



FAMILY HOMELESSNESS COALITION CALL TO ACTION

Recommendations for Incoming City Leaders to
End Family Homelessness in New York City

presented by



**FAMILY
HOMELESSNESS
COALITION**

Contrary to common belief, the majority of New Yorkers struggling with homelessness are not single adults, but families with children. The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened housing insecurity and exacerbated race, class, and gender-based inequities, pushing thousands more adults with children to the brink of homelessness.

The Family Homelessness Coalition – comprised of New York City-based human service providers, advocates, affordable and supportive housing developers, and New Yorkers who have experienced family homelessness firsthand – is calling on the incoming Adams administration, city council, and all citywide and borough-wide leaders to enact transformative policy solutions to end family homelessness once and for all.

Homelessness is traumatic for anyone, but it is especially consequential for children. Homelessness creates significant detrimental impacts to children’s mental health, physical well-being, and educational outcomes. It also increases their likelihood of experiencing homelessness as an adult. The largest driver of family homelessness is domestic violence, which causes further trauma and life-long consequences.

Before the pandemic and eviction moratorium, families with children made up two-thirds of the Department of Homeless Services shelter population, and thousands of others resided in separate domestic violence shelters and runaway and homeless youth shelters. In New York City, 101,000 students lacked permanent housing during the 2020-21 school year; 28,000 of these children are growing up in the homeless shelter system. Thousands more do not have a roof over their head at all – living in cars, parks, or abandoned buildings.

Racial inequity is undoubtedly a key factor in the family homelessness crisis: 95 percent of families with children in city shelters are headed by a Black or Latinx person and 69 percent are single mothers. Because countless families live doubled up in often overcrowded housing, the scope of the family homelessness problem is difficult to accurately quantify, but these aforementioned figures provide a glimpse.

With significant leadership changes occurring in New York City – a new mayoral administration, a vastly different city council with more women and people of color than ever before, and newly elected city and borough-wide leaders – FHC calls on ALL local elected

leaders to commit to ending family homelessness because every child in every family should grow up with a stable home.

To put an end to family homelessness, the following must be prioritized during Fiscal Year 2023:

- **Strengthen the infrastructure in city government and partner with nonprofits to improve cross-agency coordination and enhance data transparency to inform policy and practice improvements,**
- **Expand and enhance community-based homelessness prevention and aftercare supports that are proven to keep families in their homes,**
- **Expand access to permanent, affordable, and stable housing,**
- **Fully fund shelter and related service contracts to improve preventive and aftercare outcomes, shelter services and conditions, and to promote child and family well-being.**

Additionally, we urge the new City administration to accept the invitation from U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness to join House America: An All-Hands-on-Deck Effort to Address the Nation’s Homelessness Crisis, a federal initiative to utilize the American Rescue Plan resources to address homelessness through a Housing First approach.

Members Organization of the Family Homelessness Coalition Steering Committee

- Advocates for Children
- Barrier Free Living
- CAMBA
- Citizens’ Committee for Children
- Coalition for the Homeless
- Enterprise Community Partners
- Gateway Housing
- Henry Street Settlement
- Homeless Services United
- Monadnock Development
- New Destiny Housing
- Riseboro
- Safe Horizon
- Settlement Housing Fund
- The Floating Hospital
- WIN

FHC RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Strengthen the infrastructure in city government and partner with nonprofits to improve cross-agency coordination and enhance data transparency to inform policy and practice improvements.

a. Implement interagency policy solutions to combat family homelessness

- Establish a new position of Deputy Mayor to oversee and bridge between the City's affordable and public housing and homelessness policy with the delivery of health and human services.
- Launch a mayoral interagency family homelessness working group with industry experts and people with lived experience of homelessness to inform regulatory and programmatic reforms needed to strengthen the City's capacity to prevent and address family homelessness. The working group will be responsible for identifying and informing bold interagency initiatives necessary to solve family homelessness including, but not limited to, improving access to suitable housing, dismantling educational barriers for students experiencing homelessness, addressing racial inequity in housing, and promoting economic mobility for housing-insecure families with children. The working group would be led by the Office of the First Deputy Mayor who has authority over all agencies.

b. Ensure transparent multi-system data collection and data sharing to better understand the needs of families experiencing housing instability and to inform solutions that will address the unique needs of Black and Latinx families, who are disproportionately impacted by homelessness.

- Increase the collection of and access to data on families at shelter intake as well as on families accessing rental assistance to inform the development of effective prevention, in shelter service and aftercare strategies (i.e., data should include, but not be limited to, demographics, household size, caregiver education levels and work history, and age of children).
- Expand performance metrics reported in the Mayor's Management Report (MMR) and share data on all NYC shelter systems (i.e., DHS, HRA, DYCD, HPD).
- Create one single daily census that shows the true

scope of homelessness in New York City, permits breaking data by cohort, and improves data reporting on the census of every shelter system (i.e., DHS, HRA, DYCD, HPD). This will enable us to measure family homelessness and homelessness more accurately across populations.

- Expand data collection and data sharing on long-term outcomes of families that exit shelter to better understand what leads to or can impede housing stability (i.e., subsidy source, housing type, eviction filing and execution data, return to shelter over at least 5 years).
- All data should be disaggregated and reported by race and ethnicity to be able to better track needs and outcomes across demographics.



2. Reframe the City's approach to eviction prevention from crisis intervention to proactive, upstream support to help families maintain housing stability. Expand and enhance community-based homelessness prevention and aftercare supports that keep families in their homes

a. Increase housing stability with improvements to CityFHEPS and ensure it serves as a true prevention tool.

- Make CityFHEPS available to more vulnerable New Yorkers and available further upstream before eviction by
 - Expanding eligibility categories
 - Removing the requirement of an eviction filing

- Removing the shelter history requirement
- Raising the maximum allowable income
- Allowing people to be immediately eligible for a voucher upon entering shelter
- Ensure that CityFHEPS is paid to landlords on time to prevent tenants being in nonpayment proceedings and at risk of losing their housing.

b. Increase family access to homelessness prevention tools upstream long before eviction or return to shelter

- Increase access to One Shot Deals by streamlining the application process, clarifying the eligibility criteria, allowing landlords to initiate the process (with tenant's informed consent), and waiving the repayment requirement.
- Improve the web technology and user experience for clients managing their benefits online, particularly as it relates to clients being able to quickly make changes to their accounts.
- Invest in innovative models of upstream eviction prevention – supporting partnerships with schools, landlords, and other key institutions - to work with families before a crisis happens.
- Expand staff capacity at community-based organizations that provide prevention services to do proactive outreach to those at risk of housing instability and provide services that address a family's ability to maintain housing stability, such as financial counseling, workforce opportunities and mental health resources.
- Invest in aftercare – time-limited assistance to households exiting shelter for permanent housing – to ensure that families don't end up back in shelter due to common administrative issues, such as late subsidy payments, missed recertification, etc. or because they don't receive help connecting to the financial, health and wellness, educational or other services they might need to regain stability in their lives.

3. Expand access to permanent, affordable, and stable housing

a. Increase access to housing

- Improve access to supportive housing for New York City's most vulnerable families by removing chronicity as a requirement, which prolongs shelter

stays and may put parents at risk of losing custody of their children.

- Ensure adequate capacity of city staff and their community-based partners administer new federal Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV), the potential expansion of Housing Choice Vouchers, and other housing resources from Washington.
- Expand housing resources for undocumented and mixed-status families experiencing homelessness.

b. Expand affordable housing supply

- Enforce the mandate to set aside at least 15% of HPD-funded housing projects for people experiencing homelessness and ensure that all homeless families have access to this housing, not just one specific shelter system.
- Expand access to supportive housing for families with children and develop adequately sized supportive housing units.
- Ensure that the different income bands of newly built city-subsidized units accurately reflect the needs of the city's population.
- Create a framework for every community district to be part of the citywide housing plan with affordable housing supply goals, especially high-opportunity neighborhoods, and a robust community engagement process. The incoming council leaders must demonstrate housing leadership, urging council members to refrain from exercising veto powers and blocking affordable housing development.
- Ensure that federal resources are expeditiously deployed to address the family homelessness crisis, including potential funding to repair and preserve public housing.



4. Fully fund shelter and related service contracts to improve preventive and aftercare outcomes, shelter services and conditions, to promote child and family well-being.

a. Ensure the delivery of high-quality shelter services to promote family and child well-being

- Fully fund and staff family shelters to expand holistic, client-centered social service models that address the trauma of homelessness and other underlying issues, equipping clients with skills and supports needed for long-term housing stability.
- Client-centered service needs would include, but not be limited to, comprehensive health and behavioral health care, education, job training, and employment services.

b. Meet the developmental and educational needs of young children and students experiencing homelessness

- Ensure every shelter has qualified staff equipped to support students' educational needs starting by hiring 150 shelter-based DOE community coordinators.
- Ensure the City prioritizes increasing homeless children's access to critical developmental supports, including, but not limited to, early intervention, two generation models of health and behavioral health prevention, licensed infant toddler care, 3K, universal pre-k, and preschool special education, as well as afterschool and summer youth services.
- Implement the Recommendations from 40 Organizations for the Next Administration to Address

the Educational Needs of Students Experiencing Homelessness, which address critical developmental supports as well as attendance improvement supports, increasing shelter placements closer to children's schools, bridging the digital divide, improved language access and supports for English Language Learners, improved access to special education services, and more.

c. Fully funded shelter and related service contracts must include indirect costs and contracts must be registered and paid on time. Service contracts must support living wages for the social service workforce so that the very people that help lift New Yorkers out of homelessness are not at risk of homelessness themselves.

- All model budgets for DHS contracts should be revisited to ensure competitive wages for all titles with wages and career ladders built in to program structures creating opportunities to retain, cultivate, and advance talent in the sector.
- Support the #JustPay campaign, which supports a living wage with annual cost of living increases for social service providers contracted through the City and State.

Learn more about the Family Homelessness Coalition by visiting: fhcnyc.org.

