



# Integrating Children's Services and Juvenile Justice

## Division of Youth and Family Justice

### Strategic Plan

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

Significant progress has been made in enhancing the effectiveness of the City's juvenile justice system. Much more, however, can be accomplished to support the City's efforts to achieve long-lasting reform. To better serve the City, its residents, the valued agency employees who work with young people every day, and the committed community groups who work on behalf of NYC's children, the merger of the Department of Juvenile Justice with Children's Services will form a Division of Youth and Family Justice (DYFJ) that is more agile and effective by enhancing integration and collaboration among all who serve the city's youth.

The integration of the Department of Juvenile Justice into the Administration for Children's Services has many benefits; including better coordination of services for youth that are detained because they are in foster care or because of a lack of an able or willing parent, more opportunities to leverage resources and systems, as well as substantial revenue maximization opportunities for expanding alternatives to placement

The DYFJ Strategic Plan builds on: the juvenile justice reforms of Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg's administration; the foundation established by the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services ("HHS"), Linda Gibbs, during the HHS Strategic Plan initiative; and the New York City Council's support for better care of all youth involved in the juvenile justice system. The goal of the plan is to demonstrate short-term progress and build momentum for integration and transformation across the Division.

#### **The Strategic Plan is aligned to six Integration Objective Areas:**

- ✓ Clarify and align Division's Mission, Principles and Values
- ✓ Improve the quality of experiences for young people in detention
- ✓ Promote public safety and reduce recidivism through better targeted use of detention
- ✓ Expand the range of alternatives to detention for more youth who can be safely served in their communities
- ✓ Address the needs of youth and families involved in multiple service systems
- ✓ Increase information sharing and collaboration

It should be noted that all of these objective areas are intended to assist in reducing the rate of disproportionate minority confinement (DMC) in New York City. Given that over 90% of youth in detention at any given time are non-White, the primary method for addressing DMC is to better target the use of detention and reducing length of stay for all youth. Since rates of disproportionality are even higher in child welfare system, this integration offers a powerful opportunity to tackle this issue from multiple perspectives.

Each area addresses the imperative for change and the initiatives associated with introducing the change. Each objective was developed to achieve rapid and significant performance gains by increasing integration and facilitating collaboration throughout ACS/DYFJ and with stakeholders.

#### ***Objective 1: Clarify and Align Division's Mission, Principles, and Values***

**Imperative for Change:** All successful transformation and reorientation efforts begin with an examination of the organization's mission statement and how it informs operational objectives. To lay the groundwork for the Division's overall strategic planning process, the Integration Plan calls for a formal



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statement of the Division's mission, as well as its operational objectives, guiding principles and values.

### **1.A Strategy: Hold Expert-Facilitated Intra-Division Planning Session**

*Deliverable:* Solicit ideas from key leaders and team members of each of the areas being combined in the new Division of Youth and Family Justice about the division's direction and goals

*Outcome:* Ensures the division begins its work with a sense of unity and shared purpose

### **1.B Strategy: Craft the Division's Mission Statement**

*Deliverable:* Release a best-practice, juvenile justice principles-based, adolescence- and family-appropriate mission statement

*Outcome:* Institutionalizes and supports a youth- and family-focused commitment to Division practices that also recognizes the Division's role in advancing public safety.

### **1.C Strategy: Publish a collection of Mission Statement-related Operations Principles, Objectives, and Values**

*Deliverable:* Release a list principles and objectives

*Outcome:* Creates a primary touchstone to guide all operational decisions in line with Mission statement.

### **1.D Strategy: Address the definition of staff roles, responsibilities, and relationships within the Division to determine most effective collaborative structure**

*Deliverable:* Propose appropriate revisions to existing Table of Organization, procedures, orders, and standards; initiate work on new procedures, orders, and standards.

*Outcome:* Provides the foundation for lasting success within the Division by clarifying the roles, responsibilities, and dependencies across teams.



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***Objective 2: Improve the quality of experiences for young people in detention***

**Imperative for Change:** At times some young people will need to spend time in either secure or non-secure detention. New York City has benefited from strong leadership, ensuring that its facilities are neither overcrowded nor lacking important services such as accredited education, medical and mental health, and other programs. Nevertheless, more can be done to ensure that detention, when needed, is an opportunity for encouraging positive change. This integration provides key opportunities to leverage existing and new resources and partnerships to significantly assess, and where needed, improve the conditions youth experience while in detention.

**2.A Strategy: Conduct a best-practice based Conditions of Confinement Assessment Process**

*Deliverable:* Develop a process, with advice from national experts, to assess secure and non-secure detention facilities and align policies and procedures with nationally recognized best practices.

*Outcome:* Establishes a baseline measure of the conditions in each facility with input from official policies and procedures; interviews with youth, staff, and contracted service providers; and facility walk-throughs.

**2.B Strategy: Review youth-development models of detention management for use in all detention facilities, including the types and frequency of programs provided in detention**

*Deliverable:* Complete a review of the appropriateness and viability of detention transitioning from a corrections-focused approach to a positive youth development model

*Outcome:* Youth development models take into account developmental differences between youths and adults; consider individualized strengths and needs; and, place an emphasis on responsibility and safety.

**2.C Strategy: Conduct an anonymous survey of youth and their perceptions, feelings, and concerns about detention**

*Deliverable:* Construct, complete, and release the results of an initial pilot run of a detention conditions survey for youth in-care on any given day in detention.

*Outcome:* Obtain greater insight about what works and does not work in detention; gain perspective on how youth feel about their safety and the services they receive to support the re-configuration of detention services.

**2.D Strategy: Conduct a review of security procedures in detention facilities**

*Deliverable:* Complete an assessment of all security procedures in relation to best-practice models used in similar settings. Includes reviews of all search, restraint, transportation, and room confinement procedures, as well as facility/hardware styles and uses.

*Outcome:* Ensures that youth in custody have their safety ensured through the most appropriate methods possible.

**2.E Strategy: Develop new policies and procedures based on results of various assessments;**



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**Identify best practice-grounded pre- and in-service training curricula for direct child care staff**

*Deliverable:* Review and select training curricula for direct child care staff that goes beyond mandated safety training and focuses on positive youth development

*Outcome:* Promotes and supports a cultural shift toward supporting the youth in custody and provides a new set of tools for staff to use while interacting with youth.

**2.F Strategy: Increase direct community- and familial-interaction with youth in detention and increase supports for the communities and families of detained and released youth**

*Deliverable:* Develop an action plan designed to provide opportunities for community leaders and family members to become more involved in youths' lives while in detention and to support the entire family- and community-unit post release. The secure detention community rooms and the non-secure group homes can serve as vital, vibrant tools in achieving this strategy. Assess the best use of the community rooms in detention and plan for physical space and usage improvements.

*Outcome:* Research is clear that the support of and for an incarcerated youth's community and family are essential to successful development and transitioning.



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***Objective 3: Promote public safety and reduce recidivism through more targeted use of detention***

**Imperative for Change:** The purpose of detention is to prevent reoffending between court dates and ensure youth are present for court appearances. This objective builds on New York City's work – including the design and use of the Risk Assessment Instrument – to ensure that decisions about detaining a youth are as informed and objective as possible by focusing on strategies that will result in more targeted use of detention and alternatives to detention. This objective seizes the moment of opportunity this integration has created for many long-desired changes in detention usage policies.

**3.A Strategy: Change decision-making process for youth in detention with an “open remand” court order**

*Deliverable:* Institutionalize revised screening process for youth with “open remands” to detention

*Outcome:* The assessment will begin in the courthouse and focus on a youth's evidence of risk of flight and violence. This sharpened focus increases the percent of youth who are currently screened appropriate on open remands by over thirty percentage points; therefore, the average daily population in secure detention should decrease by a commensurate number, based on the rate of “open remands”.

**3.B Strategy: Expedite the screening of youth admitted to detention by the police and address parental transportation issues as a reason for youth to spend a night in detention**

*Deliverable:* Launch service to transport youth appropriate for release home and develop procedures for moving the time of assessment closer to the time of arrest

*Outcome:* Some parents cannot pick their children up from the intake facility even if they screen eligible to be released prior to court; therefore, there are some youth who spend the night in detention only to be released the next day. Better facilitation of the release to parent process and expedited case screening hold the potential to decrease the average daily population in secure detention by 5-10 youth on the busiest nights.

**3.C Strategy: Expand Options for Juvenile Offenders**

*Deliverable:* Identify step-down/community-based alternatives for supreme court judges to use in juvenile offender cases.

*Outcome:* Given their long lengths of stay in detention (close to 90 days) juvenile offenders make up close to a quarter of the secure detention average daily population. While acknowledging that juvenile offenders have serious charges, many of them could be monitored in the community, with appropriate services, if more alternatives, including electronic monitoring, were available. Step-down of juvenile offenders should decrease the average daily population in secure detention by 10 youth a day.

**3.D Strategy: Improve management of New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) youth admitted to detention for leaving or violating the conditions of their OCFS placement**



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*Deliverable:* Evaluate whether a revised policy with OCFS could minimize the length of stay for OCFS youth held in secure detention

*Outcome:* Youth will spend as little time as possible in the city's secure detention before returning to the care of OCFS. This helps reduce the use of secure detention and minimizes the "system bounce" that so often has negative effects on youth.

**3.E Strategy: Identify foster care youth within detention who can safely be returned to the community and link them with appropriate community-based supervision and resources.**

*Deliverable:* Launch a re-tooled Confirm team – the Children's Services team responsible for ensuring arrested and detained foster care youth have the same opportunities to leave detention as non-foster youth; re-train foster care agencies on how to handle the complex cases of these youth; and, identify a range of community-based alternatives tailored to the needs of these young people.

*Outcome:* Youth involved in both the justice and child welfare systems currently have longer lengths of stay in detention because many of the current alternatives to detention require a family/guardian resource in the community. Working to provide foster care agencies with the information, training, and support to allow judges to feel confident using community-based alternatives could reduce the average daily population in non-secure detention by 10 youth a day.

**3.F Strategy: Provide opportunities for youth with willing parents or other community resources to step-down from non-secure detention to an in-home monitoring program**

*Deliverable:* Pilot an in-home monitoring model that allows youth assessed as ready to step down from non-secure detention to their parent/responsible adult.

*Outcome:* This model has been successful elsewhere and data on youth in non-secure detention indicate there are youth who could be safely stepped down with this option. This model could reduce the average daily population in non-secure detention by 10 youth a day.

**3.G Strategy: Provide respite care with permanency planning for low- and mid-risk youth remanded to detention who have no currently available parent/guardian resource, so youth can have access to community-based alternatives**

*Deliverable:* Identify and evaluate a continuum of respite and foster care service models – all with permanency planning and reunification aftercare attached – capable of addressing the complicated situational factors presented by these youth and families.

*Outcome:* There is currently no systematic method to determine how many of these youth there are at any given time in detention; however, qualitative reviews have found a continuous presence of youth in detention as a result, in whole or in part, of the lack of an appropriate and available adult resource. This model would aid in ensuring detention is used solely to prevent further delinquency and to ensure youth appear in court.

**3.H Strategy: Continue work with NYS Office of Mental Health, NYC Office of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Legal Aid Society and Corporation Counsel to determine the most appropriate holding environment for seriously mentally ill youth awaiting adjudication.**

*Deliverable:* Finalize a process to refer youth to institutional mental health care when indicated,



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regardless of case status.

*Outcome:* Youth with serious mental health problems present with significant treatment needs. These needs can sometimes be better met within a more therapeutic environment. This would allow youth to receive necessary care in the correct system setting without compromising case outcomes.



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***Objective 4: Expand the range of alternatives to detention for more youth who can be safely served in their communities***

**Imperative for Change:** A truly reformed juvenile justice system operates under the principle of using the least restrictive alternative possible to prevent re-offending and ensure a return to court. To achieve this objective the system must ensure the long-term viability of a continuum of detention alternatives, which provides multiple types and degrees of services and supervision. The City has worked with juvenile justice stakeholders to develop a continuum of alternatives. Additional analysis is continuing to identify opportunities to serve youth in communities while still maintaining public safety.

**4.A Strategy: Address youth stays in detention driven primarily by the immediate unavailability of a parent/responsible adult resource**

*Deliverable:* Collaborate with New York Foundling in launching their “Way Home” program.

*Outcome:* “Way Home,” using the Family Team Conferencing model and the model program Brief Strategic Family Therapy, will work to identify and support an adult resource in the community to whom eligible youth can be released from detention and continue to receive services – with their family—from “Way Home.”

**4.B Strategy: Continue the Collaborative Family Initiative**

*Deliverable:* The Collaborative Family Initiative continues in Fiscal Year 2011.

*Outcome:* The Collaborative Family Initiative (CFI) has successfully shortened the length of stay for youth with mental health needs – youth who often spent twice as long in detention as other youth.

**4.C Strategy: Expand the availability of the psychiatric adaptation of Multisystemic Therapy in the Juvenile Justice Initiative (JJI)**

*Deliverable:* Identify resources to provide the adaptation in all boroughs and expand the number of available slots in boroughs near capacity

*Outcome:* JJI has helped to successfully reduce the number of youth released from detention to OCFS placements. JJI has done this while producing promising results such as lower re-arrest rates for violent felonies, while costing significantly less than an OCFS placement.

**4.D Strategy: Increase diversity of community-based alternatives to detention to give stakeholders more options to meet the individualized needs of youth**

*Deliverable:* Work with other stakeholders in the design and implementation of at least two new types of alternative to detention program models

*Outcome:* Through the provision of community-based monitoring programs youth who previously would not have been eligible for existing alternatives would have decreased admissions and/or stays in detention. Programs could include approaches such as electronic monitoring, respite services for youth with diverse family needs, or home monitoring with support services from existing non-secure detention



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providers.



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***Objective 5: Address the needs of youth and families involved in multiple service systems***

**Imperative for Change:** When youth are involved in multiple social service systems, they can experience prolonged stays in detention. Information “silos,” often designed with the well-intentioned aim of protecting privacy, frequently prevent a coordinated response to the underlying needs of youth and families.

**5.A Strategy: Establish secure and appropriate information sharing tools and policies linking the work of the Division throughout the Agency and with relevant stakeholders.**

*Deliverable:* Collaboratively design and release an Information Sharing plan and policy for stakeholder feedback and approval. Plan should include an internal component detailing procedures and safeguards within the expanded ACS.

*Outcome:* Youth and family needs, and any services they receive to meet those needs, can be tracked and coordinated to improve efficiency, prevent the “dropping” of needs during moves to different systems, and ensure continuity of care within ACS and across the entire social service continuum. These improvements could reduce time spent in detention and improve overall reentry outcomes.

**5.B Strategy: Identify specific community-based alternatives to detention/placement services and program models to provide care and support to “dual system” youth and their families**

*Deliverable:* Develop program and service types, which will focus on improving outcomes for youth and families who are involved with multiple city systems. Many of these programs apply to strategies mapped to other objectives.

*Outcome:* These services will help to reduce admissions and stays in detention primarily driven by a lack of community-based service options available to judges who are concerned about who will be responsible for a youth both during and after the pendency of their case.



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***Objective 6: Increase information sharing and collaboration***

**Imperative for Change:** Innovation, implementation, and evaluation require a willingness to share information about successes and missed opportunities. The new Division will move from a “need to know” to a “responsibility to provide” culture and mindset in order to continue the necessary support and assistance from community members, stakeholders, and oversight organizations. With its new expanded purview, the Division has a unique opportunity to educate the community about the needs and experiences of system-involved youth.

**6.A Strategy: Produce a Division annual report and increase intra-agency official updates**

*Deliverable:* Release a draft/plan of an annual report for the Division and a communication plan/model for providing team members and stakeholders updates on programs and successes.

*Outcome:* Provides an avenue for ensuring both employees and the public are aware of key performance metrics and standards describing the successes of the integration effort.