

**OCFS-Funded Community Reinvestment Programs
Need for Continued Funding for FY2014**

**Prepared and Submitted to the New York State Joint Legislature
Executive Budget Hearing on Human Services, February 5, 2013 by:
Good Shepherd Services
Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services (CASES)
Fund for the City of NY/Center for court Innovation
Berkshire Farm Center and Services for Youth
Hope for Youth
Hillside Children's Center**

In March of 2012, I wasn't doing so well on probation and was referred to the Brooklyn LIFE program. At that point, I was fed up with all the programs, supervision, counseling and "help". I'm in foster care and have been since 2010. I've had a hard time adjusting to the changes in my life and for a long time I was angry, angry at the world and everyone in it. I felt like nobody can help me, I was moving from house to house, losing friends and with my whole family mad at me I had no one to turn to, no sense of stability in my life. I had no guidance aside from my own. I stood mostly to myself, I didn't trust anyone, and I thought everyone was the same, here for me one day then turn on me the next. When I was told I would have to be in a program along with other kids I was very upset, I hated being in groups because I was so shy and felt like I didn't need any counseling. I just overall hated speaking my mind to others; it wasn't like they would care about me anyways no one does.

For a while I stood to myself during the time I spent in program, but the staff kept trying to reach out to me. I'm glad they never stopped, I guess secretly that's what I wanted, someone that would keep trying to reach me and not give up when I was too difficult to let them in. After a few months of "fighting" I finally gave in and opened up, I felt like these were genuine people who I could trust. The staff at LIFE actually did whatever they could to help me in any way possible and they were always there for me. I finally felt like I had something I didn't know I needed, Support. Along with the support I was cared for. They never failed to let me know that they were there for me, whether it was an occasional phone call to check up on me, or something bigger like accompanying me to a court date. At program, I didn't feel like such a loner anymore, this now became my second home. I'm always welcomed with open arms when I come to program, I can even go to the office on days there isn't group just to talk or have somewhere quiet to do assignments and have help with it. They helped me so much I cannot even begin to thank each and every one of them enough.

Without the Brooklyn LIFE program I can't even imagine where I'd be at this moment. I admit, before program, I was on a path to self destruction. They helped me to a different direction. They helped me get back into school, twice. They helped me during court and they also helped me with the bunch of foster parents I went through. They were always here when I needed someone to talk and gain advice from. It was hard work, but I did it. I completed probation, I'm in A GED School, I'm in a stable foster home, and I even have a part time job. I honestly can't see myself being able to achieve all of that without the help, support, and care of the caseworkers at LIFE. Imagine who else LIFE could help, but if the program closes down no one would ever know.

Kimberly Williams, a 17 year old LIFE participant.
February 4, 2013

Background:

In order to help reach young people in New York State like Kimberly, OCFS awarded in April 2010, 6 organizations (7 county programs) Community Reinvestment funds for preventive services targeted to youth at risk of juvenile justice involvement or placement and their families in counties with the highest rates of court-ordered placements. The program was intended as a continuation of New York State's efforts to transform its juvenile justice system, consistent with recommendations from the State's Juvenile Justice Reform Task Force. The program was intended to help young people just like Kimberly obtain stability and a promising future.

The original Community Reinvestment contract award was approximately **\$5 million** through federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) money. The contracts are performance-based and identify specific goals for served youth which include the prevention of: placement, re-arrest, missed court hearings, pregnancy or impregnating, gang involvement, and school truancy. The contracts were signed and began to go in effect in early 2011.

The contracted awards were drastically reduced for FY13 to \$1.76 million. Providers were forced to significantly reduce services to youth who are in tremendous need of support and preventive services to divert them from the juvenile justice system. It is imperative to youth and families that the Community Reinvestment funding be restored to the original allocation of \$5 million for seven high-need New York counties. As you will see from the following details of this paper, the Community Reinvestment funded programs have shown tremendously successful outcomes in engaging youth, diverting them from detention, preventing re-arresting, preventing gang involvement, and improving school attendance among other outcomes.

The following are programs that received awards with initial and current funding:

- Bronx: Good Shepherd Services \$595,000 (initial); \$322,904 for FY13.
- Brooklyn: Good Shepherd Services \$595,000 (initial); \$268,490 for FY13.
- Manhattan: Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services \$589,653
- Queens: Fund for the City of NY/Center for Court Innovation \$518,500 (initial); \$273,181 for FY13
- Nassau County: Berkshire Farm Center & Services for Youth \$484,044
- Suffolk County: Hope for Youth \$593,988
- Monroe County: Hillside Children's Center \$595,000 (initial); \$343K for an 8 month period (7/1 thru 2/28/13).

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. In November 2011, programs began receiving letters from OCFS notifying them that their contracts for these programs would not be renewed after one year due to lack of funding, however approximately 40% of the funding was continued. At this time, there is no commitment to continue the funding and programs are beginning to be notified that funding will be terminated between March and June.

Attached is a brief summary of each program and some encouraging data on the outcomes to date.

Overview of the Programs:

1 & 2: Good Shepherd Services Serving Brooklyn and the Bronx (known as LIFE)

Brooklyn: Contract term: 6/1/12 through 5/31/13

Bronx: Contract term: 6/1/12 through 5/31/13

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 the 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.

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

- Diversion from Detention = 100% FY12; 100% FY13 Q1 and Q2
- Prevention of re-arrest = 87% FY 12; 89% FY13 Q1 and Q2
- Prevention of failure to appear = 96% FY12; 93% FY13 Q1 and Q2
- Prevention of pregnancy/impregnation = 100% FY12; 100% FY13 Q1 and Q2
- Reduction in gang involvement = 71% FY12; 94% FY13 Q1 and Q2
- Improvement in School Attendance = 69% FY12; 82% FY13 Q1 and Q2

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.

3. Hope For Youth Program Serving Suffolk County

Hope For Youth was awarded a 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 first year of the program began on September 1, 2011 and ran through August 31st 2012. The Suffolk County Department of Probation is the sole referral source to the program and in year one, 40 youth who were considered moderate or high risk for OCFS placement received evidence based Multi-Dimensional Family Therapy clinical and case management services. 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.

During the program's first year 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. Specifically, of the 40 youth participating in the program, 90% participated in positive youth development and reduced their involvement in criminal and gang affiliated activities, 82.5% showed an improvement in school attendance, 97.5% appeared for court as scheduled, 90% of the youth avoided arrest, and to our knowledge 100% of the youth did not engage in a relationship that resulted in a pregnancy while participating in CRP. Of the forty youth served, 95% were maintained at home and were not placed by the court.

There are many elements specific to CRP that contributes to successful outcomes for youth and families. 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.

During the February break from school participants traveled to NYC via the LIRR to visit the Museum of Natural History. This experience was filled with many firsts, as many of the youth had never been on a train, to NYC or to a museum. The youth also participated in an Earth Day celebration at the main office during April break and worked in the YES community garden to plant vegetables. Staff guided youth to use their energy to build a harvest and helped to develop an appreciation for nature. During the summer several youth were both counselors and participants at a day camp sponsored by YES; this kept them positively entertained and involved in the community. These are a few examples

of how CRP strives to provide positive youth development, recreational activities and work readiness to the youngsters.

The program has continuously collaborated with its partners in probation and other youth organizations to ensure that youth remain both accountable and connected to their communities. The success of this program has not only helped to keep families and children together, but also provided a significant cost savings to the County.

4. Berkshire Farm Center Program Serving Nassau County

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 Hempstead, Roosevelt, Freeport and Elmont. 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.

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.

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.

5. Hillside Children's Center's Program Serving Monroe County

Contract term: 3/1/12 - 2/28/13 to serve 60 youth residing in OCFS identified, inner-city zip codes in Monroe County. Due to a delay in receiving the contract, enrollment under the contract did not begin until 7/1/12. Hillside received a letter of termination from OCFS in November, 2012, effective February 28, 2013.

Hillside's program provides three to five months of service to each identified youth, ages 11-15, who 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 Probation Department's Risk Assessment Instrument.

Each youth referred to Hillside is assigned a case manager who coordinates and arranges community based supports for the youth and his/her family. Hillside contracts with full time staff located within each of three neighborhoods based Recreation Centers, also known as Anchor Sites. The full time staff is known as Community Asset Navigators; (CAN). They navigate the neighborhood for supports, preferably natural, for the families that will sustain them after their term of enrollment with RIY. Also on the service team is an educational specialist 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 seven agencies.

Outcomes data for Hillside's program is quite positive. Of all youth served, only 5 have entered placement, 8 were re-arrested, 2 fail to appear, 0 were impregnated, or became pregnant, 0 gang involvement, and 41% improved in school. Overall compliance is very positive for all youth in these mid to high risk neighborhoods. This data reflects the contract period, 3/1/12 to 2/28/13, with an actual start date of 7/1/12, 53 youth served to date, show the following outcomes:

- Diversion from Detention=91%
- Prevention of re-arrest=86%
- Prevention of failure to appear= 97%
- Prevention of pregnancy/impregnation=100%
- Prevention of gang involvement=100%
- Improvement in School Attendance=41%

One significant difference in this program is the collaborative agreements Hillside has with the neighborhood Recreation Centers/Anchor Sites in the youths' neighborhoods with ongoing support from the Recreation Centers, Community Consortium-(collaboration of community leaders, agencies, etc. meet once a month), and local Safety Nets, where positive natural resources are built & sustained.

6. Center for Court Innovation's Program Serving Queens

The Center for Court Innovation's QUEST – Queens Engagement Strategies for Teens – program provides an alternative-to-detention, alternative-to- placement and mental health care coordination program to youths 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: 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 year two, QUEST's enhanced services included only the educational and vocational/career counseling services, dedicated Functional Family Therapy slots and pregnancy prevention

programming. While the pregnancy prevention workshop continues on weekly basis, the remaining enhanced services are offered in a reduced amount in year two.

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 10 months.

The OCFS contract for QUEST became effective on July 15, 2011. Between July 15, 2011 and January 14, 2013, OCFS funds supported services for **154 new QUEST enrollees** in the target groups listed in the chart below.

	Receive enhanced services	Receive enhanced services plus Futures (mental health services)
QUEST ATD (moderate risk, pre-adjudication)	56	34
High risk, pre-adjudication youths	3	3
Post-disposition alternative-to placement youths (facing VOP or at risk of VOP)	26	7
Futures only, pre-adjudication, low or moderate risk	-	19
Futures only, post-disposition, not at risk of VOP	-	6
Total	85	69

Of the 154 new enrollees, 13 were terminated upon remand. 93 cases have been closed with the youth being maintained in the community, for a total of 106 case closings. Forty-eight cases remain open.

7. CASES Program Serving Manhattan

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 City of New York, and enhanced by a contract with the 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.

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 offers all participants "Baby Think it Over," a

research-based pregnancy prevention program; 100% of participants exit the program without expecting a child. Choices ATD participants recently contributed to a beautification project by partnering with Art Start (an organization that uses art education to promote creativity and personal development) to decorate the walls of Union Settlement's outdoor enclosed garden. Additionally, a new project was added this year in conjunction with the Teachers College of Columbia University: The Reimagining Futures Project. The Reimagining Futures Project gives participants the opportunity to share their story through traditional and multimedia narratives that encourage individual expression and self-exploration.

The program currently integrates after-school activities (case management, sports, counseling, educational trips), structured community supervision, and legal education for both the youth and their families to form a comprehensive, case-specific plan best suited to each participants' needs. 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.

The outcomes of the City and State contracts show that 95% of program-enrolled youth avoid state placement at disposition. There is a 32% reduction in participants who are re-arrested and a 47% reduction in participants for whom a warrant is issued as compared to their risk levels determined by RAI scores. Through strong partnerships and CASES' proven experience and reputation both inside and outside the courthouse, Choices ATD successfully continues to promote community-based alternatives to detention for the youngest and most vulnerable population in Manhattan.