

NYC ANNOUNCES CRITICAL SERVICES TO HELP KIDS BROUGHT TO THE CITY AFTER BEING SEPARATED FROM PARENTS AT THE BORDER

CITY AGENCIES PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES, LEGAL ASSISTANCE, RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND MORE

NEW YORK, NY, JULY 3, 2018 – New York City government agencies today announced that they are providing a range of specific services to help the estimated 300 children who were separated from their parents at the border and brought to the City under the federal government’s immigration policy.

The separated children are in New York City under the jurisdiction of the federal government, which contracts with nonprofit agencies to provide them with care. Most of the separated children are living in foster homes around New York City, and they receive education, recreation, and health care services in the daytime at the nonprofit agencies. The federal system is completely separate from the City’s child welfare system – but City officials said they are doing everything possible to ensure the children are being properly cared for while they are here. As a result, several City agencies today announced services that the City is now providing, including mental health care for the children, trauma training for the foster parents and staff working with them, legal assistance, recreational activities, and more.

“We’ve visited some of the facilities where these kids get services, and we’ve seen children who range in age from infants to teenagers. They’re resilient, but they’re also frightened, confused, and in some cases clearly traumatized. While these children are under the care and legal responsibility of the federal government, they are in New York City now and we are doing everything in our power to make sure they are safe and healthy,” said David A. Hansell, Commissioner of NYC’s Administration for Children’s Services. “We have extensive experience working with children in the City’s child welfare system who have experienced trauma, and we’re announcing an array of much-needed services now being provided to those children who were separated as a result of this heartless federal immigration policy.”

The specific support and services that City agencies are now providing to help children who were separated from their parents because of the federal policy include:

- On-site child and adolescent psychiatric consultation services to agency mental health staff caring for the children
- Health care for children at public hospitals citywide, through expedited referrals and a 24-hour hotline
- Training for foster parents and staff at the nonprofit agencies working with children, on how to work with young people who have been through severe trauma, through in-person training sessions and online training that parents can take at home

- Legal assistance to connect children and their potential sponsors to legal service organizations
- Parenting coaching for teenage mothers who were separated from their adult mothers and are with infants they may need help and support to care for, through weekly group classes and one-on-one follow-up
- Toys and art supplies, including teddy bears, soccer balls, children's books, and paint
- Weekly field trips to educational and cultural institutions in the city, including museums and zoos
- Increased security at day facilities and during transportation from intake centers to foster homes, through specialized NYPD patrols

The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs is coordinating the citywide response, and the Administration for Children's Services, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, NYC Health + Hospitals, the Human Resources Administration, Department of Parks and Recreation, and Department of Cultural Affairs are all providing expertise and services. The services the City is providing are open-ended, since it is not clear how long the separated children will be in New York City.

The nonprofit agencies that are contracted by the federal government to provide care to separated children have worked for years with children who come to the United States unaccompanied, and over the last couple of months they report that they began to see children who were separated from their parents at the border. The particular agencies serving children in New York City also have separate contracts with ACS to provide care to children in the City's child welfare system.

"The City stepped up to support children who were separated from their parents, while the Trump Administration tried to keep us in the dark," said Sonia Lin, General Counsel and Policy Director at the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. "Immigrant families need the help of trusted legal services, and thanks to Mayor de Blasio's unprecedented investment, we're offering these children and potential sponsors free legal help. Children deserve our support and I am proud to work with our sister agencies to make sure these kids get that support."

"We are firmly committed to help these children cope with the physical and mental trauma brought about by this wrenching experience," said Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett. "The Health Department is leveraging resources to train the center's staff and foster families so that they can best support the children's emotional and social needs. We still don't know how long it will take for these families to be reunited, but we will continue to do everything in our power to provide compassionate care and support like for all the children in our great city."

“We are pleased to bring our specialized child and adolescent health expertise to provide care for the children, as well as support and training for their everyday caregivers,” said Dr. Machelles Allen, Chief Medical Officer, NYC Health + Hospitals. “The needs of children separated from their families can be complex, and helping them as soon as they need it can minimize the potential long-term health impact.”

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