



Community and religious leaders exchange ideas and discuss the needs of youth in detention at Horizon Juvenile Center.

DJJ Hosts Second Forum of City Community and Religious Leaders to Support Juvenile Justice Reform Efforts

On Friday, August 1st, the Department hosted its second forum of religious and community leaders moderated by Alfonso Wyatt, Vice President of the Fund for the City of New York. During the event, the Department provided an overview of its initiatives, including the Release to Parent Initiative, the Collaborative Family Initiative, and the Workforce/Lifeskills and Re-entry Support Programs.

Some of the organizations that were represented at the event included The Children’s Defense Fund, the Muslim Women’s Institute for Research and Development, Harlem Community Justice Center, Family Dynamics and Bread for the World. Special guests attending were Gipsy Escobar, Senior Research Associate at John Jay College of Criminal Justice Research and Evaluation Center, and Denise Hinds, Assistant Executive Director of Good Shepherd Services.

The Forum provided a valuable opportunity for networking and the exchange of ideas on how to enhance services to our City’s young people. By engaging organizations and individuals active in communities throughout New York City, DJJ can expand options that return young people to their families, provide critical services without interruption and lessen the likelihood that juveniles will become involved in the juvenile justice system or return to detention in the future.

Nearly 6,000 juveniles enter the care and custody of DJJ each year, two-thirds of whom are identified with mental health needs. The Collaborative Family Initiative, an innovative program that was initiated in February 2007, has already realized significant results, returning youth to their homes and communities, involving their families and ensuring that they continue to receive services without interruption or delay.

“Today’s forum was an important continuation of our efforts toward helping our City’s young people in innovative and effective ways,” Director of Intergovernmental Affairs Nicole Halsey said. “By regularly bringing City government together with community based organizations and individuals committed to helping our City’s youth, we can continue to expand the dialogue on efforts at juvenile justice reform.”

