



The Fortune Society
Building People, Not Prisons



Critical Rikers Programs Set To Expire

Program providers at city jails raise the alarm with less than 10 days of funding for critical services remaining

New York, NY - With less than 10 days remaining until the New York City Department of Correction (DOC) shuts critical services at Rikers Island and the Vernon C. Bain Center, Osborne Association and The Fortune Society are raising the alarm.

The two nonprofits are among six community-based organizations providing supportive programming for incarcerated people at city jails, including reentry planning, nonviolent conflict resolution, hard skills training and certifications, and cognitive behavioral interventions. DOC announced its decision to cut \$17 million in program funding as part of Mayor Eric Adams' Executive Budget.

The Fortune Society and Osborne Association held a rally in City Hall Park on Thursday, joined by dozens of program participants, New York City Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, and New York City Councilmember Carlina Rivera. A number of elected officials have voiced support for the \$17 million in contracts for supportive services to be restored.

"I am deeply concerned about the administration's proposed \$17 million cut and elimination of program contracts. These programs serve about 1,500 people everyday, and help the Department of Correction meet its mission to care for those in its custody and support a path to successful community reintegration. With significant civilian vacancies and an attrition rate of about 10%, it is difficult to expect that the Department can successfully insource these contracts, particularly when DOC's ability to meet its core operations remains tenuous. It would be irresponsible and ultimately detrimental to public safety to move forward with these cuts," said New York City **Council Member Carlina Rivera** (D-02).

"Cutting \$17 million in supportive programming from city jails is a short-sighted decision that will worsen conditions and threaten public safety," said **New York City Council Majority Leader Keith Powers**. "This relatively small amount of funding plays an outsized role in helping people who have been detained at Rikers to reenter society – and succeed. If we are serious about building alternatives to incarceration that ultimately strengthen our communities, the city will immediately restore this funding in the FY 2024 budget."

"Thousands of people in DOC custody have come to rely on our programs to help them navigate reentry, confront personal challenges, and foster better habits. DOC says they can replace our programs. We know that they cannot," said **Osborne Association CEO Archana**

Jayaram. “With only ten days until programs are shut down, this crisis has reached a new level of urgency.”

Earlier this month, a federal monitor detailed unacceptable conditions and shortfalls at Rikers - including pervasive misreporting on injuries, and even death, of people in custody. Jail officials were criticized for their role in what investigators called “serious and disturbing” incidents. Even as new details continue to emerge about the department’s lack of transparency, DOC is moving ahead with its plan to push trusted third-party providers out.

“In light of the disturbing details of the federal monitor’s report, having impartial third parties present and engaged at city jails could not be more important,” added Jayaram.

Stanley Richards, Deputy CEO of The Fortune Society, agrees. “Every individual held at a New York city jail deserves better,” he said. “DOC does not have the expertise to perform the same functions as the professionals who already provide services. They do not have access to critical services with which people need to be linked at release.

These programs help to mitigate further harm and trauma to those incarcerated and often play a pivotal role in recidivism rates and community safety.”

Every day, teams from nonprofit providers at Rikers work with approximately 1,700 people through these non-mandated services, keeping people engaged in healing processes and skills-building activities. For years, trusted providers like The Fortune Society and Osborne Association have delivered high-quality interventions at city jails. Quality programs are critical in offering hope to those in jail and mitigating the damage that the current landscape of mass incarceration creates for all New Yorkers. That’s why more than 115 organizations in the legal, reentry, mental health, substance use, employment, and housing fields have signed [letters of support](#) for these programs to continue.

Now The Fortune Society and Osborne Association are calling on the administration and the city council to restore funding cuts immediately. Program reduction or elimination will have a devastating effect on individuals in DOC custody and all who work inside.

About Osborne Association

Osborne Association is a nonprofit organization dedicated to transforming the criminal justice system and supporting individuals, families, and communities affected by incarceration. Through advocacy, direct service, and policy reform, Osborne works to create opportunities for people to heal, grow, and thrive. For more information, please visit www.osborneny.org.

About The Fortune Society

Founded in 1967, The Fortune Society has advocated on criminal justice issues for over five decades and is nationally recognized for developing model programs that help people with criminal justice histories to be assets to their communities. Fortune offers a holistic and integrated “one-stop-shopping” model of service provision. Among the services offered are discharge planning, licensed outpatient substance abuse and mental health treatment, alternatives to incarceration, HIV/AIDS services, career development and job retention,

education, family services, drop-in services, and supportive housing as well as lifetime access to aftercare. For more information, visit www.fortunesociety.org.

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