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**DE BLASIO ADMINISTRATION ENDS USE OF PUNITIVE SEGREGATION FOR
ADOLESCENT INMATES ON RIKERS ISLAND**

*Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Joe Ponte deliver on promise as part of meaningful reforms
to reduce violence, promote better outcomes for youngest inmates at city jail complex*

NEW YORK—Mayor de Blasio and Department Correction Commissioner Joe Ponte today announced the end of punitive segregation for adolescents in New York City jails. As of December 4, the Department of Correction had moved all 16- and 17 year-old inmates out of punitive segregation and ended the practice as a form of punishment for the youngest inmates at the nine operational jails on Rikers. There were 91 adolescents in punitive segregation on January 1, 2014, the day Mayor de Blasio took office.

“By ending the use of punitive segregation for adolescents, we are shifting away from a jail system that punishes its youngest inmates, to one that is focused on rehabilitation with the goal of helping put these young New Yorkers on the path to better outcomes,” said **Mayor de Blasio**. “Commissioner Ponte is a proven change agent and today’s announcement is one of a series of reforms under his leadership that will begin to stabilize the situation and unwind the decades of neglect that have led to unacceptable levels of violence on Rikers Island.”

“This reform will promote better behavior, psychological health and emotional well-being among our youngest inmates while lessening violence,” said **DOC Commissioner Joe Ponte**. “It represents best practices and the least restrictive environment, allowing us to respond more appropriately to the special needs of this troubled population, and help them re-integrate into the community when they leave our care and custody.”

Upon arriving at the Department in April 2014, Commissioner Ponte appointed a diverse team to study best practices, visit other jurisdictions and interview experts to develop a new, age-appropriate plan for managing the Department’s youngest inmates.

Reforms emerging from this initiative focus on five main areas: staff recruitment and training; custody management; educational services; program and reentry services; and family engagement. These reforms aim at fostering positive youth development, reducing violence among adolescents and assisting adolescents in their transition back home after discharge.

The Department has created two new adolescent housing units that serve as alternatives to punitive segregation: Transitional Repair Unit (TRU) and Second Chance Housing. Those inmates who've committed low-level or non-violent infractions live in Second Chance Housing and are expected to participate in special programming designed to encourage better decision-making and promote pro-social behavior. TRU is designed to hold adolescents involved in more serious infractions and provides them with access to individual support and therapy. Today, instead of being sent to punitive segregation, adolescents who break jail rules are placed in either Second Chance Housing or TRU.

Today's milestone marks the first in a series of punitive segregation reforms that the Department is pursuing under Joe Ponte's leadership, including eliminating owed time for inmates returning to DOC custody and capping the maximum amount of time an inmate can spend in punitive segregation for one infraction to 30 days from the current 90. The reforms will be instituted upon the Board of Correction's approval of Enhanced Supervision Housing (ESH), a new non-punitive, but highly secure housing unit for the small number of dangerous inmates who are responsible for the majority of violence on Rikers Island.

"I applaud Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Ponte for taking this important step toward improving our troubled correctional system for adolescents here in NYC. Ending this unjust, and, importantly, ineffective method for holding our youngest inmates is essential. As Chair of the Assembly Correction Committee, I will be pushing to expand and extend this crucial reform statewide during the 2015 legislative session," said **Assembly Member Daniel O'Donnell, Chair of the Assembly Committee on Correction.**

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