




**FY
20
22**

**Impact
Statement**



An aerial photograph of the New York City skyline, featuring numerous skyscrapers and buildings. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. The text is positioned in the upper left quadrant.

“Our work is a lever of change
for our agency, workforce,
children, families and
communities.”

- Cheryl L. Beamon,
Associate Commissioner

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A Message From Our Associate Commissioner



Cheryl Beamon
Associate Commissioner

At the Office of Training and Workforce Development, we anchor our work in an ongoing commitment to serve New York City's children and the families who interact with the Child Welfare workforce. This commitment has taught us that we can lead, create, and know our voice if we hold true to our mission, vision, and guiding principles. We can do all this even in our most challenging moments, despite the complexity of the circumstances.

"Everything we do, even the slightest thing we do, can have a ripple effect and repercussions that emanate. If you throw a pebble into the water on one side of the ocean, it can create a tidal wave on the other side." -Victor Webster

As we navigated the pandemic's challenges during Fiscal Year 2022, we recognized that evolution is a natural part of our lives and work. We took a look in the mirror to re-center what we stand for, examining how we create learning programs that reflect the changing needs of our workforce and the ways we onboard new staff, while embracing creativity to enhance our operations.

There is one constant in our many successes: the development of impactful and respectful partnerships, which is due to the collaboration between our internal team and external stakeholders. We listen to our stakeholders and conduct thorough needs assessments to bring

authenticity and accuracy to our learning programs. These efforts led us to launch several significant and innovative programs, including:

- [SCR Reform Bill: Promoting Equity Through Legislative Changes 101](#)
- [Trauma-Responsive and Informed Parenting Program \(TRIPP\) Training of Trainers \(TOT\)](#)
- [Empower, Affirm: Policy, Best Practices and Guidance for Serving LGBTQAI+ Children and Youth Involved in the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice System](#)

We are working diligently with our partners at the Division of Child Protection and Division of Youth and Family Justice to onboard staff. Our Professional Development Program continues to provide opportunities for growth and advancement by offering skills training and scholarships to ACS staff for undergraduate and graduate degrees.

We are working with our colleagues in Policy, Planning and Measurement to advance key strategic partnerships with other city agencies. These partnerships will encourage referrals to appropriate support programs rather than reporting families to the often-intrusive New York Statewide Central Register.

We are working with training teams from the Department of Education and Department of Homeless Services (DHS). Our aim is to help them develop presentations that consistently consider the effects of implicit bias, trauma, and access to community-based resources on families that need support. For example, we are helping DHS train over 2,700 staff members to support rather than report shelter families to the SCR.

Every day, we strive to better manage challenges with intentional and active inclusion of diverse voices. We know our work is a lever of change for our agency, workforce, children, families and communities. Accordingly, we expand our intentional efforts to address the changing needs of a multi-generational and culturally diverse workforce and society, as well as the changing landscape of child welfare.

We are committed to helping our agency's leadership implement and model Safety Culture and use Reflective Practice to have difficult conversations with respect, transparency and empathy.

This year, our mantra became: "Change requires the temporary surrender of security." We know that a "return to normal" is not the post-pandemic direction in which we want to move. Rather, our strategy is to continue to evolve, even if that means we will journey into uncomfortable places.

The positive ripples we are creating today are gathering strength, building into a tidal wave of meaningful change for our future workforce and work products. We strive to work together, harder, and in more creative ways every day to do our part to further ACS's ongoing commitment to the safety and well-being of New York City's children, families and communities.

Cheryl L. Beamon
Associate Commissioner
Office Training and Workforce Development

Highlights

As part of our goal to be leaders in training and professional development, The Office of Training and Workforce Development strives to create trainings that push forward the boundaries of child welfare — trainings that speak to the ever-changing needs of the children, youths and families who interact with New York City's Child Welfare workforce. Here are just a few examples:

CARES/FAR

The Collaborative Assessment, Response, Engagement and Support (CARES) strategy, also known as Family Assessment Response (FAR), is an alternative to the investigative track for reviewing reports of child abuse and neglect. In Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) the James Satterwhite Academy and Workforce Institute provided training and coaching to support the expansion of CARES citywide to 46 units within the Division of Child Protection.

In CARES, families collaborate with Child Protective Specialists (CPS) to address problems that could affect child safety. "It's really about partnership and engagement with the families," said Maria Gomez, CARES Lead Coach for the Workforce Institute. "So, families and child protective specialists can assess together...the areas of strength as well as the areas of need. And if there are areas of need, what are the family's solution to those?"

Maria describes the feedback as overwhelmingly positive. "All of the responses have been, 'I wish I had CARES sooner; I wish I had CARES when I was a CPS; This is what I signed up for.'"

TRIPP Training of Trainers

In FY22, the Workforce Institute began training provider agencies to deliver the Trauma-Responsive and Informed Parenting Program (TRIPP), a learning program that provides foster parents and Child Welfare professionals with an understanding of the challenging behaviors they may encounter with children and youths in Therapeutic Family Foster Care. Learners explore the impact of trauma and toxic stress on the brain and are taught strategies to de-escalate behavior and practice emotionally responsive parenting.

Batsheva Berger, a facilitator for Ohel Children's Home and Family Services, hopes TRIPP will provide learners with a deeper appreciation for how trauma impacts a child. "Every behavior that comes out of that trauma needs to be looked at and evaluated differently from their own children who have not had trauma. They may display the same behavior, but it has to be managed in completely different ways," says Berger.

LGBTQAI+ Children and Youth

In the [course](#) Include, Empower, Affirm: Policy, Best Practices and Guidance for Serving LGBTQAI+ Children and Youth Involved in the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice System, learners explore ways to promote the safety, permanency and well-being of LGBTQAI+ youth. Attendees practice creating affirming environments where all are respected.

Workforce Institute Learning Practitioner Pharon Ford credits the trainings with helping to create empathy and understanding by putting learners in the shoes of young people. "Really what I love to see are when folks have their own ah-ha moment and are vulnerable enough to say, 'I didn't hit that mark, I didn't get it right, or I wish I wouldn't have done that, but I'm here,' and then become not just an ally, but one of the change agents that make the shift in culture," says Ford.

SCR Reform

In FY22, the Workforce Institute launched two trainings ([SCR Reform Bill: Promoting Equity Through Legislative Change](#) and [Applying SCR Reform to Your Daily Practice: Information Gathering and Documentation](#)), aimed at preparing Child Welfare staff for changes in Statewide Central Register (SCR) legislation were enacted to bring more equity to the child welfare system. Additionally, these changes reduce racial disproportionality found in the child welfare system by raising the standards for indicating a case. No longer can a case be indicated with some credible evidence. Case workers must find a fair preponderance of evidence — evidence that outweighs the evidence that is offered to oppose it.

"Due to themes of race, racism and bias ingrained in the NYC child welfare system, we work mainly with families of color," says Workforce Institute Senior Facilitator, Daniel Siford. "So, a higher standard to indicate a case makes workers dive deeper and work harder in order to ensure the families we work with don't experience any undue hardships."

Understanding & Undoing Implicit Bias

[Understanding & Undoing Implicit Bias](#) helps learners recognize and understand how biases contribute to racial disproportionality in the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice systems. As one of ACS's racial equity strategies, learners practice strategies that reduce the implicit bias in their work and enhance their equitable decision-making.

One topic covered during the training is the importance of words. "If I'm the first person [to investigate a family] and my documentation doesn't identify the family's strengths and uses language that is leading, the next person to read my notes will be filled with biases," says Consultant/Senior Facilitator, Patricia Taylor.

Although the work can be challenging it can also be rewarding. "There are moments where people will say, 'I'm embarrassed to say I grew up being told ABC and now through my education [and] my exposure, I know better.' When people have those self-epiphanies it's just a beautiful thing to be a part of," says Taylor.

Number of Trainings:

55

Implicit
Bias

23

SCR
Reform

3

TRIPP

57

LGBTQAI+

Number of Learners:

845

Implicit
Bias

399

SCR
Reform

34

TRIPP

924

LGBTQAI+



“ Really what I love to see are when folks have their own ah-ha moment ... and then become not just an ally, but one of the change agents that make the shift in culture. ”

- Pharon Ford,
Workforce Institute Learning Practitioner

“Officers have expressed that the training has made them more aware of what details to look for when investigating and responding to these highly sensitive cases.”

- Lt. Michael Eichner of the
NYPD Domestic Violence Unit



Partnerships

Partnerships

Much of the success of the Office of Training and Workforce Development (OTWD) stems from the strength of its partnerships with a variety of agencies, internal and external. All of these agencies share a core mission to provide foundational and continuous learning for Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice direct service staff and supervisors.

Productive partnerships stem from a clear foundation and consistent support. Cheryl Beamon, Associate Commissioner for OTWD, says, “Partners share our commitment to four key principles: transparency, trust, racial justice, and social justice. We work together to shift organizational culture and workforce development, keeping equity and quality top of mind.”

Meaningful Growth

During Fiscal Year 2022, OTWD meaningfully grew partnerships with ACS divisions to support staff professional learning. Several courses came to fruition, including [SCR Reform Bill: Promoting Equity Through Legislative Changes](#), whose implementation is due to changes in state law impacting child welfare work. New York State determined more training was needed around the use of the Statewide Central Register (SCR). This course, developed with the Division of Child Protection (DCP) and Family Court Legal Services (FCLS), serves that need.

Another example of a meaningful partnership is the course [Motivational Interviewing: Investigative Strategies](#). This course uses critical thinking skills and motivational interviewing techniques to gather information to make accurate assessments of children and families. It was developed with the Division of Child Protection and available for their direct service staff and supervisors, as learners in the NYPD.

NYPD A New Audience: NYPD

One of this fiscal year's greatest achievements is the work between the James Satterwhite Academy (JSA) and the NYPD to redevelop the course, [Mandated Reporter Training: Identifying Child Abuse and Maltreatment](#), for their Domestic Violence Unit officers.

“This course is nothing short of groundbreaking,” states Cynthia Wells, Executive Director of JSA. “Born out of tragedy, JSA partnered with the NYPD to facilitate instructor led training for their officers who, on any given day, may respond to an incident in which they need to determine whether there is reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or maltreatment.”

The course teaches officers how to be aware of physical and behavioral indicators of abuse or maltreatment, as well as the best practice ways to respond, including when and how to report to the SCR. Course facilitators share deep knowledge about the nuances of child abuse situations. The response from Domestic Violence Unit Officers who took the ACS training has been positive.

A domestic violence officer in Brooklyn says the two-day training was informative. “I enjoyed how interactive the lessons were and how they split us into groups so we could brainstorm and bring our ideas together. It helped me understand the everyday issues families go through while having knowledge

Photo

in ways to help the family. It also helped me understand the different marks of physical abuse, which would be very useful when dealing with babies, toddlers and young victims who are shy or cannot communicate well.”

Another domestic violence officer in Queens described a real-world situation that occurred after they took the course. They were conducting a home visit with a 12-year-old victim who shared that they were experiencing pain in the throat and head. The officer said the training made them more aware and sensitive to both the physical and psychological effects of strangulation on this victim and prompted them to ask more questions and provide appropriate resources.

“Officers have expressed that the training has made them more aware of what details to look for when investigating and responding to these highly sensitive cases,” explains Lt. Michael Eichner of the NYPD Domestic Violence Unit. “The training has provided them with more tools to help the most vulnerable victims of domestic violence. Overall, the training has been an asset to these officers and their supervisors and has assisted with the NYPD's goal of keeping families safe.”

Foundation of OTWD is Partnership

Strong partnering is an integral part of OTWD. The office itself was established due to a partnership between ACS and the City University of New York (CUNY)'s School of Professional Studies and Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College. Within OTWD, the James Satterwhite Academy and ACS Workforce Institute, work interdependently. Internal partnerships with the six different divisions of ACS are essential to develop and implement on new and ongoing professional learning opportunities.

Additional partnerships aimed at providing training for teams in the Department of Education, Department of Homeless Services, and NYC Health + Hospitals Corporation initiated in FY22 and are planned for launch in FY23 and beyond. Together, these innovative trainings and collaboration efforts enhance the service and protection New York City provides to its children and families.

Shifting Practice

The Office of Training and Workforce Development (OTWD) is shifting practice to ensure the evolving needs of learners, as well as those of the families and children of New York City, are met. In Fiscal Year 2022, this shift was spurred into high gear with an intense focus on supporting coaches and supervisors in ever more innovative ways.

The implementation of this strategy is spread across all aspects of OTWD's offerings including onboarding new staff, deep coursework on flashpoint issues, immersive simulation exercises, and instituting Safety Culture.

OTWD is also moving the needle on shifting practice by facilitating more effective engagement and leveraging strengths-based techniques in practice labs. The Supporting Knowledge into Practice (SKIP) Team strengthened its partnership with the Division of Child Protection (DCP) and the Division of Youth and Family Justice (DYFJ), as well as expanded the CARES+SKIP wraparound coaching pilot.

Finding Community in Practice Labs

Ebonie Holden is a DCP Child Protective Specialist Supervisor who lauds practice lab offerings for helping her learn and understand the value of Motivational Interviewing (MI) and the coach approach extolled in Safety Focused Coaching (SFC). Since participating in these labs, she's shifted her day-to-day practice in multiple contexts, with both families and colleagues.

The SFC and MI labs centered the importance of suspending judgment and engaging in perspective-taking, which she was able to practice each week in between lab sessions. Ebonie feels that since learning about MI, she has broader perspective and more of an open mind. The skills she's learned help her evaluate and shed her own biases to engage with colleagues more fully.

Ebonie also appreciated the sense of community that the SKIP coaches created in the labs: "When you do this work, it's like, 'Am I the only one going through this?' and the practice labs made me realize that others were going through the same things, and I wasn't alone."

National Attention for Key Partnership

Photo

OTWD staff have presented at the National Conference on Coaching in Human Services multiple times. In FY22, to highlight the importance of enhancing partnerships in shifting practice, Alexis Howard, SKIP Program Director, and Wendy

Brown, Brooklyn East Borough Commissioner for DCP, presented together – a first for the two organizations.

Discussing the need for an advanced coaching program geared for child protection supervisors at the University of California, Davis, the two shared details of their dynamic partnership with a national audience, "We were able to create a space, cultivate a growth mindset in our respective program staff and, in the process, shift the organizational culture to one that was more open and more willing to share vulnerability and engage in the learning exchange."

In a crisis-oriented environment such as child protection, time is of the essence, and is sometimes complicated by issues of domestic violence, mental health, and/or substance abuse, not to mention the secondary trauma DCP staff experience when a tragedy occurs on their watch, a heavy burden that sadly comes with the job. The two leaders built a relationship based on a shared value system as well as realness and trust in their communications. While there was an acknowledged desire to make use of advanced coaching techniques, it took respect for each other's organizational culture, building value from within their respective divisions, and readiness assessments at each touchpoint to come together in this meaningful way.

As a result of this partnership, DCP staffers across the entire city now have this advanced training.

89

**Supervisors and Managers
attended a Safety Focused
Coaching Practice Lab**

54

**Child Protective Specialists
attended a Motivational
Interviewing Practice Lab**

Wraparound Coaching

After several years of planning, the SKIP+CARES partnership was expanded in FY22. The wraparound coaching program is geared for CARES supervisors and focused on supporting DCP managers' and supervisors' transfer of learning of the Coaching Mindset and Approach in supervisory practices. The pilot intervention, held at the Bronx South Division of Child Protection in May, consisted of two-day, two-hour virtual sessions facilitated by two SKIP Coaches.

The assessment of the CARES+SKIP wraparound coaching pilot found that supervisors and managers were significantly more committed to applying the coach approach on the job after the second session. "This is an exciting datapoint and we are thrilled to expand our partnership with the CARES team and move into other boroughs," says Alexis Howard, with an eye toward FY23 and beyond.

For more perspectives on how The Office of Training and Workforce Development is shifting practice, please watch this [video](#) shared at the end of FY22 as the team was kicking off FY23.



“ We were able to create a space, cultivate a growth mindset in our respective program staff and, in the process, shift the organizational culture. ”

- Alexis Howard, SKIP Program Director &
Wendy Brown, Brooklyn East Borough
Commissioner for DCP

“Simulation exercises, held in mock apartments and courtrooms created in the training spaces, are crucial for Child Welfare staff.”

**- Cynthia Wells,
JSA Executive Director.**



Onboarding Child Welfare Staff

The Office of Training and Workforce Development expanded innovative onboarding courses to support new hires in a variety of roles, from entry-level direct care workers to prevention case planners to new supervisors. Delivered to learners first through the James Satterwhite Academy (JSA) as they start their ACS career, and then interwoven with their job duties through the Workforce Institute (WI), these programs are designed specifically for the role into which the learner is hired.

Onboarding Innovation

Out of 20 foundational courses that JSA provided in Fiscal Year 22, there are three main onboarding courses, designed specifically for Child Protective Specialists, Youth Development Specialists and Congregate Care staff.

All onboarding courses, whether child welfare or juvenile justice, include a mix of instructional methods, including case practice scenarios, role plays, simulations and/or structured on-the-job experiences. The programs bring together mandated training topics; outline policies, procedures and required practices; emphasize cross-cutting themes; and offer insight as to how one's job responsibilities interact with others in the Child Welfare system.

The result of these offerings is an increased interest from learners requesting these innovative, foundational courses, with 786 new child welfare and juvenile justice professionals completing the programs in FY22. Recruitment was higher this year, and both the Division of Child Protection (DCP) and the Division of Youth and Family Justice (DYFJ) requested additional foundational training for their existing staff who hadn't been able to take part during the last few years, due in large part to the pandemic.

Delia's YDS Journey

"I expected just another job [but] the experience was much more than just that," says Delia Pricher, a Youth Development Specialist (YDS). "Before becoming a YDS, I would volunteer at Thomas Jefferson High School in Brooklyn, assisting students with college scholarship writing and applications, resume writing and, sometimes, personal issues that may have deterred them from attending school."

Youth Development Specialists work as part of an interdisciplinary team to provide skill-based therapeutic interventions for youth involved in the juvenile justice system, including those at detention facilities. Delia says onboarding gave her the understanding and inspiration to put what she learned into action every day: "I have learned to be supportive and always remember that these kids are not inmates [but] individuals that have made mistakes and are trying to correct their wrongs."

At her cohort's graduation ceremony, Delia went on to explain how the seven weeks of onboarding exceeded her expectations and set her up for success in more than just her job duties: "I've learned techniques not only for the residents in custody but also for raising my two daughters at home."

Photo

Real-World Experience in a Safe Space

"The real-world scenarios practiced in the simulation exercises, held in mock apartments and courtrooms created in the training spaces, are crucial for Child Welfare staff to experience before they're in the middle of a situation with a family, allowing them to utilize skills learned in the training in an unscripted session, just as they would on the job," says Cynthia Wells, JSA Executive Director. "Our courses offer a safe space to consider a variety of actions and responses to determine the most optimal way forward. Ultimately, the ability to handle a sensitive situation in more mindful ways benefits children and families, as well as the ACS workforce."

JSA Trainers know firsthand what it's like trying to handle child protection situations like that in the boroughs, having spent numerous years themselves in the same or similar positions before becoming an instructor. That's why a primary focus is on engagement and assessment skills with the learners in the CPS Practice Core.

Having taken these onboarding program courses, learners are better poised to engage families with understanding and sensitivity, to build relationships with the children and families they serve as well as with colleagues, and to more confidently start their career of achieving tangible positive results for everyone in our community.

786

New Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Completions Lab

479

CPS Practice Core Completions

257

Youth Development Specialists Core Training Completions

161

FTC Integrated Learning Program Completions

161

Supervisory Core Completions

50

Children Center Core Learning Program Completions

Transition to In-Person Learning

Several years after breaking ground, Fiscal Year 2022 brought the long awaited opening of The Office of Training and Workforce Development's (OTWD's) state-of-the-art training centers. The return to in-person training was the result of careful and strategic planning. A phased-in approach was initiated to help learners re-acclimate to being in a classroom after significant time in virtual sessions due to the pandemic. The Workforce Institute sent a survey to learners to determine their feelings and concerns about returning to in-person, classroom learning. The short survey asked for feedback and suggestions to help ease the transition. Learners were re-integrated into the training rooms with reduced class sizes, and provided disposable masks, sanitizer, and additional cleaning products.

"Our focus on the return to classroom was ... providing a safe, welcoming environment for our learners and training teams," explains Mark Jamison, Deputy Director, Operations/Deputy Chief of Staff.

Courses Offered

In November 2021, the [Motivational Interviewing: Investigative Strategies \(MII\)](#) course was safely run in-person for NYPD and Division of Child Protection (DCP) learners in the newly renovated Harlem training center.

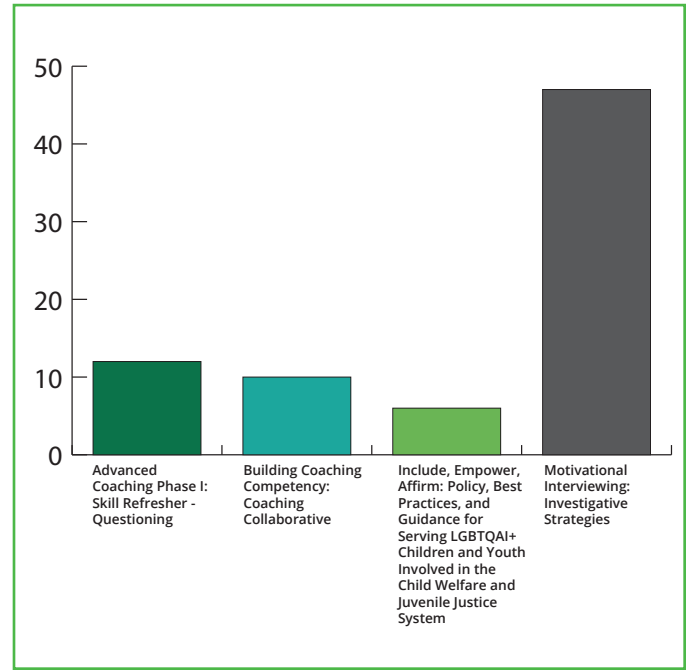
In May 2022, the Supervision and Coaching team, with the support of the Supporting Knowledge into Practice (SKIP) team, returned to offering in-person [Coaching Collaboratives](#) and [Skill Refreshers](#) once per month, the first of which were held at the Harlem training site.

The two-day pilot of the [Empower, Affirm: Policy, Best Practices and Guidance for Serving LGBTQAI+ Children and Youth Involved in the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice System](#) course also rolled out that May. The course required James Satterwhite Academy's (JSA's) Youth Development Specialists (many newly hired) to participate in simulation activities with OTWD's actors. Trainer Althea Cochran detailed the ways JSA circumvented some of the challenges that arose around the in-person training model. "Even though the work is very important, we prioritized staff and learners; we told them they had to take care of themselves first. We really saw a sense of humanity arise; people were gentler and we saw a greater sense of comradery."

Learner Responses

Seating capacity was intentionally kept low to accommodate pandemic social distancing, only offering five to seven seats per class. The MII course was initially met with mixed reviews: learners reported both some initial trepidation, as well as high engagement. Jasmin Singleton of the Workforce Institute's Learning Operations team offered qualitative data and learner reviews of the classes. She states, "While attendance started off spotty, learners are now finding that they have more opportunities in the classroom to practice in-person skills that are proving to be invaluable."

Attendance data:



Takeaways

Carolyn Rohe, Senior Director of Supervision and Coaching, says that one takeaway she observed was a positive attitude and a "hunger" for in-person learning: "Although the class sizes were smaller, the enthusiasm of the learners and facilitators was great."

Facilitators from Coaching Collaborative reported that learner engagement and participation throughout the courses were strong and learners reported feeling a high sense of community and increased confidence in using the coaching skills.

"We were able to effectively deliver material in this professional, learner-centric environment that ACS created. The training spaces are nice and there's value in going back. There's also value in the virtual environment; right now we're finding that balance," explains Daniel Siford, Senior Facilitator with Learning Operations.

Going forward into FY23, the state-of-the-art training centers will continue to welcome more learners into the classrooms, providing that right balance of in-person and virtual learning opportunities.

**“ Although the class sizes were smaller,
the enthusiasm of the learners and
facilitators was great. ”**

- Carolyn Rohe,
Senior Director of Supervision and Coaching



“ We want to build an organizational culture that feels safe for all ... an atmosphere where everyone feels safe to discuss challenges and vulnerabilities within the system. ”

- ACS Commissioner
David Hansell (2017-2022)



How We Drive Organizational Change

The Office of Training and Workforce Development (OTWD) is undertaking organizational change in a number of ways, including psychological skills/emotional intelligence and strengths-finding exercises. But its most intensive efforts involve the adoption of two leading edge initiatives — Reflective Process (RP) and Safety Culture — and the customization of them to best suit the needs of its staff and the wider ACS community. These widely respected programs for staff well-being and effectiveness both ask, “What can we improve?” rather than, “Whom can we blame?” Both share the vision for all staff to feel respected and appreciated. Both empower teams to work better together against racism and oppression within systems. Both foster an atmosphere where everyone feels safe to discuss challenges and vulnerabilities within the system without fear of retaliation.

Reflective Process (RP) meetings are held bi-weekly, facilitated by an external consultant, [the Village RDI™](#) (Race, Diversity & Intersectionality) Reflective Process.

[Safety Culture orientation sessions](#) are held on an ongoing basis. A new eLearning course, [Embracing a Safety Science Culture](#), focuses on accountability and the underlying systemic factors that are often present when adverse events occur. Local action teams (LATs) throughout ACS are testing activities and practices to help implement Safety Culture.

Roots and Customization for OTWD

Reflective Process (RP) is widely used in social service, health, education, and mental health settings. Studies have shown that it supports decision making that leads to positive outcomes for people served. For OTWD staff, RP sessions take place in emotionally supportive and accountable spaces. Staff are encouraged to discuss systemic racism and oppression — and the impact on self, colleagues, clients, and the community. OTWD has adopted RP and customized it as a unique model, to include issues of equity across race, diversity and intersectionality. Positive relationships among staff are at its core.

Safety Culture has its roots in safety science, long used in healthcare, commercial aviation and nuclear power industries. All these industries operate with high risks to worker health and safety, along with high consequences to human life or quality of life when things go wrong. Child welfare is the same. Its workers face the risk of their own physical and emotional trauma, operating in an often-hostile environment of child abuse and maltreatment. Their case outcomes are also high consequence, profoundly affecting the lives and quality of life for themselves and their clients.

OTWD has taken a proactive position in creating a Safety Culture. In 2018, then-Commissioner David Hansell (2017-2022) underscored the importance of improvement over blame:

“We want to build an organizational culture that feels safe for all ... an atmosphere where everyone feels safe to discuss challenges and vulnerabilities within the system.”

Safety Culture is a visible example of organizational change. ACS Associate Commissioner Cheryl Beamon acknowledges that organizational change is a process that requires humility and ongoing commitment to a variety of actions and conversations.

“We recognize that a strong organization supports its staff to allow them to be more effective and stronger at their jobs,” says Beamon, “And that support in turn also helps to drive our agency with our families.”

The foundation of this work is the [ACS Safety Culture Framework](#), which describes the eight core elements customized to drive Safety Culture in OTWD and throughout ACS. The Framework also highlights OTWD’s commitment to equity and anti-racism.

The Impact of RP and Safety Culture

For Sabrina Toledo, Community Coordinator, Policy, Planning and Measurement:

“Reflective Process influences how I bring together my now and there ... my evolvment tool. I use it to elicit introspective wonder and reflective learning. To balance the contextualization in diversity and to support one’s lived experiences.”

For Jing (Chelsea) Zhang, Deputy Director of Budget and Scope Management, RP sessions are a powerful means to connect with colleagues and continue to be “an eye-opening experience”. She appreciates the chance to absorb the perspectives of colleagues from diverse backgrounds. She is losing her reluctance to speak up in meetings, encouraged by respect and lack of judgment during RP sessions.

Successful Rollouts in FY22

RP sessions have been rolled out and all Workforce Institute and James Satterwhite Academy (JSA) staff have been given the opportunity to enroll and participate in any of these 90-minute sessions that suit their schedule.

140

Staff Participated
in 122 Sessions

1600+

Attended these
Sessions Across ACS

19

Safety Culture
Orientation
Sessions

5

Local Action Teams
Are Operating
Throughout ACS

120

Staff Introduced
to The Concepts
and Principles

447

Learners Completed
Embracing a
Safety Science Culture

[1] [Using Safety Science to Improve Child Welfare Systems \(imprintnews.org\) 8/16/2022](#)

[2] [ACS - Public Testimonies \(nyc.gov\)](#)

A Deeper Understanding

The Office of Training and Workforce Development (OTWD) continually seeks to better understand learners' needs and, based on the responses, to implement best practices in educational training. With an eye toward innovation for Fiscal Year 2022, the organization's leadership committed to being open to change.

"One silver lining of the pandemic is that it forced us all to be more introspective about what we do and how we do it," says Charlene Armstrong, Workforce Institute Program Director. "We stepped back to look at what we do well and where there's room for improvement. We developed a deeper understanding of our learners to grasp their needs, making necessary adjustments that included more detailed simulations, usability enhancements for online tools, continued progression of our evaluation method, and new equipment. These innovations will help to move our learners into a deeper understanding of the important information our courses contain."

Learner and Facilitators

Daniel Siford, Senior Facilitator with Learning Operations, states that the in-person pilot of the [Include, Empower, Affirm: Policy, Best Practices And Guidance For Serving LGBTQAI+ Children And Youth Involved In The Child Welfare And Juvenile Justice System](#) course included learners wearing masks and observing social distancing, and that all learners were fully invested in the training.

[The Motivational Interviewing: Investigative Strategies \(MII\)](#) course offers learners, including those from NYPD and the Division of Child Protection (DCP), the opportunity to work through the life of a case. During its FY22 sessions, learners practiced organizing and synthesizing available information to rule in, rule out, or create hypotheses about child welfare situations — rather than judging these through the lens of absolute guilt or innocence. Attendance and scheduling were challenges due to the often-erratic schedules of law enforcement and child protection staff. However, learners were actively engaged, and the partnership will look to overcome some operational scheduling challenges to roll it out to more learners in coming years.

"There are benefits to the hybrid model that have allowed trainings to continue despite the world around us," states JSA trainer Althea Cochran. The platform provides every learner to take the course and ingest the content in ways that allow for flexibility with their other duties, commitments and challenges, she acknowledges. "On the other hand, the in-person, tactile model works best for some."

When asked about the reaction to the in-person simulations, Althea explained that learners reported feeling that this part of the training is crucial, and they would like more of it. Overall, she beamed with pride that the hands-on portions of the JSA trainings, especially the simulations, are able to answer many of the learners' questions, including "what-if" situations like encountering people who refuse to talk, extreme emotional reactions, or dogs in the home.

Enhancements and Their Functioning

The Union Hall site in Queens and the 125th Street site in Manhattan offer in-person programming for learners from all

five boroughs in classrooms rebuilt as part of a multi-million-dollar state-of-the-art renovation.

The Union Hall site features 27,000 square feet of training and simulation space, including ten classrooms, a mock courtroom, two simulation apartments, and a flexible simulation space. The 125th Street site features 4,000 square feet of training and simulation space, including two classrooms, a simulation apartment, and a flexible simulation space. Both spaces have advanced audiovisual equipment.

Learners, facilitators and other spectators attending classes in these training facilities are treated to the innovative learning experiences. In fact, [NBC's News 4 New York](#) took their cameras inside to showcase the facilities.

Cornestone Upgrades

In addition to improving the physical classrooms, OTWD increased the usability and standardization of Cornerstone, the online learning management system (LMS). Now, individual welcome pages are displayed based on a learner's profile, with transcripts and training plans.

"It's a different look and feel because each service has differing requirements," explains Selina Johnson, Deputy Director of LMS Administration and Technology Management. "I think the updates made it easier for learners to navigate through Cornerstone, providing them a road map to what they needed to complete for that fiscal year."

Kirkpatrick Model

Another way OTWD delved deeper into understanding learners is the expansion of the evaluation method for courses to ensure knowledge gains are established and sustained. The evaluation team uses the Kirkpatrick model, which outlines four distinct levels of learning outcomes: Satisfaction (Level 1), Knowledge (Level 2), Application (Level 3), and Impact (Level 4).

Satisfaction checks are the degree to which learners find the training favorable and relevant to their jobs. Knowledge checks are the degree to which learners acquire the intended knowledge. In FY22, the evaluation team built upon the Level 1 evaluations to add Level 2, and prepared to implement Levels 3 and 4 down the line. Now, pre-and post-tests are administered for every continuing education learning program, to test knowledge prior to the training and knowledge acquired after taking the course.



Photo

“ We found that the updates made it easier for learners to navigate through Cornerstone, providing them a road map to what they needed to complete for that fiscal year. ”

- Selina Johnson,
Deputy Director of LMS Administration
and Technology Management





“ The PDP program has been an unbelievable once in a lifetime experience that has given me the opportunity to expand my horizons.

”

- Tamara Pyatetskaya,
co-authored a chapter with
Marciana L. Popescu and Patricia Brownell,
“Violence Against Women and Girls Across the Lifespan”

Professional Development Program

The Workforce Institute's Professional Development Program (PDP) celebrated many successes and developments in Fiscal Y22, including globally visible publications from graduates, successful hosting of events and celebrations, ACS scholarship awards, and several graduates promoted to supervisory positions shortly after completion of the PDP program.

PDP continues to be at the forefront of support for ACS staff in their professional development, creating opportunities for the integration of knowledge into practice and strengthening child welfare practice throughout New York City. The PDP team is honored and privileged to serve in the roles of social work educators, coaches, and supporters of our staff. These staff members commit to their professional growth at ACS by continuing their professional development and completing their undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Featured On The World Stage

PDP graduates Odetta Saul and Tamara Pyatetskaya co-authored chapters in "Behavioral Science in the Global Arena: Global Health Trends and Issues", published in 2022 as part of the Psychology Coalition at the United Nations (PCUN) series, which describes how evidence-based behavioral research is increasingly used by United Nations and other decision-makers to address global issues.

Odetta Saul, who is a Child Protective Specialist and current student at Fordham University's Graduate School of Social Service, also co-authored a chapter with Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Anne Isom-Williams, "Racism and Mental Health: An Overview", as well as another chapter with Daniel LeBlanc and Shenae C. Osborn, "Spiritual Health for Christians and Jews: Seeking God".

Additionally, Tamara Pyatetskaya co-authored a chapter with Marciana L. Popescu and Patricia Brownell, "Violence Against Women and Girls Across the Lifespan".

Celebrations, Collaborations, and Developments

PDP coordinated and hosted a Social Work Month celebration in March 2022. The event, which honored the social work profession and acknowledged the many contributions social workers at ACS make daily was open to everyone from the agency. The theme for this year's celebration was "The Time is ALWAYS Right for Social Work". The program highlighted social workers from various areas of ACS who shared their narratives and the impact made in the lives of the people served, celebrating victories along the way.

Commissioner Jess Dannhauser, Deputy Commissioner William Fletcher, and Deputy Commissioner Andrew White all remarked that given the complex challenges many face daily now more than ever, social workers are needed to provide the necessary support and direction to bridge gaps and build community. The event provided opportunities for participants to learn from experienced field instructors, MSW interns, and each other as they engaged in break-out sessions. These sessions included: The Impact of Mentorship, Sharing our Narratives, Advocacy-Mobilizing Change, The Legacy of Social Work with Families and Children, Engaging the Community, What's on Your Mind, and Self-Care. The many gifts and talents of our social workers were

celebrated, and they were inspired to continue to engage in best practices and advocate for equity and social justice for all. Retired field instructors Kelly Acevedo and Cyllvia Springer were recognized and honored for their many years of service as PDP field instructors.

In June 2022, PDP hosted a virtual Celebration of Success to celebrate the educational achievements of 44 ACS staff members who graduated with their master's degrees in Social Work, Criminal Justice and Public Administration.

Finally, 26 attended the annual International Association of Social Work with Groups (IASWG) symposium and 52 attended the annual National Association of Social Workers (NASW) conference.

PDP entered into a new partnership with CUNY SPS and held informational sessions for the school's newly launched BSW in Youth Studies program.

PDP also hosted four LMSW test preparation workshops in which 157 staff members participated and many received their licensure after completing the workshop.

**ACS Staff
Supported
in FY22:**

65
Program
Participants

**Total Degrees
Supported:**

44
Graduates

Total numbers of each degree earned:

41

MSW

1

Masters in
Criminal Justice

2

Masters in
Public Administration

Field Placements:

40

ACS PDP MSW Placements
38 are Advanced Level

2

Non-ACS BSW Placements

Scholarships Awarded:

40

FY22 Scholarships awarded for a
total amount of \$522,010.94

351

scholarships awarded for a
total amount of \$4,215,548.22

Overall Impact

Learning Programs

Staff members are culturally diverse, experienced and highly qualified to provide professional development opportunities to direct service staff and supervisors.



29,875

Total Learner
Participation



11,477

Total Individual
Learners



1,283

JSA Total
Individual Learners



10,194

WI Total
Learners



28,592

WI Total
Learner Participation

Advisory Group Meetings



11

Meetings

Our Team



106

CUNY SPS
Staff



24

WI ACS
Staff



43

JSA Full-time Trainers
and Support Staff



22

Silberman
Staff



19

Consultant
Trainers



11

Consultant
Actors

