



Human Resources
Administration
Department of
Homeless Services

Department of
Social Services

March 2019 Report (reflecting October, November, December of 2018)

Pursuant to Local Law 217 of 2017 to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to a record of the unsheltered homeless population, the Department of Homeless Services respectfully submits the report below.

In 2017, we announced our Turning the Tide plan to transform the City's approach to providing shelter during the past four decades. Our plan puts people and communities first; and accomplishes this goal by ending decades-old stop-gap measures like the 19-year use of ineffective cluster shelter sites and the practice of renting commercial hotel rooms, which dates back, on and off, to the 1960s. Instead, through our plan, we will open a smaller number of new borough-based shelters to help families and individuals stay connected to the anchors of life – such as schools, jobs, health care, families and houses of worship – as they get back on their feet.

With significant investments, over the past year, we have been implementing our transformation plan – while at the same time making sure in the short-term that we provide shelter each night to the families and individuals who turn to us for help as required by the right to shelter guaranteed in New York City.

*DHS's transformative plan is built on four core pillars: preventing homelessness in the first place whenever we can; **bringing people in from the streets and subways 24/7**; rehousing people who become homeless; and transforming the haphazard approach to providing shelter and services that has built up over the past four decades.*

As we have testified previously, the average monthly census for DHS shelters increased 115 percent from 1994 into 2014 – rising from 23,868 men, women, and children in January 1994, to 31,009 in January 2002, and 51,470 in January 2014. But after nearly four decades of an ever-increasing homeless population in NYC, the de Blasio administration has finally broken the trajectory of growth in homelessness; and, while we know we have more work to do, with the new programs, reforms, and investments we are implementing, we are headed in the right direction, holding the DHS census essentially flat year over year in 2017 and 2018, even as we have provided shelter and services to more than 500 evacuees from Puerto Rico that the Trump Administration abandoned.

Without the initiatives that we have been implementing, we projected that the current DHS census would be in excess of 71,000 instead of at the 60,000 level where it is today. We've also made progress driving down the number of families experiencing homelessness and residing in shelter on any given night, with the peak number of individuals across those families declining by nearly 3,000 between 2014, when families in shelter on a given night were comprised of 47,423 individuals, and 2018, when families in

shelter on a given night were comprised of 44,722 individuals. At the same time, through the initiatives outlined below, we've already shrunk the NYCDHS shelter footprint by approximately 30 percent—well on our way towards our goal shrinking the footprint by 45 percent overall—by achieving a net reduction of 180 shelter locations, down to 467 from the 647 reported in TTT.

Addressing Street Homelessness – Bringing People Inside

HOME-STAT

Our investments and program reforms to the City's comprehensive HOME-STAT (Homeless Outreach & Mobile Engagement Street Action Teams) program to address street homelessness have helped more than 2,000 New Yorkers experiencing unsheltered homelessness come in from the streets into transitional programs or permanent housing, thanks to new investments and a doubling of the size of our outreach teams.

HOME-STAT is the nation's most comprehensive outreach program, which includes 24/7/365 citywide outreach efforts, through which hundreds of highly-trained not-for-profit outreach staff, including licensed social workers, proactively canvass the streets to engage homeless New Yorkers.

Outreach teams consist of multi-disciplinary teams working around the clock to seek out individuals living in public spaces and link them to services with the goal of bringing them indoors. Following the "housing first" philosophy, outreach teams work from a harm-reduction approach, building relationships with individuals who over time have historically rejected services. Outreach teams are also focused on the most vulnerable of those living outside to ensure they are safe and/or not at risk for injury or death. This aspect of their role becomes heightened during times of extreme weather. Outreach teams also perform crisis intervention assessments and work on housing placements through on-going case management and supportive services, which includes linking clients to medical benefits as they continue to work with these individuals throughout their journey. The outreach teams meet people "where they are" both literally and figuratively—whether that means conducting a psychiatric evaluation on a street corner or sending an outreach worker who can speak to a client in his or her native language.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to ending homelessness. With a dedicated not-for-profit provider for each borough (the Manhattan Outreach Consortium, led by CUCS working with Goddard Riverside and Breaking Ground, in Manhattan; Breaking Ground in Brooklyn and Queens; BronxWorks in the Bronx; and Project Hospitality on Staten Island; and subways addressed by the Bowery Residents Committee (BRC)), HOME-STAT outreach teams work around the clock across the five boroughs by making regular contact with street homeless New Yorkers: getting to know them, developing trust, and sharing information about the resources available to them.

Since 2015, through our new investments, we have doubled - and are on our way to tripling to nearly 1,800 - the number of low-barrier beds dedicated to better serving our street homeless population. As of this year, there are approximately 1,400 beds dedicated to street homeless New Yorkers operating across 35 locations citywide (more than double what we started with), including the 22 new locations opened during this Administration and four previously-existing sites that we expanded. We also more than doubled the

number of outreach staff canvassing the streets and working to engage New Yorkers who are experiencing street homelessness to nearly 400 outreach staff today.

Overall we have more than doubled the City’s investment in street homeless programs, increasing by more than \$53 million (119 percent) – from \$44.6 million in FY14 to an investment of \$126 million in FY19.

Central to the HOME-STAT effort, these outreach teams continue to build the City’s first-ever by-name list of individuals known to be homeless and residing on the streets, more effectively enabling the teams to directly and repeatedly engage New Yorkers in need where they are, continually offering supports and case management resources while developing the trust and relationships that will ultimately encourage these individuals to accept services and transition off the streets. This tool allows outreach staff to update client and case information in real time, which may include the client’s first and last name, date of birth, race or ethnicity, and the location where outreach staff engaged the unsheltered homeless person, including but not be limited to, a bus shelter, drop-in center, hospital, park, safe haven, or subway.

As part of that by-name list, outreach teams now know nearly 1,600 individuals by name who are confirmed to be homeless and living on the streets and are actively engaging approximately 2,400 individuals encountered on the streets to evaluate their living situations and determine whether they are homeless as well as what specific supports they may need.

In regards to the reporting requirements of the Local Law 217 of 2017 DHS reports the following data:

HOME-STAT	
<p>Total number of New Yorkers who are—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(1) known to HOME-STAT outreach teams; <u>AND</u>(2) confirmed to be experiencing unsheltered homelessness; <u>AND</u>(3) currently being engaged by HOME-STAT outreach teams; <u>AND</u>(4) included in the record, also known as the City’s ‘by-name list’ of street homeless individuals <p>—as of: December 31, 2018.</p>	<h1>1,599</h1>

	Location of First Engagement	<u>Count</u>
Location of point of first engagement with HOME-STAT outreach teams, to the extent available, for those New Yorkers in the record referenced above—	Delayed Data Entry or No Entry*	189
	Bus Shelter	0
	Drop-In Center (DIC)	22
	Hospital	26
	Social service provider office	80
	Park	104
	Phone	21
	Playground	3
	Ferry Terminal	19
	Street	706
	Subway	279
	Other	6
Grand Total	1455**	

*Delayed Data Entry or No Entry reflects cases wherein HOME-STAT outreach staff either (1) did not enter point of first engagement OR (2) entered data only after successfully helping an individual off the street and into dedicated transitional housing settings, which include Safe Havens, stabilization beds, or faith-based beds, all of which require referrals from HOME-STAT outreach teams.

**For the remaining clients, upon engagement, outreach teams determined they were in need of immediate connections to alternative support settings or care, including detox treatment and emergency medical assistance.