

**LOCAL LAW 41 of 2016:  
2021 ANNUAL REPORT**

**NEW YORK CITY ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN’S SERVICES  
DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

**A. INTRODUCTION**

Local Law 41 of 2016 requires an annual report to the Speaker of the City Council, documenting the number Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) in contact with DYCD or its contracted providers and youth in contact with ACS “who are referred as, self-report as, or who the department (DYCD) or ACS later determines to be sexually exploited children, disaggregated by age, gender and whether the children had contact with either DYCD or ACS or both agencies.” The law also requires DYCD and ACS to provide a “description of the services provided by the department and ACS to meet the needs of youth who are or have been sexually exploited.” Lastly, the law requires DYCD and ACS to document their methods for collecting data regarding this population.

The New York City (NYC) Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) and Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) are jointly submitting this Calendar Year 2021 (“2021”) report, which contains the following information as required:

- A. The number of youth in contact with the department’s (DYCD’s) runaway and homeless youth services or ACS who are referred as, self-report as, or who the department (DYCD) or ACS later determine to be sexually exploited*
- B. Data disaggregated by age, utilizing the following ranges:
  - A. under 12 years old;*
  - B. 12-15 years old;*
  - C. 16-18 years old; and*
  - D. over 18 years old;*and disaggregated by gender, and by whether such children had contact with the department or ACS.*

- C. *The number of sexually exploited children identified as having received services from DYCD and/or ACS.*
- D. *A description of services provided by DYCD and ACS to meet the needs of youth who are or have been sexually exploited children including but not limited to the number of beds designated for such children and the types of mental health and health services provided to such children.*
- E. *The methods DYCD and ACS utilized to collect data regarding the number of sexually exploited children.*

**2021 DATA SUMMARY:**

**In 2021, ACS, DYCD and the Safe Harbour providers served a total of 613 youth referred as, self-reported as, or determined to be sexually exploited, or at-risk for sexual exploitation.**

<b>Table 1. Youth referred as, self-reported as, or determined to be sexually exploited or at-risk for sexual exploitation served by ACS and DYCD in 2021:</b>	
Safe Harbour Providers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Trafficking Mailbox - 127</li> <li>• Child Trafficking Database -22</li> <li>• Safe Horizon Counselors at the Children’s Center - 77</li> <li>• Foster Care Unplugged - 20</li> </ul>	246
DYCD Runaway and Homeless Youth Services	236
ACS Prevention Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-Advocate Prevention Cases - 0<sup>i</sup></li> <li>• Advocate (ADVPO) Cases – 25<sup>ii</sup></li> <li>• Family Assessment Program (Advocate) Cases - 64</li> </ul>	89
ACS Placement Services	22
Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) Confirmed Victims of Human Trafficking	20 <sup>iii</sup>
<b>Total Exploited or at Risk for Exploitation Youth Served in 2021</b>	<b>613</b>

It should be noted that the overall number of youths identified as “trafficked or at-risk for trafficking” decreased by 375 youth between 2020 (988 youth identified) and 2021 (613 youth identified), most likely due to COVID-19 concerns, closures, and safety restrictions. DYCD noted the reduction as due to fewer youth accessing the Drop-in Centers (86 in 2020 compared to 46 in 2021) and residential programs (Crisis Services: 350 in 2020 vs. 171 in 2021 and TILS: 98 in 2020 vs. 19 in 2021) due to the pandemic, despite service availability. Throughout much of the pandemic, there were also fewer families referred to ACS child protection services, and fewer families engaged ACS’ Prevention Services/FAP program. ACS also worked with a more limited group of Safe Harbour program providers based upon the decrease in OCFS funds to NYC. As a result, we no longer receive data about trafficked and at-risk youth from some previous Safe Harbour providers. Additionally, the contracted preventive program that served sexually abused/sexually trafficked youth also closed (see endnote 1).<sup>iv</sup> However, in 2021, the number of youth identified to the ACS Child Trafficking Mailbox and through the Child Trafficking Database (CTDB) were similar (Mailbox: 123 in 2020 and 127 in 2021; CTDB: 23 in 2020 and 22 in 2021) and almost all Mailbox/CTDB youth were identified at the Federal Definition of Trafficking level (117 of 149 youth). Therefore, although less youth were identified to the Safe Harbour Program overall in 2021, a high percentage (78%) of youth identified within the child welfare system were definitively recognized as trafficked, rather than as at-risk (32 youth), demonstrating the acuity of child welfare professionals in identifying federal level indicators.

It is important to note that the actual determination as to whether some youth are at-risk for exploitation or have been exploited is significantly challenging. Many youth who are considered at-risk for exploitation may have actually been trafficked, but chose not to disclose that information, or even outright deny exploitation, despite a proliferation of indicators. Therefore, the data in this report captures both exploited youth and youth determined to be at-risk for exploitation and these categories cannot be disaggregated. It should also be noted that there may be overlap between provider data and victim confirmations by the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), whose information is confidential. There is no means to determine whether or how frequently this occurred.

**Provider Breakdown:**

**In 2021, programs funded by, or affiliated with the NYC Safe Harbour Program served 246 Youth Exploited or At-Risk of Exploitation and OTDA Confirmed 20 Exploited Youth:**

- Through the State’s Safe Harbour funding, ACS contracts with Safe Horizon to provide services at the ACS Nicholas Scoppetta Children’s Center. Through this program, Safe Horizon provided services to 77 new youth who were either exploited or at-risk of exploitation, and 18 youth who had been previously identified as trafficked or at risk of trafficking. The Safe Horizon Counselors specialize in working with commercially sexually exploited children (CSEC)and youth at risk of trafficking..<sup>v</sup>
- 127 newly identified sexually exploited youth, or youth at-risk for exploitation were brought to the attention of ACS’ Child Trafficking Mailbox. 193 previously identified trafficked or at-risk youth also received services. See Section 1B on Data Capture Methodology for details..<sup>vi</sup>
- 22 newly identified sexually exploited youth were screened through ACS’ Child Trafficking Database (CTDB).
- 20 youth were served through trafficking awareness and skills focused groupwork by Foster Care Unplugged in partnership with ACS’ Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy (OCTPP).
- 20 youth ages 0 through 23 were confirmed as sexually exploited by The NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA).

**DYCD Served 236 Exploited and/or At-Risk for Exploitation Youth Through Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Programs:**

- 171 youth received Crisis Services Programs.
- 19 youth received services from Transitional Independent Living Programs (TILS).

- 46 youth received services at Drop-in Centers.
- 38 youth served by DYCD-funded providers shared that they also receive some form of service from ACS.
- Gender: 47 males; 120 females; 13 Gender Non-Conforming (GNC) youth and 56 youth who did not disclose their gender. Within those gender categories, 26 transgender youth were served: Drop-in Centers served 1 transgender youth, Crisis Services assisted 22 transgender youth, and TILS served 3 transgender youth.
- Ages: 0 children ages 12 to 15; 15 children ages 16 to 18; 221 youth over age 18. Details are provided in Section C-1: DYCD Contracted Programs and Services to Meet the Needs of Sexually Exploited Children.

**ACS Foster Care Placement, Prevention Services and Advocate Provider Services Served 111 Exploited and/or At-Risk for Exploitation Youth:**

- Foster Care Placement:
  - The Jewish Child Care Association’s (JCCA) Gateways Program served 19 Sexually Exploited Youth in 2021.
  - Children’s Village’s Empower Program served 3 Sexually Exploited Youth in 2021.
- Advocates Preventive-Only (ADVPO) providers served 24 youth identified as at-risk and 1 youth identified as trafficked.
- ACS’ Family Assessment Program (PINS Diversion/Advocate) served 64 youth identified as at-risk and 0 youth identified as trafficked.

<b>Table 2. Delineation of Data by Required Local Law 41 Categories: Total = 613</b>		
<b>By Age:</b>	Under 12 years old:	<b>4</b>
	12 to 15 years old:	<b>118</b>
	16 to 18 years old:	<b>163</b>
	Over 18 years old:	<b>239</b>
	Age unknown <sup>vii</sup>	<b>89</b>

<b>By Gender:</b>	Male:	<b>66</b>
	Female:	<b>380</b>
	Transgender Female:	<b>6</b>
	Transgender Male	<b>1</b>
	Gender Non-Conforming	<b>14</b>
	Gender Undisclosed	<b>146</b>
<b>By Contact With DYCD or ACS:</b>		
ACS only		<b>357</b>
DYCD only		<b>198</b>
Both ACS and DYCD		<b>38</b>
Unknown		<b>20</b>
<b>Advocate Case Youth Not at the Federal Definition Level</b> (age and gender data provided only for Federal level, not for youth at-risk. (See footnote vii.)	ADVPO Prevention Services	<b>24</b>
	Family Assessment Program	<b>64</b>

**B. DATA CAPTURE METHODOLOGY**

1. ACS Data Capture Methodology:

In 2021, ACS obtained demographic data of young people served by New York State Safe Harbour-funded programs from the Safe Harbour funded providers. Primarily, ACS obtained data through its Child Trafficking Mailbox, which served as a vehicle for ACS and provider agency staff to send notifications of trafficked children, ask questions, request resources and receive case practice guidance. External stakeholders, including the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), other City agencies and community providers also use the Child Trafficking Mailbox for notifications to, and communication with OCTPP.<sup>viii</sup> The Child Trafficking Mailbox is monitored by eight professionals<sup>ix</sup>

within or affiliated with the ACS Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy, who have extensive experience in child welfare and clinical service provision or law enforcement. OCTPP staff obtain updates on status, services and safety planning and collect demographic data. OCTPP staff also directly respond to every Federal Level screening notification generated by the Child Trafficking Database (CTDB). Every Mailbox and CTDB response consists of a series of emails and telephone contacts to ensure identification of youth, assessment of trafficking indicators and safety planning efforts, provision of guidance, arrangement for conference participation, provision of resources and meeting any other trafficking related need. OCTPP staff also attend and provide guidance at Multi-Disciplinary and Child Safety Conferences and individual case consultations, and to Safe Harbour non-child welfare case assistance requests.

In 2021, the Child Trafficking Mailbox received 3,674 emails, which identified a total of 127 children newly identified as trafficked, or at-risk of trafficking, and also received emails for, and provided support to another 193 youth, all of whom had previously been identified as trafficked or at-risk. Of the 127 youth newly-identified to the Mailbox, 95 were determined to have met the Federal Definition. ACS also accumulated data through electronic sex trafficking screenings in its Child Trafficking Database (CTDB), which sends an automatic notification whenever a child screened meets the Federal Definition level of sex trafficking. In 2021, the CTDB electronic sex trafficking screening process identified 22 children at the Federal Definition of Trafficking level<sup>x</sup>. Of the 149 children identified to the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy (OCTPP) (127 to the Child Trafficking Mailbox and 22 through CTDB screenings), 117 (95 Mailbox and 22 CTDB) met the Federal Definition level. An additional 12 youth met the High Risk level and 20 youth met the Medium Risk level. OCTPP provided guidance for screeners and resources for youth for both the 149 newly identified and also the 193 previously-identified youth, many of whom had met the Federal level. The increased number of youth identified at the Federal level (rather than at-risk level) in 2021 illustrates the greater

awareness of trafficking recognition and indicator relevance by ACS and provider agency staff.<sup>xi</sup>

### **Screening Youth for Trafficking: OCFS Screening Tools and the ACS Child Trafficking Database (CTDB)**

In 2021, ACS continued to follow the NYS Office of Children and Families (OCFS) Administrative Directive, *15-OCFS-ADM-16: Requirements to Identify, Document, Report and Provide Services to Child Sex Trafficking Victims* (September 1, 2015; Revised March 30, 2016), with its mandated screening and reporting tools:

- a. Rapid Indicator Tool to Identify Children Who May Be Sex Trafficking Victims or At-Risk of Bring a Sex Trafficking Victim
- b. Child Sex Trafficking Indicators Tool (also known as the “Comprehensive Tool,” a higher level of screening which follows when the Rapid Tool identified a child as at-risk for trafficking)
- c. Law Enforcement Report of a Child Sex Trafficking Victim

albeit through its use of the electronic Child Trafficking Database (CTDB), which permits staff and providers to not only screen electronically, but to also document service referrals relevant to the screening results and to generate two types of reports (Child Screening History Report, Area Compliance Report). Utilizing the CTDB is more beneficial than using paper screening tools, as paper tools cannot aggregate data, nor display a longitudinal history of the evolution of a child’s entry into trafficking. A detailed description of the CTDB is included in Appendix C.

It is highly likely that the issuance of *Identifying Assessing and Safety Planning with Child Sex and Labor Trafficking Victims*, ACS’ first agency-wide trafficking policy in September 2020, mandating the use of the Child Trafficking Database (CTDB) for sex trafficking screenings and contact with the Office of Child Trafficking for any child that met the Federal Definition of Sex Trafficking level<sup>xiii</sup> resulted in a greater awareness of trafficked children being identified to the Child Trafficking Mailbox and through CTDB screenings.



Quantitative data collection from the Mailbox and CTDB notifications occurred through the use of the NYS Office of Children and Family Services' (OCFS) Safe Harbour Program standardized Excel spreadsheet. This data capture tool helped to gather uniform statistics from providers and thereby facilitated the ability for quarterly and annual aggregation.

<b>Table 3: Summary of 2021 Data Collected by the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy Through the Child Trafficking Mailbox and the Child Trafficking Database (CTDB):</b>	
# Newly Identified Youth to the Child Trafficking Mailbox in 2021	127
# Newly Identified Youth to the CTDB in 2021	22
# Newly Identified Youth to Both the Mailbox and CTDB in 2021 (documented as CTDB only to avoid duplication)	(18)
<b>Total Number of Newly Identified Youth to OCTPP in 2021 (Child Trafficking Mailbox and CTDB):</b>	<b>149</b>
# New Youth Identified at the Federal Definition of Trafficking in 2021	117
# New Youth Identified as At-Risk for Trafficking in 2021	32
<b># Previously Identified Youth Involved in 2021 Emails to the Child Trafficking Mailbox</b>	<b>193</b>
<b>Total Number of Emails to the Child Trafficking Mailbox</b>	<b>3,674<sup>xiii</sup></b>

It is important to note that collecting data on trafficked and at-risk youth can be challenging and complex for many reasons, including:

- Many youth do not disclose traumatic experiences upon initial engagement. It can take an extended period of time to build trust and establish an environment wherein the youth feels safe to disclose.
- Reluctance to provide information to an authority figure who might impact upon their life.

- Traumatic reaction due to thinking, and thereby reliving victimization (often diagnosed as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder - PTSD).
- Fear of threats or retribution by the trafficker.
- Fear of being taken from familiar people or places.
- Embarrassed by, or ashamed of the exploitation and the abuse.
- Cultural norms that may make talking about traumatic sexually exploitive experiences difficult for children.
- Developmental delays that make it difficult to understand what has actually occurred.
- Many victims do not recognize they are in an abusive relationship and do not identify as trafficked. They truly believe their exploiter loves them and have become “trauma bonded”<sup>xiv</sup> to the exploiter. Many victims who leave their exploiter return. Some never disclose or leave at all.

DYCD Data Capture Methodology:

The RHY providers are instructed to complete the Safe Harbour (CSEC) report for each new reported case of CSEC every month. The reports are made by DYCD’s contracted RHY providers in the electronic DYCD Connect, Participant Tracking System.

**Table 4. NYC 2021 Safe Harbour Data Table, as Delineated by Agency and Indicator:** An expanded view of this table is located in Appendix B.

NYC Administration for Children's Services																
2021 NYC Safe Harbour Data: Newly Identified Exploited Children and Children At-Risk of Exploitation																
as reported by ACS, DYCD and Safe Harbour Providers																
Safe Harbour Provider	Total Youth	Cis M	Cis F	Trans F	Trans M	No G Discl	GNC	<12	12-15	16-18	>18	Age unk	ACS only	DYCD only	ACS+DYCD	Unk
Child Trafficking Mailbox* **	127	10	111	4	0	1	1	4	51	63	8	1	127	0	0	0
Child Trafficking Database	22	1	21	0	0	0	0	0	10	12	0	0	22	0	0	0
Children's Center Counselors**	77	8	65	2	1	1	0	0	40	35	2	0	77	0	0	0
DYCD RHY Programs	236	47	120	See below	See below	56	13	0	0	15	221	0	0	198	38	0
OTDA Confirmations (0 - 23)	20	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	4	8	8	0	0	0	0	20
JCCA Gateways (Placement)	19	0	19	0	0	0	0	0	11	8	0	0	19	0	0	0
CV Empower House (Placement)	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	3	0	0	0
Preventive Advocate Cases	25	0	1	0	0	24	0	0	1	0	0	24	25	0	0	0
Family Assessment Program	64	0	0	0	0	64	0	0	0	0	0	64	64	0	0	0
Foster Care Unplugged Groups	20	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	0	0	20	0	0	0
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>613</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>20</b>
Section Totals:	613	613					613					613				

\*18 additional youth notified to the Child Trafficking Mailbox were also screened through the CTDB. These youth were counted only as CTDB to avoid duplication.  
\*\*ACS' Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy also assisted 193 previously identified youth and Children's Center Counselors assisted 18 previously identified youth  
DYCD RHY Crisis Services and TILs serve ages 16-20, as well as young adults ages 21-24. Drop-in Centers serve ages 14-24.  
DYCD RHY served 26 transgender (TG) youth (included within the other gender categories). Drop Ins served 1 TG youth, Crisis Shelters served 22 TG youth, TILs served 3 TG youth. See report for details.  
OTDA collects data on confirmed victims of all ages, but only data from ages 0 to 23 was used as 23 is when all youth would have exited the child welfare system.  
Preventive Advocate Cases: 22 youth screened as Medium Risk and 2 youth screened as High Risk. 1 youth identified at the Federal Level, so demographics provided for this one youth.  
Family Assessment Program Advocate Cases: 47 youth screened as Medium Risk and 17 youth screened as High Risk. 0 youth identified at the Federal Level, so no demographics were provided.  
Foster Care Unplugged and OCTPP provided Mitigating Trauma Through Drama psychoeducational groups virtually for youth at three foster care agencies.

## C. SERVICE PROVISION FOR SEXUALLY EXPLOITED YOUTH

### 1. DYCD Contracted Programs and Services to Meet the Needs of Sexually Exploited Children

The central responsibility of DYCD is to administer City, state, and federal funds to community-based organizations that serve New York City's youth and families. DYCD funds a range of programs including immigration, afterschool, literacy, jobs and internships, parenting, and runaway and homeless youth programs and services.

DYCD's funded Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) services are designed to protect young people, and whenever possible, encourage family reunification. In cases where reunification is not possible, these programs help youth progress from crisis and transitional care to independent living arrangements. Youth who participate in DYCD-funded programs receive comprehensive services geared toward developing independent living skills, and strengthening their problem solving, decision making and communication abilities. This wide range of services includes food and clothing; medical services; substance abuse education; housing assistance; educational services; counseling; independent living skills

training; employment counseling and assistance; recreation; legal assistance; and transportation assistance.

Services are provided to at-risk youth through Crisis Services programs (serving youth ages 16-20, as well as young adults ages 21-24<sup>xv</sup>) which offer emergency, voluntary short-term residential programs. Youth in need of longer-term residential services may obtain a referral through the Crisis Services programs to DYCD-funded Transitional Independent Living (TIL) programs (serving youth ages 16-20, as well as young adults ages 21-24<sup>xvi</sup>) which assist youth in establishing independence through services such as educational and vocational programming, job placement, and counseling.

DYCD programs offer specialized services for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning (LGBTQ) youth, pregnant and parenting teens, and sexually exploited youth. Over the past few years, the City funded a significant expansion of residential programs, followed by an expansion of Drop-in Center services, and including additional resources for mental health services and LGBTQ supports. DYCD's aggregate data is provided in Appendix A.

- a. **Crisis Services\*** – Crisis Services programs offer emergency shelter for runaway and homeless youth age 16 to 20. These voluntary, short-term residential programs provide emergency shelter and crisis intervention services aimed at reuniting youth with their families. If family reunification is not possible, Crisis Services programs help arrange appropriate transitional and long-term placements. In 2021, DYCD had available a total of 258 crisis beds, including specialized services for LGBTQ youth. The RHY portfolio expanded to include two new sites (35 beds) serving homeless young adults ages 21-24. The total number of crisis beds is 293.
  
- b. **Drop-in Centers\*** – DYCD also funds emergency intervention services at seven drop-in centers across the five boroughs. Three drop-in centers

are located in Manhattan and one each in Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, and the Bronx. Each borough has one 24/7 drop-in center. These programs serve youth ages 14 through 24<sup>xvii</sup> with essentials such as food, clothing, and immediate shelter as well as access to counseling, support, and referrals to relevant services. Since 2015 DYCD has funded the Ali Forney Center to provide 24-hour drop-in center services at its Harlem location. In 2017, DYCD added Sheltering Arms to also provide 24-hour drop-in center services at its Queens location through non-Safe Harbor funding. In 2018, DYCD added Project Hospitality, SCO and Cardinal McCloskey to also provide 24-hour drop-in center services in Staten Island, Brooklyn and the Bronx respectively, through non-Safe Harbor funding.

- c. **Street Outreach Program\*** – DYCD also funds street outreach to reach at-risk youth where they are. Currently, the street outreach is conducted by the contracted provider, Safe Horizon’s Streetwork Project, with the use of vans. The Streetwork Project has been serving for over 35 years, and is a confidential and voluntary program serving anyone who is 24 years old and under and homeless. The Street Outreach’s vehicle-based outreach program focuses on locations where youth are known to congregate. By going directly to where at-risk youth are, such as subway stations and transportation hubs, the Street Outreach Program, with the assistance of street outreach workers, develops rapport with youth and provides contact by disseminating information about RHY services, providing food, clothing and other resources; making referrals to other service providers; and transporting youth back to their homes or relatives, to Crisis Services programs, or to other safe locations.
- d. **Transitional Independent Living (TIL) Programs\*** – DYCD contracts with providers to offer a total of 495 Transitional Independent Living support beds for youth 16 to 20 years old plus an additional 25 beds for young adults 21 to 24 years old for a total of 520 beds. In

addition to the services that are offered to all youth in the RHY continuum, those who are specifically identified as sexually exploited and in need of specialized services can be referred to the nationally recognized Girls Educational and Mentoring Services' (GEMS) Transitional Independent Living program, when appropriate. The GEMS TIL program specializes in services specifically for young women who have experienced sexual exploitation. All young people residing in any of the DYCD-funded programs will receive ongoing case management and counseling to address issues associated with exploitation. As each young person's experience is different, the service providers make referrals, as appropriate, to outside services. Program staff take care to engage youth in services when the youth is ready to address this sensitive issue.

e. **Effects of COVID 19-** DYCD-funded community-based organizations have gone above and beyond in helping New York City meet one of its top priorities during the COVID-19 emergency: keeping New Yorkers safe. Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Services programs continue to offer vital support. Residential programs remained open to serve youth in need, while making adjustments to ensure space for social distancing and isolation as needed. Drop-in Centers continue to offer in person services including: referrals to housing and health care; providing on-line supports such as counseling and support for coping during the pandemic, clinical support for anxiety or depression; as well as recreational activities to maintain social connections during this time. While services remain available, the number of people served during calendar year 2021 was reduced as a result of the pandemic.

## **II. New York State Safe Harbour-Funded Programs to Meet the Needs of Sexually Exploited Children**

In 2021, New York State's Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) provided \$66,000 in funding to the Administration for Children's Services, New York City (NYC), so that NYC could continue to develop and implement a child

welfare response to sex trafficking. ACS also contributed additional funding and dedicated full-time resources.<sup>xviii</sup> Following is a summary of Safe Harbour-funded programs:

#### **A. ACS' Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy (OCTPP)**

In 2015 ACS launched the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention & Policy (OCTPP), which works to raise awareness of trafficking and helps to identify and provide appropriate services available to help youth at-risk and victims of commercial sexual exploitation and their families<sup>xix</sup>.

OCTPP coordinates trafficking-related policies and procedures across NYC's child welfare agencies. In September 2020, ACS released its first agency-wide trafficking related policy: *Identifying, Assessing, and Safety Planning with Child Sex and Labor Trafficking Victims*. This policy articulates guidelines and procedures for ACS and provider agency staff in identifying children and youth, who are in the care, custody, care and custody, maintenance, or supervision of the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), who are survivors of, or at risk of, sex and/or labor trafficking. Additionally, this policy mandates the use of the CTDB for sex trafficking screenings and contact with OCTPP for all cases that meet the Federal Definition level, with the option for contact with OCTPP for at-risk cases, and provides guidance and procedures for ACS and provider agency staff in working towards keeping trafficked children and youth or at-risk children and youth safe and supported through safety planning, coordinating with law enforcement, and making referrals for appropriate services.

Training on the policy and the use of the Child Trafficking Database as mandated by the policy for sex trafficking screenings is integral to staff ability to understand, screen and follow up with law enforcement referrals, access and provide resources and ensure other safety-focused aspects of practice. During 2021, OCTPP staff provided twenty-two (22) (virtual) 3-hour trainings on the policy and CTDB screening skills to 1,741 ACS and provider agency

staff. OCTPP also provided several shorter overview presentations to leadership groups and to provider agencies during Office of Older Youth Services shared presentations. The Policy-CTDB Skills training will continue on a regular schedule throughout 2022. Additionally, OCTPP's Executive Director has been working closely with the ACS Workforce Institute (WFI) as a Subject Matter Expert (SME) to develop a CTDB E-Learn which will be readily accessible through to all child welfare providers and staff. Projected completion of the E-Learn is Summer 2022.

OCTPP's training provision is not limited to policy awareness and CTDB skills. In 2021, the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy (OCTPP) worked diligently and continually to provide the highest quality of training, alone or in partnership with other trafficking related professionals, filling and/or facilitating a total of 6,324 trafficking awareness and skills related training seats, targeting a wide audience that included ACS, foster care, prevention and juvenile justice staff, plus other City agencies, State agencies and community and faith-based agencies. OCTPP provided a wide variety of unique, self-developed trainings, the expertise for which was also featured at local, national and international (virtual) conferences. Additionally, ACS' Division of Youth and Family Justice (DYFJ) trainers filled 253 training seats with newly hired Youth Development Specialists, bringing ACS' 2021 trafficking awareness and skills training seat total to 6,577. <sup>xx</sup>

OCTPP also manages the NYC Safe Harbour Program, provides consultation on cases, produces trainings and events, analyzes data, provides a variety of trafficking prevention group work models (some self-designed), and maintains six e-mailboxes for communication with staff and external professionals on a variety of topics: Trafficking/At-Risk Cases, CTDB Issues, Training Requests, Tattoo Removal Referrals, Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting Case Reporting and Credible Messenger Program requests.



In 2018, OCTPP developed “Movin’ On”: The NYC Child Tattoo Eradication Project and Network to assist trafficking victims and former gang members in positively moving forward with their lives through the provision of trauma informed tattoo removal and the provision of relevant support. In 2019, ACS developed youth focused palm cards advertising the tattoo removal service, translated them into twelve (12) languages, and posted a program descriptive video on YouTube.<sup>xxi</sup> Due to 2021’s COVID-19 isolation, the licensed tattoo removal providers were closed for much of the year. During 2021, OCTPP received 7 tattoo removal requests. Additional information on “Movin’ On” is available in section IV (C).

In 2021, OCTPP expanded its groupwork initiative. OCTPP team members, along with staff from the Office of Older Youth Services and the Children’s Center completed Behavioral Tech’s Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) Intensive Course (65 virtual classroom hours). The Executive Director developed the Be SEA (Be Safe, Empowered, Aware), a 12-week DBT and Trafficking Awareness model, for which OCTPP provided four virtual cohorts at three foster care agencies for 13 youth. OCTPP also partnered with Foster Care Unplugged to continue facilitation of the Mitigating Trauma Through Drama groupwork model. In 2021, OCTPP also expanded its Credible Messenger Program which specifically addresses safety and behavioral aspects of youth in care, increasing the number of Messengers and producing a film on the topic. All of these projects will be described in detail in section in section IV: Community Support and Awareness Building.

## **B. Safe Horizon**

Safe Horizon, a leading service provider in the field of commercial sexual exploitation, provided expert service through the provision of Licensed Master Social Workers (LMSW) who worked as Commercially Sexually Exploited Child (CSEC) Consultants at the Nicholas Scoppetta Children’s Center. The social workers, who are employed through Safe Horizon’s Streetwork Project, screened and assessed youth for trafficking indicators, assisted staff in identifying

exploited youth, engaged with and advocated for youth, and provided trafficking relevant service recommendations and referrals. In addition to their work with exploited children and other vulnerable populations, the consultants provided safe sex awareness groups and healthy relationships workshops for all youth and technical support for staff. During 2021, the social workers served 77 new youth referred as, self-reported as, or determined to be sexually exploited or at risk for exploitation. They also served an additional 18 youth who had been previously referred to them and 13 youth whose information was forwarded to the Child Trafficking Mailbox and aggregated within that data set, for a total of 108 youth served during 2021.

### **C. Foster Care Unplugged**

Foster Care Unplugged (FCUP), a 501(c)(3) is an agency founded in 2016 by Melody Centeno, LMSW, to focus on enriching the lives of youth in foster care and youth at risk of being placed in the child welfare system by promoting positive spiritual, emotional and physical outcomes for disadvantaged individuals. The organization's mission is to identify foster care youth, meet them where they are in their life journey, and help develop their emotional-social skills as they build resiliency into adulthood. In 2021, FCUP continued its partnership with the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy and New Yorkers for Children for the Mitigating Trauma through Drama groupwork model through funding from the New York Community Trust and the 2021 NYC Safe Harbour grant. Ms. Centeno and OCTPP Executive Director Selina Higgins co-wrote the curriculum and completed the first cohort of the model in January of 2021 at an ACS contracted group home, then provided two additional (virtual) cohorts, one for youth in family foster care and one at a residential setting. The model utilizes psychodrama, a performance-based approach, to provide a trauma-informed mechanism to identify and express feelings and learn positive strategies to heal from past experiences. The last session of Cohort 1 provided these universally applicable skills coupled with a focus on trafficking awareness and prevention to 5 young women. Cohort 2 (residential) reached 11 young women and Cohort 3 (family foster care) reached 4 young women.

### **III. ACS Contracted Prevention and Placement Programs to Meet the Needs of Sexually Exploited Children**

In addition to services funded by the NYS Safe Harbour grant, ACS also contracts for specialized prevention and placement programs as part of its continuum of services for at-risk youth and victims of sexual exploitation.

#### **A. Preventive and Family Assessment Program Advocate**

##### **Cases:**

The ACS Division of Prevention Services obtained redacted sex trafficking screening data for Advocates Prevention Only (ADVPO) cases from its contracted preventive agencies. Similarly, ACS's Family Assessment Program (FAP), a Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS) diversion program obtained redacted Advocate data from its contracted service providers.

Advocate cases provide voluntarily requested prevention services (ADVPO) or PINS diversion services (FAP) for cases not involving a child in foster care or being referred to foster care, and not under investigation or having an open indicated child protective services report. ACS' contracted prevention and PINS diversion agencies do not transmit a breakdown of data on these confidential cases beyond a total number of children and their screened risk levels. Children screened at the Federal Definition of Trafficking level are identified to OCTPP, but only by age, gender and borough. Advocate case sex trafficking screenings are not captured within the CTDB but are completed with paper templates. 2021 data provided by the Advocate agencies identified:

- Preventive ADVPO Screenings: 25 youth screened with the Comprehensive tool:
  - 24 youth screened as at-risk for trafficking
  - 1 youth screened at the Federal level

- Family Assessment Program Advocate Screenings: 64 youth screened with the Comprehensive tool:
  - 47 youth screened as Medium Risk for trafficking
  - 17 youth screened as High Risk for trafficking
  - 0 youth screened at the Federal level

Note: these are cases where parents pro-actively reached out to seek services to strengthen their family prior to full crisis escalation, which may account for a higher percentage of youth being assessed as at-risk for trafficking rather than meeting the Federal Definition level.

## **B. Placement: The Jewish Child Care Association’s**

### **1. Gateways Program:**

The Jewish Child Care Association (JCCA) is an ACS contractor that provides foster home, residential, community, mental health and prevention services. Since 2011, ACS has contracted with JCCA for services provided at the Gateways Program, an intensive, specialized residential program for female trafficking victims ages 12 to 16. In 2021, Gateways served a total of 19 girls. JCCA currently supports these young people by using the Sanctuary trauma-informed care model, as well as a four-phase system of treatment that involves assessment, individual and family therapy, and peer counseling. Gateways maintains 12 child welfare beds specifically for sexually exploited girls who have indicated that they are willing to leave “the life.”

### **2. Empower House**

The Children’s Village is an ACS contractor that provides foster home, residential, community, mental health and prevention services. Since 2021, ACS has placed children at Children’s Village’s Empower House, a currently non-

contracted Agency Operated Boarding Home (AOBH), which provides an intensely clinical, safety oriented program for 5 sexually exploited girls. In 2021, Empower House served a total of 3 girls referred by ACS.

#### **IV. Community Support and Awareness Building**

##### **A. Virtual Human Trafficking Prevention Resource Fair and Trafficked Youth Web Pages with Downloadable Resources**

In recognition of January as National Human Trafficking Prevention Month, OCTPP traditionally held a Human Trafficking Awareness Exposition on “Human Trafficking Awareness Day”. Due to the COVID lockdown and safety mandates in 2021, OCTPP instead produced a large-scale virtual conference: The 2021 NYC Child Sex Trafficking Conference: A 14-Day Virtual Event, which provided fourteen (14) awareness and skills focused workshops on a variety of trafficking related topics. Over 3,000 people participated in ACS’ conference, whose workshops, facilitated by national and local experts, were attended by child welfare professionals, community members, other City agencies, and attendees from across the nation.

OCTPP also worked with ACS’ Webmaster to develop four webpages to provide information and downloadable resources and to launch the Human Trafficking Prevention Virtual Resource Fair, where NYC, state and national trafficking prevention providers are listed, as well as medical providers that work with trafficked youth, legal assistance, task forces, hotlines, and awareness material, including OCTPP’s “Children are NOT for \$ale” awareness campaign posters (4 types), brochure and tattoo removal palm cards, all available in 12 languages.

[ACS Trafficked Youth webpages with downloadable resources:](#)

- Trafficked Youth Main Page:  
<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/youth/traffickedyouth.page>
- Trafficked Youth Resources for Professionals Page:  
<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/about/child-trafficking/resources.page>
- What to Do and Who To Contact When Identifying a Trafficked Youth:  
<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/youth/identify.page>
- NYC ACS - Human Trafficking Virtual Resource Fair - provider information and links:  
<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/youth/virtualresourcefair.page>

**B. 2021 Electronic Update to “Child Trafficking and What YOU Can Do About It: A Guide for NYC Child Welfare Professionals”**

In 2019, ACS released a 40 page, spiral bound, pocket sized “toolkit” entitled: “Child Trafficking and What YOU Can Do About It: Tools for NYC Child Welfare Professionals.” 5,000 copies were printed and distributed to ACS and contract agency staff and to other trafficking related professionals to assist in improved identification of trafficking indicators and dynamics, skills enhancement, resource identification and service provision to trafficked and at-risk children. In 2020, OCTPP updated the toolkit to include information about the new policy and additional guidance and resources, with printing of 5,000 additional copies through Safe Harbour grant funding. In 2021, work began to develop a free downloadable app (to be available in the Google and Apple Play Stores) to provide an electronic version of Child Trafficking and What YOU Can Do About It: A Toolkit for NYC Child Welfare Professionals. The app will also feature a training calendar, ACS’s awareness materials (brochures, training handouts, posters, tattoo removal palm cards), tattoo removal and other videos, policy and other relevant materials. App launch is expected in Spring 2022.

**C. Continuation of Tattoo Removals Referrals Through “Movin’ On”: The NYC Child Tattoo Eradication Network and Project**

Exploiter brandings such as tattoos inhibit emotional healing, affect physical safety and employment opportunities, and impede the ability to

“move on” with life. For this reason, in 2018, the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy developed a network of doctors and tattoo artists to help youth remove or alter exploiter tattoos, along with a trauma-informed counseling component to provide the support needed for life changing decisions by trafficked and gang-involved youth. In 2021, due to COVID-19 isolation, the licensed tattoo removal providers were closed for much of the year. During 2021, OCTPP received 7 initial tattoo removal requests:

- 2 returned the waiver and received referral information
- 4 did not return the waiver
- 1 changed their mind

OCTPP hopes that once COVID-19 is mitigated, tattoo removal inquiries and referrals will increase.

#### **D. Expansion of Trafficking Prevention Group Work**

In 2018, OCTPP initiated direct service provision to trafficked and at-risk youth through facilitation of a variety of trafficking awareness and empowerment groupwork models. In 2019, OCTPP expanded its groupwork initiative, providing direct trafficking awareness groups to vulnerable youth at the Nicholas Scoppetta Children’s Center and at Residential facilities. In 2020, OCTPP continued its expansion, through the development of three new groupwork models and a Credible Messenger Program to specifically address safety and behavioral aspects of youth in care, including increased virtual exposure to predators due to COVID-19 isolation. In 2021, OCTPP continued facilitating the “Be SEA” and “Mitigating Trauma Through Drama” and also presented the results of its work at national and international conferences.

a. “Be SEA” (Be Safe, Empowered, Aware), a twelve-session Dialectical Behavioral Therapy and Trafficking Awareness Model for Youth. A 12-session group skills/trafficking awareness adaptation of Dr. Marsha Linehan’s Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) model, developed by OCTPP Executive Director Selina Higgins for vulnerable youth. A weekly

(60 to 90 minutes) group for youth teaches skills from four DBT modules: Mindfulness (2 weeks), Distress Tolerance (3 weeks), Emotional Regulation (4 weeks), Interpersonal Effectiveness (3 weeks) with each session providing and applying the learned skill to a Human Trafficking related topic towards building sequential awareness and prevention strategies. Youth received a \$20 gift card for each week of participation and a \$100 gift card upon successful course completion (total of \$360 possible). In 2021, OCTPP provided the group at three residential programs, providing trafficking awareness and DBT skills to 13 youth.

b. Mitigating Trauma through Drama: Developing Positive Pathways for Lives Through Expressive Arts

An eight-session psychodrama model for 8 to 10 youth created by OCTPP Executive Director Selina Higgins and Melody Centeno, Founder and CEO of Foster Care Unplugged, with review and feedback by trafficking survivor-leaders. This model, funded by the New York Community Trust and the 2021 NYC Safe Harbour grant, utilizes psychodrama, a performance-based approach, to provide a trauma-informed mechanism to identify and express feelings and learn positive strategies to heal from past experiences. Each session provides trafficking awareness and guides youth in applying the psychodrama exercises to trafficking related scenarios to provide opportunity for expression and disclosure in a safe milieu. Two-hour sessions are held weekly, co-facilitated by Ms. Centeno, Ms. Higgins and a trafficking survivor. Monetary and food gift cards are provided to all group members as reinforcement for attendance and participation.

Be SEA and Mitigating Trauma through Drama were successfully presented as workshops at:

- The 2021 International Association of Social Work with Groups 43rd Annual Symposium (virtual).



- Shared Hope International’s 2021 Juvenile Sex Trafficking (JuST) Conference in Washington, DC.

**E. “Here for You” The Trafficked Youth Credible Messenger Program:**

Credible Messengers are individuals who are able to connect with and motivate youth to successfully challenge and transform destructive thinking, attitudes and actions. As the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy focuses upon helping prevent sexual and labor exploitation of youth under age 18, or over age 18 while in foster care, a former foster youth/trafficking survivor Credible Messenger who shares their story with youth who are reluctant to leave the life or a risky environment and benefit from a stable, supportive trafficking interventive placement can be highly influential. “Here for You” was developed to provide trafficked youth within the NYC child welfare system with trauma informed support by adult survivor leaders with prior child welfare history. Empathetic engagement by one who has faced and overcome similar challenges to live a healthy and safe life will help youth recognize that no matter what situation they are currently involved in, there is hope and many other possibilities available if they are willing to try. In 2021, to better reach vulnerable youth, the “Here for You” program expanded to two Messengers and also commissioned a video featuring the Messengers and their stories to help youth recognize that others have had the same difficult experiences and to - model that it is okay to reach out for help.

## Conclusion

Over the past eight years, through the Safe Harbour affiliation, ACS and DYCD have worked together to systemically recognize and address the needs of sexually exploited young people. The Safe Harbor Act and state and agency resources have allowed us to strengthen our work in this area by enhancing existing services and developing increased specialized services for this population, training staff, and evaluating mechanisms to improve our efforts to identify and document sexually exploited youth.

For nine years (2013 to 2021), NYC has been the recipient of Safe Harbour grant funding from NYS OCFS as follows:

Year	Funding
2013	\$622,220
2014	\$550,000
2015	\$550,000
2016	\$448,000
2017	\$374,000
2018	\$88,900
2019	\$88,900
2020	\$88,900
2021	\$66,000

The original 5-year Safe Harbour grant funding to New York City was drastically reduced by the State to a baseline amount in 2018, and further reduced in 2021. ACS has asked the State to restore this critical funding as this reduction places key services and interventions at risk.

We acknowledge the COVID-19 crisis that began to spread in the first part of Calendar Year 2020 and continued through 2021, and the enormous impact it still

continues to have on our youth, staff, and communities. ACS' Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy has been fully operational and available for response to all inquiries, and for the provision of guidance, technical assistance, groupwork provision, resource referrals and tattoo removal requests seamlessly throughout the year. Case consultation is available through a variety of virtual platforms and by telephone, and multi-disciplinary consultations are often provided. Although in-person trainings are currently on hold, OCTPP has been fully available to provide training through available web-based environments. DYCD Residential programs remained open to serve youth in need, while making adjustments to ensure space for social distancing and isolation as needed. Drop-in Centers continued to offer in person services including: referrals to housing and health care; providing on-line supports such as counseling and support for coping during the pandemic, clinical support for anxiety or depression; as well as recreational activities to maintain social connections during this time.

ACS, DYCD, and our partner agencies remain committed to helping ensure youth are as safe and stable as possible as the unprecedented challenges related to the crisis have continued to unfold. We greatly appreciate the Council's attention to this vulnerable population of children and look forward to discussing how the Council can provide additional support for ongoing work to help the trafficked and sexually exploited children of NYC.

## Appendix A: NYC DYCD 2021 Safe Harbour Data

DYCD 2021 Safe Harbor Data for New York City: Exploited Children and Children At-Risk of Exploitation																		
DYCD Program	Total Youth	Cis M	Cis F	Trans F	Trans M	No G Discl	GNC	<12	12 to 15	16 to 18	>18	Age Unk	ACS only	DYCD only	ACS & DYCD	Age Unk	MH Referrals	MH Counseling
DYCD Drop Ins	46	6	17	-	-	21	2	0	0	1	45	0	0	36	10	0	16	9
DYCD Crisis	171	39	87	-	-	34	11	0	0	13	158	0	0	152	19	0	53	55
DYCD TILS	19	2	16	-	-	1	0	0	0	1	18	0	0	10	9	0	14	8
Total	236	47	120	-	-	56	13	0	0	15	221	0	0	198	38	0	83	72

### DYCD Served 236 Exploited and/or At-Risk for Exploitation Youth Through Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Programs:

- 171 youth received Crisis Services Programs.
- 19 youth received services from Transitional Independent Living Programs (TILS).
- 46 youth received services at Drop-in Centers.
- 38 youth served by DYCD-funded providers shared that they also receive some form of service from ACS.
- Gender: 47 males; 120 females; 13 Gender Non-Conforming (GNC) youth and 56 youth who did not disclose their gender. 26 transgender youth (included within the other gender categories) were served: Drop In Centers served 1 transgender youth, Crisis Services assisted 22 transgender youth, and TILS served 3 transgender youth.
- Ages: 0 children ages 12 to 15; 15 children ages 16 to 18; 221 youth over age 18.
- 83 youth received Mental Health referrals.
- 72 youth received Mental Health counseling.

## Appendix B: All NYC 2021 Safe Harbour Provider Data

NYC Administration for Children's Services																
2021 NYC Safe Harbour Data: Newly Identified Exploited Children and Children At-Risk of Exploitation																
as reported by ACS, DYCD and Safe Harbour Providers																
Safe Harbour Provider	Total Youth	Cis M	Cis F	Trans F	Trans M	No G Discl	GNC	<12	12-15	16-18	>18	Age unk	ACS only	DYCD only	ACS+DYCD	Unk
Child Trafficking Mailbox* **	127	10	111	4	0	1	1	4	51	63	8	1	127	0	0	0
Child Trafficking Database	22	1	21	0	0	0	0	0	10	12	0	0	22	0	0	0
Children's Center Counselors**	77	8	65	2	1	1	0	0	40	35	2	0	77	0	0	0
DYCD RHY Programs	236	47	120	See below	See below	56	13	0	0	15	221	0	0	198	38	0
OTDA Confirmations (0 - 23)	20	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	4	8	8	0	0	0	0	20
JCCA Gateways (Placement)	19	0	19	0	0	0	0	0	11	8	0	0	19	0	0	0
CV Empower House (Placement)	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	3	0	0	0
Preventive Advocate Cases	25	0	1	0	0	24	0	0	1	0	0	24	25	0	0	0
Family Assessment Program	64	0	0	0	0	64	0	0	0	0	0	64	64	0	0	0
Foster Care Unplugged Groups	20	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	0	0	20	0	0	0
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>613</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Section Totals:</b>	<b>613</b>	<b>613</b>					<b>613</b>					<b>613</b>				
<p>*18 additional youth notified to the Child Trafficking Mailbox were also screened through the CTDB. These youth were counted only as CTDB to avoid duplication.</p> <p>**ACS' Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy also assisted 193 previously identified youth and Children's Center Counselors assisted 18 previously identified youth</p> <p>DYCD RHY Crisis Services and TILs serve ages 16-20, as well as young adults ages 21-24. Drop-in Centers serve ages 14-24.</p> <p>DYCD RHY served 26 transgender (TG) youth (included within the other gender categories). Drop Ins served 1 TG youth, Crisis Shelters served 22 TG youth, TILs served 3 TG youth. See report for details.</p> <p>OTDA collects data on confirmed victims of all ages, but only data from ages 0 to 23 was used as 23 is when all youth would have exited the child welfare system.</p> <p>Preventive Advocate Cases: 22 youth screened as Medium Risk and 2 youth screened as High Risk. 1 youth identified at the Federal Level, so demographics provided for this one youth.</p> <p>Family Assessment Program Advocate Cases: 47 youth screened as Medium Risk and 17 youth screened as High Risk. 0 youth identified at the Federal Level, so no demographics were provided.</p> <p>Foster Care Unplugged and OCTPP provided Mitigating Trauma Through Drama psychoeducational groups virtually for youth at three foster care agencies.</p>																

## **Appendix C:**

### **NYC Administration for Children's Services' Child Trafficking Database (CTDB)**

Administered by ACS' Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy (OCTPP), and platformed in Microsoft Dynamics, the Child Trafficking Database (CTDB) allows assigned staff to electronically complete the mandated OCFS sex trafficking screening tools, thereby alleviating the use of paper tools. As per ACS's 2021 policy: *Assessing Identifying and Service Planning for Child Sex and Labor Trafficking Victims*, all children under investigation, in the care of ACS contracted foster care agencies, and receiving services from preventive service agencies and juvenile detention providers are required to be screened using the CTDB. The only exception to use of the CTDB for sex trafficking screening is for Advocates Preventive-Only (ADVPO) cases and Family Assessment Program (FAP) cases, which require the use of paper screening tools to maintain the confidentiality required by the Advocate's Agreement.

The CTDB allows staff to view child trafficking screening histories of children on their caseload, input screenings and view caseload demographics relevant to screenings assigned, enter service referrals and generate two types of reports (Child Screening History Report and Area Compliance Report). The CTDB permits every screening to be recorded and saved in the system for future access by a worker assigned to a child (and only when a worker is assigned to a child), and for administrative research and reporting needs, as required by Federal and State legislation.

The development of the CTDB had been divided into two phases: Phase 1: Child Trafficking Screening Tool and Phase 2: Demographic and Service Data and Reports. Phase I, launched on February 15, 2017, provided a mechanism for data input in relation to NYS child sex trafficking screening mandates. CTDB Phase II launched on March 12, 2020, encompasses expanded abilities, including a new window which permits the viewing and recording of services, and auto-generated report capability as described below:

- The ability for authorized users to record information related to referring, receiving and/or providing services for every child identified as trafficked or at-risk for trafficking in a comprehensive screening
- The ability to run a ‘Child Screening History Report’ to view information on every screening ever done on a child, all indicators selected for each screening and any services referred/provided
- The ability to run a CTDB Area Compliance report that displays a comparison of all completed screenings by the screener versus screenings closed by the CTDB if not completed within the required 30 days based upon a specific ACS Division, provider, or program area
- The ability for users with “Screener” and “Supervisor” assigned roles to deactivate a screening for a specifically provided reason
- The ability for a Supervisor to re-assign a case within their unit

OCTPP regularly conducts trainings on how to use the CTDB and is in process with ACS’ Work Force Institute (WFI) to develop a 1-hour E-Learn which will be continually available to all ACS and provider agency staff. The E-Learn is expected to be available during the Summer of 2022. An electronic mailbox, available at [CTDB@acs.nyc.gov](mailto:CTDB@acs.nyc.gov) provides access to technical support. The [CTDB Phase I & II Reference Guide](#), updated in August 2020 to include Phase II skills, provides walk through text and screen shots for user guidance.

## END NOTES

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<sup>i</sup> Mt. Sinai-St. Luke’s New Beginnings Preventive Program’s intake closed on December 3, 2019 as the program ramped down and the program closed completely in 2020. In the newly awarded prevention services continuum, ACS did not fund programs that exclusively serve sexually exploited youth. Instead, ACS has ensured a range of therapeutic models are available in every borough and neighborhood across New York City, including those that are equipped to serve sexually exploited youth. All prevention services programs are required to screen all children for history or risk of trafficking in persons. Therefore, there is no data for a program that only serves sexually abused/sexually trafficked youth.

<sup>ii</sup> OCTPP receives redacted sex trafficking screening data for Advocate (ADVPO) cases, which totaled 25 children determined to be at-risk of exploitation in Calendar Year 2021. Preventive Services Advocate Cases identified 14 children at-risk for exploitation and 1 child at the Federal Definition level, and Family Assessment Program Advocate Cases identified 64 children to be at-risk of sexual exploitation and 0 children at the Federal Definition level. For children deemed at-risk for trafficking, ACS’ contracted

Preventive and Family Assessment Program agencies do not transmit a breakdown of data on ADVPO cases beyond a total number of children and their risk levels. For children determined to be exploited, only age, gender and borough are provided.

<sup>iii</sup> As documented in 17-OCFS-INF-03: New York State Processes Related to Notifications of Victims of Human Trafficking (March 17, 2017), the NYS Anti-Trafficking Law (2007) requires the New York State (NYS) Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) and the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) to accept referrals of potential victims from local law enforcement agencies or local district attorneys' offices. In 2015, the ability to refer potential victims of human trafficking expanded to include established legal and social services provider. OTDA and DCJS are charged with confirming or denying referrals of victims made to their agencies to allow access to services. Additionally, OTDA manages the New York State Response to Human Trafficking Program (RHTP). DCJS, in consultation with OTDA, must determine whether to confirm the referred person as a human trafficking victim (HTV) under statutory and regulatory guidelines. Once confirmed, victims are directed to either the LDSS or the RHTP service provider network. OTDA confirmation is confidential, and OTDA will only provide the number of confirmed victims, their age and gender. Some of the victims may be duplicative of reporting by other providers, but this is impossible to actually ascertain due to the confidentiality requirement. While OTDA collects data for victims of all ages, only data from ages 0 through 23 was utilized, as age 23 is when all youth are required to exit the child welfare system and receive adult services.

<sup>iv</sup> DYCD Drop-in Centers did not close during the pandemic. Services programs continue to offer vital support. Residential programs remained open to serve youth in need, while making adjustments to ensure space for social distancing and isolation as needed. Drop-in Centers continue to offer in person services including: referrals to housing and health care; providing on-line supports such as counseling and support for coping during the pandemic, clinical support for anxiety or depression; as well as recreational activities to maintain social connections during this time. While services remain available, the number of people served during calendar year 2021 was reduced as a result of the pandemic. ACS worked with a more limited group of Safe Harbour program providers based upon the decrease in OCFS funds to NYC. Additionally, the contracted preventive program (New Beginnings) closed. As a result, ACS no longer receives data about trafficked and at-risk youth from previous Safe Harbour providers.

**Service Reduction Due to Pandemic and Other Factors:**

DYCD RHY	2020	2021
<b>Total</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>236</b>
Crisis Services	350	171
TILS	98	19
Drop-ins	86	46
Male	98	47
Female	178	120
GNC	24	13
G Non Discl	234	56
Trans Youth	159	26
MH Ref	152	83
MH Counsl	275	72

ACS	2020	2021
<b>Total</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>357</b>
CT Mailbox	123	127
CTDB	23	22
CC Counselors	56	77
FCUP Group	9	20
Preventive ADVPO	15	25
FAP	76	64
New Beginnings	67	Program Closed
Gateways	14	19
Empower	N/A	3
Day One Groups	51	Prior Provider



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<sup>v</sup> Many of the youth worked with by the CSEC Counselors at the ACS Children’s Center received multiple and/or extended sessions. Some youth received individual sessions, and also participated in groups. Some youth had been previously referred and met again with the counselors upon return to the Children’s Center. Some youth who screened at the Federal Definition of sex trafficking level were referred to the Child Trafficking Mailbox.

<sup>vi</sup> 127 newly identified sexually exploited youth, or youth at-risk for exploitation were brought to the attention of ACS’ Child Trafficking Mailbox. However, the Child Trafficking Mailbox received notification of 193 youth who had been previously identified as exploited or at-risk for exploitation prior to 2021. The total number of youth addressed through the Child Trafficking Mailbox is documented in Section B: Data Capture Methodology.

<sup>vii</sup> Twenty four (24) age non-disclosures were from the Advocates Only Preventive (ADVPO) screenings, which only provide age if the child meets the Federal Definition level, but not for the at-risk level. Sixty four (64) age non-disclosures were from the Family Assessment Program (FAP) screenings, which only provide age if the child meets the Federal Definition level, but not for the at-risk level. ADVPO and FAP cases do not provide any identifying information unless the youth is identified as trafficked and then only age, gender and borough. One (1) age non-disclosure was from the Child Trafficking Mailbox, which sometimes does not receive responses to further inquiries, or receives delayed responses. Some cases were non-child welfare Safe Harbour cases (no involvement with ACS or a provider agency) for which OCTPP provides limited assistance, generally through referrals.

<sup>viii</sup> In 2021, ACS continued its partnership with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), which notifies the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy when NYC youth (both in care and not in care) are identified by sharing relevant intelligence through the Child Trafficking Mailbox. This information sharing has provided an additional opportunity to offer services to trafficked youth both affiliated and not affiliated with the child welfare system. ACS and NCMEC attendees participate in a virtual monthly meeting to discuss cases, policies, procedures and provided cross trainings across 2021.

<sup>ix</sup> The Child Trafficking Mailbox auto forwards emails to:

- Selina Higgins, Executive Director, OCTPP
- Shereene McDermott-Green, Supervisor II, OCTPP
- Clifton Robertson, Residential Social Worker, OCTPP
- Sabine Chery, Assistant Commissioner, Office of Older Youth Services
- Susan Morley, Senior Advisor for Investigations to the Commissioner
- James Ciccotelli, Operations Manager, ACS Investigative Consultation Program
- Peter Alexander, ACS Criminal Justice Coordinator
- Zarde Paddyfote, OCTPP’s MSW Intern (September – December 2021)

<sup>x</sup> The CTDB only automatically notifies OCTPP for Federal level screenings. Many more youth are screened within the CTDB at the High Risk and Medium Risk levels, but guidance for work and services for the at-risk level youth are elucidated in 16-OCFS-ADM 15 and ACS’ trafficking policy. These youth are not captured on the 2021 data table due to the enormity of resources that would be needed to extract the data from thousands of screenings.

<sup>xi</sup> The overall number of youth identified as “trafficked or at-risk for trafficking” decreased by 375 youth between 2020 (988 youth identified) and 2021 (613 youth identified). However, in 2021, the number of youth identified to the ACS Child Trafficking Mailbox and through the Child Trafficking Database (CTDB) were almost all (117 of 149 youth) identified at the Federal Definition of Trafficking level. Therefore, although less youth were identified to the Safe Harbour Program overall in 2021, a large number of youth were definitively identified as trafficked, rather than as at-risk.

<sup>xiii</sup> Identifying Assessing and Safety Planning with Child Sex and Labor Trafficking Victims. ACS Policy and Procedure 2021/05 released September 18, 2021.

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<sup>xiii</sup> The number of emails sent to the Child Trafficking Mailbox does not include additional trafficked or at-risk youth emails sent directly to the Executive Director of OCTPP or to other OCTPP team members (not copied to the Mailbox), nor does it include the emails sent to the CTDB Mailbox, the Training Mailbox, the Tattoo Removal Mailbox, the FGM/C Mailbox or the Credible Messenger Program Mailbox.

<sup>xiv</sup> Trauma bonding occurs due to an ongoing cycle of abuse during which intermittent punishment and reward develop a powerful emotional bond which is highly resistant to change. The lessons and punishments become more severe over time, and the victim's compliance increases to maintain the affection of the abuser.

<sup>xv</sup> DYCD Crisis Services provide services to youth ages 16 – 20, as well as young adults ages 21-24.

<sup>xvi</sup> DYCD Transitional Independent Living (TIL) programs provide services to youth ages 16 – 20, as well as young adults ages 21-24.

<sup>xvii</sup> DYCD Drop-in Centers serve young people ages 14 to 24.

<sup>xviii</sup> ACS contributed the cost of maintaining the two Safe Horizon consultants at the Children's Center. ACS is planning to expand the staff of its Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy (OCTPP). By doing so, ACS continued its ability to reach young people who are at-risk or victims of sexual exploitation.

<sup>xix</sup> In December 2017, ACS moved OCTPP from the ACS Investigations Unit to the Division of Family Permanency Services' Office of Older Youth Services (OYS), to enhance linkage and communication with the foster care agencies, who often help identify trafficked youth via screening and casework. One example of the benefits of the move of OCTPP to OYS is that OCTPP is now leveraging resources by working closely and in coordination with other OYS programs that work with children and staff in residential foster care programs: the Intensive Preventive Aftercare Services for Child Welfare (IPAS-CW) Unit, and the Missing Children's Outreach unit (MCOU). OCTPP and IPAS-CW continue to work together to increase outreach and communication with trafficked youth and their case planners in residential programs and to provide trainings to planners on how to use the Child Trafficking Database to screen youth. The Missing Children's Outreach Unit (MCOU) works with foster care agencies to help locate youth who leave their placements without consent ("AWOC") towards mitigating the risks of trafficking. OCTPP also works with the ACS Investigative Consultant team (comprised of former law enforcement personnel) who locate and return these vulnerable youth.

<sup>xx</sup> In 2021, the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy (OCTPP) worked diligently and continually to provide the highest quality of training, alone or in partnership with other trafficking related professionals, filling and/or facilitating a total of 3,300 trafficking awareness and skills related training seats, targeting a wide audience that included ACS, foster care, prevention and juvenile justice staff, plus other City agencies, State agencies and community and faith-based agencies. Due to COVID-19 isolation and work from home mandates until September 13, 2021 and in concern for safety within large training audiences after NYC's return to office on September 13, 2021, OCTPP continued virtual training in 2021, utilizing a variety of platforms to reach widely across NYC and beyond.

Of the total 6,324 training seats OCTPP provided in 2021:

- 3,138 seats were filled through during the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy's 2021 Child Sex Trafficking Prevention Conference: A 14-Day Virtual Event
- 3,186 training seats were filled through additional trainings provided by the Office of Child Trafficking Prevention and Policy

An additional 253 training seats were filled through trainings facilitated by graduates of the NYS Office of Children and Families Services (OCFS) Train the Trainer course facilitated by the Executive Director in January 2020. These trainers work within ACS' Division of Youth and Family Justice (DYFJ), training the Youth Development Specialists (YDS) who work in the secure detention facilities.

In 2021, OCTPP continued to develop, update and provide a variety of original and specialized trainings, including:

- Understanding Child Trafficking Dynamics: A Bio-Psycho-Social Perspective

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- Safety Planning WITH Trafficked Youth
  - Endorsing Exploitation: The Influence of Media on the Developing Vulnerable Adolescent
  - ACS 2020 Trafficking Policy and Child Trafficking Database (CTDB) Screenings
  - Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): Overview, Engagement Strategies and Resources
  - Law Enforcement and Legal Perspectives on Human Trafficking
  - Human Trafficking Through a Medical Lens: Expert Physician Panel
  - Human Trafficking Expert Resource Service Panel
  - Virtual Reality of Safety Enhancement: Cyber Safety and Stress Reduction Groupwork for Trafficked and At-Risk Residential Youth
  - Exploring Trauma Through The Creative Arts

Additionally, OCTPP's Executive Director, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW-R), presented professionally at virtual conferences and other venues which provided for the sharing of subject expertise and lessons learned in NYC with other jurisdictions, including:

- The International Association of Social Work with Groups 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Symposium (with Foster Care unplugged partner)
- Shared Hope International's 2022 Juvenile Sex Trafficking (JuST) Conference in Washington, DC (with Foster Care Unplugged partner)
- Northwell Health Human Trafficking HEART Program 2021 International Symposium: Online Sexual Exploitation of Children in the Age of COVID – Human Trafficking and Health Consequences
- Human Trafficking Panel for Physicians Against the Trafficking of Humans (PATH)'s Learn to Identify & Fight Trafficking (LIFT) training
- Genesee County Youth Bureau, NYS OCFS & Safe Harbour Sexually Exploited Youth & Human Trafficking Training

<sup>xxi</sup> The tattoo removal palm cards are available in Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, English, French, Haitian Creole, Korean, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Urdu, Yiddish. The YouTube video is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGUMtzplo48>