

Preventing Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment at Rising Ground's Juvenile Justice Facilities

Annual Report

*Compliance with the 2003 National Prison Rape
Elimination Act (PREA)*



January to December 2020

PURPOSE

Rising Ground's Limited Secure Placement programs (LSP) are juvenile justice programs for youth who have been adjudicated as juvenile delinquents in New York City Family Court. Our LSPs are responsible for ensuring youth are safe and to provide a strength-based program to youth, giving them the tools and education needed to make positive choices and break cycles of incarceration and recidivism. Rising Ground is committed to meeting the requirements of the 2003 [Prison Rape Elimination Act \(PREA\)](#) and ensuring all youth are safe and free from sexual abuse and harassment. This report outlines how Rising Ground is responding to the PREA requirements and promoting safety for all youth.

ABOUT RISING GROUND

Founded as an orphanage in 1831, Rising Ground has been at the forefront of evolving community needs. We are a leader in utilizing result-driven, trauma-informed, evidence-based practices. Today, our work is a positive force in the lives of more than 25,000 individuals annually.

Our Mission: Driven by the belief that each of us can thrive when life has hope and opportunity, Rising Ground provides caring support and proven paths to positive change, helping children, adults, and families rise above adversity.

Our Vision: Rising Ground envisions a future for New York where every child has an equal opportunity to succeed; where vulnerable individuals and families have the resources and support they need; where people with disabilities can access opportunity and fully participate in their communities; and where all are supported as they navigate life's challenges and positively direct their lives.

Our values: Rooted in an unshakeable belief in every individual's ability to change and grow, we value Accountability, Connection, Tenacity, and Service as we help children, adults, and families pursue their dreams and goals.

Definitions of the four values encompass the following:

- Accountability – ethical behavior; personal responsibility; accountability to others, clients and staff; integrity; fiduciary responsibility
- Connection – connection to families, community, the organization, and each other; communication; collaboration; engagement; teamwork

- Tenacity – grit; never giving up; creativity; commitment; smart thinkers; spunk; initiative; drive; dedicated to overcoming obstacles; resourcefulness
- Service – respect for others and the work itself; client – focused efforts; compassion; support

Rising Ground operates two Limited Secure Placement (LSP) programs through contracts with NYC Administration for Children’s Services (ACS). Youth are placed in LSP by family court judges due to a juvenile delinquency finding.

PREA IMPLEMENTATION

This year we focused on developing an implementation plan to ensure each component of PREA is fully in practice. We created a multi-disciplinary implementation workgroup and engaged a consultant. The consultant provided a two-day PREA standards training, where we identified existing evidence to support compliance of each standard and ultimately developed a comprehensive workplan of detailed action items for additional items to support implementation.

PREA COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

Throughout the year, the agency continued its efforts to meet the requirements of PREA. While our efforts have been quite comprehensive, a few of the activities are noted below:

- Finalized our Prevention, Detection, Responding to Sexual Misconduct, and Zero Tolerance for Sexual Misconduct Policy
- Began employee sexual misconduct disclosures upon hire and annually thereafter
- Began contacting previous employers regarding sexual misconduct
- Website page was launched
- Held staffing plan review meetings, mix of virtual and on site for both Ryer and Carroll St. LSPs
- LSP staff, contractors and volunteers complete the PREA training annually.
- Created an email address for 3rd party grievances - Complaints@RisingGround.org
- Developed Coordinated Response protocols for abuse and harassment
- Developed a relationship with a hospital for Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner (SAFE) exams

- Formalized a contract and protocol for interpretation services
- Updated PREA Coordinator job duties

FACILITIES

Rising Ground has two LSP programs that are considered juvenile justice facilities under the PREA standards according to Rising Ground’s oversight agency, NYC Administration for Children’s Services.

Ryer LSP is a four-story building with a functional basement located in the Fordham Heights section of the Bronx. There are two stairways and an elevator that all provide access to all levels of the building. There is camera coverage throughout the building – resulting in over 89 cameras inside and out. It is an all-female/female identifying facility that houses youth ages 13 to 21.

Carroll St. LSP is four-story building with a cellar located in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn. There are two stairways providing access to all levels of the building. There is camera coverage throughout the building – resulting in 98 cameras inside and out. It is an all-male/male identifying LSP that houses youth ages 13-21.

SEXUAL ABUSE & SEXUAL HARASSMENT ALLEGATIONS DATA

Ryer LSP

	Sexual Abuse			
	<i>Youth on Youth</i>		<i>Staff on Youth</i>	
	Allegations (A)	Substantiated (S)	Allegations (A)	Substantiated (S)
2020	1	0	1	0
2019	0	0	0	0

Carroll St

	Sexual Abuse			
	<i>Youth on Youth</i>		<i>Staff on Youth</i>	
	Allegations (A)	Substantiated (S)	Allegations (A)	Substantiated (S)
2020	0	0	0	0
2019	0	0	0	0

Conclusion

While our facilities are already safe, we have dedicated a significant amount of time and resources to promote compliance with the federal regulations. As we highlighted above, efforts were made across all sections of the PREA standards including but not limited to, prevention planning, responsive planning, and reporting. This report itself is an example of our continued efforts to become fully PREA compliant. While we accomplished a significant amount of work in 2020, we remain focused and will continue to strive for full compliance in the coming years. In 2021 we will be focusing on redesigning our victimization screening tool, enhancing youth education, and developing comprehensive tracking systems for volunteer, intern, and consultant trainings.



Luis Pagan

PREA Coordinator



Alan Mucatel

Chief Executive Officer