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MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES CITY AGGRESSIVELY INSPECTING AND FIXING HOMELESS SHELTER CONDITIONS

NEW YORK—As part of the effort to improve conditions in homeless shelters, Mayor Bill de Blasio today announced a Shelter Repair Scorecard to publicly report on the conditions of homeless shelter facilities and track progress made by the expanded repair program to address sub-standard conditions. Data shows that increased inspections have been finding more violations than ever before, and that City and shelter providers have cleared more than 26,000 violations over the last two years.

“We are determined to give every family and individual in a homeless shelter decent living conditions. We have been increasing inspections to identify problems, and we now have a scorecard to track our progress in addressing them. Many of these violations are long-standing problems stemming from a lack of funding. We are increasing our repair work for all shelters and have increased our funding for not-for-profit shelter providers. We won’t rest until every shelter meets standards,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**.

The new Shelter Repair Scorecard defines the scope of the problem by listing conditions at all homeless shelters in New York City that do not meet applicable regulations, and makes it possible to track progress in dealing with them.

The scorecard can be accessed [here](#).

The data shows:

- While no sub-standard conditions are acceptable, many shelters have relatively few violations. **The non-cluster family-with-children and adult family shelters have an average of about half a violation per apartment, the same as the average for all buildings in New York City, including luxury buildings.**
- The 357 non-cluster city homeless shelters had 6,983 open violations at the end of 2015, before the new Shelter Repair Squad 2.0 began work.
- Of these 357 shelters, 190 sites had ten or fewer violations, 92 of those sites had five or less.
- The 265 cluster shelters, which house only 20 percent of the total shelter population, had 14,418 violations, or 70 percent of the total.
- Cluster shelters are groups of individual apartments in larger buildings, and the violation total includes all the violations in each building, not those solely relating to the cluster units.

Last month, the Administration announced a plan to phase out the use of cluster shelters – where the majority of the violations are found. As the City ends the use of cluster shelters, returning them to the market so that the apartments can serve as low-rent housing, it will insist that building owners bring their buildings up to code, and will work to ensure that they remain part of the City’s rent-regulated stock or enter an affordability program.

The City has substantially increased its inspections of shelters and its identification of problems. Some examples include the following:

- In 2015, as a result of the 8,665 inspections completed by the Departments of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD); Buildings (DOB); Health and Mental Health (DOHMH); and the Fire Department (FDNY), 17,312 violations were identified. That is 47 percent more than the 11,785 violations identified in 2013.
- The Fire Department alone issued 730 violations in 2015, more than double the 355 violations issued in 2013.
- Going forward, for the first time in New York City’s history, there will be inspections twice a year of all sites used to house homeless individuals and families.
- Identifying more violations has resulted in more being fixed. Looking at just HPD violations, the City shelter providers and building owners cleared more than 14,000 violations in 2015, up from more than 12,000 cleared in 2014 and fewer than 10,000 in 2013.

The City is already at work fixing violations and will work with shelter providers to resolve the remaining violations.

- The Shelter Repair Squad 1.0 cleared 12,000 violations after it was created in May 2015.
- Since it started on January 1, 2016, the Shelter Repair Squad 2.0 has been inspecting and clearing conditions, and that work will continue with teams from HPD, HRA and DHS focused on clearing conditions in non-cluster shelters.
- The FY 2016 shelter maintenance and repair budget totals \$54 million, of which \$17 million has been added since the beginning of the de Blasio Administration. The capital budget includes \$120 million in the four-year plan
- As part of the review of homeless services ordered by the Mayor, the City is reviewing payments to shelter providers to ensure they are sufficient to fund maintenance, and is assessing the capital needs of shelters, which have not been adequately provided up until now.
- The City is also developing a plan for repairing City-owned shelter buildings.

The City also has adopted some recommendations from shelter providers on how to most effectively improve conditions in the shelter. For example, because many shelters find it difficult to pay the cost of having a repair re-inspected to prove the violation was cleared, HPD is offering limited free inspections for nonprofit providers who have violations that have been repaired but not cleared. The City has also agreed to:

- Ensure that all providers have clear information about the standards and regulations against which they are measured so that they can train their staff to respond to them.

- Increase coordination among City agency inspectors and conduct joint inspections as much as possible to reduce the burden of frequent inspections.
- Explore ways to reduce the time it takes for violations to be cleared after the supporting paperwork is filed.
- Create a working group of shelter providers to discuss the best means of working together to improve shelter conditions.

As noted, the City has already met with providers and committed to improving funding for maintenance and repairs beyond the increases already in the budget.

“This new initiative is part of the 90-day review of homeless services that the Mayor ordered on December 15, 2015. We have taken a number of immediate steps to identify and fix shelter conditions that have built up over many years, including increasing funding to address maintenance and capital needs for not-for-profit organizations that are essential to providing decent shelter for homeless New Yorkers,” said **Human Resources Commissioner Steven Banks**.

“It’s impossible to fix problems and ensure proper maintenance if you don’t identify and track the problems. That’s why the City will rigorously inspect shelters and make sure they meet all the relevant standards. Where we find problems, we will work with the shelter providers and landlords to fix them, and we will hold those who refuse to fix problems, or who cannot manage the buildings appropriately, accountable,” said **Housing Preservation and Development Commissioner Vicki Been**.

“We will hold all shelters to a high standard, including our own. The City is setting an example by putting in place a plan for each shelter building it owns,” said **the Mayor’s Office of Operations Director Mindy Tarlow**. “We will ensure this process is transparent, and that the City will record progress through our Shelter Repair Scorecard.”

The new Shelter Repair Scorecard contains:

- A summary page showing the total number of inspections conducted, any new problems found, and violations and other conditions resolved each month.
- A list of all shelter buildings, with summaries of the conditions in each building.
- A report card for each individual shelter with the number of each type of violation and progress in fixing them. This page will describe the type of shelter, the total number of units and the owner of the building.

All open violations are reported as of a set date, in this case December 31, 2015. While some violations may have been repaired, documentation of the repairs may not have been processed as of that date; those repairs will be reflected in a later scorecard.

The Shelter Repair Scorecard starts with data as of December 31, 2015. The information will be updated monthly. Shelter addresses are not included due to confidentiality requirements of the New York State Social Services Law.

It is important to note that shelter providers who lease the property may have limited ability to require the owner to make repairs. The City is moving to put all shelters under contract to improve its ability to require and fund repairs.

The Administration is moving to improve conditions in homeless shelters by:

- Expanding the Shelter Repair Squad to improve shelter conditions and respond quickly to resident concerns.
- Ending the use of “cluster site” housing, which has often been sub-standard, and transitioning to new models designed to promote permanent housing.
- Establishing a shelter repair hotline for shelter residents to register issues about shelter conditions starting February 1.
- Reversing disinvestment in not-for-profit shelters and funding capital and maintenance needs.
- Reinforcing the requirement that shelter providers keep shelters open for residents during the day.
- Enhancing programming in shelters, including new job training and employment programs.

“We’re proud to work with the Mayor and our partner agencies to promote safe, code-compliant housing for our city’s most vulnerable residents,” said **Department of Buildings Commissioner Rick Chandler**.

“The Fire Department is committed to securing the safety of every New Yorker, especially our most vulnerable populations. Through extensive biannual inspections of homeless shelters, our members will make certain that each facility has the required fire protection and prevention practices in place to keep residents safe,” said **Commissioner the Fire Department Daniel A. Nigro**.

"Living conditions are key determinants of public health, and the Health Department is pleased to participate in the effort to improve conditions in shelters by holding operators to the same standards as other landlords," said **Department of Health and Mental Health Commissioner Dr. Mary Travis Bassett**.

Since taking office, the de Blasio Administration has moved over 22,000 homeless individuals into permanent housing through newly created rental assistance programs and exit programs, and served over 91,000 New Yorkers with homelessness prevention service. The Administration has also:

- Funded a ten-fold increase in legal services to prevent unlawful eviction and protect affordable housing.
- Launched a plan for 15,000 units of supportive housing – permanent housing with supportive services to help stabilize lives of homeless individuals.
- Ended chronic veteran homelessness.
- Launched HOME-STAT to ensure consistent, continued outreach to all street homeless, encouraging them to seek shelter, medical care and other services.
- Removed 30 encampments, and put in place a system to monitor new encampments, and provided services to homeless individuals living in encampments.
- Doubled the number of drop-in centers, a gateway to bringing people in from streets to shelters.
- Added 500 Safe Haven Beds in houses of worship, which are lower threshold shelters often more attractive to individuals who reject traditional shelters.

- Increased by 50 percent the number of beds at Domestic Violence shelters, to serve total of 13,300 individuals.
- Expanded daytime jobs training and vocational programming at shelters to serve almost 20,000 individuals to ensure residents have access to shelter during the daytime.
- Tripled the number of beds for runaway homeless youth – totaling 750 beds.

"We cannot rest until every New Yorker, regardless of their economic circumstances, has a safe place to lay their head," said **Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams**. "If we are to curb our city's homelessness crisis, we must be committed to true accountability that accurately assesses our successes and shortcomings, leading to meaningful reform. The Shelter Repair Scorecard is a meaningful step for people inside and outside of government to track the City's progress and expedite needed fixes in our system."

"Transparency and regular, open metrics are often the first step on the path to fixing long-neglected problems," said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. "I commend the mayor's continuing commitment to steadily improving conditions in our homeless shelters and dramatically reducing homelessness."

"Vulnerable New Yorkers deserve to know that the shelters they rely on are safe and well maintained," said **Council Member Stephen Levin, Chair of General Welfare Committee**. "By identifying and aggressively correcting violations in shelters and making that data available to the public, we will restore trust in the system and encourage homeless individuals to come in off the street. I commend Mayor de Blasio for the significant progress made over the past two years, and I look forward to working with the Administration to continue overseeing and improving the shelter system and other services that are critically important to New Yorkers in need."

"Homeless families have a legal right to safe and habitable shelter," said **Adriene Holder, Attorney in Charge of Civil Practice at the Legal Aid Society**. "We are encouraged that the City has taken steps to correct the damage caused by many years of neglect by the State and City agencies charged with maintaining shelters, and that the Administration will restore the cluster site shelter units to the City's affordable rent-regulated housing stock."

"All New Yorkers deserve a healthy and safe place to live – and living in a homeless shelter should be no exception, said **Alyssa Aguilera, Political Director of VOCAL-NY**. "The Shelter Repair Scorecard will be an important tool in assessing the quality-of-life in New York City homeless shelters, and allows the public to hold the city accountable for making necessary changes. We look forward to working with the de Blasio Administration to improve shelter conditions, as well as other policies to connect homeless New Yorkers to permanent, affordable housing."

"We thank the Mayor for his focus on improving shelter conditions, and the increased resources that will enhance our ability to provide safe, secure and homelike environments for homeless families and individuals. SCO stands ready to support the Mayor in this effort," said **Douglas O'Dell, Executive Director of SCO Family of Services**.

"The de Blasio Administration's commitment to transparency, accountability, and – most of all – new resources will improve conditions in shelters citywide. On behalf of so many of our clients who call the shelter system their home, we welcome the new Shelter Scorecard as an important tool for addressing long neglected shelter conditions," said **Marla Simpson, Executive Director of Brooklyn Community Services**

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