



# FAMILY HOMELESSNESS COALITION



## Our Platform

In New York City, the vast majority of people living in our shelter system are women and children. There are over 43,000 people living in family shelter in New York City, including close to 25,000 children under the age of 18. Almost two-thirds of the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelter system is made up by families with children, and nearly 95% of those families are Black and Latinx.

Homelessness is traumatic for anyone. It is especially consequential for children because of the long-term negative impact it has on their physical and mental health, education, and the increased risk of experiencing homelessness as an adult. Moreover, homelessness has a disproportionate impact on Black and Latinx families deepening racial inequities. In addition to leading the country in the number of homeless families, there are several indicators that point to the extent of this NY crisis and its potential long-term effect on children:

- 62% of children in shelters are chronically absent from school
- Half of all homeless families with children are placed in cluster sites or commercial hotels without sufficient access to proper social services, kitchens, laundry services, or recreational space.
- The average length of shelter stays for homeless families is well over a year.
- Almost 20 percent of adults who are now homeless were first in the shelter system as children.
- Over 40% families who enter the DHS shelter system report DV as the primary reason for needing shelter

## Addressing The Crisis

The Family Homelessness Coalition (FHC) urges New York's city and state and federal leaders to focus on eliminating family homelessness with proven approaches to ensure no child grows up without a stable home. Policies aimed at tackling the systemic drivers of homelessness are even more critical today as we move towards a long-term COVID-19 recovery plan. The pandemic and the economic collapse have had an alarming and disproportionate impact on communities that were already grappling with high risk factors associated with housing instability including: poverty, unemployment, overcrowded housing, severe rent-burden, and high numbers of families entering shelter. Because family homelessness has various and interrelated root causes—e.g., structural racism, income inequality, the scarcity of affordable housing, and domestic violence—the solution must be multi-pronged. A collaborative, cross-agency effort is necessary to:

- Strengthen prevention and housing stability for families with children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- Provide safe and appropriate purpose-built shelters, with on-site services that promote child and family well-being when homelessness is unavoidable
- Create more permanent housing with access to services for homeless families
- Expand the supply of affordable, permanent housing available to extremely low-income and homeless families



# Initiatives Supported By FHC

## **Strengthen prevention and post-shelter services for at-risk families**

- Prevent homelessness for families facing housing insecurity and for families leaving shelters by expanding neighborhood-based services including eviction prevention counseling, aftercare supports and expanded resources for short and long-term rental assistance.
- Expand rapid rehousing to help domestic violence survivors remain safely in place or move quickly to permanent housing
- Improve public awareness of and access to information about housing resources and services

## **Promote child and family well-being when shelter is unavoidable**

- Limit administrative transfers to promote family stability and continuity of services. Once a placement is identified that meets the needs of children and parents, families should be permitted to remain in place until suitable housing is identified.
- Provide resources for trauma-informed services and integrate trauma informed principles into shelter policies and practices.
- Ensure educational stability and improve school attendance for children who are homeless by increasing cross-agency coordination to address barriers students who are homeless face and by sustaining critical investments in supports like social workers and community coordinators in schools, Students in Temporary Housing Regional Managers, and Client Care Coordinators in shelters. During COVID-recovery, ensuring adequate technology and conducive learning environments for remote learning are also critical for students in temporary housing, including those in shelter.
- Ensure that parents and children receive needed supports including home visiting, early intervention, child care, after-school and summer programming, including transportation to access such services.
- Improve conditions and access to support services for families in commercial hotels, including access to social workers and recreation services available to families in Tier II shelter settings.

## **Create more permanent housing resources for homeless children and their families**

- Support a statewide rent subsidy program for very low-income families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- Increase access to affordable housing and resources that meet family needs, including rapid-rehousing and long-term rental assistance for families with limited service needs, and supportive housing for families who have deeper service needs
- Ensure local and state rental assistance programs are competitive in the private market, bringing payments up to the fair market rate used for federal rental subsidies.
- Expedite exits to permanent housing by leveraging short and long-term rent assistance as well as streamlining the process for placing families into permanent housing.
- Advance policies to expand the supply of housing, both through new construction and conversion of underutilized spaces. Increase the development of deeply affordable housing and housing for families exiting shelter, especially in projects receiving zoning bonuses, and/or tax abatements and exemptions.

The Family Homelessness Coalition is made up of service providers, housing providers, children's organizations, and advocacy organizations.

**Learn more about the Family Homelessness Coalition by visiting: [fhcnyc.org](https://fhcnyc.org)**

Or scan here:

