Rising Family Homelessness in NYC: What the Next Mayor Can Do

Center for New York City Affairs
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Rising Family Homelessness in NYC

• In September, an average of 52,351 homeless people slept each night in NYC shelter system – up 69% since current mayor took office.
• Includes 12,464 homeless families – up 80% since mayor took office.
• Includes 22,136 homeless children – up 69% since mayor took office.
• Homeless families & kids nearly four-fifths (79%) of NYC shelter population.
Rising Family Homelessness in NYC

• Avg. shelter stays for families with kids now 13 ½ months (409 days).

• African-American and Latino New Yorkers disproportionately impacted by homelessness – shelter residents 57% African-American, 31% Latino.

• Research documents harmful effects of homelessness on children’s health and education – avg. school attendance rate of homeless students in shelters only 83%.

• 28% of homeless families are working, but in low-wage jobs.
Number of Homeless People Each Night in the NYC Shelter System, 1983-2013

September 2013: 52,351

Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services and Human Resources Administration and NYCStat, shelter census reports
Number of Homeless Families Each Night in NYC Shelter System, 1983-2013

September 2013: 12,464

Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services and Human Resources Administration and NYC Stat, shelter census reports
Number of Homeless People Each Night in the NYC Shelter System, September 2013

Total NYC Municipal Shelter Population: 52,351

- Children: 11,044
- Adults in Families: 19,171
- Single Adults: 22,136

Source: City of New York, NYCStat
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- **NYC housing affordability gap growing wider.**
- **Unemployment rate still high in NYC,** higher in Bronx and Brooklyn where most low-income New Yorkers live.
- From 2007-2011, during economic downturn, **NYC median apartment rents went up 8.5% but median renter incomes fell 6.8%.**
- 78% of low-income renters have **high rent burdens.**
NYC's Widening Housing Affordability Gap, 2007-2011
(Percentage Change in Rents and Incomes)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau data from NYU Furman Center report (August 2013)
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• NYC now spends more than $1 billion/year on homeless shelter and services – up 85% under current mayor.

• Avg. annual cost to shelter a homeless family is $37,600 – up 23% since mayor took office.

• More than half of all NYC homeless families now reside in for-profit shelter (hotels/motels & cluster-site units).

• 1 of 6 homeless families in shelters nationwide is in NYC.
85% Increase in Homeless Services Expenditures Under Current Mayor
(NYC Department of Homeless Services Expenses in Millions)

Source: NYC Office of Management and Budget
More NYC Homeless Families in For-Profit than Not-for-Profit Shelter, 2013

- 49% in Family Shelters
- 17% in Cluster-Site Shelter for families w/kids
- 13% in Hotels & Motels for families w/kids
- 21% in Hotels & Motels for childless families

Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services
Recent policy failures a major cause of rising & record NYC homelessness.

Under Mayors Koch, Dinkins & Giuliani the City targeted Federal housing resources (e.g. public housing) to help homeless families get homes.

Current administration ended that policy in 2005, claimed that number of families entering shelters would decline.

But the number of families entering shelter system increased significantly after 2005.
Fewer Homeless Families Helped by Federal Housing Aid, FY 1990-FY 2012
(No. Moved from Shelters with Public Housing and Sect 8 Vouchers)

Source: Mayor's Management Report and NYC Department of Homeless Services
Number of Homeless Families Entering NYC Shelters, FY 1999-FY 2013

City Cuts Off Homeless Families from Federal Housing Programs

Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services
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• Current mayor replaced Federal programs with temporary rent subsidies (HSP and Advantage) in 2005, then eliminated all housing aid in 2011.

• Since 2005, more and more families entering shelters are formerly-homeless.

• Before 2005, 1 in 4 families entering shelter was formerly-homeless – now 63%.

• 8,500 former Advantage families with 18,000 children have returned to shelter system – half of all Advantage families without rent subsidies.
Percentage of All Families Entering NYC Shelters Who Were Formerly-Homeless

Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services

City Cuts Off Homeless Families from Federal Housing Programs

22% 24% 29% 25% 27% 24% 26% 37% 39% 45% 40% 40% 49% 55% 63%
Shelter Return Rates for Time-Limited and Non-Time-Limited Housing Aid

- **49.4%** for Advantage program*
- **3.9%** for All Subsidized Housing**
- **4.1%** for Section 8 Voucher**
- **1.4%** for NYCHA Public Housing**

Source: *NYC Department of Homeless Services (through Aug. 2013), **Vera Institute, "Understanding Family Homelessness" (2005)
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- Koch 10-year housing plan set aside **10% of apartments for homeless people** (15,700 apts.).
- Koch plan set aside **63% of apts. for very-low-income households**.
- Current mayor’s 10-year housing plan set aside **only 4% of apartments for homeless people** (4,800 apts.).
- Current mayor’s plan set aside **only 34% of apts. for very-low-income households.**
Fewer Homeless Families Aided by City-Assisted Housing, FY 1990-FY 2012
(Number Moved from Shelters to City-Subsidized Apartments)

Source: Mayor's Management Report and NYC Department of Homeless Services
Solutions to Homelessness in NYC

• Mayor-elect de Blasio and his new administration can build on *proven housing-based solutions to the problem of homelessness*.

• Research & evidence overwhelmingly show that *long-term subsidized housing reduces family homelessness*.

• Wealth of research & experience point to *success and cost savings from permanent supportive housing* for homeless people living with special needs.

• Solutions endorsed by *United to End Homelessness* coalition of 130 groups.
Solutions to Homelessness in NYC

Housing-based solutions:

1. Resume *priority referrals of homeless families to public housing and Section 8 vouchers* (at least 2,500 families/yr. to public housing).

2. Partner with State to create a *new rental assistance program* modelled on Section 8 vouchers.

3. Partner with State on a “*New York/New York IV Agreement*” to create permanent supportive housing.

4. New *NYC housing plan should set aside at least 10% of apartments for homeless New Yorkers.*
Solutions to Homelessness in NYC

Eliminate barriers to shelter and punitive policies:
1. **Eliminate bureaucratic barriers to shelter for homeless families** at intake centers.
2. **Rescind proposed shelter-denial rules for homeless adults.**
3. **Reform shelter sanction termination rules** to protect families, children, and people living with disabilities.

Reform shelter system:
1. Phase out use of apartment buildings as temporary shelter and use of commercial hotels & motels.
Solutions to Homelessness in NYC

Expand homelessness prevention:

1. Enhance funding for homelessness prevention programs, including legal services and eviction prevention services.

2. Expand access to prevention rent subsidy programs (e.g., FEPS program).

3. Enhance rent-increase exemption programs to assist seniors and tenants living with disabilities (SCRIE and DRIE programs).