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**CITY JUSTICE PROGRAMS ARE NAMED FINALISTS IN HARVARD'S  
INNOVATIONS IN AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AWARDS COMPETITION**

*The programs have prevented young people from having future justice involvement and helped drive dramatic declines in the jail population*

**NEW YORK**—Two New York City justice programs are finalists for one of the nation's most prestigious public service awards. The Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, recognized Arches Transformative Mentoring and Supervised Release as two of the seven finalists in this year's Innovations in American Government Awards competition. The finalists will compete for a \$50,000 grand prize this fall in Cambridge, and other finalists will receive a monetary grant.

The two programs were selected by the Innovations Award evaluators based on their novelty, effectiveness, significance, and transferability, as well as their impact on economic and social mobility, inequity, and stratification in the justice system.

"With Arches Transformative Mentoring and Supervised Release, we are not only creating a safer and fairer justice system – regardless of income or background – we are definitively changing the path of youth in contact with the justice system and bringing down the jail population," said **First Deputy Mayor Dean Fuleihan**. "The administrators of these programs work hard day-in and day-out to create a New York we can all be proud of. I'd like to thank Harvard University for recognizing our work by including these two important programs as finalists for the Innovations in American Government Award."

"Innovative programs like Arches Transformative Mentoring provide opportunities for young people to build successful lives," said **Phillip J. Thompson, Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives**. "It is truly an honor to have the Arches program recognized as a finalist within the Innovation in American Government Awards Competition program, one of the premier programs of its kind nationwide."

"It is an honor for Arches Transformative Mentoring to be selected as an Ash Center Innovations in American Government Award finalist," said **Probation Commissioner Ana M. Bermudez**. "Arches has changed the relationship between the Department of Probation, those on probation and the community. Credible messenger mentors, as relatable role models, can offer high-risk youth involved in the justice system concrete examples of the way out. As they work alongside

probation officers, credible messenger mentors help young people make better and safer decisions, develop and pursue goals, get connected to school and work, and repair relationships with family and community—all of which helps build a safer city and more pathways to success.”

**Elizabeth Glazer, Director of the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice**, said, “Supervised Release is a critical engine of reform, which has helped free people who have been arrested from the inequity of cash bail. It offers judges an option to allow people to remain in the community with a light touch of supervision instead of going to jail. It is one of many steps we are taking in New York City to safely reduce our jail population to its lowest levels in more than three decades and has been a game-changer in permitting New York to have the lowest incarceration of any big city in the nation.”

Supervised Release, which launched in 2016, is a program designed to cut unnecessary detention and reduce reliance on money bail. Judges citywide can assign eligible defendants to a supervisory program that allows them to remain at home with their families and continue working while awaiting trial. The collaboration with the courts, prosecutors and defense attorneys has led to this program being a critical driver in jail reduction. The City has cut the number of people in jail by around 27 percent and has the lowest incarceration rate of any large city in the nation. Citywide court appearance rates for people given Supervised Release exceed 90 percent.

Arches was developed by the New York City Department of Probation (DOP), Mayor’s Office for Economic Opportunity, and with private funding as part of the Young Men’s Initiative in 2011 during the Bloomberg Administration. Arches is a curriculum-based group mentoring intervention that helps probation clients. DOP contracts with nonprofit organizations in targeted neighborhoods to provide a transformative mentoring intervention designed to meet young people where they are in the process of pro-social engagement, focusing on changes in cognition and thinking that often precede the ability to secure concrete attainments in education and employment.

Earlier this year, an independent evaluation of Arches Transformative Mentoring Program—conducted by the Urban Institute in partnership with the Mayor’s Office for Economic Opportunity—found that young people under probation supervision who participated in Arches were significantly less likely to have future justice involvement. The results of the evaluation indicate that Arches participants had a 69 percent lower felony reconviction rate than the comparison group within 12 months of starting probation. At the 24-month mark, it was still 57 percent lower, and Arches has a particularly strong impact for participants aged 17-years-old and younger.

Arches and the credible messenger mentor model is being replicated in cities from Washington, D.C. to San Diego. With 600,000 men and women returning home from prison each year, there are many credible messengers who, with training and support, could mentor youth and improve their communities.

“Arches Transformative Mentoring has made great strides in helping those who are formerly justice-involved to go on and live meaningful and productive lives,” said **Charissa Townsend, Acting Executive Director of the NYC Young Men’s Initiative**. “We are ecstatic that the

program is being recognized as a finalist for the distinguished Innovations in American Government Awards.”

“With two programs recognized as among the most ‘efficient, creative and effective’ programs in the country, New York City is leading the way in demonstrating how cities can advance opportunity inclusively,” said **Matthew Klein, Executive Director of the Mayor’s Office for Economic Opportunity**. “Our office was the 2011 winner of the Innovations in American Government Award, and helped create and launch Arches Transformative Mentoring, so we are pleased that New York City is at the forefront of developing solutions for people who have historically faced barriers to opportunity.”

“We are incredibly proud that the Arches program is a finalist in the Innovations in American Government Awards,” said **Carson Hicks, Deputy Executive Director of the Mayor’s Office for Economic Opportunity**. “The evaluation results show that the program is highly effective in reducing recidivism and is not only transforming the lives of participants but also building capacity for the credible messenger field here in NYC and beyond.”

“Our goal was to profile programs and approaches that had demonstrated impact in improving opportunity and wealth-creation for groups that had historically been left behind,” said **Stephen Goldsmith, Daniel Paul Professor of the Practice of Government and the Director of the Innovations in American Government Program**.

“New York City has been at the forefront of innovative programs to reduce incarceration and transform lives. Arches and Supervised Release are helping to prove that you can have a criminal justice system that focuses on rehabilitation, not simply locking people up. Congratulations to the Mayor’s Office and Department of Probation for driving these reforms forward,” said **Council Member Keith Powers**.

**Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez** said, “Supervised Release, which started as a pilot program in Brooklyn, has allowed thousands of people who could not afford to pay bail avoid incarceration, and contributed to a dramatic decrease in the number of individuals who are sent to Rikers Island from Brooklyn. This approach helps to create a fairer justice system and should be recognized – and emulated – nationally. ”

**George A. Grasso, Supervising Judge, NYC Criminal Court**, said, “It was a privilege to be able to work with the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice and the Criminal Court’s partners in the criminal justice system to develop and implement the NYC Supervised Release program. Since the implementation of Supervised Release in 2016, thousands of individuals who would have been incarcerated on Rikers Island have been successfully supervised in the community. Appearance rates and re-arrest rates have compared very favorably with those of individuals released with cash bail. Additionally, Supervised Release has provided a mechanism for a very early needs-based assessment that has created a pathway for services to those in need. In my opinion, Supervised Release has created a much fairer criminal justice system for individuals while enhancing public safety for all. It has emerged as a key component of the City’s efforts to close Rikers Island.”

Representatives from the City will present to the National Selection Committee of the Innovations in American Government Awards on Thursday, September 27, with the winner to be announced later this year.

The Innovations in American Government Awards was created by the Ford Foundation in 1985 in response to widespread pessimism and distrust in government's effectiveness. Heralded as the premier public-sector honors in the nation, the Awards have recognized over 500 government innovations across all jurisdiction levels of American government and have collectively awarded more than \$22 million in grants to support dissemination efforts. Now an annual honor, the Awards focuses on a single, intractable problem in American society each cycle. The focus of the 2018 competition is social and economic mobility.

Please visit the Government Innovators Network at <http://innovations.harvard.edu> for the full list of finalists, and for more information regarding the Innovations in American Government Awards.

**For more information about the awards, contact:**

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**About the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation**

The Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation advances excellence in governance and strengthens democratic institutions worldwide. Through its research, education, international programs, and government innovations awards, the Center fosters creative and effective government problem solving and serves as a catalyst for addressing many of the most pressing needs of the world's citizens. For more information, visit [www.ash.harvard.edu](http://www.ash.harvard.edu).

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