



CASES



Written Testimony Submitted By:

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CASES
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At the Joint Hearing of the
New York State Assembly Committee on Ways & Means
&
New York State Senate Committee on Finance
On the Executive Proposed Human Service Budget

February 4, 2015

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding this year's human service budget.

This testimony is submitted on behalf of Berkshire Farm Center and Services for Youth, CASES, Center for Court Innovation, Good Shepherd Services, Hillside Children's Center, and Hope For Youth. We are the six agencies selected through a competitive process to operate programs with state funding for the Community Reinvestment Program.

In this testimony we have provided a short background on the Community Reinvestment Program as well as brief summaries of each program and some encouraging data on the outcomes to date. As you will see from the outcomes, our agencies are providing very successful programs and it is critical that funding be provided in the state budget so that we can continue to operate and provide services to children and families across New York State.

Background

In 2009, the Legislature appropriated \$5 million for the Community Reinvestment Program to provide preventive services to targeted youth at risk of juvenile justice system involvement or placement in counties with the highest rates of court-ordered placements. Contracts were to be awarded to performance-based programs to prevent placement, re-arrest, missed court hearings, pregnancy or impregnating, gang involvement, and school truancy. The overall purpose was to help transform the juvenile justice system by providing services in the local community and avoiding costly, less effective placements far from home.

Through a competitive process, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) made seven awards to the six agencies presenting this testimony to you today.

Programs began providing services in 2011. The programs' contracts were for a five-year shell, subject to annual renewal based on availability of funding. Programs were urged by OCFS to be ready to provide services upon receiving the signed contract. Therefore, many of the programs used their own funds for start-up costs so they could hit the ground running when the contract was finalized. Soon thereafter, our agencies were notified that the Executive did not include funding to support the full term of the contracts. Over the last three years, the Legislature has restored some funding to keep programs partially operating.

We are once again asking the Legislature to support the Community Reinvestment Program and restore \$5 million in the final enacted budget to support these successful programs offered by our agencies.

Brooklyn and the Bronx: Good Shepherd Services "LIFE"

Good Shepherd Services' Brooklyn and Bronx LIFE programs provide services to high risk, court-involved youth aged 11-15 and their families. The goal of these programs is to divert youth who have been arrested from entering detention and the juvenile justice system, thereby increasing their chances for permanency and remaining in their family/kinship home.

Services provided to the at-risk youth and their families by the LIFE program include: individualized, ongoing case management and supervision; education, career and vocational support; and wraparound services to youth and their families. The programs are community-based, gender, youth and family- focused, responsive, short-term, and intensive and integrated into the existing juvenile justice system. Services address issues related to public safety, accountability, self-esteem building, family planning, parenting skills, and building competencies which promote life skills development. In addition, the model includes service learning opportunities and other forms of community service so that youth can engage in positive activities in the community. In coordination with our subcontractors, GSS delivers interventions which allow youth and their families to achieve levels of engagement and stability. Upon program discharge, GSS ensures that each family has access to a rich array of resources within their community to help them avoid future interaction with the court system.

Last year, the LIFE program demonstrated the following outcomes for the 73 youth served:

- Placement prevention: 100%
- Prevention of re-arrest: 80%
- Prevention of failure to appear: 88%
- Prevention of pregnancy/impregnation: 88%
- Reduction in gang involvement: 82%
- Improvement in school attendance: 55%

Recent data shows that GSS' LIFE programs are meeting and in most cases surpassing outcomes targets including prevention of re-arrest, "failure-to-appear", pregnancy prevention, reduction in gang involvement and improved school attendance.

The LIFE programs in NYC are distinct from all other programs in the alternative to detention spectrum and in the range of programs available for adjudicated youth under Probation supervision. If LIFE were to be cut, there would be a void in the range of services available in the communities they serve and without the programs, too many of our youth that could have been saved

would fall prey to the streets or return to detention. Our pro-social/rehabilitative approach is well respected and well received by the youth and families that we serve. Without it, they would be more exposed to the punitive aspects of the juvenile justice system and left with the misconception that service providers do not care about them. The milieu of the LIFE program provides a safe haven for youth to dialogue with staff about things they are too afraid and/or ashamed to discuss with their parents or their Probation Officer. Without this programming and approach, the youth we serve would have little support and would be more likely to perpetuate the anger and the violence that has become so embedded in our communities.

Manhattan: Provided by the Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services' (CASES) "Choices Alternative to Detention (ATD)"

The Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services' (CASES) program-Choices Alternative to Detention (ATD)-provides youth awaiting disposition in Family Court with structured and effective alternatives to detention. Started in January 2008 with funding from the New York City Criminal Justice Coordinator's Office, Choices was enhanced by the Community Reinvestment Project contract with the State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS).

Awarded in May 2011, the Choices ATD program allows participants to remain embedded within their local community, continue their formal education, and live within their family setting. The funding provided by OCFS has allowed CASES to expand its city-funded services to youth considered high risk for not appearing at their hearing or for re-arrest based on a risk assessment instrument developed by the Vera Institute of Justice. The OCFS funding has also allowed CASES to serve those who are at risk of violation of probation (VOP).

The program integrates after-school activities (case management, education support, counseling, teen pregnancy prevention classes, cultural excursions, sports and camping trips). Choices' staff conducts home and school visits to make sure youth stay connected to community resources and receive the additional support they need. Staff also keep the Court informed of participants' progress and make adjustments to supervision levels if necessary. Legal services are provided for families to aid them in understanding their rights and responsibilities. Choices ATD allows youth to gain responsibility for their actions, to re-invest in their social support networks, and to explore new alternatives to rectify their past actions.

Last year, the Choices program demonstrated the following outcomes for the 109 youth served:

- Placement prevention: 89%
- Prevention of re-arrest: 84%
- Prevention of failure to appear: 89%
- Prevention of pregnancy/impregnation: 99%
- Reduction in gang involvement: 92%

Choices ATD collaborates with several partner organizations for the delivery of services. Choices ATD works closely with Union Settlement Association, the oldest and largest social service agency in East Harlem, and Youth Represent, a youth defense and advocacy organization which provides legal representation and education. Union Settlement conducts a gender specific workshop entitled "Baby Think it Over" using a research-based pregnancy prevention curriculum. Participants are able to use the Union Settlement gym for recreational activities including informal basketball games and practice. Team First, a non-profit agency that uses basketball programming to address truancy, offers a popular weekly program to Choices participants each Tuesday.

This year, The Reimagining Futures Project from Teachers College at Columbia University has built upon the on-going weekly writing workshops conducted at Union Settlement to develop new curricula for the Choices program. Reimagining Futures has facilitated media literacy workshops at Union Settlement, incorporating social message and documentary films, magazines and commercials in the discussion of body image, stereotyping, bullying, and violence. Reimagining Futures has also

begun facilitating a qualitative research workshop, in which participants have learned how to design a research project on a topic of importance to them through community outreach and interviews.

Finally, Choices has partnered with Resources for Children with Special Needs to provide specialized advocacy and expert assistance to youth with special education needs and their families in obtaining access to services (including updated IEPs) and appropriate school placements.

Queens: Provided by Center for Court Innovation “Queens Engagement Strategies for Teens (QUEST)”

The Center for Court Innovation’s Queens Engagement Strategies for Teens (QUEST) program provides alternative-to-detention, alternative-to- placement and mental health care coordination programming to young people with pending delinquency matters in Queens Family Court. OCFS funds support three areas of activity at QUEST:

1. QUEST serves two groups of adolescents not eligible for city-supported alternatives-to-detention (ATD) programming because of contractual restrictions: high-risk youths pending adjudication and youths who have violated the terms of probation. These youths have access to all QUEST programming including individualized service planning and case management, skill building workshops, literacy and tutoring programs, recreational and cultural activities, family outreach and engagement, and community service.
2. QUEST has enhanced its existing complement of services. In year one, QUEST’s additional services included dedicated treatment slots for Adolescent Portable Therapy and Functional Family Therapy, dedicated mentoring slots, formalized educational and vocational/career counseling services, and evidence-based pregnancy prevention programming. With the reduced funding in years two and three, QUEST’s enhanced services included only the educational and vocational/career counseling services, a reduced number of dedicated Functional Family Therapy slots, and pregnancy prevention programming.
3. QUEST Futures, a program component offering mental health assessment, service coordination, family support and supervision, continues to serve young people with mental illnesses both pre-adjudication and post-disposition. Futures services are available in conjunction with other QUEST program components or on a stand-alone basis and are available for as long as a participant has an open Family Court case or is on probation. If requested by a family, QUEST Futures will provide re-entry case management and family support services for young people returning from placement. The average length of stay in QUEST Futures is 11 months. A rigorous quasi-experimental impact evaluation of QUEST Futures was completed in the summer of 2013 that, among other findings, showed that QUEST Futures participants averaged significantly fewer total re-arrests and felony re-arrests than a comparison group of youths with similar characteristics.

The OCFS contract for QUEST became effective on July 15, 2011. Between July 15, 2011 and January 14, 2015, OCFS funds supported services for 294 new QUEST enrollees in the target groups listed in the chart below.

	Receive enhanced services	Receive enhanced services plus Futures (mental health services)	Total youth served
QUEST ATD (moderate risk, pre-adjudication)	154	52	206
High risk, pre-adjudication youths	7	5	12
Post-disposition alternative-to placement youths (facing VOP or at risk of VOP)	32	9	41
Futures only, pre-adjudication, low or moderate risk	-	28	28
Futures only, post-disposition, not at risk of VOP	-	7	7
Total	193	101	294

Of 279 enrollees whose QUEST cases have closed, 227 (81 percent) have been maintained in the community. Fifty-one enrollees had their cases terminated upon remand, placement or an open warrant, and two cases were closed upon placement in a therapeutic facility. Fourteen cases remain open.

Additionally, out of the 294 young people served by QUEST:

- 81 percent were not re-arrested while in the program.
- 92 percent were present at all required court appearances.
- 57 percent either improved their school attendance rate or maintained an acceptable attendance rate of at least 80 percent by the time of their case closing.

Nassau County: Provided By Berkshire Farm Center “Families Together”

Berkshire’s program, Families Together, is an intensive home, school and community-based alternative to detention programs for Nassau County youth ages 11 – 15 who have been arrested, are in police custody or detention, or are under Probation supervision, and their families. These youth and families reside in the high-need communities of throughout Nassau County.

The goals of the program are to reduce the need to place youth into detention and residential facilities, reduce remands, shorten lengths of detention stays, divert detention and keep families together in their communities. This is accomplished through a comprehensive, community-based, culturally and linguistically responsive network of services and supports. The program will collaborate with the Nassau County Department of Social Services, SNAP Long Island and the

Long Island Advocacy Center, and will reach out to all appropriate services and supports that can benefit the program's youth and families. Berkshire's Nassau Families Together Program has served 83 families to date.

Last year, the Families Together program demonstrated the following outcomes for the 58 youth served:

- Placement prevention: 100%
- Prevention of re-arrest: 100%
- Prevention of failure to appear: 100%
- Prevention of pregnancy/impregnation: 100%
- Reduction in gang involvement: 100%
- Improvement in school attendance: 100%

The outcomes for Families Together are to prevent re-arrests, divert youth arrested or in police custody from detention or OCFS placement, prevent failure to appear in Court, prevent pregnancy or repeat pregnancies, prevent gang involvement and improve school attendance.

In program year 2012, Ninety-three percent of youth were averted out of home placement for an estimated cost savings to Nassau County of \$4,479,812.

Services provided by the program include: case management and supervision including family assessments, service planning, crisis intervention and linkages with community resources; individual and family support including mental health and substance abuse evaluations and linkages to community-based treatment; individual and group skill building activities; educational and vocational services; teen pregnancy prevention services including research-based, age appropriate services and education; and wrap around services to address other issues or concerns that hinder the youth and/or family's progress toward outcomes.

Suffolk County: Provided By Hope For Youth

Hope For Youth was awarded the Community Reinvestment Program grant to serve Suffolk County youth from the high risk communities of Bay Shore, Central Islip, Brentwood, Wyandanch and Huntington Station with a target population of youth age 11-15. The Suffolk County Department of Probation is the sole referral source to the program and in year one, 40 youth participated in the program and in year two 31 youth were able to receive the intense services. The number of youth serviced decreased due to funding cuts during the second service year. On average youth and their families receive evidence based Multi-Dimensional Family Therapy clinical and case management services for 4 months and at referral 97% were rated at high to moderate risk for placement out of the home.

In 2008, Suffolk County had 45 admissions to OCFS custody; 25 of these youth originated from the target communities that CRP services. CRP is now seen as one of the primary tools for diverting youth from placement out of the home in Suffolk County and the numbers show the program has met this goal. In 2012 there were only 12 out of home placements from the communities serviced by CRP and in 2013 there were only 10. These numbers show that there was 25% reduction in placements during 2012 and a 30% reduction in 2013. These numbers clearly indicate the value of this program.

During year two of the Community Reinvestment Program we successfully intervened to keep 81% of youth referred out of placement saving the state approximately \$4,800,000. During the program's first and second years of operation the Community Reinvestment Program met and exceeded the contract deliverables. Successful diversion was accomplished by the diligent efforts of the staff to increase court appearances, increase school attendance, increase positive youth development in social activities and assisting the guardians in monitoring the whereabouts of the youth.

Last year, the Community Reinvestment program demonstrated the following outcomes for the 29 youth served:

- Placement prevention: 90%
- Prevention of failure to appear: 94%
- Prevention of pregnancy/impregnation: 98%
- Reduction in gang involvement: 100%
- Improvement in school attendance: 81%

During treatment in CRP a variety of family dynamics are addressed and, at times there is a need for youth to be placed outside of the home for various reasons, of the thirty one youth served, 81% were maintained at home and not removed because of probation violations of health and safety concerns.

There are many elements specific to CRP that contributes to successful outcomes for youth and families. In addition to case management and therapy provided by Hope For Youth, participants had access to mentoring, recreation, advocacy and independent living skills programs at through community based collaborative agencies: YES (Youth Enrichment Services), EOC-Suffolk Inc. S.N.A.P. Division (Suffolk Network on Adolescent Pregnancy), LIAC (Long Island Advocacy Center) and the Center For Restorative Practices. Youth are contacted within 24 hours of referral and a face to face meeting is scheduled within 5 days. Throughout the case wrap around services, transportation assistance, parenting programs, and other supports are offered to help eliminate barriers for the family. The case manager assists the family to ensure all basic needs are met. The Hope for Youth Therapist works individually in the home with the adolescent and the parent, and with the family as a whole. The emotional and physical health and well-being of the youth is the focus of this therapy. In addition, parents learn new ways to deal with the challenging behaviors of their children and to give the child another chance to succeed in the home. Without CRP intervention, statistics show that 24 youth were likely to be placed out of the home.

Monroe County: Provided By Hillside Children's Center's "Reinvestment in Youth (RIY)"

Hillside's Reinvestment in Youth (RIY) program provides three to five months of service to each identified youth, ages 11-15, which might otherwise be in detention due to involvement with Probation and Family Court. Referrals come from the Probation Department and are those youth who have been scored mid to high risk on the OCFS State Risk Assessment Instrument (note: the Risk Assessment Instrument is now the Statewide DRAI, although the profile of the youth remains constant)..

Contract term: 3/1/13 - 2/28/14 to serve 30 youth residing in OCFS identified inner-city zip codes in Monroe County. Due to delays in the contract process for the third consecutive year, there was a gap in funding from March 1st 2013 through to July, when we received official word that funding was reinstated.

Each youth referred to Hillside is assigned a case manager who coordinates and arranges community based supports for the youth and his/her family. Given significant reductions in State funds once again, Hillside is now able to contract with only the equivalent of one full time staff located within each of three neighborhoods based Settlement Houses, also known as Anchor Sites. The staff is known as Community Asset Navigators (CANs). They navigate the neighborhood for natural, sustainable supports that will remain in the lives of the youth long after their term of enrollment with RIY. Also on the service team is an academic liaison who works with the public schools to ensure each youth's proper placement and attendance. Hillside also contracts for additional services, as needed, based on individual assessments of the youths' needs, including but not limited to, tutoring, pregnancy prevention, skill building, therapy, parenting classes, and respite. Hillside has formal subcontracting agreements with five agencies including Encompass, Ibero American Action League, Charles Settlement House and Community Place of Greater Rochester.

Last year, the Reinvestment in Youth program demonstrated the following outcomes for the 27 youth served:

- Placement prevention: 95%
- Prevention on re-arrest: 90%
- Prevention of failure to appear: 95%
- Prevention of pregnancy/impregnation: 100%
- Reduction in gang involvement: 95%
- Improvement in school attendance: 63%

One significant difference in this program is the collaborative agreements Hillside has with the neighborhood Settlement Houses/Anchor Sites in the youths' neighborhoods with ongoing support from the Settlement Houses, the Community Consortium (a local collaboration of community leaders, agencies, etc. who meet monthly to assess needs and strategies to support families), and local Safety Nets, where positive natural resources are built and sustained.

The decision to cut funding to RIY also seems at odds with the State's ongoing efforts to use its resources more efficiently – by investing in evidence-based services with a demonstrated

ROI and the proven ability to drive meaningful cost savings. RIY's intensive community based services cost about \$6000/yr. per youth, whereas a custodial placement via OCFS costs an average of \$32,400 to \$115,000 per year. Reinvesting in Youth has a proven track record of success, and represents a long overdue model in our community for supporting youth and their families at the neighborhood level.

These programs need state funding so that they can continue to provide services to at-risk youth and help transform the juvenile justice system by providing services in the local community and avoiding costly, less effective placements far from home.

Please restore \$5 million for the Community Reinvestment Program in the 2015-16 final budget.

Thank you for your time and consideration.