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In Recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month
Hundreds Gather at City Hall to Call on the City to
Stop Budget Cuts That Threaten Child Safety

CCC Releases, "The Wisest Investment: NYC's Preventive Service System," a Report Documenting the Need to Support Preventive Services.

April 12, 2010 – Parents, service providers, advocates and elected officials warned Monday that the implementation of ACS's new RFP, which reduces slots for families by 2,500-3,000 slots, amidst an economic downturn and proposed budget cuts, jeopardizes the safety of children across New York City.

While CCC's report released today documents the need for more resources to support the preventive service system, the Mayor's Preliminary Budget Plan proposes to cut \$20 million (\$7.6 million city funds), which is currently supporting programs and their capacity to serve families. ACS is imminently issuing awards pursuant to an RFP issued last spring that will significantly reduce the preventive service system's capacity by 2,500-3,000 families. And ACS now has an additional 7.2% PEG target, or another \$50 million cut for the upcoming Executive Budget.

Advocates insist that ACS should be held to the same lower budget cutting standards as the City's uniform agencies and the Department of Education. "ACS and its preventive service providers are the city's emergency responder for children. Sadly, this city already knows the tragedies that befall us when child welfare services are cut," said **Jennifer March-Joly, Executive Director of Citizens' Committee for Children**. "We must not let the budget deficit leave children at risk and we must not wait until there has been another tragedy before restoring these funds."

"In this economic climate it is imperative that we invest in families who are struggling and do all that we can to protect children," said **Council Member Annabel Palma, Chair of the General Welfare Committee**. "Preventive services, simply, help keep children from unnecessarily entering into the foster care system. By strengthening families, we strengthen communities, and by strengthening communities we strengthen our city."

Preventive services are community-based services that strengthen and support families to prevent child abuse, neglect and the need for foster care. Preventive services cost a fraction of the price of foster care¹ and the savings to child well-being are priceless. "Preventive service programs have saved the City hundreds of millions of dollars in reduced foster care costs by keeping thousands of children safely at home. These drastic cuts to Preventive Services will result in more pain for vulnerable children and families, more children in foster care and more homelessness in our city." **Jim Purcell, CEO of the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA)**, the umbrella organization for many of the City's preventive service programs.

¹ The average annual cost of foster care is \$36,000 per child, while the most common preventive service program costs approximately \$9,000 per family.

Cutting this family support system during an economic downturn when more families are in need is the antithesis of what NYC families need. "Families in my community are being hit hard by the economic downturn and they often have very limited resources to care for their children-- so preventive services may be the only available venue for parents to keep their children safe. Downsizing of preventive services increases the risk of child maltreatment and foster care. My community cannot afford to have one less service from the already lacking resources in the Bronx," said **Elizabeth Croban, the Preventive Service Director at Catholic Guardian Society and Home Bureau.**

"The proposed cuts to preventive services could not come at a worse time. As families struggle to recover from the financial crisis, they need these support services more than ever to improve family stability and keep their children safely at home. Immigrant families in particular face unique linguistic and cultural barriers to accessing these services. With fewer slots for families and reduced funding for service providers, vulnerable immigrant families and their children will fall through the cracks," explained **Wayne Ho, the Executive Director of the Coalition of Asian American Children and Families.**

"After staffing Child Safety Conferences at ACS, I've seen how much preventive services can help both parents and children. We need to increase, not cut, the budget for preventive services. More budget cuts will result in more removal of children from our communities," said **Carmen Caban from the Child Welfare Organizing Project (CWOP),** an organization working to meaningfully engage parents in the child welfare system.

In addition to the budget cuts that are reducing the number of families the system can serve, ACS's new RFP for preventive services reduces the system's capacity as well. CCC's report documents that when programs do not have vacant slots to serve families, families at risk end up being turned away.

"True prevention of child maltreatment, before investigations by ACS and before police and court involvement, is only possible if families can find community support when they recognize a problem and seek help. If preventive services are not available to community "walk-ins" because of insufficient capacity, the risk increases that those children and their families who recognize that they need help but cannot get it, will suffer potentially grave consequences. This is not a matter of conjecture; it is a simple and predictable cause and effect." said **Julia Jean-Francois, Co-Director of the Center for Family Life in Sunset Park.**

The Wisest Investment: New York City's Preventive Service System was released by CCC today. "The over-arching recommendation from our three year study of this system is that preventive services must be valued as a core child welfare service by the federal, state and local governments, the child welfare providers, advocates and the city's communities. If the preventive service leg of child welfare is not adequately funded, it will falter and the entire child welfare system will collapse—the children of New York City deserve better from all of us," explained **Stephanie Gendell, Associate Executive Director, Citizens' Committee for Children.**

***The Wisest Investment* is available online at:**

<http://www.cccnewyork.org/publications/CCCwisestinvestment10.pdf>

Press conference co-sponsors: Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC); Child Welfare Organizing Project (CWOP); Children's Defense Fund-NY; Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF); Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA); Human Services Council (HSC); Lawyers for Children; Neighborhood Family Services Coalition (NFSC); Preventive Service Action Network (PSAN); The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families (CHCF); United Neighborhood Houses (UNH).