

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 24, 2022

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**PRESS
RELEASE**



The New York City Department of Correction

NYC Department of Correction, The Children’s Museum of Manhattan, and Robin Hood Partner to Resume Off Island Family Visitation with Expanded Program Model

Program to Resume After Two Year Hiatus with the new Addition of Family Visits for Incarcerated Fathers and the Installation of Mini Exhibits on Island



New York, NY- The NYC Department of Correction (DOC) has partnered with the Children’s Museum of Manhattan (CMOM) and Robin Hood, New York City’s largest poverty-fighting philanthropy, to host off-island visits for incarcerated parents and their children. This initiative aims to provide incarcerated parents with young children an opportunity to connect with their children and family members through facilitated programming in a supportive, non-institutional setting. During these visits, CMOM will provide arts-based workshops, educator-led tours of interactive exhibitions, music, storytelling activities, healthy meals, and take-home art kits for children.

The program will run for nine months with two visits per month. Each visit will offer up to fifteen incarcerated mothers or fifteen incarcerated fathers, their children, and caregivers a two-hour visit. Individuals in custody, their families and staff who participate in the program will receive a free membership to the museum.

The off-island visits are resuming after a two-year pause due to the pandemic. Initially, the visits were only open to women in custody, their children, and caregivers. After a successful program launch, this year the expanded program will allow incarcerated men to participate as well.

In addition, DOC will work closely with CMOM to install Baby Brain Building Hubs (3BH) inside DOC facility visit areas. The Baby Brain Building Hubs are mini-exhibits designed by CMOM to foster playful parent-child interactions and encourage caregivers to bring children on visits to see their parents. We anticipate the Baby Brain Building Hubs will be completed in the Spring of 2023 and serve approximately 50,000 visitors annually.

“I am excited to have the Department collaborate with CMOM and Robin Hood on the Family Connections initiative,” said **DOC Commissioner, Louis A. Molina**. “When individuals are able to maintain familial bonds while incarcerated, their chances of recidivism are much lower, and they are more likely to be successful when they return to their communities.”

“It is a privilege to partner with the Children’s Museum of Manhattan with the support of Robin Hood to offer this transformational program for mothers, fathers, and their families,” said **DOC Assistant Commissioner for Strategic Initiatives, Steven Kaiser**. “Maintaining these types of connections encourages positive institutional conduct for the parents and supports early childhood development for their children. This special program serves as a national model in support of both positive correctional practice and families impacted by incarceration.”

CMOM believes its impact is strongest when working alongside great partners like New York City and Robin Hood,” said **CMOM Board Chair Matt Messinger**. “This groundbreaking effort with the Department of Correction / Rikers Island is reflective of CMOM’s collaborative spirit. The work together is thoughtful, trailblazing, and urgent. We are honored to be part of it.”

"CMOM has always prioritized children and families. By creating opportunities for family bonding, we nurture the intergenerational learning that is essential for early development. Our partnership with the New York City Department of Correction and Robin Hood achieves this and so much more," said **CMOM Founding Chair Laurie M. Tisch**. "Parent-child relationships temporarily severed by incarceration have an opportunity to blossom and grow in a welcoming and supportive environment as each family unit plays and learns together, both at CMOM and when visiting one of our mini exhibits at Rikers Island."

"This program stands apart as a unique and immensely influential resource for children who are experiencing parental incarceration," said **CMOM Chief Program Officer, Leslie Bushara**. "By reimagining the role a children’s museum can play in maintaining the bonds between parent and child during a time of incarceration, CMOM, Robin Hood, and the New York City Department of Correction are recreating the landscape of early learning for children impacted by parental incarceration.”

“Play is serious business for children; it ignites curiosity, builds skills, and strengthens relationships," said **Kelvin Chan, Managing Director of Early Childhood at Robin Hood**. “From babies born at Rikers to children whose families are affected by incarceration — all need

opportunities to experience joy and meaningfully bond with their parents. Robin Hood is proud to support this child-centered initiative led by the Children's Museum of Manhattan and the Department of Correction, which paves the way for children to build protective factors through a traumatic time and expand their capacity for growth.”

About the New York City Department of Correction

The New York City Department of Correction (DOC) is dedicated to creating a safe and supportive environment while providing individuals in our care with a path to successfully re-enter their communities.

About the Children’s Museum of Manhattan

Established in 1973, the Children’s Museum of Manhattan (CMOM) is a vital destination and resource for New York City children and their families, dedicated to cultivating life-long learners across backgrounds and boroughs. A steward of early childhood education and development, CMOM offers imaginative and enriching exhibitions and programs that support, challenge, and inspire. Beyond the Museum walls, CMOM mounts outreach programs in 60 sites across the city, equips colleagues via professional development training programs, and shares its award-winning content through traveling exhibitions and online offerings.