

# DAILY NEWS

## Opinion

### Support NYC families and keep kids safe

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In creating a new Mayoral Office of Community Safety, Mayor Mamdani has taken a major step toward reshaping policing. The Office will respond to certain non-violent emergencies and strengthen the social safety net to prevent crises before they happen.

That same approach is exactly what we and many other advocates have called for in “family policing” – how the City intervenes in families with the intention of keeping children safe.

While the Administration for Children's Services' (ACS) goal is to keep children safe and support families, too often family hardship and poverty trigger harrowing investigations and family separations that rarely provide the support a family needs.

These interventions cause lasting harm and disproportionately affect low-income Black and Latinx families. Shockingly, [nearly 45%](#) of Black and Latinx children in New York City will experience an ACS investigation by age 18, compared to 19% of White children. Families describe these investigations as deeply traumatic – warrantless home entries, invasive searches, even body inspections of their children. Months of follow-up interviews often force parents to miss work.

Yet [nearly 80%](#) of cases are not substantiated. Out of [50,000](#) annual ACS investigations, [fewer than 7%](#) result in court filings alleging wrongdoing. Tens of thousands are resolved simply by helping parents access support. Paradoxically, [Black parents](#) who face investigations are less likely to seek supportive services and more likely to be separated from their children.

Separating children from their families can cause [lifelong consequences](#): increased risks of attachment disorders, mental and physical health challenges, and substance use. Fear of these humiliating investigations and child removal discourages families from seeking the support they need – making the system not only harmful, but counterproductive.

The administration's plan to establish an Office of Community Safety takes a prevention-first, community based approach to improving public safety. This same logic must now be applied to how the city approaches strengthening families and keeping children safe.

That's why we are advocating to create an Office of Family Well-Being to help enhance family safety and security, improve children's health and wellness across their life span, close gaps that lead to family crises and reduce ACS intervention, and contribute to community safety. Like the city's community violence-prevention work, the office would focus on neighborhood-based supports that keep children safe by preventing family challenges from becoming crises.

An Office of Family Well-Being would coordinate family support services separate from ACS. The same entity tasked with investigating families cannot also be responsible for providing support; separating these functions is essential to building trust and removing a major barrier that prevents families from reaching out for help.

Graham's role within the system as an ACS foster care and family services provider gives us insights into both the system's goals and the harms it can cause. Our experience has made clear that separating community-based support from ACS is essential to truly supporting families.

This office would invest in trusted organizations that families rely on, prioritizing peer-based models and culturally responsive services. Research [shows](#) that children are safer when families have access to stable housing, adequate income, quality childcare, health care, and strong social networks – resources the office could connect to families in need.

The city already spends enormous sums responding to crises after they occur, while underfunding efforts to address the underlying challenges faced by low-income Black and Latinx families. Redirecting crisis intervention toward prevention and family well-being would [save millions](#) and prevent harm. As Mamdani stands up the Mayoral Office of Community Safety – and continues to plan for a larger investment in a new Department – this new Office of Family Well-Being should be part of that planning.

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