

September 2020 Report (reflecting April, May, and June of 2020)

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 (TtT) plan to transform the City's approach to providing shelter, by putting people and communities first. Our plan accomplishes this goal by ending decades-old stop-gap measures like the 20-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 are opening 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 experiencing homelessness; 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, 2018, and 2019 for the first time in a decade.

Without the initiatives that we have been implementing, we projected that the current DHS census would be in excess of 71,000 instead of below the 55,000 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 more than 10,000 between 2014 and today. At the same time, through the initiatives outlined below, we've already shrunk the NYCDHS shelter footprint by approximately 26 percent—well on our way towards our goal of

shrinking the footprint by 45 percent overall—by getting out of more than 200 locations that did not meet our standards and siting a smaller number of borough-based shelters, down to approximately 478 locations from the 647 reported in TtT.

Addressing Street Homelessness – Bringing People Inside

HOME-STAT: 24/7/365 Outreach

The most comprehensive outreach program in the nation, HOME-STAT (Homeless Outreach & Mobile Engagement Street Action Teams) encapsulates all of New York City’s street homeless outreach efforts, from 24/7/365 in-field/on-streets outreach and engagement across the five boroughs, to case management, to dedicated facilities and tailored services.

Overall, we have quintupled the City’s investment in street homeless programs, increasing from approximately \$45 million in FY14 to more than \$240 million.

At the same time, we have tripled the number of low-barrier beds dedicated to better serving our individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness, increasing from 600 beds in 2014 to more than 1800 in 2019. Additionally, in December 2019, we announced our plan to add another 1,000 safe haven beds citywide; representing a 65-percent increase over the tripling we have already achieved. 350 of those beds were already in the development process by the end of 2019; and hundreds of interim stabilization beds have been brought online this year.

Through these investments, programs, and enhanced efforts, in which hundreds of highly-trained not-for-profit outreach staff, including licensed social workers, proactively canvass the streets to engage unsheltered New Yorkers, our City has helped more than 2,900 New Yorkers experiencing unsheltered homelessness come in from the streets into transitional programs or permanent housing.

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 Bowery Residents Committee (BRC) on the subways), HOME-STAT outreach teams work around the clock across the five boroughs by making regular contact with New Yorkers experiencing street homelessness: getting to know them, developing trust, and sharing information about the resources available to them.

HOME-STAT outreach teams consist of multi-disciplinary teams working around the clock to seek out individuals living in public spaces, engage them about the resources and supports available to them, and link them to services with the goal of bringing them indoors, always focused on building relationships with individuals who over time have historically rejected services. Outreach teams are also focused on reaching, engaging, and assisting the most vulnerable of those living outside to ensure they are safe and/or not at risk of injury or death. This health-protection aspect of their role becomes heightened during times of extreme weather. Outreach teams also perform crisis intervention assessments and work on housing placements through ongoing case management and supportive services, which

includes connecting clients to medical benefits as they continue to work with these individuals throughout their journey back to permanency/stability. 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.

HOME-STAT: The Journey Home

In December, we announced our “Journey Home” action plan to double down on the progress we’ve made through HOME-STAT—the nation’s most comprehensive street outreach program—and end long-term street homelessness as we know it within five years. This “Journey Home” action plan calls for new permanent housing, new safe havens, new outreach staff, and new cross-agency collaborative intervention to ensure the HOME-STAT solutions that have helped nearly 2,900 unsheltered New Yorkers off the streets into transitional and permanent settings since 2016 also start to work for those unsheltered New Yorkers who’ve been the toughest to reach. With new collaborative approaches and creative interventions, we intend to achieve the breakthroughs and find the unique pathways off the streets that each of these individuals requires, in partnership with the dedicated, experienced outreach providers who’ve spent time getting to know them, building the trust and relationships that will ultimately change their lives. To learn more about this Administration’s bold, unprecedented, historic plan to take action, visit nyc.gov/journeyhome.

HOME-STAT: Compassionate Individualized Engagement, and the By-Name List of Known and Prospective Clients

Central to the HOME-STAT effort, HOME-STAT 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, the location where outreach staff engaged the unsheltered homeless person, including but not limited to, a bus shelter, drop-in center, hospital, park, safe haven, or subway, and information about the factors that may have contributed to their homelessness.

As part of that by-name list, HOME-STAT outreach teams now know and are actively engaged with approximately 2,400 (2,317) individuals by name who are confirmed to be homeless and living on the streets. HOME-STAT outreach teams are also continuing to engage another approximately 1,300 (1,228) individuals encountered on the streets to evaluate their living situations, determine whether they are homeless, and assess what specific supports they may need.

To this end, 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.

HOME-STAT

Total number of New Yorkers who are—

- (1) known to HOME-STAT outreach teams; AND
- (2) confirmed to be experiencing unsheltered homelessness; AND
- (3) currently being engaged by HOME-STAT outreach teams; AND
- (4) included in the record, also known as the City's 'by-name list' of street homeless individuals

—as of: June 30,, 2020.

2,317

Location of First Engagement

Count

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*	599
Bus Shelter	0
Drop-In Center (DIC)	12
Hospital	25
Social service provider office	70
Park	99
Phone	15
Playground	0
Ferry Terminal	0
Street	760
Subway	693
Other	44

	Grand Total	2,317**
--	--------------------	----------------

*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.