



Advocates for Children of New York

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News Release

For Immediate Release

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New Data Analysis Shows Racial Disparities in Schools' Response to Students in Emotional Crisis

Students as Young as 5 Handcuffed and Transported to Emergency Room

November 2, 2017 (NEW YORK CITY) — Today, Advocates for Children of New York (AFC) is releasing a brief analyzing data reported by the New York City Police Department (NYPD) showing that Black students are significantly over-represented in NYPD “child in crisis” interventions – incidents involving students in emotional distress sent to the hospital for psychological evaluation. The new data brief, entitled ***Children in Crisis: Police Response to Students in Emotional Distress***, scrutinizes data made public as part of 2015 amendments to the Student Safety Act that require reporting of enhanced information on police activities involving students in New York City public schools. The brief examines the demographic characteristics of students involved in child in crisis interventions, as well as the NYPD’s use of handcuffs on students as young as 5 years old during these incidents between July 2016 and June 2017.

AFC’s analysis notes that 95% of the 2,702 child in crisis interventions involved students of color. About half (49.6%) of these interventions involved Black students, even though Black students comprised only about 26.5% of students in city schools. The data also indicates that Black students in emotional distress are more likely to be handcuffed than any other group: Black students involved in child in crisis interventions were handcuffed 15.2% of the time, ahead of Latino/a students (10.4%), White students (7.9%), and Asian/Pacific Islander students (1.4%). Indeed, Black students accounted for 61.8% of students handcuffed during this type of intervention. Students of color accounted for 100% of students handcuffed at ages 12 and under.

In all, 1,295 of the 2,702 (48%) child in crisis interventions reported in this period involved elementary school-aged students (12 and under). Police used restraints during 84 of these interventions, handcuffing children as young as 5 years old.

“Kids need to receive mental health support, not to be treated like criminals,” says **Kim Sweet, AFC’s Executive Director**. “The reliance on police to address students in emotional crisis has significant negative consequences for all students, especially students of color.”

Dawn Yuster, Project Director of AFC’s School Justice Project and one of the primary authors of the report, says, “New York City must realign its resources to reflect the critical need to appropriately support students in emotional crisis. Clinically trained mental health professionals, and not law enforcement, are best positioned to assess and address the needs of students in emotional distress, without escalating the situation or further traumatizing students.”

Based on the data, the paper recommends that the City, the NYC Department of Education (DOE), and the NYPD undertake the following initial steps:

- Fund and provide clinically trained mental health professionals to address students in emotional crisis
- Provide school staff with appropriate crisis de-escalation training and resources and monitor implementation
- Conduct individual behavioral assessments and provide individualized supports and interventions
- Fund the expansion of school-wide and district-wide evidenced-based approaches to address student behaviors and improve school climate including restorative practices, Collaborative Problem Solving, and trauma-informed approaches
- Establish and maintain inter-agency information sharing to report data disaggregated by disability status while strictly preserving student confidentiality
- Hold a City Council hearing on policing and mental health in schools
- Revise the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the NYPD and DOE to significantly limit the role of law enforcement when students are in emotional crisis

Read full report at http://www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/children_in_crisis.pdf.

About Advocates for Children of New York (AFC)

Since 1971, Advocates for Children of New York has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds who are at greatest risk for failure or discrimination in school because of their poverty, disability, race, ethnicity, immigrant or English Language Learner status, sexual orientation, gender identity, homelessness, or involvement in the foster care or juvenile justice systems. AFC uses four integrated strategies: free advice and legal representation for families of students; free trainings and workshops for parents, communities, and educators and other professionals to equip them to advocate on behalf of students; policy advocacy to effect change in the education system and improve education outcomes; and impact litigation to protect the right to quality education and compel needed reform.

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