



**For Immediate Release**

January 12, 2006

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**Recent Child Deaths Identify Areas for ACS to Act On**

The recent deaths of children known to New York City's Administration for Children's Services raise two related questions:

- Is the child welfare system failing New York City's children?
- What should ACS have done to better protect children and prevent their deaths?

Citizens' Committee for Children of New York has done a preliminary analysis of ACS budget and performance data for 2004 and 2005. The system performance data is used to identify hot spots or problem areas that ACS can identify, act on, and correct.<sup>1</sup> The data available on the city's websites does not show system failure. It reports ACS budget and staffing levels that are stable and citywide performance that is still strong.

However, the data do show some areas where performance has dipped slightly and this warrants immediate attention. These early warning signs give every indication that prompt action taken by Commissioner Mattingly can get things on track.

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<sup>1</sup> According to performance data for 2004 and 2005 found on the ACS website and in the Mayor's Management Report:

- Reports of abuse and neglect have increased - 9,655 SCR intakes in FY06 compared to 9,118 SCR intakes in FY05;
- The percentage of high-risk reports has increased - 59.5 % in FY06 compared to 53.5 % in FY05.
- Slight decrease in response time has occurred - with a 24-hour response rate of 94.5 % in FY06 compared to 98% in FY05.
- The number of repeat reports of abuse and neglect has increased - 20.3 % of children where investigations were completed have had repeated investigations within a year in FY05 compared to 18.6 % in FY04.
- The number of children at risk of abuse and neglect receiving services has also declined - with 4,861 new children receiving preventive services in FY06 compared to 5,210 in FY05 and 16,983 children in foster care in FY06 compared to 20,185 in FY05.

It is important for ACS to dig deeper and begin a more intensive review of performance and practice in neighborhood field offices to identify weaknesses in case handling and case practice that leave children at risk. Then, ACS must take immediate action to correct any deficiencies it finds.

"This tragic death of Nixzmary Brown and the recent deaths of other children known to child welfare authorities, points to the fact that ACS must do much more to keep children safe. Conducting more timely and thorough investigations and completing more accurate safety and risk assessments is the first step. The other is increasing opportunities for children known to ACS to receive the services they need to keep them safe," stated Gail B. Nayowith, Executive Director of CCC.