



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
July 9, 2013

**STUDY DEMONSTRATES HOMEBASE SERVICES
KEEP MORE FAMILIES OUT OF SHELTER**
Rigorous evaluation gathers invaluable data for NYC and the country

The Department of Homeless Services (DHS), today, announced findings from a premier, rigorous evaluation, which examined the efficacy of the Agency's network of homelessness prevention programs. Conducted between 2010 and 2013 by Abt Associates, the random control study concluded that services delivered through Homebase successfully prevent homelessness, keeping more families stably housed in the community. Most notably, the study found that Homebase intervention cut shelter applications nearly in half and reduced the number of days that families spent in shelter by 70 percent. New York City taxpayers saved more than \$1.25 for every City tax levy dollar invested through the program. The findings suggest Homebase currently prevents 650 families, or a total of 2,000 individuals, from entering the system a year and that without the presence of Homebase these households would spend an average of 15,000 days in shelter and require DHS to build at least 12 new facilities.

"We have long believed that Homebase provides direct benefits to New Yorkers who are at-risk of homelessness and reduces dependence on emergency shelter," said DHS Commissioner Michele Ovesey. "Now, we have a top-tier independent analysis and evidence that the program works. At Homebase, we serve families with customized plans and help them avoid shelter— an outcome that is clearly the best possible result for everyone involved."

Operating the most extensive and innovative network of homelessness prevention services in the country, the City of New York assists families and individuals at 15 store-front Homebase offices, located throughout the five boroughs. Since its inception in 2004, Homebase has assisted nearly 50,000 households— offering customized assistance, personalized housing stability plans, and services such as eviction prevention, short-term emergency funding, household budgeting and help in obtaining employment and public benefits. In the five years since the program expanded citywide, enrollments have increased more than 300 percent. In Fiscal Year 2012, Homebase served more than 10,800 households, and is on track to achieve a similar milestone again this year, demonstrating the widespread influence the program is having on near homeless New Yorkers.

The random assignment study was widely requested among members of the research community, in an effort to determine if homelessness can truly be prevented; whether specific households can be targeted; and if services can be found to be fully effective. The study was led by Abt Associates' Dr. Howard Rolston, a recognized pioneer in social science research.

"DHS is to be highly commended for having both the desire to rigorously determine the effectiveness of Homebase Community Prevention and the courage of their convictions to put the program on the line in a trail blazing evaluation," said Abt Associates' Howard Rolston. "The findings are impressive— very substantial reductions in the amount of time families spend in shelter, as well as the percentage who enter, and program savings that exceed the cost of operating the program."

"This study, the first randomized trial of its kind in the field, provides definitive proof that homelessness prevention not only works by cutting homelessness rates nearly in half, but it better than pays for itself by

reducing shelter costs,” said Dennis Culhane, Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania. “The field has been waiting for such a study for many years and now it’s here.”

Last summer, in an attempt to promote prevention services, DHS unveiled a Citywide public awareness campaign entitled, “Reach Out, Before You’re Forced Out of Your Home: We can help you avoid shelter. If you’re at risk of becoming homeless, call 311 today.” The campaign, which was featured on billboards, subways, buses and bus shelters, targeted families in high-risk communities and increased monthly 311 calls for related services– from an average of 800 a month to an average of 1,600 per month. In addition to the outdoor campaign, television Public Service Announcements aired last July and a video streamed on DHS’ Web site. The total cost of the four-month campaign was \$869,458 paid through the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

“Homebase is the first community-based prevention program in the nation to show clear success in reducing rates of homelessness among families it services,” said Marybeth Shinn, Ph.D., Vanderbilt University. “Homebase helps. It is a model for the rest of the country.”

The results revealed the program is cost-effective to the taxpayer, supporting the Obama Administration’s priority that targeted comprehensive solutions are far more effective and cost-efficient than temporary fixes. Since the beginning of the Bloomberg Administration, funding for DHS homelessness prevention efforts has steadily increased from zero to more than \$31 million annually.

“Targeting prevention is one of the hardest things to do in social policy, because it is easy to help people who may not need it and miss people who do,” said John Mollenkopf, Ph.D., City University of New York (CUNY). “Rigorous research has shown that Homebase has hit that elusive target, significantly reducing entry to shelter and days in shelter at a cost-effective rate. This is a remarkable achievement.”

DHS also commissioned supplemental studies, in hopes of maximizing opportunities to learn about the program and potential enhancements. In one such study the impact of Homebase on the communities it serves was examined, with researchers comparing communities served by Homebase to those that were not and program impact estimated by comparing shelter use in both types of communities. Researchers found that the presence of Homebase in high-demand communities resulted in fewer shelter entries.

In another study, researchers determined that households with certain circumstances including a previous shelter history, conflict in the household, frequent moves, child protective service involvement and domestic violence, were most likely to enter shelter. A third study showed there is a strong association with neighborhoods with high poverty rates, family distress and contact with the criminal justice system and the neighborhoods with the highest shelter entry rates in the city.

The total budget of the evaluation was \$598,213, which included reports and recommendations, development of maps, and other analyses. Although less than three percent of the Homebase program’s annual budgets have been dedicated to evaluation and research, DHS– and the greater research community– has garnered information that will assist thousands of households. DHS has already begun to incorporate this groundbreaking research into improvements to the Homebase program.