



### Summer Recovery Programming

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New York City's youth service providers have adapted quickly in the face of devastating circumstances brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Within days, programs such as COMPASS/SONYC and Beacon and Cornerstone Community Centers pivoted from in-person programming to remote, virtual engagement for youth and their families, while also supplementing local food distribution for families. Community-based organizations (CBOs) are currently offering online tutoring support, art and recreation programming, as well as behavioral health care and additional supports to youth and families through grab-and-go meal provision and grocery delivery for many households.

When the City announced the rollout of Regional Enrichment Centers (RECs) to provide early childhood education opportunities for the children of essential workers, CBOs, including youth services providers, rose to the occasion and deployed their own staff to support the RECs. They developed prescriptive lesson plans that conformed to Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) social-distancing standards while simultaneously providing social-emotional supports to children who were dealing with a wide range of difficult circumstances.

As these providers were in the middle of ramping-up planning to continue and expand these efforts in summer 2020, Mayor de Blasio announced the Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget, eliminating funding for all summer Beacon, Cornerstone, COMPASS/SONYC, and SYEP programming. Though the Mayor cited health and safety concerns as justification for the elimination of these programs, youth services providers themselves were never given an opportunity to weigh in on this decision in advance. Had they been asked, they could have shared the tremendous knowledge they have gleaned through pivoting to a combination of remote and in-person, socially-distant programming to help inform alternative models that would keep youth engaged and supported while keeping them safe.

It is essential that New York City have program options in place this summer for youth to ensure that they have constructive activities that support their well-being and recovery after a difficult spring. Similarly, their parents, including many parents who are essential workers, need the security of knowing that there are secure child care arrangements. Summer recovery programming is more important than ever given the sudden and extreme challenges youth and their families face this spring due to COVID-19. To ensure that young people and their families are supported, New York City must provide funding to CBOs to address the following needs whose urgency is exacerbated by the crisis of COVID-19:

1. Education – helping students build and strengthen cognitive skills through project-based learning activities and workforce development opportunities;
2. Social Emotional – offering youth opportunities to build positive and rewarding relationships with others and strengthen their self-efficacy and resilience;

3. Health – providing opportunities for safe and regular physical activity and health and nutrition education; and
4. Family and Home – supporting parents, caregivers, and families to help promote learning and healthy development in safe and stable homes.

The Campaign for Children, Campaign for Summer Jobs, and the Neighborhood Family Services Roundtable have worked closely with providers since the initiation of social distancing mandates to aggregate all of the careful planning and creative thinking they had been doing. What follows is a high-level outline of the enriching, engaging, and safe summer programming CBOs could offer youth in summer 2020. These are not exhaustive lists, but rather ideas to begin a dialogue and collaborative planning process for summer 2020. The solution will require flexibility on the part of both the City and its contractors, the CBOs. Summer programming for 2020 will likely be a combination of in-person, socially-distant programming for the children of essential workers and some vulnerable youth, and remote, distance-learning alternatives for those young people who will likely spend at least a portion of their summer under continued social-distancing mandates. What happens should be informed by local, community need as determined by CBOs, particularly in low-income communities-of-color hardest hit by the pandemic.

We urge the City to work with its contractors, the CBOs, to implement this plan because a total absence of summer programming is likely to lead to its own set of health and safety problems for NYC's youth and families. Young people are unlikely to remain safely indoors in cramped apartments heading into the second or third month of social distancing, especially when the weather begins to improve.

For children and youth, school closures and stay-at-home orders have blocked access to essential resources necessary for healthy development: regular nutritious meals, physical activity and time outdoors, positive relationships with peers and community adults, academic and social-emotional learning opportunities, etc. Many children are sadly experiencing the illness and loss of caregivers or multiple family members and are at risk of losing potentially unrecoverable ground academically.

Programming will give them a reason to stay inside while offering a unique checkpoint for their social-emotional health and ensure that they are prepared to begin in-person school when the time comes in the fall. In the case of the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), the loss of those wages could be disastrous for many families that depend on them during regular years, let alone in the midst of an economic recession that has brought record-breaking unemployment numbers to communities-of-color in NYC.

### **Summer Programming for Youth Ages 6-14**

Summer camp programs serve children and youth ages 6-14, and have been offered primarily via COMPASS/SONYC, Beacon and Cornerstones contracts with DYCD. Before COVID-19, summer camp ran for six to eight weeks from 8 am to 6 pm. Building on the remote work that COMPASS and SONYC programs have already been doing during the spring, these programs could transition to remote engagement opportunities should New York City still be following social distancing guidelines. If social distancing guidelines are relaxed to allow for in-person activities for children beyond those whose parents/guardians are essential workers, CBOs can build on the work they have already been carrying out via the RECs to offer safe, enriching, socially-distant in-person programming for youth.

## **Remote Programs**

Regardless of the health circumstances in summer 2020, it will be important to have remote programming options available in order to actively foster the thinking, creativity, and resilience of youth. Many families may opt for remote programs over in-person due to residual fears even if the City is slowly opening back up.

### *Program Design*

- COMPASS/SONYC, Beacons, and Cornerstone programs have quickly pivoted to online, remote programming from literacy, STEM, homework help and tutoring to music, dance, karate, and fitness all delivered online via video-conferencing. Many young people have adapted to this style quickly with providers reporting regular attendance. For those who have not adapted, summer presents the only opportunity to engage them before the potential start of school in September.
- One-on-one check ins with students/families is critical to ensure young people and their families are able to communicate their needs and concerns. Furthermore, CBOs use these check-ins to coordinate referrals and other supports for the whole family. They are also critical academic and social/ emotional supports and interventions.
- A combination of remote learning technology, such as Google Classroom, and analogue activities that can be completed with common household supplies can help ensure youth are not spending too much time staring at screens. Reading assignments are encouraged as well as a great way to prevent over-exposure to screens.

### *Staffing*

- It is important that experienced staff be running these programs—where possible, programs should ensure they have credentialed social workers on staff to aid with social/emotional supports.
- CBOs should have experienced youth development staff managing the programs to ensure that the technical, emotional and academic needs of participants can be appropriately managed and addressed.
- Two staff should be moderating any live video conferencing programs at a time to ensure programming is kept safe and secure.

### *Funding Levels*

- Funding levels should be adequate to ensure that programs can employ youth development staff who have experience working with the communities they are serving. In most cases, this would require maintaining their existing program directors as 12 month staff.
- Funding levels should be adequate to ensure that CBOs can hire licensed social workers.
- Funding levels should guarantee that CBOs have the technology to implement remote learning.

## **In-person programs**

If social distancing guidelines are relaxed enough and parents and guardians begin returning to work, in-person summer programs will be necessary to meet families' child care needs. In addition to providing childcare, these programs will allow young people to begin the work of sorting through the myriad challenges that have arisen during months of social distancing accompanied by devastating economic and human loss.

Providing safe and enriching child care will assist the City on its path to recovery. Child care for essential workers is already a necessity. If the city begins to reopen and parents go to work or look for jobs, in-person summer programming will be essential for families. It may also provide both CBOs and DOE with important insights as schools prepare for students to phase-in their return to school.

It is also important to note that DOE RECs, Cornerstones, and Beacons have been offering limited in-person programming during COVID-19 (with Cornerstones and Beacons mainly acting as meal distribution sites). Providers have worked to develop and revise protocols to ensure this programming is safe and follows current public health guidelines have helped to develop the following recommendations and protocols.

Though there are numerous health and safety concerns that are to be expected when imagining in-person programming, providers would leverage the extensive knowledge gleaned through their work at REC sites to do so safely.

The in-person programs developed by experienced youth development experts have helped to provide critical emotional supports and check in opportunities for participating children and youth. These needs will continue, if not increase during the summer as the human costs and economic fallout of the pandemic begin to settle in.

#### *Program Design*

- Building on the work that took place in the RECs, programs could include:
- Fashion/art classes for elementary age children where children work with materials already at their desks to design a costume for a favorite character.
- Small group dance/movement classes where children maintain proper social distancing.
- Individual gym activities where children perform activities at the same time while maintaining physical distance by standing on personal colored spots or in hula hoops.
- Hallway monitoring and supervision with walkie-talkies to ensure that neither children nor adults enter hallways at the same time.

#### *Additional considerations*

- Adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is essential—masks for staff and children, gloves, thermometers to do forehead scan temperature checks of youth, and enough soap and paper towels to ensure proper handwashing throughout the day, plus hand sanitizer when hand washing is not possible.
- Youth should have their own supplies and materials to use, so that they do not have to share items with other children that might be too difficult to properly sanitize. These should be paid for with program budgets, and the burden should not be on families to put in place.
- Partnerships with DOE, NYCHA and Parks will be essential to provide adequate space and, where possible, safe outdoor space for activities.
- Coordination with the DOE will be essential to ensure that school buildings that are open over the summer are leveraged if socially-distanced gatherings become an option.

#### *Funding Levels*

- Funding levels should be adequate to maintain the higher staffing ratios necessitated by social distancing guidelines. While SACC guidelines allow for as many as 20 children to be supported by two staff members, social distancing guidelines require smaller groups with RECs are limited to 8 children with 2 adults.

- Funding must also include the indirect costs to maintain year-round staff at CBO's to plan for school year programs.

### **Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)**

In addition to all of the social/emotional and academic benefits of summer programs described above, SYEP goes a step further and acts as an economic stimulus for young people. Many families report relying on SYEP income during regular summers, and the impact of COVID-19 has been hardest in low-income communities where many youth participate in SYEP. Providers often hear from SYEP participants that the families of SYEP participants depend on SYEP wages for basic household expenses such as food, utilities and rent.

The Campaign for Summer Jobs has compiled the following recommendations for remote/in person socially-distant summer employment programming depending on the current best practices promoted by public health officials.

#### **Process Recommendations**

- Leverage existing DOE software to do secure remote/online recruitment for programming with wages or stipends, as enrollment in SYEP requires the collection of sensitive information like Social Security Numbers
  - Providers pointed to vendors, like Submittable, who have the technology to do this for a small fee, should the City be unable to build something on their own
- Consider launching programs in mid-July or August to give providers/DYCD ramp-up time
- Consider prioritizing teens/young people from communities hardest-hit by COVID-19 for priority access to SYEP

#### **Remote Programs**

##### *Program Design*

Should the City remain under social distancing guidelines for the entire summer, there are many remote learning options that could be available to youth. In addition to Hats and Ladders—the application that was being developed for launch in summer 2020 that offered both career orientation as well as online career-exposure content—the below remote opportunities could be put in place:

- The younger-youth (YY) model could be brought entirely online fairly easily given the way it operates. It would take limited time/resources to adapt curricula to be remote.
- For older-youth (OY), it is important to distinguish their SYEP opportunities and provide them a more robust experience, such as:
  - Occupational training resulting in an industry-recognized credential – can be built on existing curricula for other DYCD- or philanthropically-funded programs, such as:
    - National Retail Federation
    - Food Protection/food handlers
    - Microsoft Office User Specialist
    - Google Suites
    - CDL test prep
    - DOE's list of credentials

- Potential partnership w/ CUNY for credits
- Career exploration supports
- Remote/virtual job “placement”
  - Helping businesses troubleshoot problems/issues they’re having
  - Working in teams to help community businesses plan re-launches when social distancing is lifted
  - Helping with social media plans for businesses, etc.
- Call centers/remote check-in on vulnerable community members/seniors, including 311

### *Funding Levels*

In order to provide a strong remote program while also ensuring that the economic stimulus component of SYEP is not lost, funding should include:

- \$800 per participant for remote programming and/or in-person internship placement coordination
- \$1,000 stipend for youth

### **In-Person Programs**

If public health experts say that it is safe to relax social distancing requirements by July, SYEP internship opportunities that could be ramped up quickly include:

- Counselors at summer camp programs run by CBOs;
- Support at cultural institutions;
- Positions with small business partners; and
- Customer service jobs.

Though it may be unlikely for in-person programs to operate this summer, in the event that in-person SYEP is permitted, adequate PPE must be offered to any youth working in frontline, essential positions.

*For questions, please contact Gregory Brender ([gbrender@unhny.org](mailto:gbrender@unhny.org)) regarding younger youth, and J.T. Falcone ([jfalcone@unhny.org](mailto:jfalcone@unhny.org)) regarding SYEP.*

*The Campaign for Children is a coalition of 150 early childhood education and after-school advocacy and provider organizations, including Citizens’ Committee for Children, United Neighborhood Houses, Children’s Aid, Good Shepherd Services, FPWA, the Day Care Council of New York, UJA-Federation of New York, and the YMCA of Greater New York.*

*The Campaign for Summer Jobs (CSJ) is a 20-year-old coalition of community-based social service and advocacy organizations, convened by United Neighborhood Houses, which advocates for programmatic improvements and expanded capacity for New York’s Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP).*