



BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Mission Statement

On behalf of the Citizens of Baltimore City, the Public Safety Committee will be responsible for matters concerning public safety, including, but not limited to, emergency preparedness, police services, fire/EMS, & their administrative functions.

The Honorable Mark Conway

CHAIR

PUBLIC HEARING

4/28/2026

1:00PM

CLARENCE "DU" BURNS COUNCIL CHAMBERS

LO26-0045

***Legislative Oversight - Mayor's Office of
Neighborhood Safety & Engagement (MONSE)***

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PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

The Honorable Mark Conway
CHAIR

Legislative Oversight Hearing

LO26-0045

Legislative Oversight Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety & Engagement (MONSE)

Sponsor: Council Member Mark Conway District 4

Purpose: For the purpose of conducting oversight of MONSE in light of findings from the Office of the Inspector General, examining gaps in oversight, financial controls, data tracking, and the protection of sensitive juvenile information, and ensuring that stronger transparency, accountability, and safeguarding all MONSE programs effectively to support public safety and rebuild public trust.

REPORTING AGENCIES

- **Mayor's Office on Neighborhood Safety & Engagement** •
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BACKGROUND

Department Overview

Department Responsibilities

The Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety And Engagement (MONSE) is an office under Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott. MONSE according to its website "...works with people, groups, and businesses to make Baltimore's neighborhoods safer. We team up with residents, community organizations, the government, police, and local businesses to help reduce violence and build safer communities across our city."

MONSE replaced what had been known as the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice. The Office coordinates a number of Public Safety focused programs including (but not limited to):

- Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS)
- Safe Streets
- Human Trafficking Collaborative
- Coordinated Neighborhood Stabilization Responses

Department Budget

In Fiscal Year 2026 MONSE had a total budget of approximately \$22.4 million dollars and employed 40 staff. In the Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27) preliminary budget MONSE's proposed budget is approximately \$24 million dollars with decreases in State funding (-\$1,577,091) & Federal funding (-

\$839,062) there are also decreases in special and special grant funding. MONSE's proposed budget does include an increase of nearly \$6 million from the general fund. According to the FY27 preliminary budget MONSE will employ 42 staff. In the FY27 budget the former service lines for MONSE seem to be discontinued and MONSE's budget has been organized into several new service lines including:

- 923: Administration (MONSE) FY27 \$3,108,284
- 924: Violence Prevention FY27 \$12,867,064
- 925: Victim Services FY27 \$4,653,512
- 926: Re-Entry Services FY27 \$750,143
- 927: Neighborhood Stabilization FY27 \$2,682,923

Office of the Inspector General Investigation

In October 2025 the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) issued the first of two reports detailing concerns at MONSE (report included in bill file). The October 2025 report focused on concerns with the SideStep youth diversion program. The program was meant to act as a way to divert youth from the formal justice system into a program with Community Based Organizations who would offer services. One goal of the program was to reduce youth recidivism. The OIG noted concerns with the program including (but not limited to):

- The use of funds outside of what would be considered the scope of work
 - This includes the use of funds on populations older than what would be considered eligible for the SideStep program. SideStep was meant for young people 17 and under, while some of the CBOs scope of work included providing services to young people in their 20s.
- The drawdown of grant funds from the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS)
 - Workday records and information supplied from DJS indicated that for FY 23 & FY 24 MONSE may not have submitted invoices to draw down on grant money from DJS to support the SideStep program

MONSE responded to this report clarifying that

- While the memo from the Board of Estimates (BOE) only mentioned the SideStep program, the approved scope of work and contracts allowed for broader uses. These uses supported the comprehensive violence prevention plan and were directed to support other populations of young people.
 - MONSE committed to clearer language in future BOE memos and in their scopes.
- The Workday records were incomplete, and MONSE is now in communication with DJS regarding next steps. FY25 grant funds were timely and appropriately drawn down, which the OIG noted in their report. MONSE attributes this to staff changes & new internal protocols.

In March 2026 the OIG issued their second report on MONSE noting additional concerns including (but not limited to):

- Fraudulent invoices from CBOs charged to MONSE
 - Fraudulent invoices were submitted on behalf of two CBOs which led to thousands of dollars being incorrectly paid by MONSE.
- A breach of security containing information on post-arrest diversions with the names of juveniles

- A MONSE staff member seems to have sent a spreadsheet with private data, some of which belonged to juveniles to a family member.

Also, in March 2026 MONSE submitted a response to the OIG report clarifying that:

- MONSE had begun an internal audit of its grant programs.
 - This audit is expected to be completed before the end of the fiscal year.
 - This audit has so far uncovered one additional agency which has failed to submit proper documentation for advance payment. The process to recoup those funds has been initiated.
 - MONSE thanks the OIG for their oversight and notes that it stands ready to work with the OIG and the Law department.
- The employee who sent the spreadsheet no longer works for MONSE
 - MONSE has found no malicious use of the data in this breach.
 - The breach happened in violation of data sharing & security protocols.
 - MONSE & the Law Department are conducting a review to make sure that relevant data breach notifications are met in the future.

As of the March 2026 report, the OIG is continuing its investigation of MONSE.

Analysis by: Tony Leva
Analysis Date: 4/21/2026

Direct Inquiries to: Anthony.Leva@baltimorecity.gov

BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL



PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

LO26-0045

*Legislative Oversight - Mayor's Office of
Neighborhood Safety & Engagement (MONSE)*

Agency Reports



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor

Public Safety and Government Operations Committee

Legislative Oversight – Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE)

PREPARED BY
Stefanie Mavronis, Executive Director
Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE)

Tuesday, April 28, 2026



MAYOR'S OFFICE OF
NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY
AND ENGAGEMENT

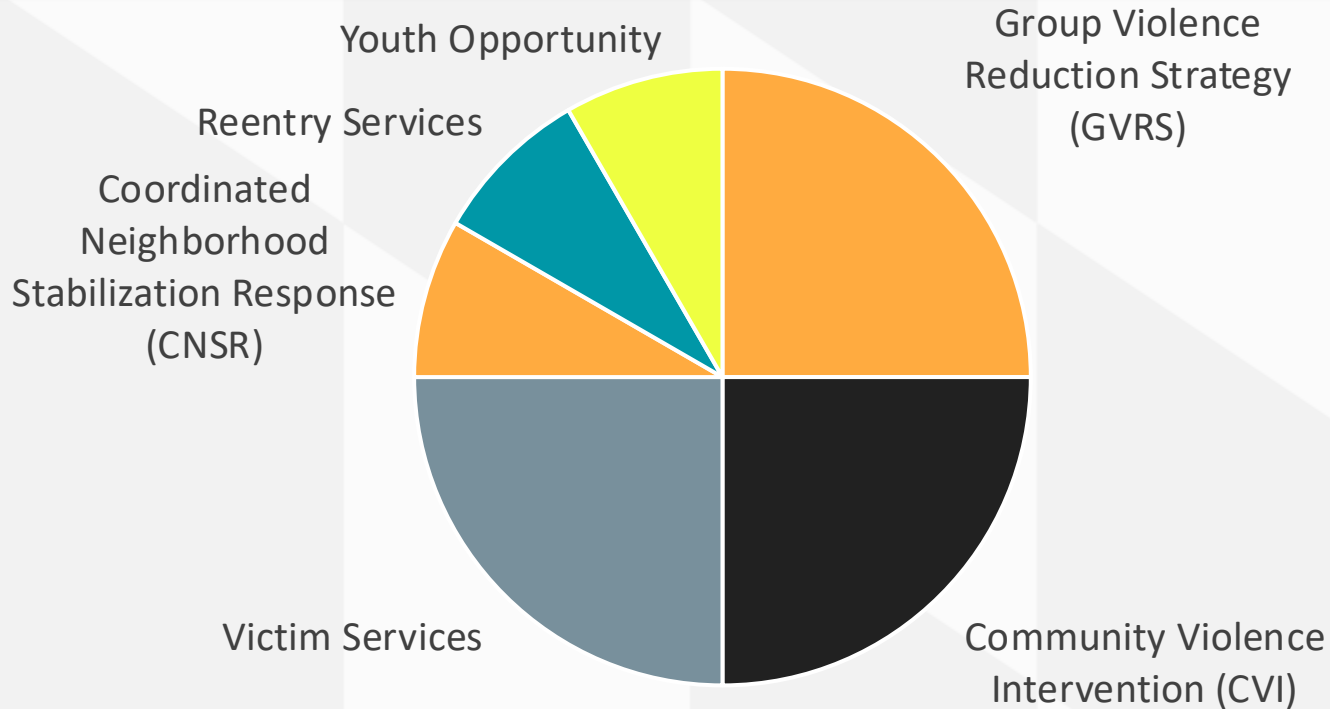
Baltimore's comprehensive public safety approach continues to yield historic, year-over-year reductions in violence

	2023 YTD	2024 YTD	2025 YTD	2026 YTD	% Decrease Over Period
Homicide	84	55	37	33	-60.71%
Non-Fatal Shooting	179	132	93	87	-51.40%

*BPD data through 4/26/2026



MONSE (est. December 2020) is responsible for the coordination and implementation of the Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan



What Was The SideStep Pilot?

- Limited pilot program that operated between 2022-2024 in the Western Police District, in which BPD Western District Officers would divert eligible first-time offenders to MONSE's Youth Opportunity Coordinator to be connected with services.
- The concept was envisioned and developed by youth and Western District community members after the Baltimore Uprising in 2015, with a focus on reducing unnecessary interaction with law enforcement and connection to community-rooted services with the power to transform lives and reduce recidivism.
- The pilot program was always a limited test of concept to inform future youth diversion work in Baltimore.
- MONSE contracted with an evaluation partner in 2023 to review the pilot program before making determinations about scaling to other districts. The evaluation identified opportunities to strengthen program operations and improve oversight and redundancy.

What Was The SideStep Pilot?

- Fifty-one (51) first-time youth offenders under the age of 18 were diverted during the three years that the SideStep pilot program was active and 48 out of 51 youth successfully completed their service provider placement.

Qualifying Offense	2022 Diversions	2023 Diversions	2024 Diversions	Total
Shoplifting	0	1	0	1
Larceny	1	3	0	4
CDS Possession	3	1	0	4
Destruction of Property	6	0	1	7
Misdemeanor Assault	2	10	4	16
Unauthorized Use	3	12	4	19
Total Diversions	15	27	9	51

- The pilot program saw a range of positive qualitative outcomes for youth that were referred, including: securing employment; connecting with mental health services after being disconnected for two years; successfully completing a group mentoring program; connecting participants' parents to vocational training and jobs; achieving perfect attendance at school; and resuming attending school after a prolonged absence.

MONSE is committed to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement

- MONSE takes evidence of fraudulent invoices, overbilling, or any other action that impacts public dollars invested in improving public safety extremely seriously.
- The continued examination of the former pilot program is retrospective in nature and findings do not reflect current agency operations, which are significantly stronger than during the pilot period, which started more than four years ago and concluded nearly two years ago.
- Since 2024, MONSE leadership has prioritized organizational changes and overhauled agency financial process and procedure.
- Looking ahead, MONSE, in partnership with BPD and the Department of Juvenile Services, has re-envisioned and redesigned a model for youth diversion for some first-time offenders, using lessons learned and an evaluation from the Western District pilot program.

Since the pilot, MONSE has strengthened internal oversight mechanisms and standard operating procedures

Invoice Review,
Grants Management
and Subrecipient
Monitoring
SOPs

Implemented
Agency-wide Case
Management
Standards

Data Transmission
and Protection
Protocol for MONSE
Client Data



Current Status of Youth Diversion Work

- The SideStep pilot ended in 2024 and is no longer active. SideStep as it previously existed will not be expanded citywide. The future of this work is still under development.
- From 2024 to the Present, MONSE has taken lessons learned from the pilot, the findings of a contracted process evaluation of the pilot, input from BPD, and a renewed partnership with DJS to outline the future of youth diversion work.
- MONSE has built the core infrastructure needed to ensure sensitive juvenile information is protected, safeguards and oversight are in place, and data is tracked securely and in accordance with the law and internal case management standards.
- The tracking of more robust and multifaceted key performance indicators will serve as a guidepost and management tool, allowing interagency partners to make adjustments in real time while ensuring positive youth outcomes over time.

MONSE's Ongoing and Active Work

- Currently conducting an internal review of SideStep pilot program expenditures. The agency will take every action available to recoup taxpayer funds in partnership with the Law Department.
- Finalizing Memorandum of Understanding with Department of Juvenile Services, which will govern the future of this work
- Conducting regular and ongoing staff training to review roles/responsibilities established in SOPs, including finance process and data system responsibilities.
- MONSE will continue to work in partnership with the Mayor's Office and oversight partners to ensure our policies and programs reflect best practices, uphold the highest integrity, and deliver meaningful results for Baltimore's youth and communities.

Thank you.



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor



MAYOR'S OFFICE OF
**NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY
AND ENGAGEMENT**

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

CITY OF BALTIMORE



Isabel Mercedes Cumming

Inspector General

Mission

The Office of the Inspector General's (OIG) mission is to make sure the City's government works efficiently and honestly. We look for any wasteful spending, fraud, or wrongdoing. We help build trust between the public and the City government. Citizens deserve effective and transparent leadership, and the OIG helps hold the government accountable and improve its operations.



Slack Investigation Case #25-0013-I

- Slack allows for direct messaging and virtual meetings.
- In 2021, MONSE requested a waiver from Baltimore City Information & Technology (BCIT) to pay and use Slack.
- Only used for internal correspondence



Baltimore City Office of Information & Technology

Request to Use P-Card

Please complete the Purchase Information section. Once you have completed the form and have all 3 signatures, email the completed form to bcit.procurement@baltimorecity.gov.

Your members sent a total of 2,517 messages last week (that's 383 fewer than the week before). Of those, 2% were in public channels, 2% were in private channels, and 96% were direct messages. Your members also uploaded 258 files (that's 18 more than the week before).



Slack Data Security and Management

Will the system store, process, or transmit:

- Personal Health Information (PHI),
- Personally Identifiable Information (PII),
- Criminal Justice Info (CJI),
- Facial Recognition Data, or
- Sensitive data that shall not be released to the public without appropriate approvals?

	Free	Pro	Business+	Enterprise+
	GET STARTED	GET STARTED	GET STARTED	CONTACT SALES
Compliance				
Data retention policies <input type="radio"/>	Up to 1 year	✓	✓	✓
Data residency <input type="radio"/>	—	—	✓	✓
Data exports for all messages <input type="radio"/>	—	—	✓	✓
Data exports for all messages from a single user <input type="radio"/>	—	—	—	✓
Native data loss prevention <input type="radio"/>	—	—	—	✓
Information barriers <input type="radio"/>	—	—	—	✓
Legal holds <input type="radio"/>	—	—	—	✓
Discovery API <input type="radio"/>	—	—	—	✓
Audit logs <input type="radio"/>	—	—	—	✓
Support for HIPAA compliance <input type="radio"/>	—	—	—	✓

- BCIT is unable to manage & monitor Slack messages.
- MONSE replied Slack would not store, process, or transmit any of those data types
- Monse utilized Slack Pro plan
- Law Dept. redacted Slack messages due to health and potential student record information

SideStep Pilot Program Case #25-0046-I (OIG October 2025 Report)

- Pre-Arrest Diversion Program for youth 17 or younger
- Criteria for participant –
 - First-time offender
 - Category 2 offense – Shoplifting, larceny, CDS possession, unauthorized use, etc.
- Operated from between January 2022 and 2024 in Western District
- MONSE contracted with community-based organizations (CBOs) to provide services to the youth



SideStep Evaluation Consultant

SCOPE OF SERVICES AND BUDGET

PERFORMANCE METRICS

- Number, types, and sources of cases referred and any gaps in implementation of eligibility criteria.
- Number and types of youth participating in refusing, completing program successfully, unsuccessful exits
- Number and types of diversion plans developed
- Survey participant and participant's family feedback on program satisfaction (perceived quality/perceived value), strengths and opportunities for improvement, barriers to participation/success.
- Survey feedback from internal stakeholders (staff/boards/community partners) to gain their perspectives on programs implementation and impact, understanding of their roles/responsibilities

Fiscal 2026 Recommended Budget

Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement

Fiscal 2026 Goals

- Responsibly scale the Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS) citywide
- Expand SideStep Pre-Arrest Youth Diversion program citywide
- Evaluate core programs and initiatives

- Evaluator assessment (December 2023)
 - Data deficiencies
 - Lack of case plans & follow-ups
 - Blocked from speaking with youth and their parents
- Evaluation not released
- Same issues found with 2024 SideStep contracts
- June 2025 Budget Hearing
 - MONSE presented goal to expand SideStep citywide

SideStep Data & Grant Billing (OIG October 2025 Report)

MONSE's Reported Performance Indicator

- **14%** of 51 Youth Participants recidivated within first 6 months of SideStep Referral Date

Investigation Found Rate Increased After Six Months

- DJS information given to MONSE showed recidivism increased to **over 40%** after 6-months

Lack of Grant Billing

- Expenditure data for the DJS Grant in Workday was not fully reconciled
- In FYs 2023 & 2024, MONSE did not appear to bill DJS for approximately **\$357,775.17**

CBO Expenditures & Scope (October 2025 OIG Report)

- Approximately \$694,798.86 of City funds spent on SideStep Pilot Program.
- BOE Award memo stated City Council approved CBOs contract funding for SideStep

BACKGROUND/EXPLANATION:

The Baltimore City Council, approved funding for the Pre-Arrest Remote Diversion Program in the FY24 budget. The Grantee will perform under the Pre-Arrest Remote Diversion Program to provide support in programming that offers young people suspected of certain unlawful behaviors a meaningful opportunity to avoid the harms of the justice system for the Sidestep Pre-Arrest Remote Diversion Program.

The Agreement is late due to delays in the award selection process.

- **MONSE allowed CBOs to use City funds for non-SideStep youth and activities**

Through a holistic approach, we immerse our participants in a year-round program that supports improved SEL competencies, addresses mental health needs, and expands opportunities for growth while preparing our participants (primarily at-risk youth ages 9-24) for the workforce.

The evaluator will engage the youth in co-facilitating focus groups involving young people (ages 16-25) across Baltimore to learn about the needs of young related to mental health and if those needs could be met by a Youth Integrated Mental Health (IYMH) center.

Confidential Information Exposure

October 23, 2025

- The OIG did not include MONSE's response attachment in the public synopsis
- The file contained confidential employee information protected by MPIA
 - Employee ID # and personal payroll data
- Once the OIG alerted the Law Department, MONSE's link and statement were quickly removed.



Baltimore MONSE - Neighborhood Safety and Engagement · 4h

Statement from MONSE Director Stefanie Mavronis in response to report on Baltimore's SideStep pilot program. Our full, unedited response to the report can be found at bit.ly/SideStepResponse

Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement
Thursday, October 23, 2025

Statement from MONSE Director Stefanie Mavronis in Response to Report on Baltimore's SideStep Pilot Program

When SideStep operated as a limited pilot program from 2022–2024, the goal was always to take lessons learned to inform future program design. MONSE continues to review the pilot and make improvements ahead of citywide expansion.

MONSE's grants management processes and procedures, as well as the agency's case management standards, are more rigorous now than they were during the pilot. As an agency, we are committed to continuous improvement and advancing the work of supporting young people and their families, in partnership with BPD and DJS, in ways that prevent recidivism and reduce unnecessary justice system involvement.

During the pilot, community-based service providers were permitted to utilize funds in alignment with their approved scopes of work — which included serving youth outside of the Western District, where the pilot program was solely focused. Supporting organizations that support youth with mentorship, mental health services, and other wraparound supports.

MONSE remains committed to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in both fiscal and programmatic practices. The purpose of the limited pilot was to test feasibility, examine effective and ineffective strategies, and identify areas for improvement or gaps in established processes. With the pilot period concluding more than one year ago, MONSE has already made, and will continue to make, informed adjustments based on the totality of information and data collected during the pilot program.

Unfortunately, the agency response submitted to the Inspector General was doctored and the supporting documentation was removed.

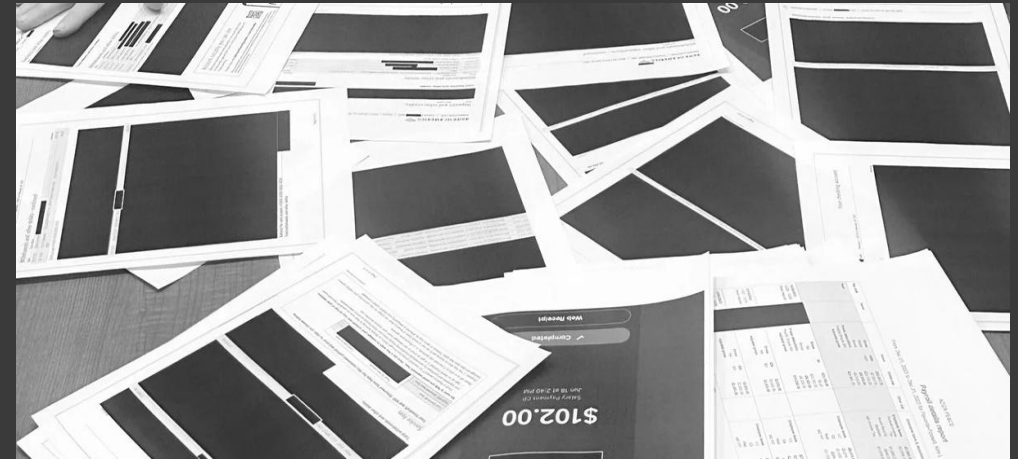
You can see the full information provided by MONSE, including all approved scopes of work and budgets for community providers (starting on page 27), at the following link: <https://bit.ly/SideStepResponse>

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SideStep

March 27, 2025 Report

- **October 22, 2025 –** OIG requested CBO invoices and supporting documents submitted to MONSE for payment and additional program data
- **January 16, 2026 –** OIG received over 200 pages of redacted records
- **January 20, 2026 –** Subpoena issued, no response received. Currently an ongoing legal matter.



SideStep Fraudulent Invoices

March 27, 2025 Report

- The OIG found MONSE paid 2 CBOs that submitted fraudulent invoices**
- Case has been referred to Law enforcement for criminal prosecution**

Lack of SideStep Program Data

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Data Column 1</u>	<u>Data Column 2</u>	<u>Data Column 3</u>	<u>Data Column 5</u>	<u>Data Column 5</u>
<u>OIG Data Request</u>	<p>According to Apricot, the number of youth who successfully completed the SideStep programs and the number of youth who were determined to be unsuccessful.</p>	<p>The number of voice-to-voice contacts or meetings documented for each youth.</p>	<p>The number of case note entries per youth documented in Apricot.</p>	<p>Number of youth for whom MONSE has records of individual service models and/or case plans.</p>	<p>Number of provider referral forms on record for the youth participants.</p>
<u>MONSE Response</u>	<p>48 successful referrals 3 unsuccessful referrals</p> <p>Note: During the pilot, there was not a recorded metric in the data management system that captured the success of the youth placement. Some of this information is included in case notes for individual youth but is not standardized.</p>	<p>N/A – Not tracked during the pilot program.</p>	<p>In the case management system, 24 case notes fields were filled in across all youth referred to Sidestep. There is no way to distinguish the number of individual entries per youth because they were entered into the same box in the case management system during the pilot program and were not timestamped as unique entries.</p>	<p>N/A - These records are not available in the agency's case management system (note: the database in use during the pilot period did not allow for attachments). Service providers, based on their respective program model, may have established their own contracts and/or diversionary agreements with youth referred during the pilot program.</p>	<p>We were able to locate 3 scanned referral forms from the pilot program. The referral process during the pilot period was not uniform and was often done through a phone call.</p>

SideStep Juvenile Data Exposure

- **MONSE employee sent post-arrest diversion table with 700 names, many of which were juveniles to a personal google account belonging to a relative**
- **According to the State Law, the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (which MONSE has replaced) "shall be liable for the unauthorized release of a police record it accesses under this subsection"**
- **MONSE was not aware of the exposure until OIG report**

SideStep Expansion

City of Baltimore

2026 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

 **MAYOR'S CORE PRIORITIES**

- MONSE responded that SideStep as it previously existed will not be expanded Citywide, yet it was listed as part of the City's legislative priorities for the 2026 State Legislative session

Extension of Juvenile Records Access for MONSE/MOCFS/MOAAME

This legislation would reinstate access provided to the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement to juvenile records. This access is essential for MONSE's SideStep diversion program as well as additional youth-focused services, ensuring treatment plans and referrals are comprehensive and effective in reducing recidivism.

Summary

1) **OIG found consultant's evaluation was critical of SideStep**

- **Not shared with City Council yet funding for expansion of SideStep requested**

2) **OIG found lack of documentation, data, case plans, & follow-ups**

- **Recidivism rates increased to over 40% after six-month period**
- **Data and documentation are necessary for program**

3) **Recommend stronger contract management & documentation**

- **Improved scopes of work with detailed service models**
- **Thorough invoice verification**
- **Documented interactions & detailed case notes**

4) **Direct access to records helps OIG inform Agency leadership of issues**

- **Data breaches**
- **Fraudulent invoices**

BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL



PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

LO26-0045

*Legislative Oversight - Mayor's Office of
Neighborhood Safety & Engagement (MONSE)*

Additional Materials

M-R: Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement

The Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE) is responsible for implementing the City's public health approach to violence through the Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan. MONSE seeks to implement and support effective violence prevention and intervention, re-entry, and rehabilitative strategies, and to co-produce public safety in all of Baltimore's neighborhoods. The agency's portfolio includes the Community Violence Intervention (CVI) ecosystem, the Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS), victim services support and advocacy, neighborhood stabilization and outreach, and re-entry services.

Preliminary Budget

Fund Name	Fiscal 2026 Budget		Fiscal 2027 Budget	
	Dollars	Positions	Dollars	Positions
General	10,690,524	32	16,683,093	31
Federal	2,839,876	2	2,000,814	1
State	6,475,110	6	4,898,019	10
Special	1,129,900	0	480,000	0
Special Grant	1,268,000	0	0	0
Total	22,403,410	40	24,061,926	42

Budget by Service

Service	Budget	
	Fiscal 2026	Fiscal 2027
617: Criminal Justice Coordination	4,416,609	0
618: Neighborhood Safety and Engagement	13,049,340	0
619: Community Empowerment and Opportunity	1,543,211	0
758: Coordination of Public Safety Strategy - Administration	3,394,250	0
923: Administration (MONSE)	0	3,108,284
924: Violence Prevention	0	12,867,064
925: Victim Services	0	4,653,512
926: Re-Entry Services	0	750,143
927: Neighborhood Stabilization	0	2,682,923
Total	22,403,410	24,061,926

The Fiscal 2027 Preliminary Budget reflects:

- A new organizational structure to better reflect the services and activities provided by the agency. The new service structure transfers 4 historical services to a new 5 service model. These services include: Administration, Violence Prevention, Victim Services, Re-Entry Services, and Neighborhood Stabilization.
- Additional funding to continue supporting Youth Advocate Programs (\$1.1 million), Hospital and School-Based Intervention Programs (\$2.45 million), and the Office of Returning Citizens (\$300,000) through the General Fund.
- Transferring \$650,000 to Service 927: Neighborhood Stabilization to support the City's Summer Youth Engagement strategy.
- An overall \$3.7 million decrease, or 35%, in Federal, State, and Private grant funding. The budget reflects all grants the agency expects to receive in the upcoming fiscal year and does not represent a loss in grant funding.

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
CITY OF BALTIMORE



Isabel Mercedes Cumming
Inspector General

Investigative
Report Synopsis

OIG Case # 25-0046-I

Issued: October 22, 2025



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
Isabel Mercedes Cumming, Inspector General
City Hall, Suite 635
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, MD 21202



October 22, 2025

Dear Citizens of Baltimore City,

The mission of the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) is to promote accountability, efficiency, and integrity in City government, as well as to investigate complaints of fraud, financial waste, and abuse. The following synopsis is a condensed version of the full report provided to City management officials and does not contain all investigative information.

During an ongoing investigation of the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement's (MONSE) SideStep program, the OIG reviewed information concerning a lack of case management, data tracking, grant billing, and community-based organization's (CBOs) scopes of work.

Background

MONSE piloted the SideStep youth diversion program between January 2022 and 2024 in the City of Baltimore's (City) Western District. MONSE administered the program with the Baltimore City Police Department (BPD) and the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS). According to the initial program announcement, SideStep provides youth who are 17 or younger with an alternative to the formal justice system and assistance from CBOs to improve their lives and help them reach their potential.¹ Youth who encountered BPD and met the following criteria were eligible for SideStep:

- First-time offender
- No active warrants
- Charged with a qualifying Category 2 offense
 - Shoplifting
 - Larceny
 - CDS Possession
 - Destruction of Property
 - Misdemeanor Assault
 - Unauthorized Use

In March 2023 and February 2024, MONSE announced a total of \$820,000 in funding to 15 CBOs and one evaluation consultant.² Both funding announcements mentioned a citywide scale-up following the launch of the pilot program. In 2023, MONSE hired an evaluation team (Evaluator) for \$24,999 to evaluate SideStep's pilot implementation and how it assists the youth and families.

The SideStep Standard Operating Policy (SOP) and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between MONSE, BPD, and DJS detail the referral process. When BPD encounters a youth and has probable cause for a Category 2 offense, BPD contacts MONSE's SideStep Youth Opportunity Coordinator, (YOC), who will contact the youth's parent/guardian within 48 or 72 hours to invite participation.³ If the invite is

¹ <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/MDBALT/bulletins/34f4e19>

² <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/MDBALT/bulletins/38a5997>

³ The MOU states contact will occur within 48 hours but the SOP states 72.

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accepted, the YOC will extend an intake appointment to the parent/guardian and the youth. During intake, the YOC conducts a Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment (CANS), Adverse Childhood Experiences Survey (ACEs), and a Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) screening. The YOC will use the results to inform the service and case plan for the youth. The YOC shall use the CBOs to address the needs of the youth and encourage restorative and transformative justice while focusing on effective case management.⁴ Figure 1 below details the diversion process.

Figure 1: Diversion process workflow based on workflow within MOU



SideStep is not currently operating as the pilot ended in 2024. Since the completion of the pilot, MONSE has recommended the Citywide expansion of the program.

Evaluation

The Evaluator’s scope of services included obtaining feedback from staff, youth, and stakeholders, assessing the program’s impact in West Baltimore Communities, and determining if the Sidestep process provides youth development, family and community engagement, and written diversion agreements. The Evaluator’s performance metrics also included the number and types of diversion plans developed and the number and types of youth who participated and completed the program successfully or unsuccessfully.

The Evaluator completed its assessment on December 30, 2023. The OIG received a copy and reviewed the Evaluator’s report (Exhibit 1). The Evaluator’s assessment identified several issues and concerns with the program:

- Lack of available data regarding diversion options, completed diversion cases, and follow-up activities for successful diversion efforts (Pg 4).
- MONSE did not provide the Evaluator with access to participating youth and their parents/guardians (Pg. 6). Ultimately, the Evaluator concluded it did not have sufficient ground to offer recommendations because they were unable to access and analyze a complete data set. The Evaluator claimed the most impactful data deficit was the lack of access to SideStep youth and families, for whom the program is designed to serve (Pg. 21).

⁴ During witness interviews, the terms service providers and CBOs were used interchangeably. For the report purposes, service providers will be referred to as CBOs.

- The Evaluator noted SideStep’s SOPs state data collection and analysis will be essential to ensure that the diversion process is equitable and successful and that the YOC shall track outcomes of all cases at the time of closure including successful, partially successful, unsuccessful completion of any case plan goals (Pg. 17). The Evaluator determined SideStep is not in compliance with its internal procedures for tracking youth diversion activities. The YOC informed the Evaluator that data collection needs to be ‘refined’ and was “not being captured 100 percent.” The YOC acknowledged to the Evaluator that SideStep was not currently utilizing case plans as a foundational tool for measuring participant progress. The YOC referenced “light case management notes” that were documented in the database. The Evaluator was not provided with redacted versions of case notes and could not verify compliance (Pg. 18). The YOC proposed an option to hire an additional youth opportunity coordinator to divide the workload, which would immediately solve staffing issues in the face of expansion (Pgs. 19&20).
- The Evaluator found that diversion options are limited, and there was a belief that SideStep, from a staffing perspective, does not have the resources to be effective. Specifically, the Evaluator wrote that having one person who is responsible for internal policies and practices, service provider [CBO] coordination, and community relations requirements, ultimately sets up the program and its sole staff person for failure (Pg. 9).
- BPD officers collectively expressed varying levels of frustration toward the unending cycles of encounters with juveniles after the initial contact and referral. They acknowledged they had no real sense of what diversions are occurring post-contact and referral. Each officer reported that many of the youth they contact and initially refer to SideStep become engaged in more serious offenses, such as robberies or assaults. One officer wanted to have more engagement and follow up with youth after the referral while also facilitating mentorship opportunities (Pg. 12). The officers were not critical of the YOC’s responsiveness but were frustrated at the decision to allocate one individual for officers to call when they have a potential referral, which can often occur outside of traditional work hours (Pg. 11).
- The Evaluator interviewed one service provider [CBO] and was not provided with the opportunity to interview other service provider organizations [CBOs], but it was given access to non-organizational providers whose services are not under the umbrella of a community organization. Feedback was positive for the program and YOC, but a more precise understanding of long-term program objectives and communication post-diversion needed to be improved (Pgs. 14&15).
- The report found that BPD Juvenile Arrest Records indicated that although juvenile arrests increased, there had been a fall in diversion numbers in 2023. In 2021, 7.89% and 2022, 8.05% of juveniles were sent to alternative programs, and in 2023, 0.9%. The Evaluator attempted to run an analysis on the six qualifiable category 2 offenses. However, due to the unavailability of data, the Evaluator could not summarize and determine the impact of SideStep on the rate of juvenile arrest for the qualifying offenses (Pgs. 4&5).
- Based on the problems, issues, and challenges identified by the workgroup members, it was their firm judgment that the program is not ready for expansion (Pg. 10).

When asked by the OIG about the evaluation, MONSE’s Director (Director) explained that the Evaluator’s evaluation was helpful and evaluated the structure, but not the impact on SideStep reducing crime. The Director said MONSE agreed with a lot of the evaluation, such as refining the referral process. She added

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SideStep. The Director stated there were 51 participants during the SideStep pilot. According to the Director, 86% of the 51 participants did not recidivate within six months after enrollment.

The OIG reviewed correspondence and on May 13, 2025, the YOC provided DJS with a list of youth and requested that they provide the rearrest status within six months after their referral/arrest date. The list contained 55 names associated with case ID numbers. DJS returned the list to the YOC, and 24 youth had a notation of “yes” in the rearrest column, indicating a rearrest occurred. Two days later, the YOC asked DJS for clarification around the dates used in the spreadsheet and how many participants were rearrested within six months of the referral/intake date. DJS returned the list with 9 names noted with a “yes” in the rearrest within six months column. While the measurement of six months indicates 9 youth were rearrested, the initial spreadsheet DJS provided appears to show that 24 recidivated over a longer period. Additionally, the data that the YOC provided to DJS shows 34 individuals with successful program completion, 3 as unsuccessful, and 18 without any entry.

Regarding SideStep’s recidivism tracking, the YOC explained that they would contact DJS to obtain a list, which was typically done informally and at the last minute. He did not believe MONSE did a good enough job with following up with the youth. He added they are currently learning and developing a more formal process. The YOC opined that he would like to improve the discharge process when the youth complete the program. The YOC said he would like to create a mailing list to communicate potential future programs or hiring opportunities.

CBOs Use of Funding and Scopes of Work

A review of Workday invoices for SideStep CBOs showed the City issued approximately \$694,798.86 to CBOs for the program.⁵ The OIG reviewed Workday CBO invoices, and several did not have supporting documents uploaded to Workday. It appears the CBOs used MONSE’s invoice template to request reimbursement for line items including professional fees, travel and transportation, meals and entertainment, supplies and materials, indirect costs, and other expenses.

The CBO contracts submitted to the City’s Board of Estimates (BOE) noted that the grantee [CBO] will perform under the pre-arrest remote diversion program to provide support in programming that offers young people suspected of certain unlawful behaviors a meaningful opportunity to avoid the harms of the justice system (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Excerpt of BOE Memo for Fiscal Year 2024 Contract

BACKGROUND/EXPLANATION:

The Baltimore City Council, approved funding for the Pre-Arrest Remote Diversion Program in the FY24 budget. The Grantee will perform under the Pre-Arrest Remote Diversion Program to provide support in programming that offers young people suspected of certain unlawful behaviors a meaningful opportunity to avoid the harms of the justice system for the Sidestep Pre-Arrest Remote Diversion Program.

The OIG reviewed information that indicated CBO funds may have been used on non-SideStep youth. Correspondence from August 2024 showed MONSE’s Chief of Staff (COS) responded to a CBO

⁵ This was calculated based on a Workday invoice review and the OIG will continue the investigation to verify the total spent.

that there were some capacity challenges at MONSE and BPD, and there was a need to make sure MONSE built the right support infrastructure around the YOC role.

DJS Funding

MONSE's interagency agreements with DJS for Fiscal Years 2023, 2024, and 2025 included a \$200,375 grant award per year for the YOC's salary and benefits and case management software costs. The DJS agreement shows that the City provides an invoice with supporting documentation to receive payment of the funds.

A review of the Fiscal Year 2023 and 2024 grant awards in Workday, the City's human capital and financial management software, indicated that MONSE had not submitted an invoice to DJS for these funds. The grant awards in Workday showed \$172,518.23 is ready to be billed for Fiscal Year 2023, and \$150,157.08 for Fiscal Year 2024. The review found that the full award amount for Fiscal Year 2025 appears to have been submitted to DJS for reimbursement.

MONSE clarified in their response that the amount spent in Fiscal Year 2023 was \$166,599.16 and \$191,176.01 in Fiscal Year 2024. The OIG learned from DJS that MONSE has not yet billed DJS for reimbursement of these funds.

Case Plans, Site Visits, and Outcomes

In the DJS interagency agreements, MONSE wrote that the YOC would be responsible for case management, including contacting, scheduling, and meeting with youth and/or families to complete the diversion intake process and connecting regularly with youth and CBOs. The OIG obtained a copy of the SideStep SOP used during the pilot. The SideStep SOP stated that diverted youth shall not be referred back to BPD or DJS for failure to engage or unsuccessful completion of diversion case plan goals. However, the YOC explained that this sentence in the SOP was not accurate. The YOC clarified that if a youth fails to comply with the program or does not make progress, he could refer them back to BPD. According to the YOC, he did not refer any youths back to BPD.

The SideStep SOP defined success based on the individual youths' case plan goals. The outcomes included: successful, partial, unsuccessful, and inability to successfully engage for intake. When asked about the level of detail in case plans during the pilot, the YOC stated it needed improving and was not what he wanted. The YOC explained that he was on call 24 hours a day and felt burned out. Although the work was a lot, which the Evaluator's report corroborated, the YOC described it as his dream job.

During the YOC's interview with the OIG, he stated success is based on program completion and following through on the agreement with the CBOs, participation, and attendance. He stated that some CBOs' programs are more structured with attendance sheets, others may be task-oriented, and youth may work on a capstone project. The YOC said he would typically get verbal feedback from the CBOs regarding the youth. The YOC stated he would check in with the youth every two weeks. Regarding site visits to the CBOs, the YOC said he would try to see them in action when the youth were there, but sometimes would go when no youth were present. Later in the interview, the YOC clarified that site visits will occur without the youth there. The YOC added that site visits would mostly occur once and then mostly communicated with the CBOs by phone.

The Director said the SideStep pilot's primary measurement of success focused on recidivism. The Director explained that recidivism would be tracked for the six months after the youth's referral to

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regarding program expenditures, explaining that “the advance funds of \$25,000 you received for your grant could be used for your program and were not restricted to Side-Step participants only.” Another CBO responded that classes took place in a secure youth facility and could not share the names of the youth who attended due to confidentiality. The CBO stated that they contacted the Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center to see if they could share attendance records.

Some of the SideStep CBOs’ scope of work also appeared to be inconsistent with SideStep’s age eligibility requirements. To be eligible for SideStep, a youth must be 17 or younger. A CBO’s scope of work listed the objective of co-facilitating focus groups involving young people up to the age of 25. Another CBO’s objectives referred to preparing participants up to the age of 24 for the workforce.

During the COS interview, she stated the SideStep program predated them, and did not “know much about SideStep.” When asked what their understanding of the program’s purpose was, the COS said she did not ask about and it was not on their radar. The COS explained that she was focused on MONSE’s finances due to the departure of a MONSE chief and setting up MONSE’s School-based Violence Intervention Program. The COS acknowledged that she did review some SideStep information in preparation for this year’s budget hearings.

The Director confirmed CBOs could use the funds for other youth who may not have been referred from SideStep. The Director stated that MONSE expected SideStep to be scaled up faster, and more referrals would go to the CBOs. However, she said it became clear that referrals would be limited, and CBOs still had work occurring. The Director explained that if there was a way to support CBOs’ general efforts, and it was a part of their approved scope of work, she did not have an issue with them using funds for their general work. The Director added that CBOs would accept youth referrals from SideStep as part of the agreement.

The YOC explained that he was not sure if the funding for CBOs was solely for SideStep youth. When asked if there were any evaluation criteria for how the CBOs were providing services to the non-SideStep participants, the Director said she did not know. The Director added that the CBOs’ payment structure was decided before their leadership role. For the future, the Director does not expect the structure to look similar to what it was during the pilot.

Findings

The OIG learned the City paid the Evaluator \$24,999 for an evaluation that was limited in recommendations due to the lack of available data and access to the youth and parents the program served. As noted in the Evaluator’s evaluation and OIG interviews, MONSE’s lack of formal case plans, data collection, and follow-up with youth, has potentially created an inconclusive outcome for the pilot program’s performance. The OIG learned that the YOC maintained a heavy workload during the pilot.

The OIG also found that recidivism rates may be higher after the six-month referral date, which MONSE used as a performance metric. The OIG formally requests further clarification regarding the recidivism rate that occurred for the pilot after the six-month metric. The lack of follow up and insight into the long-term recidivism rates, including arrest types, is data that can be collected to help inform the improvement of the program.

According to MONSE’s response, the City appears to have a total \$357,775.17 that has not been billed to DJS for the grant. The OIG recommends that MONSE review the DJS grant award billing for all fiscal years and work with DJS to bill and receive any outstanding funds. The investigation found evidence that

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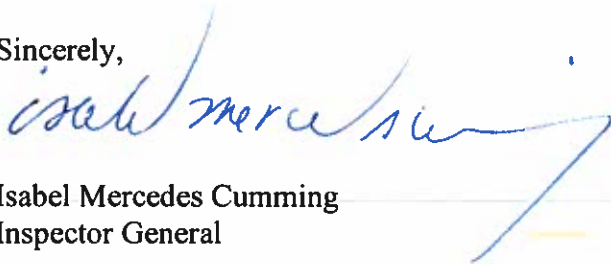
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MONSE allowed CBOs to spend contract funding on non-SideStep youth if it was within the CBOs' scope of work. Nonetheless, MONSE did not appear to review or monitor the CBOs' contract performance for the services provided to non-SideStep participants with City funds.

The evidence obtained during the investigation causes concern surrounding the upcoming Citywide expansion of the program without further follow-up review of the pilot program. As a result, the OIG will be continuing the investigation and will provide a full report at its conclusion with recommendations.

Sincerely,



Isabel Mercedes Cumming
Inspector General

- CC: Hon. Brandon M. Scott, Mayor of Baltimore City
Hon. Zeke Cohen, Baltimore City Council President
Hon. Bill Henry, Baltimore City Comptroller
Honorable Members of the Baltimore City Council
Hon. Ebony Thompson, Baltimore City Solicitor

Exhibit List

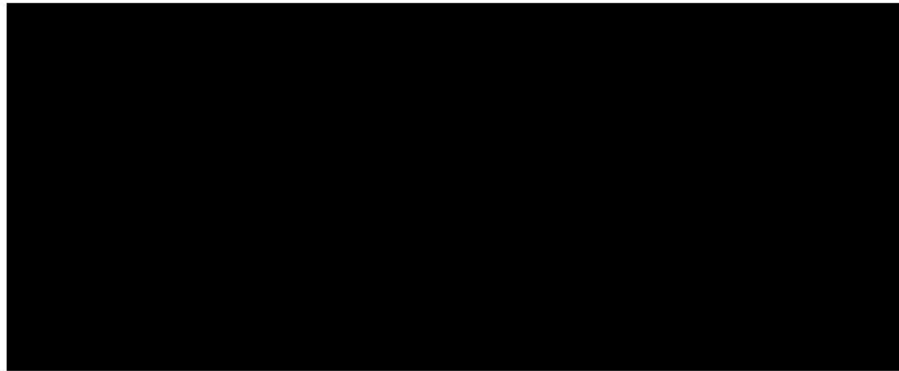
1. Evaluator Report

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Exhibit 1



December 30, 2023

Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement
Side Step Diversion Program Assessment

Requesting Organization

Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement
2700 Rayner Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21216
(410) 396-0125

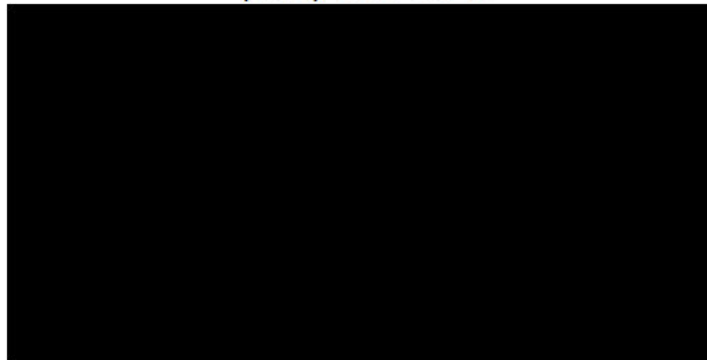


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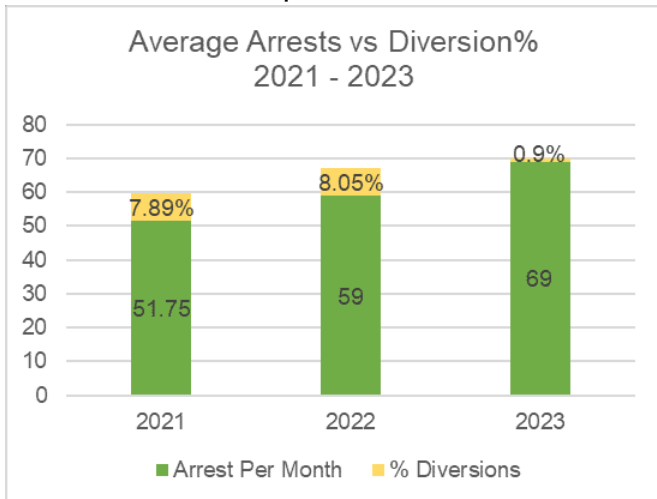
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

██████████ commenced its assessment of the Mayor's Office on Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE) Side Step Pilot Initiative on June 30, 2023. The core objective of the assessment process was to review and analyze Side Step from two distinct perspectives. Level one of the analyses was focused on Side Step's operational, administrative, and programmatic capacity. Central to this aspect of the analysis is the role and effectiveness of MONSE's Youth Opportunity Coordinator. The second level of the assessment entails examining Side Step's effectiveness in terms of the specific outcomes of its diversion efforts over the course of the last two years. Mindful of the consent decree mandate, this analysis utilizes these core and essential benchmarks to provide answers for two fundamental questions: (1) Is Side Step's operational paradigm effective enough to sufficiently meet the objectives of the consent decree and serve the needs of those youth who are referred for diversion? (2) Does the Side Step program have a tangible and documented impact on juvenile crime in Baltimore City? In looking to provide data driven answers to these inquiries, ██████ gathered information, opinions, thoughts, and perspectives from Side Step's key stakeholders and constituencies. This process, therefore, endeavored to engage representatives from Side Step's Workgroup members, the Baltimore City Police Department (BPD), service providers, youth and their parents/guardians, and the Youth Opportunity Coordinator.

DATA COLLECTION

█████ data collection methodology encompassed both quantitative and qualitative information. The quantitative data were to be obtained primarily through secondary sources such as BPD Juvenile Arrest Records, Side Step Program Juvenile Data, and additional arrests records deemed germane to the inquiry. Throughout the duration of █████ data collection efforts, it was provided with BPD Arrest Records. However, there were elements of the data request which were not available. Unavailable data included: (a) diversion options; (b) period to the completion of diversion options; (c) completed diversion cases; and (d) follow up activities on successful diversion efforts. Accordingly, based on the limited available data, █████ summary assessment on the trends of juvenile arrests in Baltimore City is as follows.

BPD Juvenile Arrest Records data from July 2021 to August 2023 indicated that although there has been a steady increase in the average of arrests of juveniles per month each year, there has also been a sharp fall in diversion numbers in 2023. As compared to the average 7.89% and



8.05% of juveniles sent to alternative programs instead of formal adjudication in the years 2021 and 2022 respectively, in 2023 we see only 0.9% of youth being diverted while the average number of juveniles arrested has increased from the previous years. The chart attached illustrates these trends.

In the wake of Side Step's implementation of the concept of pre-arrest diversion, █████ attempted to run an analysis on the arrest records provided to see if the Side Step program had led to a reduction in arrests in the six (6) Category 2 offenses listed in the program description.

However, due to the unavailability of data regarding how those six (6) offenses mapped to BPD's arrest data, [REDACTED] was unable to summarize and determine the impact of Side Step, on the rate of juvenile arrests for the listed offenses.

As the literature demonstrates, one of the dominant philosophies driving diversion practices is to avoid exposing juveniles to the formal judicial system for minor offenses and to instead seek out restorative and rehabilitative options that will reduce recidivism and possible progression to violent offenses. However, [REDACTED] was unable to obtain the Side Step diversion records which gave details of juvenile's arrest and the associated diversion referral and outcome details which could help analyze the effectiveness of the program in keeping youth out of the formal juvenile justice system. Meanwhile, the BPD Juvenile Arrest Records provided up to August 2023 indicated a significant rise in juveniles being detained in detention facilities such as Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center (BCJJC) and the Charles H. Hickey, Jr School (CHS). The year-to-date data up to August of 2023 shows a 114% rise in detention at BCJJC and 1200% rise in detention at CHS as compared to previous year.

The current climate surrounding juvenile criminal justice reform and detention in Baltimore City shows an increase in juvenile arrests and detention. It also indicates a significant decrease in diversion activities. The lack of availability of Side Step data has severely hindered [REDACTED] ability to highlight the progressive and restorative intentions of MONSE towards the youth of the city.

From a purely qualitative perspective [REDACTED] requested two levels of information. The first encompassed program background information. Key background information received included MONSE's organizational chart, Side Step's diversion eligibility criteria, Standard Operational Procedures (SOPs), the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment tool, BPD policies on Interactions with Youth (Policy 1202), the Western District's Juvenile Diversion Policy

(WDJDP, Policy 803), and the [REDACTED] 2019 Baltimore Youth Diversion Assessment.

The second level of qualitative information requested was to access feedback from Side Step's stakeholders and constituencies. This information was essential to [REDACTED] assessment because the extraction of data from the rich narrative provided by stakeholders provided the means to evaluate if Side Step is meeting the needs of program participants. [REDACTED] requested individual interviews with the Youth Opportunity Coordinator, each member of the Side Step Workgroup, and as many BPD Officers as possible. In addition, [REDACTED] also requested conducting two (2) focus groups, one with participating youth and one with their parents and/or guardians. Ultimately, [REDACTED] interviews and focus groups process included an interview with the Youth Opportunity Coordinator, interviews with two (2) Workgroup members, interviews with four (4) service providers, and interviews with three (3) BPD officers. MONSE did not provide access to participating youth and their parents and/or guardians. Therefore, [REDACTED] has provided observations and conclusions based on the data provided but highlights that there are significant and essential portions of requested data that remain undelivered.

The qualitative data was less robust than what would be considered ideal. [REDACTED] worked in collaboration with the Youth Opportunity Coordinator to design and implement a process for facilitating time to schedule and gather crucial feedback. This included an agreement between [REDACTED] and the Youth Opportunity Coordinator. The agreement called for the Youth Opportunity Coordinator to: (a) email Workgroup members and service providers to set up interviews based upon their respective schedules; (b) make phone calls to police officers to secure their cooperation and forward their contact information to [REDACTED] (c) secure a place for youth and parent focus groups to occur; and (d) make phone calls to participating youth and their parents to secure their participation. This

framework was agreed to in August and was scheduled to launch in early September. However, despite repeated requests stakeholders were not contacted for interviews until the last full week of November. As referenced above, the delays had a significant impact on [REDACTED] ability to develop a comprehensive picture of the thoughts and opinions of those whose perceptions of Side Step are so essential to this report. In turn, any final determinations about the program must be viewed within this context.

WORKGROUP OBSERVATIONS

The Side Step Workgroup consists of eight (8) members, including a representative from the consent decree monitoring team, BPD's administrative bureau, community policing and consent decree implementation units, the department of Juvenile Services (DJS), and the [REDACTED]. The Work Group's primary function, by design, is to serve the Youth Opportunity Coordinator in an advisory capacity. Within this context, the Workgroup has focused on assisting with developing macro policies, procedures, and practices. In terms of day-to-day operations, those responsibilities are the sole domain of the Youth Opportunity Coordinator. The Youth Opportunity Coordinator, in turn, provides program updates to the Workgroup on a weekly or biweekly basis depending on program priorities. While the body does have an active role in the screening and selecting of service providers, the Workgroup does not participate in the assessment and screening of youth who are referred to the program. Additionally, the group does not participate in connecting program participants with service providers.

As the two Workgroup members interviewed shared their experiences, perspectives, and concerns, it soon became clear that Side Step, at least from the vantage point of the respondents, is viewed as ineffective. From a foundational level one of the first problems highlighted was the difficulty of identifying youth for the program who meet the criteria for diversion intervention.

Observing that most of the youth encountered by BPD have often committed serious offenses which do not qualify under Category 2, the respondents highlighted the inherent limitations of the program because its narrow qualification criteria does not connect with the reality which BPD confronts each day. Subsequently, there is also an underlying perception that the ongoing challenges of finding youth who qualify for the program have increased because BPD's commitment to/and or engagement with the program has waned over time. Citing a cumbersome and complicated

referral process and personnel changes within the department which have impacted continuity, the operational relationship between BPD and Side Step is not perceived to be strong. In this regard, it was stated that within the confines of day-to-day program operations, the consent team now serves as the “go-between” in the Side Step-BPD relationship.

When the interviews turned to current diversion activities, there was a consensus that diversion options are limited. Background information confirmed the observation. This is attributed to a belief that the Side Step program, from a staffing perspective, does not have the resources to be effective. Conceptually and practically speaking, the opinion is that having one person who is responsible for internal policies and practices, service provider coordination, and community relations requirements, ultimately sets up the program and its sole staff person for failure. For Side Step to have a chance of success, it was argued, MONSE must look to augment its staffing configuration.

Beyond staffing there were four (4) additional thoughts on improving the program. First, there was the suggestion that Side Step should be housed in DJS and not in the [REDACTED]. The argument is that DJS would provide a “one-stop shop” for the myriad of services that a youth would require during and after the diversion process is completed. The second recommendation suggested that Side Step examine options for increasing its visibility in the community at large. Third, there was a call for Side Step to incorporate a more comprehensive family centered proactive approach which looks to intervene before the need for diversion arises. Finally, the Workgroup members advocated for transitioning the coordination of diversion activities to community-based organizations to ensure that diversions are both comprehensive and targeted.

Invoking Maslow's hierarchy of needs-realizing that food, clothing, and shelter is the first and best diversion-the thought here is that a comprehensive case management model would best serve

the needs of youth in the program. The last observation from the interviews regards the current plans for Side Step to expand beyond the Western District into other Baltimore Communities. Based on the problems, issues, and challenges identified by the Workgroup Members, it was their firm judgment that the program is not ready for expansion.

BPD OBSERVATIONS

█████ contacted six (6) BPD officers. Following multiple phone calls, voicemails, and text messages, three (3) officers eventually responded and agreed to be interviewed for the assessment. The objective of the interviews was to examine each officer's thoughts and perspectives on the youth diversion referral process and the overall relevance and effectiveness of the program.

Among this small sample size of officers, there were common themes which collectively echoed in the responses. Among their observations was the contention that Side Step lacked sufficient comprehensive resources to effectively impact those youth who are on the precipice of entering the criminal justice system. Commenting on the program's core functionality, the officers pointed to Side Step's limited diversion options as a barrier to success. In lamenting this lack of resources in the face of the broad spectrum of socio-economic issues which confronts Baltimore City's juvenile population, the officers indicated that they did not have faith in the program's ability to achieve its goals and objectives. The officers also observed that Side Step's resource deficit was a contributing factor to the persuasive lack of "buy in" to the program by participating youth and their parents/guardians.

When commenting on the diversion process, the officers expressed concerns regarding Side Step's on-call availability to deal with referrals at any given moment. To be clear, the officers were not critical of the Youth Opportunity Coordinator's responsiveness. Rather, their core frustrations are directed at the decision to allocate one individual for officers to call when they have a potential referral. With youth encounters often occurring outside of traditional work hours, late evenings, late at night, or weekends, there was a consensus among the officers that if the diversion process were to work as designed, more human capital would be required.

Beyond the concerns of capacity, resources, and buy-in, the officers commented that their youth encounters are highly problematic and often unproductive. Echoing once again the theme of lack of “buy-in,” the officers characterized their encounters with both youth and their parents as often verbally combative and disrespectful. In their judgment there is a fundamental lack of accountability with these youth and their parents/guardians, “they do not appear to take Side Step interventions seriously.”

In terms of the effectiveness of the program and its outcomes, the officers are not seeing any tangible benefits from Side Step’s diversion interventions. Collectively, they expressed varying levels of frustration toward the seemingly unending cycles of encounters with juveniles after initial contact and referral. Simply put, in the words of one officer, “we come in contact with them over and over again for the same issues.” Confessing that they have no real sense of what diversions are occurring post contact and referral, each officer reported that many of the youth they contact and refer to Side Step initially, “ups the ante” and become engaged in more serious offenses such as committing robberies or assaults. Commenting on this troubling trend one officer lamented that: “We referred a kid to Side Step and now he is suspected to be involved in seventy (70) or eighty (80) robberies in the neighborhood.”

The cumulative effect of the persistent issues of resource deficits, limited diversion options, limited accountability and buy-in, and reoccurring encounters with youth has translated into a negative perception of the program among these rank-and-file members of BPD. While the interactions with the Youth Opportunity Coordinator were seen as positive, (for example it was noted that youth had a good rapport with ██████████ on the scene), this dynamic did not achieve the desired behavioral outcome of decreasing the rates of recidivism. These officers, therefore, are questioning the efficacy of the program specifically and the city’s approach to juvenile crime overall.

One forward looking comment, however, came from an officer who wanted to have more engagement and follow up with youth after initial contact and referral. This officer observed that if Side Step could find a way to provide a “coming together” with a youth and his or her arresting officer while also facilitating mentorship opportunities, the current narrative could change for the better. There is a belief that if youth had a more positive connection with officers who routinely patrol their neighborhoods and who they encounter, then it would be possible for law enforcement to be seen in a different light, a community partner rather than an enemy. This, in turn, would result in positive pressure that could alter youth behavior.

In sum, the observation of these officers conveys the following: (a) Side Step requires additional resources, including personnel and an expansion of service providers; (b) finding ways to enhance youth and parental/guardian accountability is paramount; and (c) creating a mechanism for officers to have positive community interactions is a critical component for fostering shared responsibility for community safety.

Currently, it was asserted, none of these components are in place. As Side Step moves forward and considers replication to other parts of the city, the looming concern is that BPD officers will become increasingly reluctant to engage youth for “minor offenses.” If officers are not fully engaged and believe in the process and its outcomes-if they do not witness behavioral changes that would encourage their day-to-day engagement with the program-Side Step’s underlying philosophy of preventing youth from becoming entrenched in the criminal justice system would be questioned.

SERVICE PROVIDER OBSERVATIONS

████ had three primary objectives during its interviews with Side Step's service providers. The first objective was to examine the range of diversion options that are available to program participants. Second, █████ interview design endeavored to afford service providers with an opportunity to reflect on their collaboration with Side Step. And last, █████ wanted to examine youth diversion outcomes and how they are documented and measured.

As of the writing of this report, Side Step's current range of diversion options, as observed by Workgroup members and BPD officers, are limited. As best as this analysis could ascertain, the current list of organizational service providers includes █████ and the nonprofit organization █████. More precisely, the █████ implements its diversion efforts. █████ interviewed a representative of the █████. However, █████ was not provided the opportunity to speak with a representative from █████. In addition, █████ was not provided with access to those organizations who received funding in Fiscal Year 2022. In seeking to broaden the scope of the inquiry, █████ asked to be provided with additional service provider organizations who could speak to their experiences with Side Step. In turn, █████ was informed that other potential partnering organizations were various public agencies, for example the Baltimore City School System, for which the Youth Opportunity Coordinator did not have one designated representative. Conversely, to augment the interview process, █████ was given access to non-organizational providers whose services are not under the umbrella of a community organization. Specifically, █████ interviewed a clinical psychologist who provides as-needed individual and group counseling sessions, a mental health advocate with a focus on improving youth self-esteem and workforce development, and a Lt. Commander from the National Institute of Health who offers mentoring services.

The initial take away from [REDACTED] conversations with service providers is that each partner had positive things to say about Side Step and the Youth Opportunity Coordinator. In particular, the providers agreed on the following: (a) providers received extensive background information about the program, though not a formal orientation; (b) providers received resources and support when requested; (c) communication with providers was ongoing throughout their diversion activities; and (d) providers witnessed impact and progress with some of the youth they worked with.

Conversely, in terms of areas where Side Step could improve, providers observed the following: (a) providers need to be given a more precise and concrete understanding of long-term program objectives; (b) Side Step needs to develop a system for structured feedback from providers during the diversion process; (c) communication with providers post-diversion need to be improved, i.e. consistent follow up; and (d) Side Step should seek to be more proactive to identify at-risk juveniles before the need for diversion occurs.

The observation regarding the need for more structured feedback is particularly salient and provides a good conduit for discussing documented program outcomes. What has become clear from the conversations with the service providers is that Side Step is not implementing, at least to the extent of the information that has been provided, a standardized structured process and system to: (a) document the diversion work of the service providers and (b) measure the outcomes for effectiveness. The latter observation lends itself to both outcomes for Side Step youth and evaluation tools for the providers. Without the enforcement of clearly established metrics and benchmarks by which to evaluate the progress and effectiveness of all aspects of the program, Side Step's diversion efforts are not quantified.

YOUTH OPPORTUNITY COORDINATOR OBSERVATIONS

The interview with the Youth Opportunity Coordinator [REDACTED] proved to be both candid and insightful. Throughout the one-hour plus conversation, [REDACTED] insights into Side Step's current operational paradigms and its future trajectory were anchored in the realities of launching a pilot initiative and ongoing conversations regarding the program's expansion beyond the Western District. Within the context of Side Step's established operational norms, [REDACTED] echoed the thoughts and observations expressed by Workgroup members, BPD officers, and service providers regarding the programmatic and administrative challenges facing the program. From limited diversion options and undocumented outcomes to the need to increase staffing capacity, [REDACTED] was transparent and open about Side Step's current limitations and the need for the program to reconfigure its approach moving forward.

Regarding the question of the range of diversion options, [REDACTED] readily acknowledged the limitations which have existed during this pilot phase. In providing context, he emphasized what had not been documented during the qualitative data collection segment of the assessment. This being Side Step's clear demarcation between pre-existing service providers which are community-based organizations and grant funded community organizations which responded to Side Step's Request for Proposal (RFP) to provide diversion services. From [REDACTED] perspective, the salient point of the distinction is that pre-existing service providers are at-will partners who are not obligated to conduct diversion activities. Thus, when referrals have been made over the last two years there have been consistent challenges in creating, in the words of [REDACTED], "an uninterrupted stream of services." These barriers to services have included youth being placed on a waiting list, disruptions of services once they commence, and gaps in services as they are being provided. [REDACTED]

lamented that this has resulted in Side Step being reliant upon providers, in some cases city agencies, who though well intended, are nevertheless not inherently connected to the program and its outcomes. They are, he emphasized, “not responsive because they are beholden.”

When speaking to the utilization of grant recipients to increase the range of and capacity for impactful diversion activities, ██████████ expressed optimism in the belief that this augmentation of diversion offerings, in conjunction with the efforts of pre-existing programs and city agencies, could facilitate significant improvements in the coming year. His confidence is based on the process by which recipients were selected and the services that have been offered and will be offered.

Screened and selected by a collaborative review process (██████████ and the Workgroup) featuring a metric driven scoring rubric, the first set of grant recipients were selected in Fiscal-Year 2022 and recipients for Fiscal-Year 2023 are scheduled to start at the end of the year. The new diversion partners, ten (10) in total, bring to the program diversion options that include targeted services for young girls, LGBT+ youth, grief counseling, music and the arts, and life skills development.

The groundwork for expanded capacity nonetheless still leaves unresolved the question of documenting and measuring outcomes and collecting the data necessary for validation. ██████████ acknowledged the shortcomings of the program in this area. He directed ██████████ to Side Step’s SOPs which clearly outlines the steps by which youth and partner organization progress are supposed to be measured. Stating that “data collection and analysis will be essential to ensure that the diversion process is equitable and successful, particularly across race/ethnicity, gender, and age”, the manual declares that “the Youth Opportunity Coordinator shall track outcomes of all cases at the time of closure, to include: (a) Successful completion of case plan goals; (b) partial successful completion of

case plan goals; (c) unsuccessful completion of any case plan goals; and (d) inability to successfully engage for intake.

As of the writing of this report, Side Step is not in compliance with its internal operating procedures when it comes to tracking youth diversion activities. As indicated in the data collection summary of this analysis, there are indications that Side Step's data is neither exhaustive nor to date. ██████████ concedes the point by saying that data collection needs to be "refined" and "is not being captured 100 percent". Furthermore, regarding the SOP's call for case plans, ██████████ concedes that Side Step is not currently utilizing case plans as a foundational tool for measuring participant progress. Beyond the lack of formalized case plans for each participant, the detailed documentation of diversion activities is uncertain. ██████████ referred to "light case management notes" documented in the database. To the extent that these notes represent the participant tracking called for in the SOPs is unclear. ██████████ did not receive redacted versions of case notes and thus cannot verify compliance.

As currently designed and implemented, the tracking of diversion activities is tied to what ██████████ has called a "very loose contract" which outlines the responsibilities of being in the program. Stipulations include participants committing to attending scheduled diversion activities, completing a minimum of three (3) quarters of their appointments, acknowledging that diversion activities must be completed within ninety (90) days of the agreement, and to understanding that they will not be arrested. Youth who are not meeting the stipulations of the agreement are referred to BPD for adjudication. Currently, there are no protocols, policies, or procedures to follow up on youth who are to BPD.

As for the tracking monitoring service providers, the SOPs requires that: (a) The Youth Opportunity Coordinator shall meet with each referral partner at least monthly to assess progress, challenges, barrier removal issues, and overall communication and coordination issues and; (b) The Youth Opportunity Coordinator shall schedule monthly standing meetings with all referral partners to assess progress, challenges, barrier removal issues, and overall communication and coordination issues and resource and other needs across the pilot. Based on the data provided, without access to minutes or notes, █████ cannot confirm that the weekly and monthly meetings are occurring.

As █████ looked to the future of the program, he spoke of improvements which are required for all aspects of the initiative. The quality improvement agenda he advocates for includes a focus on enhancing data collection processes, ensuring the capacity to adhere to existing policies and procedures, and creating the internal and external infrastructure necessary for future expansion. Yet █████ also endorses the views of the stakeholders and constituencies engaged throughout this report—a new operational staffing model is key to improving the program. Speaking of the challenges of being the sole MONSE staff responsible for all aspects of the program, he expressed concerns about whether the Youth Opportunity Coordinator position has the bandwidth to effectively manage the broad spectrum of responsibilities that comes with the position.

Accordingly, throughout the assessment and interview, █████ gave considerable thought to how his position should best serve Side Step in the future. Contemplating what responsibilities should shift to other individuals and entities and how best to self-critique himself to maximize Side Step's impact and reach, he envisions two potential staffing models which could improve the program. The first option he proposed was to hire an additional Youth Opportunity Coordinator to divide the current workload. This, he concluded, would be an immediate solution to staffing issues in

the face of expansion. Yet, the more optimal path, he contends, would be to secure the services of nonprofit organizations to coordinate diversion activities and thus rendering the bandwidth issue obsolete.

Conceptually speaking the nonprofits would facilitate intake and assessment, provide targeted case management solutions, and in turn implement the comprehensive family centered proactive approach and support model which has been mentioned throughout the report. If this approach is adopted, the Youth Opportunity Coordinator would focus on administrative matters such as invoices and budgets, ensuring accountability and structured follow up with service providers, leading community education and public relations, and creating and safeguarding a strong relationship with BPD. ██████ believes that there are two advantages to this configuration. First, it would further entrench Side Step in the community, bringing it back to its grassroots origins. And second, having the organizational infrastructure outside of MONSE, yet still beholden to the office, would provide shelter from the political crosswinds of Baltimore City.

CONCLUSIONS

Given the challenges of accessing a complete data set for this analysis, [REDACTED] has determined that it does not have sufficient grounds to offer a set of recommendations. As referenced throughout this report, [REDACTED] has faced significant challenges with accessing the complete data set required for this analysis. Although there were gaps in statistical information and less than ideal numbers of stakeholders to interview, the most impactful deficit in data was the lack of access to Side Step's youth and their families. The inability to hear from those for whom the program is designed to serve limited [REDACTED] ability to gauge as to whether Side Step is meeting the objectives of the consent decree and transforming the lives of youth who have been referred for diversion. Although the stakeholder and constituent engagement process provided the opportunity and the context for developing basic impressions of Side Step's operational activities, the open data questions which exist, both quantitative and qualitative, would render any final determinations regarding key aspects of the program partly speculative. However, considering the consistent themes which were observed amid stakeholder engagement, we do believe that it is worthwhile to identify and highlight the following salient observations for future consideration.

- a) Side Step-BPD Communications: From both a conceptual and core operational perspective, Side Step's working relationship with BPD is the most critical component of the program. Without this foundational construct, the program would cease to be relevant. [REDACTED] has observed that Workgroup members and BPD officers indicated that the communication between the two partnering organizations could be stronger. While there is nothing to suggest the presence of mistrust or ill-will in the collaboration, it does seem that larger programmatic issues (staffing, availability for referrals, limited diversion options and youth accountability) are hindering the maximum potential of the partnership.

- b) Staffing Capacity: As Side Step prepares for potential expansion, [REDACTED] has observed that Workgroup members, BPD, and the Youth Opportunity Coordinator are calling for expanding staffing capacity/human capital. When discussing the challenges that have been cited during the assessment (increasing diversion options, availability for referrals, data collection, and validating outcomes) the stakeholders have connected these concerns directly back to bandwidth and capacity. Although adding internal staffing was mentioned, there is nonetheless a firm consensus for solving this problem by hiring community-based organizations. As indicated in [REDACTED] Baseline Summary, developing an enhanced continuum of such services is an effective diversion option. Utilizing trusted community-based organizations is also a key component of the original objectives of the Side Step program.
- c) Data Collection & Documenting Outcomes: During the assessment [REDACTED] observed that Workgroup members, BPD Officers, and service providers all had positive comments regarding the intent of the Side Step Program and the efforts of the Youth Opportunity Coordinator. Yet, [REDACTED] has also observed that Side Step has significant challenges when it comes to documenting its activities and demonstrating its impact through validated data. With documented concerns regarding adherence to established protocols, database management, data accuracy, and the implementation of case management protocols, the Youth Opportunity Coordinator and to a lesser degree service providers, are all aware of the needs to ensure the program's long-term substantiality by capturing and documenting the work that has been done on behalf of participant youth.
- d) 2019 Baltimore Youth Diversion Assessment: This assessment was conducted following the [REDACTED] 2019 Baltimore Youth Diversion Assessment, which was submitted as background information. Based on the data that has been provided

over the course of this assessment, [REDACTED] cannot confirm that the recommendations from that study have been addressed by the Side Step Program.

APPENDICES

WORKGROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How were you selected to be a member of the workgroup and how would you describe your role in the workgroup ?
2. How would you characterize the role of the workgroup itself ?
3. How would you characterize the process by which BPD makes juvenile diversion referrals?
4. How would you describe the role of the workgroup in the development of the Side Step youth assessment process ?
5. What are your thoughts and opinions on the assessment process as currently constructed ?
6. How would you characterize the role of the workgroup in the selection of diversion partners?
7. What are your thoughts and perspectives on the range of Sidestep youth diversion options ?
8. What are your thoughts and opinions on how Sidestep measures the outcomes of its Juvenile diversion efforts ?
9. What are your thoughts and perspectives on program data collection efforts?
10. How would you characterize the working relationship between the workgroup and the Youth Opportunity Coordinator ?
11. How does the workgroup members receive program updates,(i.e., meeting, email, written reports)

12. Thinking from an overall perspective, what is working well with the Sidestep Program and what is not working well.
13. What are some of your thoughts and/or recommendations for improving the program?
14. There has been talk of expanding Sidestep to other precincts in the city. Do you believe that the program is ready for expansion?

BPD INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Are you aware of the Side Step referral guidelines?
2. How does BPD initially encounter a youth?
3. Who makes the decision as to whether a not a youth is referred to Side Step?
4. If referred to Side Step, what is that process for BPD?
5. If not, what happens with that youth?
6. Once a referral is made, what follow up, if any, does BPD have?
7. As someone in the field, do you see this diversion technique as being effective? Why or why not?
8. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the program?
9. What can be improved with the Side Step?
10. Would you like to add any additional comments ?

SERVICE PROVIDER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How were you selected to be a diversion partner?
2. What is the referral process with Side Step?
3. What are your thoughts and opinions on the process?
4. How many youths from Side Step have you served and in what time frame?
5. How long have you worked with the youth and their families and what determines a successful and unsuccessful discharge from your services?
6. What services are you under contract to provide for Side Step youth and their families?
7. How is data collected and service implementation measured?
8. What is the communication process with your program and Side Step program coordinator/staff?
9. What are the strengths and limitations of the current contract?
10. Do you feel supported in this partnership? If yes, how and if not, why?
11. Additional thoughts/recommendations for improving the program?

YOUTH OPPORTUNITY COORDINATOR QUESTIONS

1. What are the responsibilities of the Opportunity Youth Coordinator via Side Step and within MONSE overall?
2. Who else in MONSE has a role in the program policies, administration, and evaluation ? Please Describe?
3. How many active diversions are in process?
4. What is the underlying conceptual foundation and the metrics utilized for assessing youth who are referred to the program.
5. What are your thoughts and perspectives on the process by which BPD makes referrals? Would you characterize it as effective? Please provide reasons for your answer.
6. What is the process by which diversion partners are recruited and screened?
7. How many diversion partners does the program utilize currently ?
8. What is the process by which a juvenile is referred to a partner ?
9. How are diversion partners evaluated for effectiveness ?
10. What are your thoughts and perspectives on the range of Sidestep youth diversion options ?
11. How is program data collected, updated, and distributed to stakeholders?
12. How does Sidestep measure the outcomes of its Juvenile diversion efforts ?
13. What is the role of the workgroup in the selection of diversion partners?

14. What is the role of the Side Step Work group and how are decisions made regarding group representation ?

15. How would you characterize the working relationship between Side Step ([REDACTED] as Administrator) and relations with the following:
 - a. Work Group Members
 - b. Diversion Partners
 - c. BPD

16. Are there currently any challenges with these stakeholders which are impacting the program?

17. In looking at Side Steps Mission, what are the core strengths of the program?

18. In looking at Side Steps Mission, what are the weaknesses of the program?

19. What are your thoughts and/or recommendations for improving the program?

20. There has been talk of expanding Sidestep to other precincts in the city. Do you believe that the program is ready for expansion? Please Provide a reason for your answer.



CITY OF BALTIMORE
MAYOR BRANDON M. SCOTT

MEMORANDUM

TO	Isabel Mercedes Cumming, Inspector General
FROM	Stefanie Mavronis, MONSE Director
DATE	Tuesday, October 7, 2025
SUBJECT	Management Alert # 25-0046-I

This memorandum will serve as an official response to the OIG Management Alert for Case No. 25-0046-I. Over this current calendar year and prior to the issuance of this report, the Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE) leadership had already begun the work of realigning staffing and updating standard operating procedures to address identified challenges concerning the agency’s subrecipient monitoring, case management, data tracking, contract oversight and finance invoicing and documentation. Additionally, MONSE has taken steps to strengthen and improve internal case management standards.

The initial SideStep youth diversion pilot program—which originated under prior agency leadership—was designed and developed as one tool to respond to the needs of youth and families while reducing youth recidivism for first-time offenders. This pilot, which operated in the Western District between 2022-2024, was intended as a limited test of concept to inform the future of youth diversion work in Baltimore.

As a result of findings from the pilot, MONSE, in partnership with the Baltimore Police Department (BPD), has spent this year redesigning entire portions of the program based on lessons learned during the pilot phase. Many of these changes specifically address several of the underlying concerns raised in the report. MONSE has embedded stronger oversight mechanisms, clarified program processes, policies and procedures, and removed singular points of failure through increased oversight and redundancy. We are confident these changes will position the program for greater impact, cross-agency coordination, sustainability, and consistency when the determination is made that the program will launch citywide.

Evaluation: MONSE appreciates the evaluation conducted by [REDACTED] and the findings have provided meaningful lessons that will be used to strengthen our operations moving forward. This is, by definition, the desire and goal of a pilot program. With the benefit of the evaluation, internal review of data and procedures, and candid discussion with pilot program partners combined, MONSE has already taken the following responsive actions:

- Undertaken a comprehensive review of the program with interagency partners to better meet both operational goals and broader community needs.
- Strengthened programmatic oversight to ensure accountability and role redundancy while maintaining agency standards.

City Hall – Room 250, 100 Holliday Street, Baltimore, MD 21202

- Improved data tracking from the point of referral, reducing the risk of late or incomplete data entry.
- Developed a plan for tracking youth recidivism beyond the 6-month period tracked during the pilot phase, aligning with established agency recidivism tracking methods utilized in the Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS).

DJS Funding: The OIG findings surrounding DJS funds were based on expenditure data in Workday that had not been fully reconciled to the respective grant award. In FY23, the actual spend was \$166,599.16. In FY24, the actual spend was \$191,176.01. We have confirmed with BBMR that at this stage there is no way to correct spending in Workday for prior-year grants. We have attached documentation for expenditures related to the FY23 and FY24 DJS grant awards (*see Appendix*)*. We are in communication with DJS regarding the FY23 and FY24 award periods to determine the actual amount remitted to the City for those fiscal years and next steps. We appreciate the OIG acknowledgement that the drawdown was completed properly and timely for the FY 25 DJS award MONSE received, which speaks to the new staffing and internal protocols implemented within the agency.

CBO’s Use of Funding and Scope of Work: All expenditures were made within the framework of approved scopes of work in the subrecipients’ executed contracts and were directed to support young people, consistent with the mission and objectives of the agency and the Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan. MONSE’s commitment has remained twofold: to take a limited number of SideStep referrals through the Western District pilot program while also carrying out citywide youth opportunity work. The language in the original Board of Estimates (BOE) memorandum solely referenced SideStep, but the approved scopes of work and budgets of the individual vendor contracts executed under this initiative allowed for a broader use (*see authorized scopes of work and budgets in the Appendix*).*

We note that the information under review has previously been shared transparently and publicly, including in responses to inquiries from both the Baltimore Sun and Fox 45. At no point has MONSE withheld information regarding the scope or use of funds. Moving forward, the agency will ensure that BOE memos and grant agreements are clear, precise, and aligned regarding the approved and authorized use of funds for any subrecipient contract.

Conclusion and General Response to Management Alert

MONSE remains committed to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in both fiscal and programmatic practices. The management alert identifies several reasonable adjustments that were necessary to improve oversight and internal management of the SideStep pilot program before it is scaled citywide. The SideStep program in the Western District that operated between 2022-2024 was structured as a limited pilot, the purpose of which is to test feasibility, examine effective and ineffective strategies, and identify areas for improvement or gaps in established processes. Now that the pilot period has concluded, MONSE has already made, and will continue to make, informed adjustments based on the totality of information and data collected during the pilot program.

This management alert includes findings that appear to question public policy decisions made by the Mayor’s Office, guided by subject matter experts, and informed by data and community needs. The management alert states that the findings, “created an inconclusive outcome for the pilot program’s performance.” MONSE has relied on multiple factors to evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot program since its conclusion, and our agency contends that evaluating the value or success of a particular policy requires a broader scope of information than is reflected in this management alert.

**The OIG did not include the appendix file due to the large file size and disclosure concerns at this time.*

The OIG's formal request for "further clarification regarding the recidivism rate that occurred for the pilot after the six-month metric" expands beyond the established key performance indicators that were tracked for the pilot program. MONSE is continuing to make improvements to program design and ensuring a robust system is in place for tracking recidivism long-term, in alignment with standards set in other agency programs, including re-entry services and the Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS). As we continue discussions with the Administration on the future of the SideStep youth diversion program, the tracking of more robust and multifaceted key performance indicators will serve as a guidepost and management tool, allowing interagency partners to make adjustments in real time while ensuring positive youth outcomes over time.

MONSE will continue to advance opportunities and support for young people in Baltimore. Similarly, we will continue working in partnership with the Mayor's Office and oversight partners to ensure our policies and programs reflect best practices, uphold the highest integrity, and deliver meaningful results for Baltimore's youth and communities.

**Office of the Inspector General
Response
Case # 25-0046-I**



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
Isabel Mercedes Cumming, Inspector General
City Hall, Suite 635
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, MD 21202



October 22, 2025

Office of the Inspector General Response

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) is responding to the October 7, 2025, memo provided by the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE) Director Stefanie Mavronis (Mavronis). The OIG's SideStep pilot program Management Alert was issued to MONSE management on September 23, 2025. It contained information learned from a third-party evaluation and interviews concerning SideStep's lack of formal case plans, data collection, follow-up with participating youth, and grant management.

The OIG notes that MONSE operated SideStep as a pilot program in the Western District between 2022 and 2024 for youth diversion work. MONSE spent approximately \$700,000 on SideStep. The SideStep pilot paid \$24,999 of City funds for an evaluation team (Evaluator) to evaluate the pilot. In June 2025, MONSE presented its Fiscal 2026 budget to the Baltimore City Council's Budget and Appropriations Committee with a goal to expand SideStep citywide.

According to the Evaluator's report, MONSE did not give the Evaluator access to the youth and their parents and/or guardians, for whom the program is designed to serve.¹ The Evaluator wrote that this was a critical data deficit. Additionally, the Evaluator cited a lack of available data for diversion options, completed cases, and follow-up activities for successful diversion efforts. Furthermore, the Evaluator found SideStep was not in compliance with its internal procedures for tracking youth diversion activities. The OIG learned from the evaluation and the investigation that SideStep was not utilizing case plans as a foundation tool for measuring participant progress. MONSE claims to have benefited from the evaluation, internal review of data and procedures, and candid discussion with pilot program partners.

Of the 51 Sidestep participants, it was reported that 14% recidivated within the first six months after their referral to the SideStep program. Correspondence between MONSE and the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) showed a rise in recidivism after the six-month mark. The total number of participants that appeared to recidivate was over 40%, or over 20 participants in that data pull.

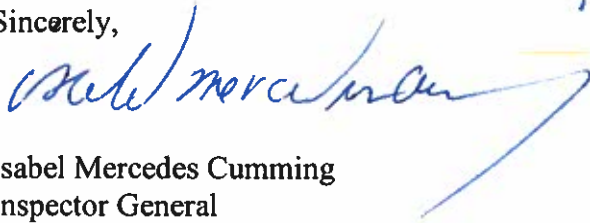
In September 2025, DJS informed the OIG that MONSE had not billed expenses to DJS for reimbursement. MONSE's lack of drawdown from the DJS grant for prior fiscal years means that the City has spent \$357,775.17 in City funds without requesting reimbursement from DJS.

MONSE acknowledged that the Board of Estimates (BOE) memos for 2024 contracts specifically state that the Baltimore City Council approved the funds for the pre-arrest diversion program. However, MONSE accepted scopes of work from SideStep vendors that allowed for a broader use of funds beyond the SideStep framework. Two SideStep vendors' scopes of work listed objectives that included servicing participants up to the ages of 24 and 25. This age range conflicts with SideStep's eligibility requirements, which state that a participant must be 17 or younger.

¹ Seeking feedback from the youth and families was a performance metric outlined in the Evaluator's scope of work.

The OIG reiterates that it will continue the investigation and provide a full report at its conclusion with recommendations.

Sincerely,



Isabel Mercedes Cumming
Inspector General

CC: Hon. Brandon M. Scott, Mayor of Baltimore City
Hon. Zeke Cohen, Baltimore City Council President
Hon. Bill Henry, Baltimore City Comptroller
Honorable Members of the Baltimore City Council
Hon. Ebony Thompson, Baltimore City Solicitor
Faith P. Leach, Chief Administrative Officer
Anthony Barksdale, Deputy Mayor of Public Safety
Richard Worley, Baltimore Police Department Commissioner
Stefanie Mavronis, MONSE Director

REPORT FRAUD, WASTE AND ABUSE

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This public synopsis is only a summary of a more comprehensive report of investigation submitted to the appropriate City management official

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
CITY OF BALTIMORE



Isabel Mercedes Cumming
Inspector General

Investigative
Report Synopsis

OIG Case # 25-0046-I

Issued: March 17, 2026



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
Isabel Mercedes Cumming, Inspector General
City Hall, Suite 635
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, MD 21202



March 17, 2026

Dear Citizens of Baltimore City,

The mission of the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) is to promote accountability, efficiency, and integrity in City government, as well as to investigate complaints of fraud, financial waste, and abuse. The following synopsis is a condensed version of the full report provided to City management officials and does not contain all investigative information. This report shows why oversight and direct access to City records and emails are necessary to identify fraud and prevent liability to the City.

This public synopsis provides information that the OIG has learned during an ongoing investigation regarding the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement's (MONSE) SideStep Pilot Program (MONSE's youth juvenile diversion program). On October 22, 2025, the OIG issued a [public synopsis \(October 22 Report\)](#) regarding the MONSE's lack of case management, data tracking, and grant billing for SideStep.

This synopsis uncovered fraudulent invoices and an exposure of juvenile information, which both have been referred to law enforcement. The synopsis provides information regarding the request for financial records and an update on other data obtained.

BACKGROUND

MONSE piloted the SideStep youth diversion program between January 2022 and 2024 in the City of Baltimore's (City) Western District. MONSE administered the program with the Baltimore City Police Department (BPD) and the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS). According to the initial program announcement, SideStep provides youth who are 17 or younger with an alternative to the formal justice system and assistance from various service providers, also known as community-based organizations (CBOs) to improve their lives and help them reach their potential.¹ Youth who encountered BPD and met the following criteria were eligible for SideStep:

- First-time offender
- No active warrants
- Charged with a qualifying Category 2 offenses (Shoplifting, Larceny, CDS Possession, Destruction of Property, Misdemeanor Assault, and Unauthorized Use).

The SideStep program was limited to the Western District and stopped operating in 2024. However, in June 2025, MONSE presented its Fiscal 2026 budget during Baltimore City Council's budget hearings with a goal to expand SideStep citywide.

The City's Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) was allowed to access juvenile records due to a 2019 bill that named MOCJ as an exception (carve-out exception) to the State of Maryland law regarding the [Confidentiality of Juvenile Records](#). No other local municipal government is listed in the carve-out exception. In December 2020, the City replaced MOCJ as a City agency with MONSE, but the law was never changed to reflect the agency change. MONSE continued to access juvenile records based on the

¹ <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/MDBALT/bulletins/34f4e19>

REPORT FRAUD, WASTE AND ABUSE

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carve-out exception in the law during the SideStep program. The legislation was in effect until September 30, 2025. As of October 1, 2025, MONSE's access to juvenile records ceased. The Mayor has requested this carve-out exception be added back to the law. The Mayor has also requested two other mayoral offices to be added to the carve-out. The two offices are the Mayor's Office of Children and Family Success (MOCFS) and the Mayor's Office of African American Male Engagement (MOAAME). The legislation does not make clear how MOCFS and MOAAME would use the juvenile records as part of their programs.

The Mayor's 2026 legislative priorities plan which states the reinstatement of juvenile records access "is essential for MONSE's SideStep diversion program as well as additional youth-focused services" (Exhibit 1). During February 26, 2026, State of Maryland House of Delegates Committee [session](#) for the new legislation, MONSE Director Stefanie Mavronis (Mavronis) testified.

The OIG released an internal Management Alert to the Mayor and MONSE on September 23, 2025 and the public synopsis was published on October 22 (October 22 Report). The October 22 Report found an external consultant and its evaluation was limited in recommendations for the SideStep program due to the lack of available data and access to the youth and parents the program served. The OIG's October 22 Report and the external evaluation found a lack of formal case plans, data collection, and follow-up with youth. The OIG also noted MONSE's lack of drawdowns from DJS grant funds for some fiscal years that amounted to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

A review of Workday invoices for SideStep CBOs showed the City issued approximately \$694,798.86 to CBOs for the program. The October 22 Report found evidence that MONSE allowed CBOs to spend contract funding on non-SideStep youth if MONSE believed it was within the CBOs' contracted scope of work. MONSE did not appear to review or monitor the CBOs contract performance for the services provided to non-SideStep participants with City funds.

On October 22, 2025, the OIG requested a list of SideStep program information from MONSE, which included policies², a list of SideStep youth, case plans and notes for youth, copies of completed youth assessments, diversion agreements, SideStep CBO contracts and submitted invoices (Exhibit 2). Below is the following correspondence that ensued regarding the OIG's request for information:

- October 31, 2025 - City Law Department responded that the State of Maryland Law makes it a crime for MONSE to release juvenile information to anyone outside of MONSE (Exhibit 3).
- November 3, 2025 - OIG sent an amended request, explaining that the OIG understands the Maryland Code provisions that prohibit MONSE from identifying specific juvenile personal information including name and date of birth. As a result, the OIG asked for the documents to use case identification numbers instead of any personal identifiable information and the redaction of limited information that would reveal the identification of the juvenile (Exhibit 4).
- November 4, 2025 - City Law Department responded their interpretation of the law was that any contents from police records MONSE obtained from BPD for the time-limited PILOT program cannot be released, even with a subpoena (Exhibit 5). DJS suggested the OIG could likely obtain the youth's case plan information from MONSE with case identifier numbers in place of juvenile names so that no personal information was shared. However, the Law Department's interpretation did not allow for that.

² MONSE provided numerous various general policies for the agency or other programs in response to the request on different dates.

- November 5, 2025 – OIG again amended the request based on the City Law Department’s interpretation. The OIG decided to not pursue the juvenile records further at this time. However, the OIG requested data related to the amount of documentation completed for the juveniles, which included the number of case notes and contacts/meetings per youth (Exhibit 6).
- December 19, 2025 – OIG received MONSE’s answer to the November 5, 2025, data questions that the OIG requested (See Chart 1).
- January 16, 2026 – OIG received SideStep third-party contractor invoices with more than 200 pages of financial information redacted, including payments made to instructors and contractor employees. To support these redactions, the Law Department did not cite juvenile records as a reason for the redactions (Exhibit 7). The Law Department made redactions for health information and confidential personal financial information based on the Maryland Public Information Act (MPIA). Names of employees and payments made to individuals were redacted. The Law Department did include some supporting documents and invoices for payments made to companies that were not redacted which allowed the OIG to continue the investigation in a limited manner.
- January 20, 2026 – OIG subpoenaed the redacted records from the Law Department. No response has been received to date from the Law Department, and the OIG has filed a lawsuit to enforce the subpoena.

MONSE uses a case management software called Apricot to document case and program data information for youth and other MONSE clients. MONSE also utilizes Slack, which is a third-party messaging platform that the OIG previously reported is not managed, monitored, or maintained by Baltimore City’s Information and Technology (BCIT) department.

FRAUDULENT INVOICES

The OIG’s review of the SideStep contractor invoices is ongoing and currently limited due to the redacted information. However, during the review, the investigation has revealed two fraudulent invoices were submitted for payment by a CBO (CBO 1). The OIG reviewed two invoices that CBO 1 submitted as supporting document for reimbursement from MONSE. The OIG obtained the original invoices from the company shown on the receipt. The original invoices showed the actual cost was thousands less than the invoices that CBO 1 had submitted and received payment from MONSE. Evidence supports that CBO 1 altered the original invoices and submitted the altered invoices to receive a larger payment from MONSE.

The OIG also reviewed several invoices submitted by another CBO (CBO 2) that the investigation found fraudulent. The OIG contacted the company listed on the invoice and were only able to verify one of the several invoices. The company stated they had no records to support the other invoices. Further, the company provided information that supports that several of the invoices submitted are fraudulent, which amount to thousands of dollars.

The OIG has referred these fraudulent invoices to law enforcement so that a criminal investigation can be conducted as other questionable invoices have also been found. The OIG’s October 22 Report found that MONSE allowed CBOs to spend contract funding on non-SideStep youth if it was within the CBOs’ contracted scope of work. In MONSE’s response to the OIG’s October 22 Report, MONSE wrote regarding the CBOs’ use of funding that “all expenditures were made within the framework of approved scopes of work in the subrecipients’ executed contracts and were directed to support young people,

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consistent with the mission and objectives of the agency and the Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan.”

MONSE’S JUVENILE INFORMATION & BREACH

The OIG found that a MONSE employee sent a diversion table containing post-arrest diversions with approximately 701 names, many of which were juveniles, to a personal google email (Gmail) account. The Gmail account appeared to belong to a relative of the employee. In addition to juvenile names, the diversion table sent contained cases from 2018 to September 2022 with individuals’ date of births and charges.

According to the State Law that provided the carve-out exception, the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice “shall be liable for the unauthorized release of a police record it accesses under this subsection” (Exhibit 9). Due to the data breach of juvenile information, the OIG has referred this matter to law enforcement. MONSE’s SOP for Apricot are a one-page document with website links shown in Figure 2.³

Figure 2: MONSE’s Apricot SOP

Overview of MONSE’s Case Management System
MONSE’s Case Management System (also known as Apricot) is the central repository for all MONSE’s activities. As such every program within MONSE should make their best effort to report all program related activities accurately and timely.
Apricot is used for reporting data to other agencies as well as sharing information with the public.

How to get started
Email the [Apricot Administrator](#) to request user access
Users log into the system via <https://apricot.socialsolutions.com/> using their username and password
Users must take the following training before using Apricot [Training Academy](#) (a different username and password is required to attend the training)
Learn more about your program’s Tier 1 and Tier 2 forms [here](#)

How and when to record new activities
Enter data regularly, one record at a time, or submit, on a case by case basis, all records for bulk entry to the [Apricot Administrator](#).
Any new activity must be recorded within 48 hours, and all activities for a specific month must be recorded by the end of the month at midnight.
If, inaccuracies are identified in the records, these should be corrected promptly

Reporting requirements
Apricot reports may be pulled at any time and be shared with partners, other agencies and/or publicly. Generally, reports are generated for each cycle period (monthly, quarterly and per fiscal year). If a program runs on shorter cycles; it is the responsibility of the program manager to ensure up to date records within Apricot.

LACK OF SIDESTEP DATA

According to the SideStep Pilot’s standard operating procedures (SOP), MONSE would conduct assessments for the youth and implement a service model and case plan for youth that incorporates trauma-informed and trauma-responsive programming. Further, the SOP states that “data collection and analysis will be essential to ensure that the diversion process is equitable and successful, particularly across race/ethnicity, gender, and age.”

The OIG requested data from MONSE related to the SideStep Pilot Program. The OIG received MONSE’s response with the data information on December 19, 2025. Regarding the number of voice-to-voice contacts or meetings with the youth, MONSE wrote “N/A – Not tracked during the pilot program.”

Chart 1 on the following page shows some of the information received, while Exhibit 8 shows all responses.

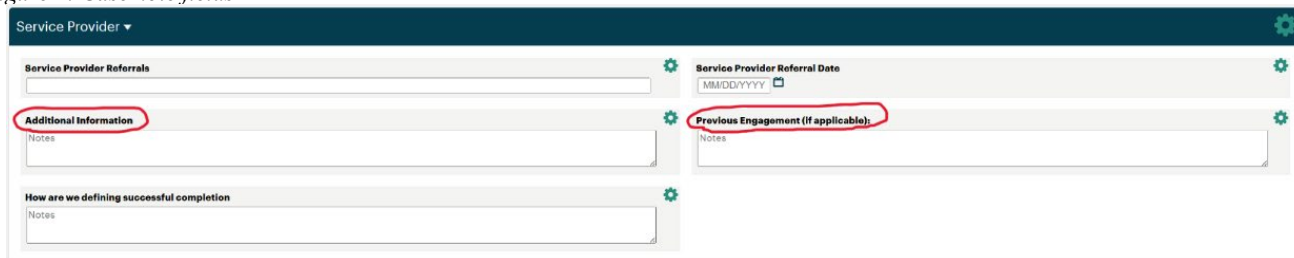
³ MONSE also provided an Apricot Quick Reference Guide for Baltimore City Visitation Center and a Data Breach checklist form.

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Data Column 1</u>	<u>Data Column 2</u>	<u>Data Column 3</u>	<u>Data Column 4</u>	<u>Data Column 5</u>	<u>Data Column 6</u>	<u>Data Column 7</u>
<u>OIG Data Request</u>	According to Apricot, the number of youth who successfully completed the SideStep programs and the number of youth who were determined to be unsuccessful.	The number of voice-to-voice contacts or meetings documented for each youth.	The number of case note entries per youth documented in Apricot.	The number of youth with SideStep contracts/diversion agreements.	Number of youth for whom MONSE has records of individual service models and/or case plans.	Number of provider referral forms on record for the youth participants.	The number of youth for whom MONSE has a record of receiving assessments from the Youth Coordinator upon intake (CANS, ACEs & PTSD).
<u>MONSE Response</u>	48 successful referrals 3 unsuccessful referrals Note: During the pilot, there was not a recorded metric in the data management system that captured the success of the youth placement. Some of this information is included in case notes for individual youth but is not standardized.	N/A – Not tracked during the pilot program.	In the case management system, 24 case notes fields were filled in across all youth referred to SideStep. There is no way to distinguish the number of individual entries per youth because they were entered into the same box in the case management system during the pilot program and were not timestamped as unique entries.	N/A - These records are not available in the agency's case management system (note: the database in use during the pilot period did not allow for file attachments). Service providers, based on their respective program model, may have established their own contracts and/or diversionary agreements with youth referred during the pilot program.	N/A - These records are not available in the agency's case management system (note: the database in use during the pilot period did not allow for attachments). Service providers, based on their respective program model, may have established their own contracts and/or diversionary agreements with youth referred during the pilot program.	We were able to locate 3 scanned referral forms from the pilot program. The referral process during the pilot period was not uniform and was often done through a phone call.	N/A - Not tracked during the pilot program, but the CANS assessment was used by the Youth Opportunity Coordinator during the intake process. There are references to the assessments in some of the case notes, but documentation of these assessments in the system was not standardized during the pilot program.
<u>OIG Review of MONSE Response</u>	Due to the lack of recorded metric in the data system, case note entries and documentation for the program, the investigation has not been able to corroborate the number of successful referrals at this time.	The program's purpose was to serve the youth. Without documented contacts or meetings the OIG cannot measure the level of service that was provided to the youth.	According to MONSE's response and additional statements, only 24 youth that participated in the program had a case note entry in MONSE's diversion program.	MONSE's response indicates that they are not aware if diversion agreements were established with participating youth either with MONSE or their CBOs.	According to the SideStep policy, MONSE would implement a service model and case plan for youth that incorporated trauma-informed and trauma-responsive programming. The investigation did not find evidence to support that this was done.	The SideStep policy stated MONSE would use Apricot to make and track referrals. Based on MONSE's response this was not done and the program was not in compliance with its own policies.	The lack of documentation for the assessment is concerning as the SideStep policy stated MONSE would use the assessment results to inform the service and case plans for each youth.

In the December 19th response, MONSE wrote it has completed 134 youth opportunity referrals since January 2021. MONSE also wrote that it has developed a plan to track youth recidivism beyond the 6-month period, but details were not provided to the OIG.

MONSE wrote they received 51 SideStep referrals and claimed that 48 successfully completed the program. The OIG interviewed a MONSE staff member who explained the use of Apricot as it relates to case note entries. The staff member explained there are two applicable fields for each person entered (Figure 1). According to MONSE’s response to the OIG data request and the staff member interviewed, 24 SideStep participants have an entry, which leaves 27 SideStep youth referrals without any case note entries. The OIG also learned that the entries into the case note system are not time-stamped.

Figure 1: Case note fields



FINDINGS

While the OIG continues its investigation, the finding of fraudulent invoices has been referred to law enforcement for criminal investigations. The OIG found that MONSE has paid approximately \$694,000 based on SideStep CBOs’ invoices, of which the Law Department redacted more than 200 financial documents. The OIG reiterates that this report clearly shows why oversight and direct access to City records and emails are necessary to identify fraud and prevent liability to the City.

The investigation also uncovered that a MONSE employee sent juvenile information outside of their case management system to a personal email account with more than 700 diversion participants’ names, including juveniles, date of births, and charges. This data breach is being referred to law enforcement entities for further investigation. Diverted youth participating in City programs should receive the maximum protection of their information and assurances that there is oversight of the services being provided to them.

According to MONSE’s internal database, Apricot, only 24 juveniles had a case note entry. The case note entries were not timestamped. MONSE was unable to find records of case plans and diversion agreements for youth in its case management system. Furthermore, voice-to-voice contacts or meetings with youth were not tracked during the pilot program. The lack of documentation in Apricot indicates MONSE was not monitoring or tracking diverted youth in a measurable way.

Sincerely,



Isabel Mercedes Cumming
Inspector General

REPORT FRAUD, WASTE AND ABUSE

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CC: Hon. Brandon M. Scott, Mayor of Baltimore City
Hon. Zeke Cohen, Baltimore City Council President
Hon. Bill Henry, Baltimore City Comptroller
Honorable Members of the Baltimore City Council
Hon. Ebony Thompson, Baltimore City Solicitor

EXHIBITS

1. Mayor's Legislative Priorities Plan
2. October 22 OIG request
3. Law Dept. Response October 31, 2025
4. OIG Amended Request Nov. 3, 2025
5. Law Dept. Response Nov. 4, 2025
6. OIG 2nd Amended request November 5, 2025
7. Law Dept. Response with sample of redactions January 16, 2026
8. MONSE's Response to OIG data request – MONSE provided December 19, 2025
9. MD Law regarding Juvenile Record Access that ceased September 30, 2025

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Exhibit 1

Extension of Statute of Limitations for Local Consumer Protection Actions

This legislation would extend the statute of limitations for local consumer protection enforcement from one year to three years for local jurisdictions, such as the City of Baltimore, that have consumer protections divisions. This change would align with Maryland's general civil statute of limitations, giving local jurisdictions more time to investigate and pursue consumer protection cases, likely increasing settlement and judgment revenues.

TRANSPORTATION

Extension of Highway User Revenue Increased Share

This legislation would make the current increase permanent; following FY2027, the increase in State Highway User Revenue that is directed to Baltimore City will revert to its lower level. This permanent increase will ensure that the City can complete its larger capital projects while also maintaining all state and local roads throughout the jurisdiction.



PUBLIC SAFETY

Administrative Charging Committee Investigatory & Subpoena Powers

This legislation grants Administrative Charging Committees the investigatory and subpoena powers previously held by the Baltimore City Civilian Review Board, allowing independent evidence gathering to strengthen oversight.



Baltimore City — Ordinance Enforcement — Amount of Fines and Penalties

This legislation would amend Section (48) of Article II of the Baltimore City Charter to increase the cap on civil and criminal penalties from the current \$1,000 to \$5,000. This adjustment would provide the City with an essential tool to deter and punish illegal dumping and other offenses that harm public safety, community well-being, and drain City resources.

Motor Vehicle Administration Records — Access to Digital Photographic Images and Signatures

This legislation would clarify that, for purposes of this section, the Special Investigations Unit of the Department of Housing and Community Development is deemed a "criminal justice agency" that can receive photo images. By making this small change, the City will be able to more effectively access MVA photos to assist investigators in identifying suspects in illegal dumping cases.

Extension of Juvenile Records Access for MONSE/MOCFS/MOAAME

This legislation would reinstate access provided to the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement to juvenile records. This access is essential for MONSE's SideStep diversion program as well as additional youth-focused services, ensuring treatment plans and referrals are comprehensive and effective in reducing recidivism.

ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Judicial In-Rem Tax Foreclosure — Streamline Notice Provisions

This legislation will align local requirements with state statute with Maryland Rules by eliminating duplicative 5-day notice mailing requirement in judicial in-rem tax foreclosure actions. This alignment

Exhibit 2



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
Isabel Mercedes Cumming, Inspector General
City Hall, Suite 635
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, MD 21202



October 22, 2025

██████████ Director
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, MD 21202

RE: OIG Case # 25-0046-I

Dear Director ██████████

Pursuant to an ongoing Office of the Inspector General (OIG) investigation, the OIG respectfully requests copies of any, and all documentation related to the following topics, created or utilized by MONSE, including but not limited to:

1. Agreements and Policies
 - a. Interagency Agreements between MONSE and DJS for SideStep only
 - b. Memorandums of Understanding between MONSE, BPD, & DJS for SideStep
 - c. Complete list of all grant funding (not just SideStep) awarded to MONSE from Fiscal Years 2022 to 2025, including the amount of expenditures and drawdowns completed for each
 - d. MONSE policies for invoice review and grant management used from 2022 to 2025, including the date they were implemented
2. SideStep Documents
 - a. A complete list of youth that the Baltimore Police Department has referred to SideStep, including those who declined to participate in the program
 - b. SideStep contracts/diversion agreements for each youth
 - c. Provider referral forms for each youth
 - d. Individual case plans
 - e. Complete case notes for each youth from Apricot, including any available audit logs showing when the notes and outcomes were entered
 - f. Diversion outcomes for each youth
 - g. Recidivism data for each youth
 - h. Provider referral participation outcomes, including attendance sheets
 - i. List of post-arrest diversions that MONSE has completed from 2021 to present
 - j. Copies of assessments conducted by the Youth Coordinator upon intake (CANS, ACEs & PTSD)
 - k. Documentation and records of site visits to providers/CBOs
 - l. Criteria and evaluations for the grant selection of the SideStep providers/CBOs
3. Providers and CBOs
 - a. Comprehensive list of all providers and CBOs by fiscal year

Exhibit 3

From: [REDACTED] (LAW) [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, October 31, 2025 6:06:21 PM
To: Cumming, Isabel (OIG) <Isabel.Cumming@baltimorecity.gov>
Subject: Your Request

Madam Inspector General-

The Mayor's Office has asked me to help with the response to your request. The responsive documents are here: [OIG Request](#)

With respect to each type of document you have requested:

1a – The only MOU that existed for the pilot is the one between MONSE, BPD and DJS. It is in the link above.

1b - In the link above.

1c – Records being gathered.

1d – Records being gathered.

2a-2j – Unfortunately, there is a state law that makes it a crime for MONSE to release this information to anyone outside of MONSE. Md. Code, Cts. & Jud. Proc., §§ 3-8A-27(a)(3); 3-8A-27 (b)(9). The Mayor's Office received identifiable juvenile justice information from the Baltimore Police Department in accordance with Section 3-8A-27(a)(2)(ii) of the Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article of the Maryland Code. This state law permits the sharing of the information only with the Mayor's Office and only for the purpose of assisting juveniles in receiving support services. It does not permit Mayor's Office to share this identifiable information with anyone outside of the Mayor's Office. Rather, the general rule that prohibits disclosure of identifiable criminal record information from being disclosed applies in this instance. Md. Code, Cts. & Jud. Proc., § 3-8A-27; Md. Code, Gen. Prov., §§ 4-301; 4-327. The state law twice repeats in that statute that the Mayor's Office "shall be liable for the unauthorized release of a police record it accesses under this subsection." Md. Code, Cts. & Jud. Proc., §§ 3-8A-27(a)(3); 3-8A-27 (b)(9); Md. Code, Gen. Prov., §§ 4-401-403. Additionally, the identification of a person that receives welfare or financial assistance is unable to be disclosed. Md. Code, Gen. Prov., §§ 4-307; 4-336. To the extent that any services provided would reveal mental or physical health information of a particular person, that information cannot be disclosed. Md. Code, Gen. Prov., § 4-329. Thus, the Mayor's Office cannot identify the specific youth (including name, date of birth or any other personal information), or the services they received or the outcomes as that would identify the juveniles whose criminal records were received in confidence and disclose financial, medical or welfare information. Md. Code, Cts. & Jud. Proc., §§ 3-8A-27; Md. Code, Gen. Prov., §§ 4-307; 4-329; 4-336.

2k – Records being gathered.

2l - Records being gathered.

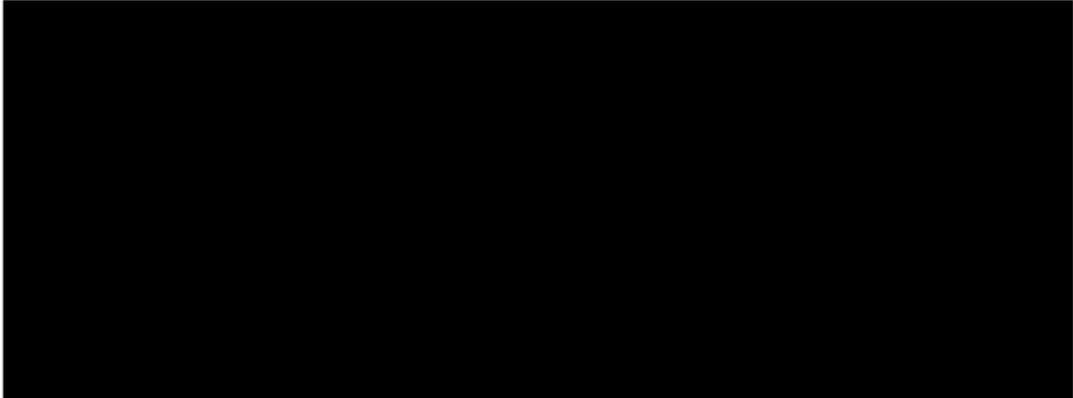
3a – The list of SideStep Providers and CBOs are:

FY23

- [REDACTED]



FY24



3b – These are all in the link above [redacted] is not a provider.
3c – Records being gathered.

As soon as MONSE gathers the rest of the information, I can put it in the same link.

Best,
[redacted]



Chief Solicitor
Baltimore City Department of Law
100 N. Holliday Street, Suite 101
Baltimore, MD 21202

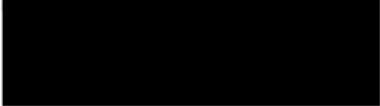


Exhibit 4

From: Cumming, Isabel (OIG)
Sent: Monday, November 3, 2025 2:39 PM
To: [REDACTED] (MONSE); [REDACTED] (LAW)
Cc: [REDACTED] (OIG)
Subject: OIG request
Attachments: OIG Document Request Follow-up.pdf

Hello [REDACTED] -
Please review the attached request from the OIG.
Many thanks, Isabel

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OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
Isabel Mercedes Cumming, Inspector General
City Hall, Suite 635
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, MD 21202



November 3, 2025

[REDACTED] Director

2700 Rayner Ave
Baltimore, MD 21216

[REDACTED] Chief Solicitor

100 Holliday Street, 1st Floor
Baltimore, MD 21202

RE: OIG Case # 25-0046-I

Dear Director [REDACTED] and Chief Solicitor [REDACTED]

Thank you for your response and for providing the documentation requested by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). The OIG looks forward to the outstanding items. We acknowledge the response provided on October 31, 2025, regarding information sharing.

The OIG understands the various provisions of the Maryland Code, Courts & Judicial Proceedings prohibit the Mayor's Office from identifying the specific juvenile personal information, including name and date of birth. For items 2a-2j, the OIG respectfully requests the documents to use case identification numbers instead of any personal identifiable information. Additionally, the OIG agrees to the redaction of limited information that would reveal the identification of the juvenile.

This request is being sent to you for an official response. Please respond with your intent to this request by November 6, 2025. Please respond with the documents in writing by November 17, 2025. If possible, electronic versions of all documents requested are acceptable and preferred.

Sincerely,

Isabel Mercedes Cumming
Inspector General

Exhibit 5

From: [REDACTED] (LAW)
Sent: Tuesday, November 4, 2025 3:34 PM
To: Cumming, Isabel (OIG); [REDACTED] (MONSE)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: OIG request
Attachments: 3-8A-27 Privacy of records.pdf

Hi-

Unfortunately, *any* "contents" from the police record MONSE obtained from BPD for the time-limited PILOT program cannot be released, **even with a subpoena**. There is no ability to just shield things like name or birthdate or social security number and release the remaining information. Nor is there any authority for substituting a MONSE case number or other unique ID number for the identity information in the police record.

The ONLY reason MONSE could get a police record of a juvenile during the PILOT program was an exemption in this state law permitting BPD to give it to MONSE. However, this exemption expressly prohibited MONSE from releasing any information in the police record outside of MONSE unless to a provider helping that juvenile. The state law as it was written before sunseting is attached so you can see the contours of the exception, which I have highlighted for ease of reference.



From: Cumming, Isabel (OIG) <Isabel.Cumming@baltimorecity.gov>
Sent: Monday, November 3, 2025 2:39 PM
To: [REDACTED] (MONS [REDACTED] (LAW)
[REDACTED]@baltimorecity.gov>
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: OIG request

Hello [REDACTED]
Please review the attached request from the OIG.
Many thanks, Isabel

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West's Annotated Code of Maryland
Courts and Judicial Proceedings
Title 3. Courts of General Jurisdiction--Jurisdiction/Special Causes of Action (Refs & Annos)
Subtitle 8a. Juvenile Causes--Children Other than Cinas and Adults (Refs & Annos)

This section has been updated. [Click here for the updated version.](#)

MD Code, Courts and Judicial Proceedings, § 3-8A-27

§ 3-8A-27. Privacy of records

(a)(1) A police record concerning a child is confidential and shall be maintained separate from those of adults. Its contents may not be divulged, by subpoena or otherwise, except by order of the court upon good cause shown or as otherwise provided in § 7-303 of the Education Article.

(2) This subsection does not prohibit:

(i) Access to and confidential use of the record by the Department of Juvenile Services or in the investigation and prosecution of the child by any law enforcement agency;

(ii) Access to and confidential use of the record by the Baltimore City Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice if the Baltimore City Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice is providing programs and services to a child who is the subject of the record, for a purpose relevant to the provisions of the programs and services and the development of a comprehensive treatment plan;

(iii) A law enforcement agency of the State or of a political subdivision of the State, the Department of Juvenile Services, or the criminal justice information system from including in the law enforcement computer information system information about:

1. An outstanding juvenile court ordered writ of attachment or an outstanding criminal court ordered writ of attachment, for the sole purpose of apprehending a child named in the writ;
2. An outstanding criminal court issued warrant, for the sole purpose of apprehending a child named in the warrant; or
3. A missing child as defined in § 9-401 of the Family Law Article; or

(iv) A law enforcement agency of the State or of a political subdivision of the State, when necessary and for the sole purposes of facilitating apprehension of a child and ensuring public safety, from releasing to the public photographs and identifying information of a child who:

1. Has escaped from:

- A. A detention center for juveniles;
 - B. A secure residential facility for juveniles; or
 - C. A correctional unit as defined in § 2-401 of the Correctional Services Article;
2. Is a missing child as defined in § 9-401 of the Family Law Article; or
3. The court does not have jurisdiction over pursuant to § 3-8A-03(d)(1), (4), or (5) of this subtitle and who is subject to:
- A. Arrest; or
 - B. An arrest warrant issued by a criminal court.

(3) The Baltimore City Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice shall be liable for the unauthorized release of a police record it accesses under this subsection.

(b)(1) A court record pertaining to a child is confidential and its contents may not be divulged, by subpoena or otherwise, except by order of the court upon good cause shown or as provided in §§ 7-303 and 22-309 of the Education Article.

(2) This subsection does not prohibit access to and the use of the court record or fingerprints of a child described under Title 10, Subtitle 2 of the Criminal Procedure Article in a proceeding in the court involving the child, by personnel of the court, the State's Attorney, counsel for the child, a court-appointed special advocate for the child, or authorized personnel of the Department of Juvenile Services.

(3)(i) Except as provided in subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph, this subsection does not prohibit access to and confidential use of the court record or fingerprints of a child described under Title 10, Subtitle 2 of the Criminal Procedure Article by the Department of Juvenile Services or in an investigation and prosecution by a law enforcement agency.

(ii) The court record or fingerprints of a child described under §§ 10-215(a)(20) and (21), 10-216, and 10-220 of the Criminal Procedure Article may not be disclosed to:

- 1. A federal criminal justice agency or information center; or
- 2. Any law enforcement agency other than a law enforcement agency of the State or a political subdivision of the State.

(4)(i) The Department of Juvenile Services may provide access to and the confidential use of the court record of a child by an agency in the District of Columbia or a state agency in Delaware, Pennsylvania, Virginia, or West Virginia, if the agency:

1. Performs the same functions in the jurisdiction of the agency as described in § 9-216(a) of the Human Services Article; and
2. Has a reciprocal agreement with the State that provides that the specific information to be shared by the State is the same type of information that will be shared by the agency.

(ii) A record that is shared under this paragraph may only provide information that is relevant to the supervision, care, and treatment of the child.

(iii) The Department of Juvenile Services shall be liable for an unauthorized release of a court record under this paragraph.

(iv) The Department of Juvenile Services shall adopt regulations to implement this paragraph.

(5)(i) This subsection does not prohibit access to and use of a court record by a judicial officer who is authorized under the Maryland Rules to determine a defendant's eligibility for pretrial release, counsel for the defendant, the State's Attorney, or the Maryland Division of Pretrial Detention and Services if:

1. The individual who is the subject of the court record is charged as an adult with an offense;
2. The access to and use of the court record is strictly limited for the purpose of determining the defendant's eligibility for pretrial release; and
3. The court record concerns an adjudication of delinquency that occurred within 3 years of the date the individual is charged as an adult.

(ii) The Supreme Court of Maryland may adopt rules to implement the provisions of this paragraph.

(6)(i) This subsection does not prohibit access to and confidential use of a court record by the Department of Human Services or a local department of social services:

1. For the purpose of claiming federal Title IV-B and Title IV-E funds; or
2. If the Department of Human Services or a local department of social services is providing treatment, services, or care to a child who is the subject of the record.

(ii) The Department of Human Services and local departments of social services shall keep a court record obtained under this paragraph confidential in accordance with the laws and policies applicable to the Department of Human Services and local departments of social services.

(7)(i) This subsection does not prohibit access to and confidential use of a court record by the Maryland Department of Health or a local health department if the Maryland Department of Health or a local health department is providing treatment, services, or care in coordination with the Department of Juvenile Services to a child who is the subject of the record, for a purpose relevant to the provision of the treatment, services, or care.

(ii) The Maryland Department of Health and local health departments shall keep a court record obtained under this paragraph confidential in accordance with the laws and policies applicable to the Maryland Department of Health and local health departments.

(8) This subsection does not prohibit access to and confidential use of a court record by the Baltimore City Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice if the Baltimore City Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice is providing programs and services in conjunction with the Department of Juvenile Services to a child who is the subject of the record, for a purpose relevant to the provisions of the programs and services and the development of a comprehensive treatment plan.

(9) The Baltimore City Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice shall be liable for the unauthorized release of a court record it accesses under this subsection.

(10) This subsection does not prohibit access to and confidential use of a court record by the Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform and Emerging and Best Practices if the Commission is performing the functions described under § 9-3502 of the State Government Article.

(c) The court, on its own motion or on petition, and for good cause shown, may order the court records of a child sealed, and, upon petition or on its own motion, shall order them sealed after the child has reached 21 years of age. If sealed, the court records of a child may not be opened, for any purpose, except by order of the court upon good cause shown.

(d) This section does not prohibit access to or use of any juvenile record by the Maryland Division of Parole and Probation or the Maryland Parole Commission when the Division or the Commission is carrying out any of their statutory duties either at the direction of a court of competent jurisdiction, or when the Maryland Parole Commission is carrying out any of its statutory duties, if the record concerns a charge or adjudication of delinquency.

(e) This section does not prohibit access to and use of any juvenile record by the Maryland Division of Correction when the Division is carrying out any of its statutory duties if: (1) the individual to whom the record pertains is committed to the custody of the Division; and (2) the record concerns an adjudication of delinquency.

(f) Subject to the provisions of §§ 9-219 and 9-220 of the Human Services Article, this section does not prohibit access to or use of any juvenile record for criminal justice research purposes. A record used under this subsection may not contain the name of the individual to whom the record pertains, or any other identifying information which could reveal the individual's name.

(g) This section does not prohibit a victim or victim's representative who has filed a notification request form from being notified of proceedings and events involving the defendant or child as provided in this subtitle, the Criminal Procedure Article, or the Criminal Law Article.

(h) This section does not prohibit the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services or a supervising authority, as defined in § 11-701 of the Criminal Procedure Article, from accessing or using the part of a juvenile record that identifies an offense committed by a juvenile for purposes of complying with Title 11, Subtitle 7 of the Criminal Procedure Article.

Credits

Added as Courts and Judicial Proceedings § 3-828 by Acts 1973, 1st Sp. Sess., c. 2, § 1, eff. Jan. 1, 1974. Amended by Acts 1974, c. 555, § 1; Acts 1974, c. 691, § 8; Acts 1975, c. 554, §§ 1, 3; Acts 1978, c. 814; Acts 1982, c. 124; Acts 1983, c. 164; Acts 1987, c. 290; Acts 1988, c. 6, §§ 1, 8; Acts 1989, c. 327; Acts 1989, c. 539, § 7; Acts 1989, c. 641; Acts 1994, c. 693, § 1, eff. Oct. 1, 1994; Acts 1995, c. 8, § 1, eff. Oct. 1, 1995; Acts 1995, c. 8, § 4, eff. June 1, 1995; Acts 1995, c. 111, § 1, eff. June 1, 1995; Acts 1995, c. 112, § 1, eff. June 1, 1995; Acts 1997, c. 311, § 1, eff. Oct. 1, 1997; Acts 1997, c. 312, § 1, eff. Oct. 1, 1997; Acts 1997, c. 390, § 1, eff. Oct. 1, 1997; Acts 1998, c. 464, § 1, eff. Oct. 1, 1998; Acts 1998, c. 465, § 1, eff. Oct. 1, 1998; Acts 2001, c. 35, § 1, eff. Oct. 1, 2001. Renumbered as Courts and Judicial Proceedings § 3-8A-27 and amended by Acts 2001, c. 415, § 6, eff. Oct. 1, 2001. Amended by Acts 2002, c. 19, § 1, eff. April 9, 2002; Acts 2002, c. 213, § 6, eff. Oct. 1, 2002; Acts 2002, c. 554, § 1, eff. July 1, 2002; Acts 2003, c. 17, § 1, eff. Oct. 1, 2003; Acts 2003, c. 53, § 4, eff. July 1, 2003; Acts 2006, c. 10, § 1, eff. Feb. 18, 2006; Acts 2007, c. 8, § 1, eff. Oct. 1, 2007; Acts 2008, c. 526, § 1, eff. Oct. 1, 2008; Acts 2008, c. 602, § 1, eff. Oct. 1, 2008; Acts 2008, c. 603, § 1, eff. Oct. 1, 2008; Acts 2009, c. 60, § 1, eff. April 14, 2009; Acts 2009, c. 486, § 1, eff. Oct. 1, 2009; Acts 2009, c. 524, § 1, eff. Oct. 1, 2009; Acts 2010, c. 72, § 1, eff. April 13, 2010; Acts 2011, c. 65, § 5, eff. April 12, 2011; Acts 2011, c. 16, § 1, eff. Oct. 1, 2011; Acts 2011, c. 102, § 1, eff. Oct. 1, 2011; Acts 2013, c. 474, § 1, eff. Oct. 1, 2013; Acts 2013, c. 611, § 1, eff. Oct. 1, 2013; Acts 2017, c. 62, § 6; Acts 2017, c. 193, § 1, eff. Oct. 1, 2017; Acts 2018, c. 669, § 1, eff. Oct. 1, 2018; Acts 2019, c. 37, § 1, eff. Oct. 1, 2019; Acts 2019, c. 271, § 1, eff. Oct. 1, 2019; Acts 2020, c. 419, § 1, eff. Oct. 1, 2020; Acts 2021, c. 12, § 1, eff. March 13, 2021; Acts 2022, c. 41, § 1, eff. June 1, 2022; Acts 2022, c. 42, § 1, eff. June 1, 2022; Acts 2024, c. 382, § 5; Acts 2024, c. 735, § 1, eff. Nov. 1, 2024.

Editors' Notes

ABROGATION

<Acts 2019, c. 37, is abrogated effective at the end of September 30, 2025, under the terms of § 3 of that Act.>

Notes of Decisions (6)

MD Code, Courts and Judicial Proceedings, § 3-8A-27, MD CTS & JUD PRO § 3-8A-27

Current through all legislation from the 2025 Regular Session of the General Assembly. Some statute sections may be more current, see credits for details.

Exhibit 6

From: Cumming, Isabel (OIG)
Sent: Wednesday, November 5, 2025 4:39 PM
To: [REDACTED] MONSE) [REDACTED] (LAW)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Request from OIG
Attachments: Record Request Response 11.5.25.pdf

Hello [REDACTED]
Please review the attached updated request from the OIG.
Many thanks, Isabel



Isabel Mercedes Cumming
Inspector General

[Baltimore City Office of the Inspector General](#)

100 N. Holliday Street, Suite 635
Baltimore, MD 21202
O: (410)396-3951 | C: (443) 682-2130

FRAUD HOTLINE: 800-417-0430

[Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [LinkedIn](#)



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
Isabel Mercedes Cumming, Inspector General
City Hall, Suite 635
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, MD 21202



November 5, 2025

[REDACTED] Director
2700 Rayner Ave
Baltimore, MD 21216

[REDACTED] Chief Solicitor
100 Holliday Street, 1st Floor
Baltimore, MD 21202

RE: OIG Case # 25-0046-I

Dear Director [REDACTED] and Chief Solicitor [REDACTED]

With respect to your legal opinion, the OIG is amending the request for items 2a-2j and requesting the following data:

2. SideStep Data

- a. The number of youth referrals that MONSE received from the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) for SideStep.
- b. The number of youth who were referred to the Youth Opportunity Coordinator but declined to participate in the program.
- c. Number of youth referred back to BPD or Department of Juvenile Services for failure to engage or unsuccessful completion of diversion case plan goals.
- d. Total number of SideStep Program participants.
- e. According to Apricot, the number of youth who successfully completed the SideStep programs and the number of youth who were determined to be unsuccessful.
- f. The number of youth with SideStep contracts/diversion agreements.
- g. Number of provider referral forms on record for the youth participants.
- h. Number of youth for whom MONSE has records of individual service models and/or case plans.
- i. The number of youth for whom MONSE has a record of receiving assessments from the Youth Coordinator upon intake (CANS, ACEs & PTSD).
- j. The number of case note entries per youth documented in Apricot.
- k. The number of youth who have recidivated beyond the six-month pilot program metric and the number of youth who have not.
- l. The number of youth referred to each provider.
- m. The number of voice-to-voice contacts or meetings documented for each youth during the diversion process.
- n. The number of post-arrest diversions that MONSE has completed from 2021 to present

This request is being sent to you for an official response. Please respond with your intent to this request by November 7, 2025. Please respond with the documents in writing by November 17, 2025. If possible, electronic versions of all documents requested are acceptable and preferred.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Isabel Mercedes Cumming". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Isabel Mercedes Cumming
Inspector General

Exhibit 7

From: [REDACTED] (LAW)
Sent: Friday, January 16, 2026 5:03 PM
To: Cumming, Isabel (OIG); [REDACTED] (MONSE)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Outstanding items

Below is the link to the remaining documents I had left to review from MONSE.

[OIG 1 16 26](#)

The redactions in these and other documents are generally confidential personal financial information or health information. MD. Code, Gen. Prov., § 4-336; see, e.g., Matter of Mayor & City Council of Baltimore City, 265 Md. App. 318, 341 (2025); Md. Code, Gen. Prov., § 4-329; 90 Md. Op. Atty. Gen. 45, 54 (2005). I also removed one reference to a private entity's payment for electronic fare media (tolls) as it is also a mandatory denial. Md. Code, Gen. Prov., § 4-318.

Unless MONSE has any other responsive records, I think those are all I have been given.

Happy long weekend everyone!

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] (LAW)
Sent: Wednesday, January 14, 2026 11:32 AM
To: Cumming, Isabel (OIG) <Isabel.Cumming@baltimorecity.gov>; [REDACTED] (MONSE)
[REDACTED]@baltimorecity.gov

Subject: RE: Outstanding items

It's on my plate and I have been working late to get it done. Hopefully soon.

[REDACTED]

Exhibit 8

Note: Data included below based on data available in the MONSE case management system and Youth Opportunity Coordinator’s digital files.

The number of youth referrals that MONSE received from the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) for SideStep.	51 referrals
The number of youth who were referred to the Youth Opportunity Coordinator but declined to participate in the program.	<p>There were three youth over the three-year pilot period – two in 2022 and one in 2023 – who did not successfully complete their service provider placement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2022, a youth first-time offender who was in the custody of DSS as the time of their referral ran away from their foster home and could not be located. MONSE was notified by DSS. • In 2022, a youth first-time offender was referred to SideStep but refused to participate. • In 2023, a youth first-time offender was placed with [REDACTED] for mental health services but absconded before receiving them. MONSE was informed that the young person no longer lived at the address on file, but no updated address was provided.
Number of youth referred back to BPD or Department of Juvenile Services for failure to engage or unsuccessful completion of diversion case plan goals.	No such records exist in the case management system for Sidestep. Outside of this program, the Youth Opportunity Coordinator did make at least two paper referrals back BPD or DJS for failure to engage or lack of success for other youth that were referred to MONSE.
Total number of SideStep Program participants.	48 program participants
According to Apricot, the number of youth who successfully completed the SideStep programs and the number of youth who were determined to be unsuccessful.	<p>48 successful referrals 3 unsuccessful referrals</p> <p>Note: During the pilot, there was not a recorded metric in the data management system that captured the success of the youth placement. Some of this information is included in case notes for individual youth but is not standardized.</p>

The number of youth with SideStep contracts/diversion agreements.	N/A - These records are not available in the agency's case management system (note: the database in use during the pilot period did not allow for file attachments). Service providers, based on their respective program model, may have established their own contracts and/or diversionary agreements with youth referred during the pilot program.
Number of provider referral forms on record for the youth participants.	We were able to locate 3 scanned referral forms from the pilot program. The referral process during the pilot period was not uniform and was often done through a phone call.
Number of youth for whom MONSE has records of individual service models and/or case plans.	N/A - These records are not available in the agency's case management system (note: the database in use during the pilot period did not allow for attachments). Service providers, based on their respective program model, may have established their own contracts and/or diversionary agreements with youth referred during the pilot program.
The number of youth for whom MONSE has a record of receiving assessments from the Youth Coordinator upon intake (CANS, ACEs & PTSD).	N/A - Not tracked during the pilot program, but the CANS assessment was used by the Youth Opportunity Coordinator during the intake process. There are references to the assessments in some of the case notes, but documentation of these assessments in the system was not standardized during the pilot program.
The number of case note entries per youth documented in Apricot.	In the case management system, 24 case notes fields were filled in across all youth referred to Sidestep. There is no way to distinguish the number of individual entries per youth because they were entered into the same box in the case management system during the pilot program and were not timestamped as unique entries.
The number of youth who have recidivated beyond the six-month pilot program metric and the number of youth who have not.	N/A - Not tracked during the pilot program. Moving forward, MONSE has developed a plan for tracking youth recidivism beyond the 6-month period tracked during the pilot phase, aligning with established agency recidivism tracking methods utilized in the Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS).
The number of voice-to-voice contacts or meetings	N/A - Not tracked during the pilot program.

<p>documented for each youth during the diversion process.</p>	
<p>The number of post-arrest diversions that MONSE has completed from 2021 to present</p>	<p>Outside of Sidestep, MONSE documented 134 youth opportunity referrals from January 1, 2021, to present. These were not diversions, but youth referred to MONSE’s Youth Opportunity Coordinator for support and/or connection to services. Documentation about the referral source(s) is not included in the case file.</p>

Number of Youth Referred to Each Provider

Service Provider Referrals	Participant Count
	2
	1
	6
	5
	1
	1
	4
	4
	1
	1
	1
	4
	2
	1
	1
	1
	4
	1
	1
	2
	1
	1
	1

2a-2n – SideStep Pilot Data



2
1
1

Exhibit 9

Chapter 37

(Senate Bill 985)

AN ACT concerning

Confidentiality of Juvenile Records – Baltimore City Mayor’s Office on Criminal Justice

FOR the purpose of establishing that certain provisions of law relating to the confidentiality of juvenile police records and court records do not prohibit access to and confidential use of certain records by the Baltimore City Mayor’s Office on Criminal Justice under certain circumstances; specifying that the Baltimore City Mayor’s Office on Criminal Justice shall be liable for the unauthorized release of a certain record; making this Act subject to a certain contingency; providing for the termination of this Act subject to a certain contingency; providing for the effective date; and generally relating to juvenile records and access by the Baltimore City Mayor’s Office on Criminal Justice.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
Article – Courts and Judicial Proceedings
Section 3–8A–27
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2013 Replacement Volume and 2018 Supplement)
(As enacted by Chapter 474 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2013)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Courts and Judicial Proceedings

3–8A–27.

(a) (1) A police record concerning a child is confidential and shall be maintained separate from those of adults. Its contents may not be divulged, by subpoena or otherwise, except by order of the court upon good cause shown or as otherwise provided in § 7–303 of the Education Article.

(2) This subsection does not prohibit:

(i) Access to and confidential use of the record by the Department of Juvenile Services or in the investigation and prosecution of the child by any law enforcement agency;

(II) ACCESS TO AND CONFIDENTIAL USE OF THE RECORD BY THE BALTIMORE CITY MAYOR’S OFFICE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE IF THE BALTIMORE CITY MAYOR’S OFFICE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE IS PROVIDING PROGRAMS AND

SERVICES TO A CHILD WHO IS THE SUBJECT OF THE RECORD, FOR A PURPOSE RELEVANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF THE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COMPREHENSIVE TREATMENT PLAN;

[(ii)] (III) A law enforcement agency of the State or of a political subdivision of the State, the Department of Juvenile Services, or the criminal justice information system from including in the law enforcement computer information system information about an outstanding juvenile court ordered writ of attachment, for the sole purpose of apprehending a child named in the writ; or

[(iii)] (IV) A law enforcement agency of the State or of a political subdivision of the State from releasing to the public photographs and identifying information of a child who has escaped from a detention center for juveniles or a secure residential facility for juveniles, for the purposes of facilitating apprehension of the child and ensuring public safety.

(3) THE BALTIMORE CITY MAYOR’S OFFICE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE SHALL BE LIABLE FOR THE UNAUTHORIZED RELEASE OF A POLICE RECORD IT ACCESSES UNDER THIS SUBSECTION.

(b) (1) A court record pertaining to a child is confidential and its contents may not be divulged, by subpoena or otherwise, except by order of the court upon good cause shown or as provided in §§ 7–303 and 22–309 of the Education Article.

(2) This subsection does not prohibit access to and the use of the court record or fingerprints of a child described under Title 10, Subtitle 2 of the Criminal Procedure Article in a proceeding in the court involving the child, by personnel of the court, the State’s Attorney, counsel for the child, a court–appointed special advocate for the child, or authorized personnel of the Department of Juvenile Services.

(3) (i) Except as provided in subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph, this subsection does not prohibit access to and confidential use of the court record or fingerprints of a child described under Title 10, Subtitle 2 of the Criminal Procedure Article by the Department of Juvenile Services or in an investigation and prosecution by a law enforcement agency.

(ii) The court record or fingerprints of a child described under §§ 10–215(a)(20) and (21), 10–216, and 10–220 of the Criminal Procedure Article may not be disclosed to:

1. A federal criminal justice agency or information center; or
2. Any law enforcement agency other than a law enforcement agency of the State or a political subdivision of the State.

(4) (i) The Department of Juvenile Services may provide access to and the confidential use of the court record of a child by an agency in the District of Columbia or a state agency in Delaware, Pennsylvania, Virginia, or West Virginia, if the agency:

1. Performs the same functions in the jurisdiction of the agency as described in § 9–216(a) of the Human Services Article; and

2. Has a reciprocal agreement with the State that provides that the specific information to be shared by the State is the same type of information that will be shared by the agency.

(ii) A record that is shared under this paragraph may only provide information that is relevant to the supervision, care, and treatment of the child.

(iii) The Department of Juvenile Services shall be liable for an unauthorized release of a court record under this paragraph.

(iv) The Department of Juvenile Services shall adopt regulations to implement this paragraph.

(5) (i) This subsection does not prohibit access to and use of a court record by a judicial officer who is authorized under the Maryland Rules to determine a defendant's eligibility for pretrial release, counsel for the defendant, the State's Attorney, or the Maryland Division of Pretrial Detention and Services if:

1. The individual who is the subject of the court record is charged as an adult with an offense;

2. The access to and use of the court record is strictly limited for the purpose of determining the defendant's eligibility for pretrial release; and

3. The court record concerns an adjudication of delinquency that occurred within 3 years of the date the individual is charged as an adult.

(ii) The Court of Appeals may adopt rules to implement the provisions of this paragraph.

(6) (i) This subsection does not prohibit access to and confidential use of a court record by the Department of Human Services or a local department of social services for:

1. The purpose of claiming federal Title IV–B and Title IV–E funds; or

2. If the Department of Human Services or a local department of social services is providing services or care in coordination with the

Department of Juvenile Services to a child who is the subject of the record, a purpose relevant to the provision of the services or care.

(ii) The Department of Human Services and local departments of social services shall keep a court record obtained under this paragraph confidential in accordance with the laws and policies applicable to the Department of Human Services and local departments of social services.

(7) (i) This subsection does not prohibit access to and confidential use of a court record by the Maryland Department of Health or a local health department if the Maryland Department of Health or a local health department is providing treatment, services, or care in coordination with the Department of Juvenile Services to a child who is the subject of the record, for a purpose relevant to the provision of the treatment, services, or care.

(ii) The Maryland Department of Health and local health departments shall keep a court record obtained under this paragraph confidential in accordance with the laws and policies applicable to the Maryland Department of Health and local health departments.

(8) THIS SUBSECTION DOES NOT PROHIBIT ACCESS TO AND CONFIDENTIAL USE OF A COURT RECORD BY THE BALTIMORE CITY MAYOR'S OFFICE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE IF THE BALTIMORE CITY MAYOR'S OFFICE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE IS PROVIDING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE SERVICES TO A CHILD WHO IS THE SUBJECT OF THE RECORD, FOR A PURPOSE RELEVANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF THE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COMPREHENSIVE TREATMENT PLAN.

(9) THE BALTIMORE CITY MAYOR'S OFFICE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE SHALL BE LIABLE FOR THE UNAUTHORIZED RELEASE OF A COURT RECORD IT ACCESSES UNDER THIS SUBSECTION.

(c) The court, on its own motion or on petition, and for good cause shown, may order the court records of a child sealed, and, upon petition or on its own motion, shall order them sealed after the child has reached 21 years of age. If sealed, the court records of a child may not be opened, for any purpose, except by order of the court upon good cause shown.

(d) This section does not prohibit access to or use of any juvenile record by the Maryland Division of Parole and Probation or the Maryland Parole Commission when the Division or the Commission is carrying out any of their statutory duties either at the direction of a court of competent jurisdiction, or when the Maryland Parole Commission is carrying out any of its statutory duties, if the record concerns a charge or adjudication of delinquency.

(e) This section does not prohibit access to and use of any juvenile record by the Maryland Division of Correction when the Division is carrying out any of its statutory duties if: (1) the individual to whom the record pertains is committed to the custody of the Division; and (2) the record concerns an adjudication of delinquency.

(f) Subject to the provisions of §§ 9–219 and 9–220 of the Human Services Article, this section does not prohibit access to or use of any juvenile record for criminal justice research purposes. A record used under this subsection may not contain the name of the individual to whom the record pertains, or any other identifying information which could reveal the individual's name.

(g) This section does not prohibit a victim or victim's representative who has filed a notification request form from being notified of proceedings and events involving the defendant or child as provided in this subtitle, the Criminal Procedure Article, or the Criminal Law Article.

(h) This section does not prohibit the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services or a supervising authority, as defined in § 11–701 of the Criminal Procedure Article, from accessing or using the part of a juvenile record that identifies an offense committed by a juvenile for purposes of complying with Title 11, Subtitle 7 of the Criminal Procedure Article.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect on the taking effect of the termination provision specified in Section 2 of Chapter 474 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2013. This Act may not be interpreted to have any effect on that termination provision.

SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That, subject to the provisions of Section 2 of this Act, this Act shall take effect September 1, 2019. It shall remain effective for a period of 6 years and 1 month and, at the end of September 30, 2025, with no further action required by the General Assembly, this Act shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.

Approved by the Governor, April 18, 2019.

**Mayor's Office of Neighborhood
Safety and Engagement
Response
Case #25-0046-I**



CITY OF BALTIMORE
MAYOR BRANDON M. SCOTT

MEMORANDUM

TO	Isabel Mercedes Cumming, Inspector General
FROM	Stefanie Mavronis, MONSE Director
DATE	Monday, March 16, 2026
SUBJECT	Management Alert #25-0046-I

This memorandum will serve as an official response to the OIG Management Alert for Case No. 25-0046-I dated March 11, 2026. This Management Alert concerns the SideStep pilot program that ended in 2024. To reiterate, in October 2025, when MONSE received the Inspector General's prior Management Alert on the SideStep pilot program, [we indicated](#) that work was underway within the agency to update and enforce standard operating procedures for financial review and processing.

While the recent Inspector General report acknowledges that SideStep is no longer operational as of 2024, it is important to reiterate what we shared in our response to the October 2025 OIG report on the SideStep program: MONSE and the administration have utilized lessons from the limited Western District pilot to make programmatic improvements across the agency and inform program design moving forward. These lessons include improved workflows to ensure the secure and confidential transmission of protected data and stronger support of meaningful referral-based services and case management, all with the goal of preventing young, first-time offenders from committing future (and potentially more serious) offenses. With new staff and systems in place and numerous internal training sessions on subrecipient monitoring, the MONSE financial management and invoice review process is significantly stronger today than it was during the pilot program's active period, which began four years ago and concluded more than a year ago.

In the year since the conclusion of the SideStep pilot program, MONSE has worked with the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) and Baltimore Police Department (BPD) to redesign the future of this interagency youth diversion work, which is necessary to implement lessons learned, respond to changes in juvenile crime since 2022, and build out the victim support protocol and network of youth-serving providers. In summary, as MONSE has repeatedly stated, SideStep as it previously existed will not be expanded citywide.

This background is necessary to establish the context that the continued examination of the SideStep program is retrospective in nature, and any findings regarding the program no longer

reflect the current operations of MONSE or the future of this work.

Potential Fraudulent Invoices

MONSE takes evidence of fraudulent invoices, overbilling, or any other action that impacts public dollars invested in improving public safety extremely seriously. The agency is deeply concerned about the allegations raised in this report and will take every action available to recoup taxpayer funds. Unfortunately, the OIG's report provides virtually no detail about the alleged instances of overbilling that MONSE could use to review or address the concern. The report does not include the organization's name, the specific amount, the specific date, or any corresponding information, which is surprising given the OIG has referred this matter for criminal investigation. Since there is no rationale for the limited detail included in the report, it is unclear to MONSE why this information and the corresponding allegations are provided without specifics and without corresponding exhibits. The agency would like to note for the record the constraints it imposes on the agency's ability to adequately respond to the specific allegations.

In Fall 2025, MONSE began conducting an internal audit of all invoices associated with the now-concluded SideStep pilot program, which included 15 participating organizations and hundreds of corresponding invoices. This audit is ongoing, with completion expected by the end of the fiscal year. For all of our grants management efforts, we follow established protocol as a City agency in working with the City Law Department to facilitate strong oversight of our partnerships, including in those rare instances where we need to recoup funds. Through MONSE's ongoing audit of the SideStep pilot invoices, and prior to the issuance of this report, the agency identified one instance where an organization failed to provide supporting documentation to reconcile an advance payment that was made. MONSE has initiated the process to recoup these funds from the organization, in partnership with the Law Department. Due to the notable lack of detail in the OIG's report, it is unclear whether either example identified in the report relates to the instance that MONSE is already addressing or is a newly identified instance.

To that end, MONSE stands ready to partner with the Inspector General and the Law Department to recover taxpayer dollars, ensure accountability, and recoup the funds from any organization that submitted inaccurate invoices.

Case Management and Data Collection

This latest OIG report reiterates findings from earlier reports into the SideStep program regarding insufficient case management protocols, which the agency has already responded to in detail. As mentioned in [MONSE's October 2025 response](#), the agency has strengthened and improved case management standards. We have also adjusted the case management system to give DJS direct access to share records digitally and securely within the system – preventing this sensitive data from being shared via email, on physical sheets of paper, or on any individual's physical device. This also ensures that only authorized staff with approved credentials are the ones accessing the records in the system. Staff will be trained on data management expectations and the system before the next stage of this work begins. Additionally, under the future program design, MONSE will

work with DJS to monitor recidivism for all program participants, allowing both agencies to monitor participant recidivism on an ongoing basis.

Potential Breach of Juvenile Data Privacy

Regarding the finding about a potential breach of juvenile data privacy, MONSE is gravely concerned about the potential violation identified in the OIG's report. However, this is another instance where the report fails to provide relevant details that would allow the agency to clearly identify and address the concern. As similarly noted above, MONSE would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the OIG and the Law Department on the additional details in the OIG's possession that would aid in the agency's ability to address this matter.

Nonetheless, based on the extremely limited information provided in the report, MONSE believes we have found the referenced email, in which a former MONSE employee transmitted a spreadsheet containing juvenile information via email to someone who appears to be a relative. The email in question was sent in 2023 and neither included other MONSE staff, nor were other staff made aware that this individual had sent the information to an external party. While the reason the former employee sent the data is unknown at this time, MONSE has not identified any malicious use of the data or further mishandling related to this singular email. Regardless of intent, such disclosure is completely unacceptable and violates MONSE's existing data policy, as well as State law. All MONSE employees who handle sensitive data, including this former employee, are aware of the agency's standard operating procedures concerning responsible data stewardship. In short, the violation appears to be the independent actions of a single individual, rather than a reflection of MONSE's data management procedures. MONSE and the Law Department are conducting a thorough review to ensure that any relevant data-breach notification requirements are met in the future.

Conclusion

In conclusion, MONSE takes the allegations regarding the specific findings around potentially fraudulent invoices and the potential breach of juvenile data privacy seriously and is poised to address these concerns. While these findings appear to be isolated incidents driven by individual actions that do not reflect broader systemic concerns with the agency's work, they are crucial examples of the value provided by the OIG to city agencies. While previous OIG reports have ventured into subjective assessment of the value or success of certain programs or policies, these findings identify incidents of concern that would be difficult to uncover without the assistance of an oversight partner like the OIG. For that support, MONSE is grateful for the OIG's work. The agency would now request that the OIG work directly with the agency and the Law Department to provide additional details that were omitted from the report to ensure that any organization that may have defrauded or overbilled the City is held accountable and funds can be recouped. Additionally, the agency would like to express our wholehearted support for the OIG's referral of the individual who violated the confidentiality of juvenile data to the appropriate authorities.

The agency would also like to note for the record that this report and our subsequent response were

provided under an unusually accelerated deadline. Given the important nature of the findings, the agency was happy to oblige the shorter timeframe, at least to the extent possible, when the report conspicuously lacked details that would have aided our agency's response.

In line with our shared commitment to safeguarding city resources, MONSE will continue to work in partnership with the Mayor's Office and oversight partners to ensure our policies and programs reflect best practices, uphold the highest integrity, and deliver meaningful results for Baltimore's youth and communities. Our agency will continue working towards and advocating for the legislation referenced in the report that would ensure our ability to coordinate with relevant agencies like DJS proceeds uninterrupted. We are confident that, given the isolated nature of the data-related incident outlined in this report and the improved case management protocols outlined in this and previous responses, there will be no outstanding concerns regarding MONSE's future ability to access the information necessary to facilitate our work.

Similarly, in line with the commitments outlined in Baltimore's Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan and the Mayor's public safety priorities, MONSE will continue working diligently alongside our partners at DJS, the Mayor's Office, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders to ensure that our work to support Baltimore's young people proceeds uninterrupted.