

**Preliminary Budget Hearings for FY 07  
Committee on Public Safety**

March 21, 2006

**Testimony of New York City  
Alternative to Incarceration Programs**

Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services  
Center for Community Alternatives  
Center for Employment Opportunities  
Family Justice / La Bodega de la Familia  
Legal Action Center  
Osborne Association  
Women's Prison Association

Presented by Joel Copperman  
Chief Executive Officer  
CASES

My name is Joel Copperman. I am the CEO of the Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services. CASES is part of a coalition of seven organizations that provide ATI services in all five boroughs. Those organizations are CASES, the Center for Community Alternatives, the Center for Employment Opportunities, Family Justice, Legal Action Center, the Osborne Association and the Women's Prison Association. I am here on behalf of that coalition and I thank you for the opportunity to speak before the Committee.

The Council has been supporting ATI programs since FY 98. The Council funding for ATIs has never been incorporated into the Mayor's budget and the Council restores it every year. Last year, the City Council provided almost \$5 million for our seven organizations. We thank you for supporting our programs and your support of this very important field. This year, we ask the City Council to continue to support our work and to restore our funding to pre-9/11 levels. After 9/11, Council funding to our seven programs was cut by 25% - \$1.6 million. With that cut, each of the organizations was forced to reduce the level of services that they were able to provide. In addition, over the four years since that cut, our programs, like all programs in New York City, have had to absorb increased expenses. We ask that you restore that funding this year.

On June 3, 1997 a report – *Curbing Crime, Cutting Costs* – was issued by the Committee on Public Safety. Among their findings, the Report indicated that ATI programs:

- Are an extremely cost-effective means of administering sanctions;
- Produce cost-savings to the City and the State, both by diverting individuals from jail and prison and by helping to expedite the judicial process; and
- Contribute to increased public safety by placing defendants under an enhanced level of supervision.

Our programs continue to provide supervision and services to thousands of individuals coming through the justice systems while saving money for the City and State. Our programs serve court involved students, women, individuals with

drug and substance abuse problems, and the mentally ill. We help kids get into school and stay there; we reconnect women with their families; we help our clients prepare for work, find jobs and help them keep those jobs; we help the mentally ill off the streets, into services and permanent housing. We work in all of the courts across the five boroughs. We partner with employers, with schools, with other non-profits, with most City agencies including the Departments of Probation, Correction, Health and Mental Hygiene, Education, Youth and Community Development, Small Business Services, the Human Resources Administration and the Housing Authority. We work with thousands of individuals and families every year.

I would like to share with you information about one of the programs at CASES – the Court Employment Project. CEP works in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens and takes jail or prison bound youth into our service rich youth development program. We work with approximately 400 youth per year. Our program is structured around a case management model and we provide educational, employment and mental health services as well as computer based training, outdoor adventure based learning, school placement and GED preparation.

In particular I wanted to share with you the outcomes of a recidivism study that we conducted. We looked at a group of participants who graduated over a 15-month period – 118 program participants. Each of these young men and women had committed a felony at the point of entering our program. Within two years after graduation only 12% had been convicted of a new felony and another 8% had been convicted of a misdemeanor. And while 57% entered CASES on a violent charge only 4% were reconvicted for a violent crime.

While there was no comparison group for the study, we can share with you the outcomes of other recidivism analyses. According to the Correctional Association of New York, among 16-18 year olds who are arrested and sent to City jail, 705 will return within a year of their release. A study by Jeffery Fagan of Columbia University 15 and 16 year olds charged with robbery, 76% were re-

arrested and 56% were re-incarcerated within a two year period. When contrasted with the success of CASES graduates, the outcomes presented in these studies strongly indicate the benefits of providing court-involved youth with support and resources in their communities.

Once again thank you for your past support and we ask you to support our programs again this year.

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