



# ISSUES FACING NEW YORK CITY'S AGENCIES: ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

## Overview

The Administration for Children's Services (ACS) is charged with overseeing New York City's child welfare, juvenile justice, and early care and education services. Child welfare includes investigating allegations of abuse and neglect and managing foster care placement and crisis prevention programs for families. In juvenile justice, ACS provides family support services and secure and non-secure detention for youths whose cases are pending in family or criminal courts. For early care and education, ACS provides child care assistance to income-eligible families. ACS's Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 budget totals \$2.7 billion, comprising federal (37.8 percent), City (36.4 percent) and State (25.8 percent) funding sources.

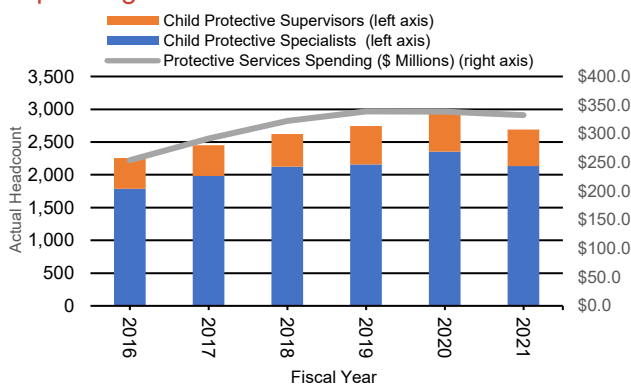
## Pandemic Impact on Agency Operations

ACS has reported sharp declines in service levels during the COVID-19 pandemic. As schools operated remotely, the number of abuse and neglect reports from school staff and other mandated reporters slowed, resulting in fewer ACS investigations. Child care voucher enrollment also declined in this period, from 64,324 in FY 2020 to 50,266 in FY 2021, due in part to program closures and parents' decisions not to send children to child care. Total admissions to detention also declined, from 1,442 in FY 2020 to 987 in FY 2021.

## ISSUES FACING THE AGENCY

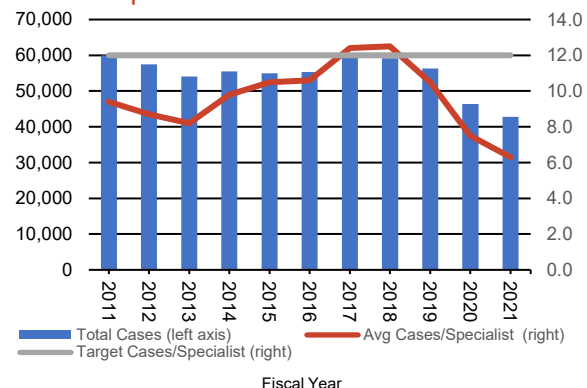
- School & Court Closures and Reopening:** Legal advocates have expressed concern that there could have been an increase in undetected abuse cases while at-home learning was in place. Family courts were also suspended or kept limited operations throughout the pandemic, to which ACS has attributed a number of unexpected changes in agency performance indicators, including longer length of stay at detention facilities.
- Staffing Levels and Caseloads:** The City announced child welfare reform measures following a highly publicized death of a child in October 2016. As part of these efforts, ACS increased the number of child protective specialists and supervisors by almost 20 percent from FY 2017 to FY 2020 (see Figure 1). As the number of reported cases fell significantly during the pandemic, the average caseload per worker also declined, to 7.5 cases in FY 2020 and 6.2 cases in FY 2021 as compared to the agency target of 12.0 (see Figure 2). As schools return to normal operations, the number of reported cases may rise again. Staffing levels will need to be closely monitored going forward to ensure that resources are commensurate with service need.

**FIGURE 1**  
Child Protective Services - Staffing and Spending



Source: NYC Office of Management and Budget. Actual headcount taken from March or April of each fiscal year as available in budget supporting schedules.

**FIGURE 2**  
Cases and Caseloads for Child Protective Specialists



Source: NYC Mayor's Management Report. Cases are equal to the number of State Central Register consolidated investigations.