

## With less than two weeks to go, what's at stake for New York City Families for the Summer of 2020

June 15, 2020: With less than two weeks to go until the school year ends and summer begins, millions of New Yorkers are wondering what outdoor activities will be available, especially for the City's 1.4 million school age children (of which, at least 740,000 reside in homes that are low income and eligible for the School Free Lunch program/130% of the Federal Poverty Level). NYC-DOE schools close on June 26. If this is a typical summer, all of the youth programs, pools, beaches and parks shown in the chart below would open the week of June 29 and stay open at least until Labor Day. **Not this summer.** As of today, there is no clear direction as to which City funded summer youth programs will operate or if the beaches, pools and recreation centers will remain closed. What's at stake is clear: hundreds of thousands of NYC kids may have nothing fun to do. Here is a tracking chart showing the past demand and 2020 summer status of City programs.

New York City Government Agency	Summer Programs/ outdoor recreation	2019 Usage/Participation	Current Status Summer 2020	Week of June 29
Department of Youth and Community Development	COMPASS, BEACON and Cornerstone summer programs	100,000 youth Enrolled <sup>i</sup>	Closed due to lack of City funding and COVID-19 Restrictions	
Department of Youth and Community Development	Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)	74,354 youth/young adults enrolled ages 14 to 24	Closed due to lack of City funding and COVID-19 Restrictions	
Parks and Recreation	outdoor Olympic and intermediate pools (pool season)	1,621,048 people	Closed	
Parks and Recreation	NYC Beaches	16 million people	Closed	
Parks and Recreation	Recreation Centers	3,003,599 people	Closed	
Department of Education	Summer Meals Program	In July/August, a total of 7.5 million free meals were provided at over 1,000 locations	The Free Summer Meals program will not be available at the pools, beaches, parks, libraries and CBO's since most of these places will be closed.	
Department of Health and Mental Hygiene	Article 47 and Article 43 licensed group child care	Prior to COVID-19, around 3,000 NYC regulated child care providers operated full time.	All child care providers were ordered closed last March. An April 6 <sup>th</sup> DOHMH Order limiting child care to only essential workers has still not been lifted.	
Department of Health and Mental Hygiene	Article 48 Day Camp Permit	Day camps were given a green light to open on June 2; NYC-DOH Article 48 permit has a 90 day review requirement.	While NYC-DOH is trying to process permits quickly as possible, there is no indication that most day camps will be approved to operate by first week of July.	

## Millions of New Yorkers are waiting for City Hall and the City Council to act decisively with a comprehensive plan for outdoor fun filled activities this summer.

On June 10, Mayor de Blasio said “It’s gonna take a little patience, but, absolutely, we can have a conversation now with a little more opportunity to envision progress around beaches and now we can start a conversation around pools. I don’t know if we can get there, but at least we can begin that conversation.”<sup>ii</sup> **NYC youth have been cooped up in their homes for three months.**

***June 29<sup>th</sup> is less than two weeks away.*** Hundreds of thousands of kids may have nothing fun to do unless government agencies move quickly. To be fair, between COVID-19 safety issues and the \$9 billion City budget deficit, the Summer 2020 opening presents the most challenging set of decisions for Mayor de Blasio since he took office in 2014. Years from now, his mayoralty will be judged first by how well he managed this crisis.



Photo credit: NYC DYCD website

**If Mayor de Blasio is not going to fund the DYCD youth programs and open up the recreation centers, parks, beaches and pools, what is the plan for outdoor recreation and engaging programs for the families that always relied on them in past summers.**

## Part II:

# New York City Government Agencies Summer Programming Analysis and Documentation

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- **NYC-Department of Youth and Community Development (NYC-DYCD):** The proposed cuts to NYC-DYCD youth community based programs (COMPASS, Beacons, Cornerstone) and Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) means few options will be available this summer for the families that always counted on them in the past. According to an analysis by the Campaign for Children NYC: “Nearly 175,000 young people served by city-funded programs would be left with no options this summer if proposed cuts by the City Administration are not restored. The Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget proposed \$175 million in cuts to youth services that include the elimination of programs that are currently providing crucial supports to young people and their families. .... These programs will be crucial in ensuring children in the communities hardest hit by the pandemic are prepared for the new school year while also ensuring that parents maintain access to programs that remain essential as they continue to, or return to, work.”

  - **Comprehensive After School System of New York City (COMPASS):**  
The Comprehensive After School System of NYC (COMPASS NYC) comprises more than 900 programs serving young people enrolled in grades K-12. Through its network of providers, COMPASS NYC offers high quality programs with a strong balance of academics, recreation, enrichment and cultural activities to support and strengthen the overall development of young people.
  - **Beacon Programs:** Beacon programs are school-based community centers serving children age six and older, and adults. There are currently 91 Beacons located throughout the five boroughs of New York City operating in the afternoons and evenings, on weekends, and during school holidays and vacation periods, including the summer.
  - **Cornerstone Programs:** Cornerstone Programs provide engaging, high-quality, year-round programs for adults and young people. Programs are located at 94 New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Community Centers throughout the five boroughs.
  - **Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)** is the nation’s largest youth employment program, connecting NYC youth between the ages of 14 and 24 with career exploration opportunities and paid work experience each summer. Participants have the opportunity to explore their interests and career pathways, develop workplace skills and engage in learning experiences that help in developing their social, civic and leadership skills. By participating in structured project and work-based opportunities, NYC youth are better prepared for careers of the future.



- NYC Department of Parks and Recreation:** For opening our beaches, pools and neighborhood parks this summer, with COVID-19 precautions, a detailed eight point plan was proposed by Adrian Benepe, former Commissioner of NYC Parks and Recreation, Carter Strickland, former Commissioner of NYC Department of Environmental Protection and City Council Member Mark Levine. “We do not accept that all of those relief valves must remain off-limits to New Yorkers. We understand the good intentions to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus, but this widespread closure could well backfire. Surely, some limitations and closures are necessary as temporary measures to protect public health. But many leading public health officials agree that parks and outdoor areas, including beaches and pools, are not only safer than indoors areas in terms of virus transmission, but are vital to maintaining physical and mental health as millions have been forced to stay inside, cut off from all traditional forms of social and physical recreation.” Source: New York Daily News May 24, 2020
- NYC Department of Education Free Summer Meals:** Since COVID-19 forced the closure of all schools in mid-March, the NYC-DOE has been serving around 500,000 meals a day (which now includes a third meal option and adults are also eligible to pick up the free meals). The COVID period number is a big drop from the nearly 900,000 meals (breakfasts and lunches) served daily when kids were in school. So, at best, the City is serving around half pre-COVID. During past summers, the DOE operated a vast and effective free meals program with over 1,000 sites including public schools, municipal pools, public parks, libraries, and community-based organizations. Children ate the meals (more than 7.5 million meals were served in 2018) as one of several activities offered daily at these publicly funded sites. Any child could get a free meal, regardless of income, no questions asked. Unless something changes, only a handful of these sites will be open this summer. Families will now have to make special trips to a neighborhood public school to pick up the meals. How many families are going to do this?



- New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH):** The NYC-DOHMH regulates all group child care for ages 0 to 5. At least 59% of NYC parents rely on NYC-DOHMH regulated childcare system for ages 3 and 4 years. When COVID-19 shut NYC down in late March, all DOHMH regulated childcare centers were also forced to close. On April 5<sup>th</sup> DOHMH Commissioner Oxiris Barbot issued an executive order allowing childcare programs to operate only for children of essential workers. This [Order](#) is still in effect; no changes have been announced as we approach summer. In fact, all Article 47 and 43 regulated child care providers must first receive “emergency authorization” from NYC-DOHMH-Bureau of Child Care to limit enrollment to only “essential workers”. A term that has no relevance since NYC

entered Phase 2 on June 22. For the hundreds of thousands of parents that fall into the nonessential worker group do, will there be licensed childcare for them? As of June 28, most child care operators have not reopened. Many of these parents are working from home. Furthermore, close to 100,000 low income children receive subsidized childcare in NYC's vast system (vouchers, contracted care, Head Start). With care still restricted to only essential workers, what options are available to these families. Outside of NYC, child care providers are reopening and serving any family in need as per NYS guidance. In addition to the rest of New York State, all neighboring states, including Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut and New Jersey have all issued new guidance encouraging all child care providers to reopen and serve any family that wants child care.

NYC-DOHMH also oversees summer day camps. All day camps must be approved with an DOHMH Article 48 permit. The problem now is that camp operators were notified very late, at the beginning of June, that camps could operate this summer. NYCDOHMH requires all applications to be submitted at least 90 days prior to opening. <sup>iii</sup> **“§48.07 Permit; application, issuance, records and enforcement. (a) An application for a permit to operate any camp under this Article must be made by the operator to the Department, on a form furnished by the Department, at least 90 days before the first day of operation.”** While DOHMH is making every effort to process applications quickly, the big question here is will all camps open in early July.

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<sup>i</sup> These are annual figures except for DYCD programs (municipal pools are only open during the summer). Data comes from the 2019 NYC Mayor's Management Report except for beach attendance. The NYC-DYCD COMPASS, BEACON and Cornerstone had an annual enrollment of 222,263 in 2019. According to NYC Citizens Committee for Children, around 100,000 youth participated in DYCD summer youth development/recreation programs in 2019 "There were approximately 70,000 youth who participated in COMPASS & SONYC summer programs in 2019. While summer-only enrollment data is not available for programs at Cornerstone and Beacon sites, estimates indicate there are at least 30,000 young people enrolled in summer programs across approximately 200 sites."

<sup>i</sup> <https://newyork.cbslocal.com/2020/06/10/coronavirus-covid-19-new-york-city-reopening-public-pools-bill-de-blasio/>

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