narrative and we need collective
9 commitment to truly move the needle for youth,
10 families and communities. The team at Sheltering
11 Arms is here [sic] to partner as you consider the
12 next phase of juvenile justice reform in New York
13 City. Thank you for your time.

14
15 LAUREL RINALDI: My name is Laurel
16 Rinaldi; I'm the Director of Client Development at
17 Center for Community Alternatives.

18 So the Center for Community Alternatives
19 respectfully submits the following testimony
20 regarding family engagement for New York's detained
21 and placed youth.

22 CCA is a nonprofit organization whose
23 mission is to provide reintegrative justice and to
24 end mass incarceration through advocacy, services and
25 public policy development in pursuit of civil and

1 human rights. We currently operate wraparound
2 services for over 500 court-involved youth every
3 year, including the pilot SONYC afterschool programs
4 at Crossroads Juvenile Detention Facility and Belmont
5 Academy for Youth in nonsecure detention and
6 placement.
7

8 The question CCA would like to pose is
9 how do we engage parents, service providers and
10 community members in order to build a continuous
11 network of support for young people as they navigate
12 the life-disrupting experience of the criminal
13 justice system?

14 When youth enter secure detention or
15 nonsecure placement, they are bombarded with a
16 dizzying array of new faces and interventions. At
17 the Crossroads facility alone, youth come in contact
18 with social workers, juvenile counselors, mental
19 health specialists, teachers, and afterschool
20 providers representing countless nonprofit
21 organizations.

22 Most of these interventions contribute
23 something positive, but too often they exist in
24 isolation. Due to budget restrictions, staff
25 capacity, safety concerns and, most importantly,

1 without a multiagency parent outreach and continuity
2 of care strategy that engages all service providers;
3 nonprofit agencies like ours are often unable to
4 coordinate with each other, nor remain in touch with
5 participants and their families after they exit our
6 program.
7

8 We had a young participant at the
9 Crossroads facility who discovered a love of soccer
10 while attending our afterschool programs. Our coach
11 saw her potential and we began to explore the
12 possibility of joining his all-star team upon her
13 release. Unfortunately, as is too often the case
14 with justice system-involved youth, the young woman's
15 case was dismissed and she left the facility and our
16 programs without warning.

17 Without a multiagency strategy, we were
18 unable to connect with this young person or her
19 parents and have had no contact since. Positive
20 relationships were disrupted, interventions left
21 incomplete and a huge opportunity missed to ensure
22 this young person remains free from future court
23 involvement. These failures weigh heavily not only
24 on the youth and their families, but on our frontline
25 service providers.

1
2 Last week at Crossroads facility, two our
3 afterschool providers met for the first time. They
4 stood in front of a newly completed mural -- which
5 you've heard about already today -- featuring our
6 youth as their grownup selves with jobs like marine
7 biologists and images of exotic places where they
8 hope to travel one day. Although these providers
9 operate very different organizations, one a mural
10 artist, the other a gang violence interrupter, they
11 instantly connected over their relationships with the
12 young people at Crossroads. They each discovered
13 something new about the youth they worked with and
14 bonded over the youths' personality quirks and
15 potential. They discussed how they might be able to
16 use art to help youth reflect on conflict de-
17 escalation, and just like that, new program ideas and
18 possibilities for our youth emerged.

19 What if we created targeted collaboration
20 opportunities like this? It would not only lead to
21 better outcomes for our youth and their families, but
22 more innovative interventions and decreased staff
23 burnout. Instead of a revolving door of youth
24 entering and exiting their lives, providers would
25

1 know where their youth are headed and be able to
2 celebrate the long-term successes of their labor.

3
4 A taskforce could be established, made up
5 of agencies, nonprofits, parents and community
6 members to coordinate services while maintaining
7 youth safety and respecting family privacy. We have
8 already worked with our ACS partners at Crossroads to
9 develop methods for staying in contact with families
10 post-release and Carnegie Hall, for example, is
11 working with ACS Ambassadors at our Belmont program
12 to develop pathways to afterschool music programs.
13 But again, these efforts are occurring in isolation
14 and should be streamlined and extended to all
15 nonprofit agencies working with court-involved youth.

16 A Multiagency Tracking Tool could be
17 developed that provides a snapshot of the
18 interventions this young person has received and
19 Youth Asset Portfolios could highlight skills,
20 accomplishments and goals. These can be updated and
21 passed on to the next service provider and shared
22 regularly with parents and community members.

23 Finally, an Assessment Protocol could be
24 developed to determine how a continuity of care
25 strategy is measured. Instead of x number of youth

1 served or x number of completed interventions, what
2 is the length of continued support for court-involved
3 youth? Once youth leave the detention or placement
4 facility, how long do service providers maintain
5 contact? Where are young people in two to three
6 years? Have they achieved the goals they and their
7 families have set for their future?
8

9 Thank you for your attention to this
10 important issue.

11 SALLY SANCHEZ: Good afternoon. My name
12 is Sally Sanchez and I am the Director of the Queens
13 Youth Justice Center with the Center of Court
14 Innovation. Thank you so much for giving me the
15 opportunity to speak with you today.

16 The Center for Court Innovation supports
17 the Council's efforts to examine family engagement
18 for New York City's detained and placed youth. The
19 Center encourages the City Council to consider the
20 need for family engagement both before and beyond
21 detention and placement. The need for family
22 engagement doesn't end once the young person is out
23 of detention. Families can play a positive role in
24 the lives of young people and increased their chances
25 for success. Any youth development program or

1
2 approach that aims to produce lasting change must
3 include engagement with families.

4 Because we understand the importance of
5 engaging and supporting the families, the Center, in
6 collaboration with the New York City Department of
7 Probation, operates the Parent Support Program in
8 Queens to assist families of justice-involved youth.
9 Parents are offered peer support in navigating
10 various systems in which families may be involved.
11 In addition to collaborating with the Department of
12 Probation, we have produced a video called *Family*
13 *Voices in Juvenile Justice*, which is being used
14 across the city by Probation to help parents and
15 caregivers understand the juvenile justice system and
16 get advice from other parents who have been in that
17 position. I have a copy of the video with me today;
18 if you're interested, I can give that to you.

19 We also collaborate with the
20 Administration for Children's Services; we provide
21 structured, strength-based continuum of supervision
22 and services for young people returning home from
23 residential placement for delinquency in Brownsville,
24 Queens, Harlem and Staten Island. Families are
25 engaged from the first meeting and throughout the

1
2 young person's engagement in aftercare. We organize
3 Family Resource Nights and Peer Support Groups for
4 parents and guardians. Youth are also proactively
5 engaged in additional community services to help them
6 overcome challenges, manage family transitions and
7 sustain positive growth as well as discharge.

8 In closing, the Center for Court
9 Innovation looks forward to continuing to work with
10 the Council on juvenile justice issues. Family
11 engagement is essential to reducing further
12 involvement of the youth in the justice system. We
13 hope that the Council will consider sustainable
14 resources for family engagement initiatives before
15 and beyond detention and placement. Thank you again
16 for the opportunity to testify.

17 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Thank you so much.
18 I am curious regarding the aftercare; I think --
19 yeah, you were mentioning regards having like a
20 parent organization to coordinate all the efforts.
21 From your point of view, as nonprofit organizations
22 providing services, wouldn't that be ACS' job. Sorry
23 to put you on the spot.

24 [laughter]

1
2 SALLY SANCHEZ: I would say it's all of
3 our jobs; not just a single agency. I think if we
4 are vested in this young person's success; I think
5 there are different avenues that we have to attack in
6 order for the young person to be successful and I
7 think where ACS might have their strong points and
8 may be able to work with a family in a different way,
9 because as a nonprofit we're not involved with ACS
10 and just collaborating with them, it allows us an
11 opportunity to work with the family in a manner
12 that's very different and allows them to kind of be
13 more open with what's going on at home; giving us an
14 opportunity to really provide them with services.

15 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: But they have
16 information you don't and they're able to follow up;
17 they have the data that you need -- where they move;
18 who they're with -- you don't have that information
19 once they leave; right?

20 JOSEFINA PEREZ: Only if they're involved
21 in our **[inaudible]**... [crosstalk]

22 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: If you could... yeah.

23 JOSEFINA PEREZ: Only if they're involved
24 -- like for our limited secure placement, we have our
25 aftercare program within the agency which is

1
2 providing MST (Multisystemic Therapy) within the
3 home, so only until **[inaudible]** their **[inaudible]** MST
4 is in their home.

5 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Only in that sit...
6 so if I'm coming out of Horizon or Crossroads, the
7 day after I leave, pretty much hands off, and
8 therefore, really, that big organization that you're
9 talking about is really ACS [background comments] and
10 maybe it's something that the nonprofits could get
11 together and meet with ACS. I think it's a good
12 suggestion; I think... it's not a bad thing, actually
13 it's a good thing. And I'm glad that we have the
14 setting that we could freely talk about this, because
15 at the end of the day it's all about the kids; the
16 only reason why we're there is for the kids. So I
17 think that if we can have an honest, kind of a
18 dialogue and then strategic plan that says now what;
19 how do we engage all of... just... look, I've been
20 holding these hearings a few years now, a couple of...
21 three years and I can tell you that I do hear some of
22 the aftercare -- well **[inaudible]** got engaged in this
23 nonprofit and so forth, but what you're talking about
24 is in a coordinated effort that is actually
25 intentional, and that makes I think a huge difference

1
2 and we could create a net so we don't have the kids
3 coming back, 'cause from what I understand, about 70%
4 of the kids keep coming back, so we don't want the
5 kids coming back; we wanna close that backdoor, and
6 so this might be something that I think -- not might
7 -- something that we should be engaged with ACS and
8 have that level of conversation so we could have that
9 level of coordinated effort.

10 [background comments]

11 LAUREL RINALDI: And from my
12 conversations with ACS, it seems that the main
13 concern, which I understand, is safety and privacy of
14 the families and the kids and you know, when we do
15 our attendance for the SONYC program, we only have
16 the first and last initials that we are sending to
17 DYCD, you know, so we have very limited information
18 and so it's a matter of determining, you know what --
19 they are interested and they wanna be a part of that
20 process, but we have to figure out a safe way to do
21 it.

22 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: I wonder if we
23 could have a system where the kids buy into it, the
24 parents buy into it and they give consent to release
25 information, but that is done prior to them leaving,

1
2 so prior to them leaving, maybe they could sign it on
3 the first day or whenever they want to while they're
4 there and they say look, I want you to follow up with
5 me; I'm giving your organization permission to stay
6 in contact with me and I wanna continue receiving
7 services, so like the young lady that is playing
8 soccer that was mentioned, you know, she could be
9 connected into a positive alternative, you know
10 playing sports and god knows what doors would open
11 for her. So I think -- you know, you brought up I
12 think a very, very, very important issue.

13 Okay, thank you so much. We're gonna
14 take all the information I heard from all the
15 advocates today. I wanna let you know; what you say
16 here matters; sometimes I could tell you that it
17 translates into bills -- I have at least three that
18 came into mind -- and so when you see me texting,
19 it's not that I'm talking to a friend, I'm actually
20 talking to my legislative director, say -- here's
21 another one, okay? And so thank you so much and with
22 that we conclude today's hearing. Have a great day.

23 [background comments]

24 [gavel]

25 [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 October 14, 2016