



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 18, 2022, 11:00 AM
CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**ADAMS ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES ‘PROJECT OPEN ARMS,’
COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT PLAN TO MEET EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF
FAMILIES SEEKING ASYLUM**

‘Project Open Arms’ Will Provide Wraparound Services for New Students Entering School System, Including Academic, Social-Emotional, and Language-Access Supports

Plan Includes Targeted Resources for Asylum-Seeking Families Currently Living in and out of City’s Shelter System

NEW YORK – New York City Mayor Eric Adams, New York City Department of Education (DOE) Chancellor David C. Banks, Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs Commissioner Manuel Castro, and New York City Department of Social Services (DSS) Commissioner Gary Jenkins today announced [‘Project Open Arms’ a comprehensive plan to support families seeking asylum and ensure children are provided a full range of services to start their New York City public education on the first day of school next month.](#) This multi-agency plan highlights wraparound services to ensure asylum-seeking families and their children will have access to critical academic, social-emotional, and language-based supports needed to be successful in New York City public schools.

Under the plan, the city is prioritizing strong interagency collaboration to provide families with a broad range of resources. DOE has been working in close coordination with its agency partners, including MOIA and DSS, to connect families with the resources they need in preparation for the start of the school year on September 8th.

“Our city has been, and will always be, a city of immigrants that welcomes newcomers with open arms,” said **Mayor Adams**. “‘Project Open Arms’ ensures we are well-prepared to assist asylum-seekers as the school year begins and that we are offering wraparound services to students and families. With strong collaboration with our partners, both in and out of government, this plan highlights how we can lead with compassion and ‘Get Stuff Done’ for those who need it most.”

“Project Open Arms is a multi-agency effort that will provide children and families seeking asylum with the services they need to thrive,” said **Deputy Mayor for Health and Human**

Services Anne Williams-Isom. “It is critical to equip these students with the full range of academic, language access, and social-emotional resources to succeed as they adjust to a new and unfamiliar environment. We are grateful to our sister agencies and community-based partners for their heroic efforts to assist these families, and look forward to deepening this work as we prepare for the start of the school year.”

“Our public schools are prepared to welcome families seeking asylum with open arms,” said **DOE Chancellor Banks**. “Our city has always stood with those in need of refuge and shelter, and this administration will continue that proud legacy. We are working alongside our agency partners to set students up for success by addressing their academic, emotional, and social needs, and ensuring there is no disruption to their education. Our schools are ready and excited to welcome our newest New Yorkers to class on September 8th.”

“New York City is committed to welcoming individuals and families seeking refuge and liberty, which is why our staff has been on the ground every day helping to connect new arrivals to resources,” said **MOIA Commissioner Castro**. “With the start of the school year approaching, we are prepared to assist families entering the school system, providing a broad range of supports, including language access and legal services, in close collaboration with agency and community-based organization partners.”

“Despite unprecedented challenges, this administration is going above and beyond to serve and support families seeking asylum,” said **Department of Social Services Commissioner Gary P. Jenkins**. “We are incredibly grateful to our agency partners for working closely with us on this extraordinary initiative to provide dedicated supports for these families and children and ensuring that we are prioritizing academic progress and learning for some of our youngest, new New Yorkers. We will continue to lead with care and compassion in all that we do, and our every effort to support families and individuals seeking asylum and in need of our services will reflect the true values of New York City.”

According to the most recent analysis, most asylum-seeking families are concentrated in School Districts 2, 3, 10, 14, 24, and 30. As of Thursday, August 18, DSS estimates that at least 1,000 children, including 3- and 4-year-olds, will enter the city’s school system in the upcoming school year.

As part of this plan, the city is:

- **Seamlessly Working Across Agencies** – ‘Project Open Arms’ coordinates across DOE, MOIA, DSS, the New York City Department of Youth & Community Development, and the New York City Administration for Children’s Services.
- **Simplifying the Enrollment Process** – Regional managers and their teams in DOE’s Students in Temporary Housing Office are fully engaged in coordinating with shelters to host pop-up Family Welcome Centers (where DOE staff assist families with the school enrollment process), accompanying families to Family Welcome Centers, and providing enrollment staff at the Asylum Seeker Navigation Center (which will provide asylum seekers with access to and information about a full range of wraparound services) as soon as it opens. Staff immediately identify local schools for enrollment, provide backpacks

and school supplies, and assist in connecting families to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene clinics for ongoing pediatric care. For virtual enrollment support, families are encouraged to visit the [DOE's website](#).

- **Ensuring Language Access and Support** – In collaboration with superintendents, DOE is ensuring that all families are being supported in their native languages and that school leadership is aware of the constellation of resources available to provide translated content-specific information.
- **Providing Academic and Extracurricular Programming** – New York City public school curricular and instructional resources will be culturally and linguistically responsive, and educators will receive additional guidance in the areas of second language acquisition and specialized instruction for diverse learners. Extracurricular activities will be similarly targeted to students' needs and interests, with the goal of enhancing the academic and social experience.
- **Creating Supportive Classrooms and Schools** – Once they are enrolled in school, every student will have access to universal social-emotional supports and will be evaluated using the DESSA social-emotional screener, an educational tool to assess students' social and emotional needs. School leadership and staff will have regular check-ins to review attendance and DESSA data and ensure interventions and supports are activated as needed.
- **Continuous Coordination with Community Providers and Community-Based Organizations (CBO)** – ‘Project Open Arms’ will work in tight coordination with critical CBO partners, including the United Way of New York City, Make the Road New York, Comprehensive Youth Development, El Puente, United Community Schools, the Coalition for Hispanic Family Services, and other organizations to provide families with critical resources and services.

Since May, the city has experienced a surge in people seeking asylum arriving from border states. Many have entered the city's shelter system, while others have found housing through family members, friends, or sponsors. Additionally, community groups have helped reticket individuals to their final destinations outside of New York City. The city estimates that approximately 6,000 asylum-seekers have gone through the intake process in the last three months.

“New York City is a beacon to the world because we are a city of immigrants, committed to the long tradition of the United States in welcoming individuals and families seeking refuge,” said **New York State Senator Robert Jackson**. “Today New York City begins to fulfill its commitment to building a better and more secure future, responsive to the needs of our fellow immigrant New Yorkers. We welcome the city’s Project Open Arms, which will provide access to critical academic, social-emotional, and language-based supports needed to be successful in New York City public schools. Every child in New York City has a right to public education, regardless of immigration status.”

“This is the moment of truth when it comes to living up to being a sanctuary city,” said **New York State Senator Julia Salazar**. “Project Open Arms is a testament to our best interagency plan. In the hour of their displacement and desperation it is up to us to ensure these families have a helping hand when arriving here. We are the city of compassion, and we were able to mobilize

these wraparound programs and comprehensive response as quickly as we have. We feel confident that CBOs such as Make the Road NY, El Puente, and the Coalition for Hispanic Family Services, whom we work with closely in our district, will make a great impact ushering these families and individuals into our communities seamlessly.”

“Supporting those seeking refuge and treating all with decency is part of what it means to be American,” said **New York State Assemblymember Jenifer Rajkumar**. “When families arrive seeking asylum, we will provide them with resources to succeed. Through simplified enrollment in school and healthcare, coordination among agencies, and comprehensive support in their native languages, Project Open Arms will equip asylum-seeking children with every tool needed to leap over any hurdle on the road to academic success. Before we know it, these young people will become part of the next generation of leadership in our city, who will help make our country globally competitive.”

“In the midst of Governor Abbott’s shameful and dehumanizing political theater, New York City is proudly welcoming asylum seekers,” said **New York City Councilmember Shahana Hanif, chair, Committee on Immigration**. “Across City Agencies, we’re committing the resources necessary for these newly arrived New Yorkers to survive and thrive in the five boroughs. Effective interagency communication and partnership are critical to ensuring that these asylum seekers don’t fall through the cracks of our system and get the help they need. With more asylum seekers arriving each week in our city, I’m hopeful that Project Open Arms will meet the needs of the thousands of people seeking shelter, employment assistance, education, and other critical services. This project is a bold statement from our city that we are ready and equipped to deliver a sanctuary city to these asylum seekers.”

“Every child, regardless of their immigration status, is entitled to a quality education,” said **New York City Councilmember Rita Joseph, chair, Committee on Education**. “Our public schools will welcome students seeking asylum and their families with open arms. As a former ENL teacher who had the privilege of teaching immigrant students and students from immigrant households, I’m going to do everything in my power to ensure that this school year is as great as it can be for every single child that walks through our school doors this academic year.”

“I commend Mayor Adams and Commissioner Castro for responding to the arrival of asylum seekers with compassion and resources,” said **New York City Councilmember Gale A. Brewer**. “I was proud to stand alongside the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs and other agencies at the Port Authority bus station to welcome new New Yorkers, and I look forward to working together to ensure that these families and individuals find housing, jobs, and schools. They will be an asset to our city. We must continue to strengthen the human services system to ensure that housing and workforce opportunities are available to asylum seekers and all New Yorkers who need them, but it was an honor to be at the bus station to experience how New York City welcomes people who are vulnerable and need support.”

“Families seeking asylum need our full support in accessing needed resources to thrive in our schools,” said **New York City Councilmember Farah Louis**. “I applaud the mayor’s office in keeping me and my colleagues engaged in ensuring all students enrolling into public schools this

year will be supported by the city, and the agencies and organizations who are tirelessly providing these needed services to incoming families.”

###