



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.

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- 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.