



LANDSCAPE OF YOUTH SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH JUVENILE AND/OR CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEMS INVOLVEMENT

**New York City Youth Justice Coalition
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LANDSCAPE OF YOUTH SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH JUVENILE AND/OR CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEMS INVOLVEMENT¹

For youth involved in the juvenile justice and/or the criminal legal system, it is critical to strengthen and scale existing programs so that young people in all five New York City boroughs can access comprehensive, community-based supports that help them thrive. What follows is an overview of current programs serving justice-involved youth, each accompanied by programmatic and budget recommendations that outline a blueprint for building a more coordinated and effective youth justice system.

It is critical to note that youth services have long been underfunded compared to adult services, leaving providers to patch together multiple contracts to fill persistent budget and resource gaps. Therefore, we are also making broader recommendations that address gaps in contracts and procurement processes, wage floors for human services workers, and coordination that can support a vision for community safety that benefits all young people. Finally, we outline programmatic investments that could help to scale youth justice through community-based interventions, working toward a “zero youth detention” model.

Administration of Children Services (ACS)

Mentoring and Advocacy Program (MAAP): Mentoring and Advocacy Program (MAAP) is designed for youth involved in, or at risk of involvement in, the juvenile or criminal justice system. Programs provide targeted, timelimited services to youth and their families with the goal of promoting positive behaviors, healthy relationships, and problem-solving skills that will allow youth to remain in the community and reduce involvement in the juvenile justice system. **The proposed funding for MAAP in FY27 is \$2.4 million.**

Recommendation: Maintain the existing program at \$2.4 million per year with a cost of living adjustment attached to each new year of funding.

Assertive Community Engagement & Success (ACES): Assertive Community Engagement & Success (ACES) is a multiyear program that provides therapeutic, education, and employment services to young people, ages 16 to 24, who are identified in their communities as being at risk for involvement in the criminal legal system. Using a research-backed intervention model, ACES identifies young people who are resistant to engagement and uses persistent outreach, tailored programming, and collaboration with community partners to help young men transform their lives through meaningful relationships, skill building, and opportunities for success.

Recommendation: ACES is a critical early prevention program. The FY26 approved budget allocates additional funding to create at least 360 more slots for young people annually. The Administration should earmark at least \$10 million for NYC’s Assertive Community Engagement and Success (ACES) program to ensure that all young people with risk factors have access to this kind of prevention model. While the approved FY 26 budget added funding for up to 500 slots, this expansion would further grow the program from serving about 140 young people annually, to serving over 1,000 people annually. The program currently serves East Harlem and the South Bronx; an expansion would allow growth to several new neighborhoods in the Bronx and to Brooklyn and

¹ A note about this document: Wherever possible, we inserted both current budget numbers and corresponding recommendations about how that budget line should be increased to shore up the other programmatic recommendations we considered. Where we could not find budget lines, our recommendations are strictly programmatic- and policy-focused. Also, while this is a survey of programs that touch young people with juvenile or criminal legal systems involvement, it is not comprehensive.

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Queens. The expansion should be phased in over 3-5 years to ensure fidelity to the model and the ability for providers to build the deep community ties essential to success.

Family Court Alternative to Detention Programs: Choices is an Alternative to Detention program for children facing charges in Manhattan and Bronx Family Courts. Choices is a vibrant hub of learning and youth development, helping children and their families build positive relationships and access resources in their communities. The program starts with individual assessments of the young person to develop a service plan, with case management offered in the home so busy families can access the full program benefits. Programming includes school liaison services to help children stay in school, navigate Individualized Education Programs (IEP) and access in-school resources; mental health services through CASES' Nathaniel Clinic or Adolescent Portable Therapy Program; after-school programming including art, cooking, basketball, poetry and homework support; and parent support workshops and family nights to strengthen family bonds and communication.

Recommendation: Maintain funding for these crucial programs to ensure young people and their families are successfully supported in the community. We recommend flexible funding for concrete needs of youth and families, particularly where it helps them to access services. Expand funding to allow for a Parent Advocate and mental health support as part of the staffing pattern. All young people should have access to a space to address their mental health needs that is both safe and culturally competent.

Parent Support Program: Parents with youth in detention are often in need of support in a variety of areas. As youth navigate carceral systems, their caretakers are as well. Often without knowledge of the process and/or participants, many parents feel overwhelmed and underprepared. The Parent Support Program (PSP) provides support via an advocate who has knowledge of the court system, process and participants. In addition to providing court advocacy and moral support for parents, PSP also provides connections to assist with concrete needs and individualized planning as well as a community of staff and peers to support parents. Currently, these programs are supporting youth (and families) connected to detention and placement across the city.

Recommendation: Parent Support Services with ACS can only provide support for families in Family Court and/or the Youth Part who have touched detention or placement. Expand the program to also allow an open door policy for Family Support Services for youth in vulnerable communities as a prevention intervention versus supporting parents when in crisis.

Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD):

Crisis Management System/Community Violence Intervention: New York City's Crisis Management System (CMS) is a community-based anti-gun violence prevention program that targets persistent gun-violence hotspots through conflict mediation, de-escalation, and supportive services delivered by trusted credible messengers from the community. Modeled after the Cure Violence evidence-based model and rooted in the Community Violence Intervention approach, CMS has expanded to nearly 29 precincts with substantial City investment where organizations work to reduce shootings, change community norms around violence and address the social conditions that allow gun violence to spread. CMS components include: Community Violence Intervention, school conflict mediation, therapeutic services, an employment program and hospital-based violence intervention programs. CMS sites have been destabilized by inconsistent agency leadership, moving from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) to their current agency home, DYCD; meanwhile, essential components of the violence interruption model, like WorksPlus, are

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housed at other agencies, thus fragmenting oversight and program continuity.² The City has not properly supported the program’s infrastructure and leadership development, and failed to provide consistent oversight. The system lacks a comprehensive, standardized evaluation framework, making it difficult to assess long-term impact, identify successful interventions, or allocate resources efficiently. Additionally, severe payment delays—now averaging more than eight months—disrupt operations, threaten service continuity, and diminish the credibility of community violence intervention programs. **The proposed funding for CVI in FY27 is \$56,411,682.**

Recommendation: The City must restore the model of CMS as a public health approach to gun violence, with training and ongoing support from culturally-competent, public health professionals who can work with violence interrupters and site managers. Additionally, the administration should create the infrastructure for stronger citywide coordination—including a dedicated CVI oversight team, standardized data practices for reporting to allow providers to see trends over time between and among sites, expanded training, and structured collaboration between sites that would transform CMS from a fragmented set of programs into a unified, strategically managed system. Community Violence Intervention sites would benefit from an integrated real-time data dashboard and should adopt a continuous, data-driven evaluation process to refine interventions, guide expansion into other high-need neighborhoods, and improve program effectiveness.

CVI contracts are due to expire in June of 2026 and without a clear path of extensions or renewals, CVI providers have uncertainty around their funding relationship with the City. Finally, the City must stabilize CVI operations by eliminating chronic payment delays, and an advance-payment model.³

Anti-Gun Violence Employment Program: The Anti-Gun Violence Employment Program (AGVEP) is a year-round initiative for youth ages 14–24 that provides employment and enrichment opportunities for individuals at risk of experiencing or engaging in violence and operates alongside Community Violence Intervention sites. Through partnerships with community organizations and local stakeholders, AGVEP helps participants obtain essential employment documents, secure job placements, develop leadership skills, and engage in positive community activities. The program operates in two phases—a six-week summer session and a 25-week school-year session. **The proposed funding for AGVEP in FY27 is \$5,012,369.**

Recommendation: Youth employment is an essential service and a powerful motivating force for young people to desist from violence. We recommend that all Community Violence Intervention sites maintain AGVEP and increase funding for each site to hire a full time AGVEP director. CVI providers have asked that this program be expanded to support older youth and emerging adults that struggle to find employment and have risk factors that can lead to involvement in violence. **The recommended FY27 budget for this program is \$8,114,227.**

DYCD Youth Enrichment Services: YES (formally School Conflict Mediation) engages school-aged youth ages of 11-21 in programming and supportive services that seek to change the culture around violence and encourage positive youth development. YES is delivered in and around schools in neighborhoods with a high prevalence of community violence. DYCD uses data from New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) and NYPD to ensure Community Based Organizations (CBOs) are partnered

² Please see “The Cure for Crisis: The Power and Potential of Community Violence Intervention,” New York City Comptroller, March 10, 2025: <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/the-cure-for-crisis/>.

³ Several NYC Council bills are attempting to address the lapses in contracts and funding that have plagued contracting for community-based human services providers across the City. The administration should work to support these efforts including the passage of Int. 1392-2025, which would allow MOCJ to issue advance payments expanding the Council’s Discretionary Grant Pilot. This should be done across all city agencies to ensure that providers are not experiencing gaps and delays in funding that lead to gaps and delays in service.

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with schools with the greatest need. YES staff actively recruit and engage youth who are vulnerable to system involvement and may be at risk for interpersonal violence or who have experienced community violence. The four main components of the YES model include: structured in-school engagement, conflict mediation, case management and safe passage. **The proposed funding for YES in FY27 is \$7,584,063.**

Recommendation: Reinstate, expand and fully fund YES services with original workscope as an effective impactful preventive tool. Relatedly, YES should operate with all of the components of CMS sites, including therapeutic services, employment readiness training and employment opportunities, and sustained case management; this will require additional contract lines to expand these services where they do not exist. **The recommended FY27 budget for this program is \$8,584,063.**

ATLAS: The Atlas Program is a free, voluntary initiative that supports young people ages 16–22 who have had multiple encounters with the criminal legal system. Through Functional Family Therapy (FFT) and tailored access to education, job training, and other resources, Atlas helps participants strengthen family relationships and build long-term stability. Providers connect eligible youth to the program in court and through follow-up outreach, offering an alternative to repeated justice involvement. By addressing root causes and providing sustained support, Atlas helps young people change their path and move toward brighter futures. **The proposed funding for ATLAS in FY27 is \$24,068,473.**

Recommendation: ATLAS is a model for how FFT can serve and strengthen family ties for youth with criminal legal system involvement. Currently, contracts are stretched to support therapists, support staff and navigators, but leave little room for youth engagement and wrap-around supports. Overall, funding for ATLAS should be doubled to provide for new teams in all five boroughs while increasing lines of funding for youth engagement pieces like outreach, programmatic activities, and support services. **The recommended FY27 budget for this program is \$59,107,852.**

Comprehensive After School System (COMPASS): DYCD'S COMPASS program offers a comprehensive range of no-cost afterschool programs for students in grades K-12. These programs are designed to support the academic, social, and emotional development of young people through a variety of activities. In 2015, COMPASS launched a pilot program to service middle school youth in ACS and homeless facilities. There are seven (7) pilot programs that are located at the Department of Homeless Service (DHS), Secure Detention (SD) and Non-Secure Detention Facilities (NSD) providing support and services to youth involved in the juvenile justice system. In collaboration with the Administration for Children Services and the Department of Homeless Services as well as community-based organizations with history working with these populations, DYCD offers tailored career exploration programming that aims to support youth in the areas of career pathways, leadership, restorative justice, and enrichment.

The secure detention sites for juveniles in New York City, namely Horizon and Crossroads Juvenile Centers, were each originally designed to house 108 youth. As of November 2025, these facilities have a census in excess of 170 youth per facility (approximately 340 youth across both sites). The existing overcrowding inevitably creates an array of challenges for service delivery. The challenges range from the lack of available space to accommodate programs, to the need for additional funding to support the excess of program participants. **The proposed funding for COMPASS in FY27 is \$1,471,817,148.**

Recommendation: The current cost per participant for services to youth in secure detention is \$6,000 with total contract dollars corresponding with the number of young people each detention center is designed to house rather than correlating with current census numbers. Given the current census within secure detention facilities, funding levels must increase to ensure that all youth detained are receiving adequate services. Additionally, the cost per participant must be increased to account for the influx of older youth who are seeking access to credential-bearing programs, like Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) training, which come at a higher cost. These programs and

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services are essential to account for the reality of youth who are seeking to ensure access to employment and skill-building upon release. We recommend increasing funding levels per participant, thus building in the flexibility to offer a higher level of programming for older youth, to ensure providers can meet all detained youth needs. **The recommended FY27 budget for this program is \$1,671,817,148.**

Department of Probation:

NeON Works: NeON Works provides youth and young adults with the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills, and experience that prepare them for success in the workplace. Members can earn a stipend based on participation and goal attainment and can take part in the program for up to a full year. NeON is open to all residents in Bedford Stuyvesant, Brownsville, East New York, Far Rockaway, Harlem, Jamaica, northern Staten Island and the South Bronx, as well as people on probation who live anywhere in New York City. Priority is given to people ages 16-24. **The proposed FY27 funding for NeON is \$2,575,000.**

Recommendation: Currently, sites have been painted to look more like precincts, and youth have to walk through metal detectors. It will be critical to restore the original ethos of the NeON programs which were set up to create welcoming, holistic, community-based spaces by a) restoring the function of each NeON site to operate as inclusive of community participants; b) increasing contracts to provide for additional staff at sites where this function has been curtailed in recent years; and, c) restoring contracts for subcontractors that have been essential to ensure adequate service provision in communities. In the best iterations of NeON, young people were able to report to Probation at NeON sites instead of court-based DOP sites. This practice should be reinstated and all NeON sites open in 2021 should be re-opened. Finally, NeON programs have traditionally been an essential tool in the prevention landscape with original sites being open not simply to young people on probation, but as a service site for community participants (all young people in a certain area irrespective of legal system involvement) that ensures a prevention-first model. Recently, sites have been prohibited from serving community participants thus circumscribing the capacity of staff to engage in prevention services. **The recommended FY27 budget for this program is \$3,200,000.**

WorksPlus: WorksPlus provides flexible work readiness wrap-around services to young adults ages 16-30 who have been touched by gun violence and referred to the program by the NYC Crisis Management System (CMS). Program activities include career awareness services, connection to educational opportunities, vocational skills training, assistance with job search competencies, and case management. There is also a strong emphasis on soft skills and basic life skills development as a means toward work readiness. All WorksPlus contracts are scheduled to end in June 2026. **The proposed FY27 funding for WorksPlus is \$2,659,253.**

Recommendation: While WorksPlus is an essential program, it is not a standalone program although it is currently contracted as such. Providers must cobble together other contracts to provide the robust services necessary to truly support participants. Contracts make it challenging to allocate for fulltime staff without additional funding from other sources and many providers note that they can no longer afford food, metrocards, and other supplies needed to adequately serve young people. Providers are currently relying on salary accruals to make ends meet through the end of the fiscal year. A new Request for Proposal should be issued with reasonable outcomes that are directly focused on the soft skills training at the core of the program. Outcomes should be aligned with the original, core intention of the program, which was to increase job readiness through developing life skills, soft skills, and through civic/community engagement. Additionally, budgets should be expanded in order to keep pace with inflation, the increased cost of staff salaries and indirect costs, and minimum wage increases. Finally, WorksPlus has lived under DOP whereas CMS sites (which

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are responsible for referrals) currently reside in DYCD; given these programs are interconnected, we are recommending that these two programs are housed under the same agency. **The recommended FY27 budget for this program is \$3,700,000.**

Adolescent Portable Therapy: Adolescent Portable Therapy (APT) is a flexible in-home family therapy model designed to identify, reinforce, and leverage a family's existing strengths to create buy-in and willingness to learn new relational skills and begin to address challenges including the participating young person's problem behaviors (e.g., substance abuse, truancy, etc.). This short-term intervention works with young people ages 12-24 and lasts four to six months and includes cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) techniques.

Recommendation: APT funding should be immediately restored to \$130,000 annually. The program should also be expanded to provide services to significantly more young people and families. DOP and DOHMH should jointly consider whether the program should move to DOHMH, which could set aside spaces for young people with Probation mandates while expanding the voluntary program to prevent Probation involvement. **The recommended FY27 budget for this program is \$130,000.**

Advocate, Intervene, Mentor (AIM): Advocate, Intervene, Mentor (AIM) program, an Alternative to Placement (ATP) program, helps high-risk youth ages 13-18 avoid out-of-home placement in facilities by allowing youth to be placed under an intensive model of probation supervision while receiving wraparound services from a credible messenger employed by a provider organization. The organization provides services for youth across any given borough. AIM is a six- to twelve- month court-mandated (Family Court) ATP program that utilizes a one-on-one mentoring model with a paid advocate-mentor (credible messenger) who is available around the clock. Over 80% of participants avoided felony rearrest within 12 months of enrollment, far exceeding the program's deliverables.⁴ AIM also employs a Parent Coach who helps to support parents as they navigate the Family Court system. All AIM contracts are scheduled to run out in June 2026. **The proposed FY27 funding for AIM is \$2,079,639.**

Advocate, Intervene, Mentor Non-ATP (AIM Non-ATP): This program is a subset of the AIM Program and operates to engage youth with high risk factors ages 13-18 who are not *mandated through an ATP*. These youth are often referred to the program by Probation Officers as a means of additional support to youth who are struggling with the conditions of lower-level Probation. AIM Non-ATP is a non-conventional mentoring program that pairs youth with credible messengers, trusted community members with whom they can form transformational relationships. AIM Non-ATP also employs Parent Coaches who provide support and assistance to caregivers, helping them to navigate systems and the challenges their children are experiencing.

Recommendation: Ensure continued implementation of AIM via contract renewals or new Request for Proposal (RFP), as appropriate. As the City moves toward a decarceration plan for youth in NYC, the City should expand services throughout the City and include funding for education assistance programming for one-on-one tutoring as many youth are disconnected from school and/or employment. Research has shown a strong correlation between incarceration and education attainment.⁵ The City should also address youth furthering their involvement in the carceral system by using a two-generation approach; at the same time providers are supporting youth, they must also

⁴ Please see, New York City, "Findings at a Glance," Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity, 2018: https://www.nyc.gov/assets/opportunity/pdf/evidence/AIM_Final_Findings_2018.pdf

⁵ John Whibey, "Juvenile incarceration and its impact on high school graduation rates and adult jail time," *Journalist Resource*, February 4, 2015: <https://journalistsresource.org/education/juvenile-incarceration-long-term-consequences/#:~:text=Juvenile%20incarceration%20decreases%20the%20chances,an%20increase%20in%20adult%20incarceration.%E2%80%9D>

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support families and will need financial resources to offer families with concrete, educational, vocational and mental health resources. Additionally, AIM Director positions require a licensed master social worker (LMSW). In order for providers to attract and retain an LMSW, Probation will need to include additional funding to support this position. **The recommended budget for this program is \$3,079,639.**

IMPACT: IMPACT is a now-defunct capsule program run through the Department of Probation that was designed to divert 175 young people (aged 14-18) annually from probation or detention to comprehensive services including counseling (both family counseling and individual sessions), case management, and mentoring. While DOP cited budget restraints in cutting the program, the total program budget was just \$3.3 million. **There is no budget line for IMPACT in FY27.**

Recommendation: Restore the program and increase funding to \$4.1 million to ensure staff capacity and retention without having to borrow from other contracts. Restoring IMPACT is critical to the goal of reducing the number of youth in detention citywide and addressing the crisis of overcrowding in detention. **The recommended budget for this program is \$4.1 million.**

Arches: Arches Transformative Mentoring program works with youth ages 16-24 on probation, combining credible messengers, group sessions and individualized activities to set positive goals.⁶ Arches participants were less than half as likely as a matched comparison group to be convicted of a new felony both 12 months and 24 months after beginning probation. Investments like these are critical now because they save taxpayer dollars and reduce youth crime. Arches uses an evidence-based interactive journaling curriculum delivered by credible messengers. When independently evaluated by the Urban Institute in 2017, the program led to a 57% decrease in reconviction rates.⁷ **The proposed FY27 funding for Arches is \$3,421,705.**

Recommendation: Fully restore funding for Arches and engage stakeholders to discuss the ways that the program should be updated to be more responsive to the immediate needs of youth that are currently being served. While the model takes an innovative approach, it has not been updated since its initial rollout in 2012. **Convene stakeholders to update the program model and budget.**

Next STEPS: Next STEPS, abruptly shuttered in 2023, placed credible messenger mentors in 15 NYC Housing Authority (NYCHA) public housing sites to engage youth before arrest for serious offenses. Next STEPS was the only DOP program which intervened in the lives of young people *whether or not* they were or ever had been involved in the criminal justice system, instead focusing on young people who were at risk of such involvement.⁸ Over an eight-year period, the program served hundreds of teens in high-incarceration developments like the Polo Grounds Towers in Harlem and Tompkins Houses in Bedford Stuyvesant, using an eleven-month curriculum of intensive mentoring, journaling, and group workshops on communication, goal-setting, and handling conflict.⁹ Many participants were children with high risk factors for future systems involvement—approximately 50% were already justice involved—but what made the program unique was it also served young people at risk of future juvenile justice system

⁶ Matthew Lynch, Nan Marie Astone, Juan Collazos, Micaela Lipman, Sino Esthappan. *Arches transformative mentoring program. An Implementation and Impact Evaluation in New York City*. Urban Institute. 2018.: <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/arches-transformative-mentoring-program>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Please see, Jessie Mitchell, “Concerns rise after New York City Department of Probation cuts program for at-risk youth,” November 17, 2023: <https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/new-york-city-probation-department-cuts-next-steps-program/#:~:text=Jackson%20received%20a%20letter%20from,sites%20with%20Next%20STEPS%20branches>

⁹ CASES, “Next STEPS Youth Go Bowling,” July 26, 2018: <https://www.cases.org/2018/07/26/next-steps-youth-go-bowling-with-community-police-officers/#:~:text=games%2C%20and%20unlimited%20pizza%20at,who%20patrol%20these%20housing%20developments>

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involvement.¹⁰ Despite these successes, Next STEPS was abruptly cut in late 2023, with providers and participants receiving less than one week of notice that the program would be ending.¹¹ The program cost just \$2.5 million annually to serve over 200 young people. **There is no budget line for NextSTEPS in FY27.**

Recommendation: Restore the program with \$5 million in funding to provide for expansion to additional NYCHA developments and to give additional funding for each site to allow for full-time, appropriately compensated staff. Conduct a new analysis of NYCHA sites to determine the highest need developments and site the program accordingly. **The recommended budget for this program is \$5 million.**

Parent Support Services. This program engages “Parent Coaches” as credible messengers who provide peer-based support to families involved in the juvenile justice system. Parent Coaches are community members—ideally parents—who have lived experience with challenges similar to those facing the families they serve. Their firsthand knowledge of neighborhood-specific issues and the juvenile justice process allows them to offer informed, empathetic guidance. They help families understand and meet court-assigned requirements, including conditions such as substance abuse treatment, and assist caregivers in navigating available resources. Through this peer-driven model, the program strengthens family engagement and promotes more effective, community-rooted support for youth.

Recommendation: This is a highly effective program model that has been severely underfunded by the Department of Probation. Funding must be expanded to allow for organizations to employ several full-time parent coaches as well as allow for broader OTPS funding that would go to funding community building events as well as psychoeducational groups.

Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice

Alternatives to Incarceration/Alternative to Detention: Alternatives to incarceration (ATI) programs offer community-based supervision and services instead of jail or prison sentences, aiming to reduce the reliance on incarceration and provide individualized supports for participants. These programs can include a variety of options such as drug and mental health treatment, vocational and educational training, community service, and cognitive behavioral interventions, tailored to an individual’s needs. **The proposed FY27 funding for ATI/ATDs (including non-youth specific programs) is \$51,065,768.**

Recommendation: Alternatives to Incarceration not only keep people out of jails and prisons, but connect them to supports and services that allow people to begin to thrive in community. For young people, these supports can alter the trajectory of their lives and set them up for success. However, to provide consistent and holistic programming for young people, the City must invest in a much higher per youth cost. The most recent ATI RFP had an average cost per youth of \$4,482, while most ATIs for youth and emerging adults is approximately \$20,000 per youth per program. When compared to the cost of youth detention, which has been estimated between \$500,000 and nearly \$1 million per youth per year,¹² this is a small investment in programming that has a significant impact.

¹⁰Please see, Jessie Mitchell, “Concerns rise after New York City Department of Probation cuts program for at-risk youth,” November 17, 2023: <https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/new-york-city-probation-department-cuts-next-steps-program/#:~:text=Jackson%20received%20a%20letter%20from,sites%20with%20Next%20STEPS%20branches>

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Steven Yoder, “New York Legislators Say They Want Alternatives to Costly Youth Prisons” *Imprint News*, January 2, 2021: <https://imprintnews.org/justice/juvenile-justice-2/new-york-legislators-want-alternatives-youth-prisons/50607>.

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The City should also expand the number of slots available to young people overall, working with providers to shape RFPs and best practices for working with youth.

Families Rising Program: Families Rising is one such Alternative to Incarceration (ATI) program serving *specifically* 13-27 year olds with open cases in the adult court system. The program was designed to divert teens and young adults away from justice system involvement toward positive life choices, including education and career development. The program uses the evidence-based model Functional Family Therapy (FFT), working with young people and their families in their homes, to reduce family conflict, substance use, recidivism, and violent behavior in the long term. Through strengthening family relationships, the young person is less dependent on peers and feels more supported to address challenging situations.

Recommendation: We recommend doubling the funding for the program to expand Families Rising and allow providers to better support family court cases directly. While the program can follow cases to family court, funding through ACS would allow the program to officially operate as an alternative to detention program, and support with lessening overcrowding in Crossroads and Horizons. The need for Families Rising services in family court in all five boroughs is absolutely critical to supporting young people with being allowed to remain safely in the community during their ongoing court proceedings. Additionally, the program, as currently funded, frequently has very long waitlists: As of November 2025, the program has a three-month waitlist in both the Bronx and Queens. Additional funding to expand hiring in boroughs with the highest youth arrests would allow Families Rising to serve more young people and in a more timely manner.

Community Justice Reentry Network (CJRN): Community Justice Reentry Network is a citywide reentry initiative offering a combination of discharge planning, transitional employment, job training, access to higher education, and holistic supportive services for justice system-involved individuals. It builds on a four-year Demonstration Pilot (2016-2020) known as the Youth Reentry Network—created and operated by Youth Justice Network together with multiple partner organizations—launched to meet young adults within 48 hours of their admission to Rikers Island; and the Jails to Jobs initiative, to ensure that individuals leaving custody are connected to internships/work within the earliest weeks upon release. **The proposed FY27 funding for CJRN is \$20 million.**

Recommendation: Current year allocation of \$20,000,000 is set to expire on June 30, 2025. As the population in custody has continued to increase since 2021, and in order to offer meaningful support to special populations – including teenagers, emerging and vulnerable adults – this figure must be doubled to \$40,000,000. **The recommended funding for this program is \$40 million.**

Human Resources Administration

Work Progress Program (WPP): WPP is a subsidized work experience initiative designed to complement existing youth services programs by providing participating low-income young adults with paid work experiences. Through WPP, HRA reimburses providers for wages or stipends paid to low-income youth and emerging adults ages 16-24 who have been placed in short-term work experiences that typically last 12 weeks, with a special emphasis on serving opportunity youth (i.e., young people who are out of school and out of work) and young people who are at risk of becoming opportunity youth.

Recommendations: Expand funding to serve more young people and include funding to cover the expenses (other than the direct payment to participants). Programs are currently run at a deficit for nonprofits because expenses like payroll fees, staff time to administer the program, and indirect costs are not covered.

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Department of Education and Supports Supports for Court Involved Youth in New York City Public Schools (NYCPS)

Passages Academy: NYCPS' Passages Academy within District 79 (Alternative Schools and Programs) operates across seven sites serving youth in both secure and non secure detention as well as in placement settings. Students in non-secure settings receive education at community-based sites where providers are responsible for escorting youth to school. At Horizon and CrossRoads, Passages provides education on site. An April 2025 Oversight of Horizon and Crossroads Juvenile Centers audit by the Office of the New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli found that both facilities exhibited chronic absenteeism levels across all educational programs and ages, ranging from 13-73 days absent and that only a fraction of students entitled to special education services received them.¹³ Additionally, a November 2025 Reconnecting to Opportunity Advancing Educational Equity for Court-Involved Students data brief by Advocates for Children of New York found that one in six students with disabilities did not receive their legally required Special Education Plan within 30 school days of enrolling at Passages Academy.¹⁴

Recommendation: Increase the number of educators and transition specialists that are assigned to secure detention facilities to ensure that every young person leaves with a concrete education plan, and receives the support and guidance necessary to seek appropriate special education and alternative services. The City must ensure that students are receiving instruction through Passages every single day.

Judith S. Kaye Transfer High School (JSK): JSK opened its doors in September 2017. Students who attend JSK are dually enrolled at the School of Cooperative Technical Education (Co-Op Tech) in Manhattan and Queens. JSK was designed to meet the needs of young people who become disengaged from school and welcomes young people involved in the criminal and juvenile justice systems and other over-age eighth graders with a particular focus on young people who are not on track to graduate from high school (for example, 16 and 17 year olds who have 10 or fewer credits). JSK offers multiple, individualized pathways to success including a regents high school diploma, High School Equivalency, and access to Career and Technical Education certifications and internship opportunities. The existing sites have seen remarkable success in enrolling, retaining, and producing good final outcomes for students and with a remarkable lack of disciplinary issues.

Recommendation: Strengthen the educational, mental health and social and emotional supports and services for youth who with justice involvement while in detention, in placement and upon exiting and reentering communities. Explore expanding models like JSK to the Bronx and Brooklyn. Reinstate funding for schools to partner with community-based providers to bring credible messenger mentors on-site for individual and group mentoring sessions. This model was implemented in the initial JSK site in Manhattan with Arches, shortly after the school opened, to further support young people who have been disconnected from school.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

CENTRALIZE COORDINATION: Establish a citywide Coordinator of Youth and Emerging Adult Justice with authority to ensure consistent communication and collaboration among the multiple agencies that provide services for justice-involved youth and emerging adults. The Coordinator shall be responsible for collecting and analyzing data from all relevant agencies including New York Police Department

¹³ Office of the State Comptroller, "Oversight of Horizon and Crossroads Juvenile Centers," April 10, 2025: <https://www.osc.ny.gov/state-agencies/audits/2025/04/10/oversight-horizon-and-crossroads-juvenile-centers>.

¹⁴ Advocates for Children of New York, "Data Brief: Reconnecting to Opportunity," November 2025: https://advocatesforchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/reconnecting_to_opportunity.pdf

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(NYPD), DOP, ACS, DYCD, and the New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) and information sharing from and between each of the five District Attorneys as well as the Office of Court Administration. The coordinator shall also establish formal mechanisms for input from citywide youth justice stakeholders including young people, families, service providers, law enforcement, and public defenders. Based on this input and data analysis, the Coordinator will identify gaps in services and work with city agencies to address them with robust evidence-informed programming.

REBUILD THE DEPARTMENT OF PROBATION: Appointed by New York City Mayor Eric Adams in 2023, current Probation Commissioner Juanita Holmes—an NYPD veteran with no probation, youth or social work background—has fully abandoned the prior twelve years of deep community investment and trust-building that occurred under Commissioners Shiraldi and Bermudez, with devastating consequences. She has reshaped the agency into a quasi-police precinct, requiring officers to wear uniforms, badges, and carry weapons while sidelining community-based initiatives like Arches and Next STEPS. During this period, DOP has seen a spike in rearrests and technical violations along with the worst staff attrition rate of any city agency. It is time to reverse course, restore the department’s core purpose, and rebuild an agency focused on true rehabilitation of individuals under supervision through intensive, individualized programming, and focused on offering supports and opportunities that strengthen surrounding communities.

ADDRESS QUALITY OF CONTRACTS: New York City’s contract issues continue to hamper the ability of organizations to deliver quality services. Contracts are not registered on time and do not consistently include cost escalators or account for inflation. RFP timelines are often too short—sometimes with a turnaround of less than a week—and agencies do not consistently provide opportunities for organizations to give feedback on program design prior to RFP issuance. Additionally, agencies do not consistently communicate clearly around contract extensions and modifications, leaving organizations unable to plan for the future of their contracts.

Many community-based organizations (CBOs) have been forced to reject certain contracts due to structural flaws — including service gaps, unrealistically low staff salaries that hinder recruitment and retention, and deliverables that exceed existing capacity – these flaws would be solved if the agency sought CBO feedback when designing new programs and preparing RFPs. Contracting delays at agencies are also severe: in FY24, over 85% of all City contracts with nonprofits were registered late.¹⁵ Contracts also consistently undervalue youth work, requiring CBOs to pay very low salaries for staff, particularly for social workers which leads to staff turnover and an inability to retain and promote quality staff.

To stabilize the system, we are recommending that all program budgets should be expanded in order to keep pace with inflation, the increased cost of staff salaries and indirect costs, and minimum wage increases. This should include a cost of living increase annually across all staff lines. It should also prioritize consumer-centered outreach by empowering CBOs to directly enroll youth onsite and by launching community-based application and enrollment facilitators to expedite access to afterschool and summer programs. Finally, the City must pay youth service providers on time, resolve outstanding payments, fully staff agency invoicing and payment divisions, and make permanent the policy allowing providers to batch multiple months of invoices. While this is especially true in DCYD contracting, it should apply to nonprofit contracts across the youth service space.

ADVANCE WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION: ATI and reentry service programs are severely understaffed and face high turnover due to the low wages common in human services. Budget constraints and narrowly defined contracts often prevent programs from offering living

¹⁵ See Annual Contracts Report, NYC Comptroller Office, January 30, 2024: <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/annual-contracts-report/>

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wages or hiring essential staff such as credible messengers, peer support specialists, and youth mentors—roles critical to participant engagement and program success.

For programs serving individuals with mental illness or trauma, recruiting and retaining licensed clinical staff is especially difficult. Many clinicians leave for the private sector, where salaries are far more competitive. This challenge is even greater for youth service providers, whose contracts set wages lower than those in adult ATI and reentry programs, despite the additional expertise required to work with youth. Contracts also fail to recognize the importance of hiring staff with lived experience—individuals who are employed as credible messengers but are often asked to work on part-time contracts while their work is central to many programs. Additional funding is required to ensure that these critical positions can be full-time employment.

To address these issues, City contracts should establish a wage floor of \$60,320 or \$29/hr¹⁶ for human services workers, with annual cost-of-living increases tied to inflation. The City should also create incentives to help programs retain licensed clinical professionals, including psychiatrists and social workers, who might otherwise be drawn to private-sector opportunities.

DOUBLE FUNDING FOR THE CITY COUNCIL COURT-INVOLVED YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE: The Council’s Court-Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative, currently funded at \$3.4M, provides essential, flexible funding to community-based providers. This funding supplements existing programs, allowing providers to innovate and build cross-organizational partnerships by convening funded providers regularly. This funding should be doubled, so currently funded organizations can grow their work and new organizations can be added.

FUND PREVENTION AND DIVERSION TO SCALE: To begin to scale youth services, funding for programs across every agency that currently provides services and supports to youth and young adults with juvenile justice and/or criminal legal systems involvement must be tripled. The rationale here is fourfold: a) Funding increases would support better program stability by allowing providers to not have to gap-fill contracts that have vastly underestimated the cost per participant of providing services to young people that need a higher level of care and staff time; b) relatedly, young people require access to robust wraparound services and supports, including incentives that cover transportation and feeding young people in program, but also provide for emergency funds for clothing and other basic necessities; these costs are higher for young people because of the tailored supports and thus need to be reflected in higher OTPS expenses; c) the City must shore up the sustainability of these programs by creating investments for infrastructure development, rising rental costs, and cost of insurance for programs that has continued to rise at exponential rates over the last decade; and, d) programs should receive funding specified for research, monitoring, and evaluation to collect, review, and analyze data on programs and outcomes, allowing for service providers to assess strengths, weaknesses and gaps and pivot where necessary. Overall, tripling funding will allow programs to rightsize and scale, leading to robust programming for nearly double the young people programs are currently serving.

COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION AND PROGRAMMING FOR YOUTH IN DETENTION: Youth detained pre-trial must have access to comprehensive educational, vocational, recreational and other enrichment programs whether in the care of ACS or DOC. This includes consistent, daily access to high school instruction for any student who does not have a high school diploma or GED; adequate services for students with disabilities; and regular reporting on attendance. Students who have completed high school must have access to college and vocational training and all youth must receive robust arts, social emotional, recreational, and other programming outside of school hours. Programming for detained

¹⁶ CUNY Institute for State and Local Governance, “Amid an uncertain economy, human services lead job growth—but wages threaten the sector’s long-term strength,” July 22, 2025: See <https://islg.cuny.edu/blog/human-services-job-growth>

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youth must be coordinated across agencies to ensure adequate funding and consistent attendance across all facilities and successful educational placement upon release. Additionally, there are 1,278 18-25 year olds at Rikers as of November 2025 (nearly 20% of the detained population), which is a significant number of young people who could benefit from services. In 2023, the Adams administration cut \$17 million in funding for community-based providers running programs and services on Rikers Island. While the administration moved to restore \$14 million, the full amount and scope of those programs has not.

MAKING NEW YORK CITY A “ZERO YOUTH DETENTION” CITY: If New York City was to truly invest in the services and supports necessary to bring to scale a robust network of providers at every intercept from prevention programs that support mentoring, youth counseling, peer support and education to intervention programs that can provide wraparound, holistic community-based alternatives to detention and placement, New York City could adopt the goal of reaching a policy of “zero youth detention.” Over the last decade, several jurisdictions¹⁷ have pledged to make this the aim of youth justice policy. By scaling a continuum of community-based responses, New York City can provide strength-based, effective solutions that help youth remain safely in their homes and communities.

ENSURE NYPD DIVERSION: Each NYPD precinct should adopt a “youth diversion plan” establishing a set of offenses for which pre-arrest diversion is the preferred option for youth under 26. The plan should include a list of community-based referral partners, youth diversion guidance and training for all uniformed officers, and quarterly reporting on the number of youth diverted.

EXPAND PROGRAMS FOR GUN DIVERSION: Expanding diversion for youth with gun-possession cases is imperative because punitive, one-size-fits-all responses neither enhance public safety nor address the underlying drivers of youth firearm carrying. Most young people who carry guns do so for protection, peer norms, or trauma-related fears and aggressive prosecution often exacerbates these risks by disrupting school and employment pathways, increasing justice-system involvement, and eroding trust in public safety institutions. Expanding pathways to diversion preserves opportunities for positive development and allows the City to invest in interventions proven to reduce violence, such as community-based outreach, trauma-responsive services, and targeted engagement for youth at maximum risk. Programs like Queens Community Justice Center’s trauma and healing program, which is funded by DOHMH, and the Bronx Osborne Gun Accountability and Prevention Program (BOGAP), are models that should be expanded. The City should 1) make diversion presumptive for youth gun-possession cases, especially for youth with no prior record, 2) expand specialized diversion pathways for fund possession; and 3) pair diversion with access to counseling, mentoring programs, conflict-mediation programs, and supportive services that address the real reasons youth seek firearms.

EXPAND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS FOR JUSTICE-INVOLVED YOUTH: Youth employment is especially critical for justice-involved young people because it strengthens both their educational and life trajectories while directly reducing their risk of further system involvement. We must ensure that all programs that serve youth with criminal legal system involvement have comprehensive workforce development components that provide the opportunity for young New Yorkers to gain skills and earn income. We believe that youth employment is a powerful public safety strategy: reducing idle time and promoting a sense of purpose and responsibility. Through socio-emotional skill development and access to positive peer and adult networks, participants gain tools and relationships that lead to re-engagement with schools and better court outcomes.

¹⁷ See Regional Office of Gun Violence Prevention, “The Road Map to Zero Youth Detention,” n.d.: <https://regionalgunviolencephskc.com/vision/road-map/>; and Alice Green, “We need better alternatives to locking up kids,” *Times Union*, December 9, 2022: <https://www.timesunion.com/opinion/article/Commentary-We-need-better-alternatives-to-17638128.php>

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Agency	Program	FY26 Budget (as of 11/25)	FY27 Budget*	Recommended FY27
ACS	MAAP	\$2,400,000	\$2,400,000	\$2,400,000
ACS	ACES	***	***	DOUBLE LINE BUDGET
ACS	Family Court ATD	\$15,453,572	\$30,175,904†	\$30,175,904†
DOE	Judith S. Kaye Transfer	N/A	N/A	N/A
DOP	NeON Works	\$2,575,000	\$2,575,000	\$3,200,000
DOP	WorksPlus	\$2,659,253	\$846,400	\$3,700,000
DOP	Adolescent Portable Therapy	\$130,000	N/A	\$130,000
DOP	Advocate, Intervene, Mentor (AIM)	\$2,079,639	\$2,079,639	\$3,079,639
DOP	Arches	\$3,421,705	\$3,421,705	\$3,421,705
DOP	IMPACT	N/A	N/A	\$4,100,000
DOP	NextSTEPS	N/A	N/A	\$5,000,000
DYCD	Comprehensive After School System (COMPASS)	\$927,719,588	\$1,471,817,148	\$1,471,817,148
DYCD	Violence Intervention: CMS/CVI	\$60,417,876	\$56,411,682	\$60,417,876
DYCD	Anti-Gun Violence Employment Program AGVEP	\$5,114,227	\$5,012,369	\$8,114,227
DYCD	DYCD Youth Enrichment Services	N/A	\$7,584,063	\$8,584,063
DYCD	ATLAS	\$29,553,926	\$24,068,473	\$59,107,852
HRA	Works Progress	N/A	N/A	N/A
MOCJ	Alternatives to Incarceration/Alternative to Detention	\$51,065,768	\$53,710,683~	\$53,710,683

* As outlined in the November Budget (2025)

† ACES and Family Court ATD fall under the same budget line, which we were not able to parse. In the FY26 approved budget that line was doubled. We support that increase.

~ This line represents the entire budget line for ATIs and thus does not represent the number going into youth services specific to young people under 18