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*****For Immediate Release*****

Brooklyn Defenders and JMACforFamilies Launch Public Awareness Campaign to Educate Families on Their Rights When Facing Investigation by the Administration for Children’s Services

(BROOKLYN, NY) – Brooklyn Defender Services and Just Making a Change for Families (JMACforFamilies) launched a public awareness campaign to inform families about their rights when facing investigation by the Administration for Children’s Services (“ACS”). For eight weeks, the campaign will reach New Yorkers inside MTA buses across Brooklyn, including communities that are heavily targeted by ACS, like Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brownsville, East Flatbush, and East New York.

The campaign highlights four critical rights that parents should be aware of during an investigation by ACS. It also directs people to www.yourfamilyyourrights.org, an advocacy and education website created by Brooklyn Defenders and community stakeholders. The campaign aims to support families who may be investigated by ACS by empowering them with information that can help them make informed decisions that are best for their children.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: PROTECT YOUR FAMILY FROM SEARCHES BY THE ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES.

1. You do **NOT** have to let ACS into your home.
2. You **HAVE** the right to speak with an attorney.
3. You do **NOT** have to answer ACS’s questions; anything you say can be used against you.
4. You do **NOT** have to let ACS speak to or strip search your children.

Get informed, get help, and get involved at www.YourFamilyYourRights.org




Scan this code to learn your rights and find free legal resources in your borough.
Or visit www.YourFamilyYourRights.org

JMACFORFAMILIES
JUST MAKING A CHANGE FOR FAMILIES
JMACforFamilies.org

Brooklyn Defenders
BDS.org

[View campaign art.](#)

“When I was investigated by ACS as a young mother, the lack of knowledge about my rights led to my children being separated from me,” **said Joyce McMillan, Founder and Executive Director of JMACforFamilies.** “But it also led me to become an advocate who will always work to ensure that families are empowered with necessary information that will support them to keep their family whole, healthy, happy, and thriving. This campaign does just that.”

“Far too often, families endure invasive ACS investigations without knowledge of their rights and without legal assistance, leaving parents and their children misled and traumatized,” **said Nila Natarajan, Associate Director of Policy & Family Defense, Brooklyn Defenders.** “As public defenders working with parents, we have seen that when parents know their rights and have early access to counsel, families have a greater chance of remaining together, are better able to access supportive resources, and stay out of family court. With this campaign, we hope to empower parents with information about their rights, limit the harm of ACS investigations, and ultimately keep families together.”

Background on Your Family, Your Rights

YourFamilyYourRights.org is an advocacy and education website, created in collaboration with a steering committee of advocates and focus groups of parents, that is designed to inform parents who are being investigated by ACS of their rights and how to navigate an investigation; help parents to connect with legal advocates to guide parents through the investigation process; and to provide information on how to get involved with other parents who have been impacted by the family policing system and are working to change it.

In New York City, ACS investigates about 60,000 reports of alleged child maltreatment and abuse every year, of which 70% are later deemed “unfounded.” The vast majority of these investigations involve Black, Latine and low-income families. Parents describe visits in the middle of the night, full body checks of their children, and feeling coerced into agreeing to services, drug tests, and mental health evaluations in order to prevent their children from being taken away; all without ever having been advised about what their rights are during this frightening process. Tens of thousands of families are needlessly subjected to invasive and traumatic investigations. With knowledge about the law and how to navigate the system, parents will have the information they need to make the best choices for their family.

YourFamilyYourRights.org is intended to empower and support families navigating ACS investigation by arming them with information and a clearer understanding of what an investigation is, so that they can have more control over the situation when they are dealing with ACS. BDS and the organizations and individual parents who lent their experience, expertise and time to help develop this online resource, created this website so all parents in New York have access to critical information about their rights during and after an ACS investigation.

Brooklyn Defender Services is a public defense office whose mission is to provide outstanding representation and advocacy free of cost to people facing loss of freedom, family separation and other serious legal harms by the government. www.bds.org

Just Making A Change for Families is a non-profit organization working to dismantle the family policing system while simultaneously investing in community support that keeps families together. <https://jmacforfamilies.org/>

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