

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



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
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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.

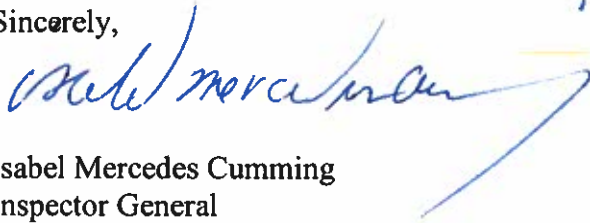
In September 2025, DJS informed the OIG that MONSE had not billed expenses to DJS for reimbursement. MONSE's lack of drawdown from the DJS grant for prior fiscal years means that the City has spent \$357,775.17 in City funds without requesting reimbursement from DJS.

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

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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