



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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 11, 2016
CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**MAYOR DE BLASIO: COMPREHENSIVE HOMELESS SERVICES PLAN
INCREASES FOCUS ON PREVENTION & REHOUSING**

*Result of 90-day review includes streamlined management structure that generates \$38 million
in administrative savings*

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio today announced a comprehensive plan to ensure homeless services are delivered as efficiently and effectively as possible with a focus on both preventing vulnerable New Yorkers from becoming homeless and rehousing individuals and families in shelter into permanent housing. The plan is the result of the 90-day review of homeless services ordered by the Mayor and incorporates and builds on the many reforms that were announced during the review period. The first part of the plan, full implementation of the HOME-STAT outreach program for street homeless, was announced last week. The plan also includes measures to improve conditions and safety in shelters.

“The homeless population has changed, but the way we fight homelessness hasn’t. It’s time to bring new approaches and resources to keep vulnerable New Yorkers in their homes and help those in shelters find new permanent homes,” said **Mayor de Blasio**. “As a result of our 90-day review, we now have a comprehensive plan, including significant policy changes and both programmatic and structural reforms that will enable us to do just that. I urge the State, the providers, the advocates and homeless New Yorkers to join us in a new partnership to bring the homeless situation that has built up over the years under control.”

The complete 90-day review can be accessed [here](#).

To ensure all resources are focused on prevention and rehousing:

- The City will implement an integrated management structure with both the Human Resources Administration (HRA) and the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) reporting to a single Commissioner of Social Services (DSS), current DSS/HRA Commissioner Steven Banks.
- Prevention and rehousing operations at DHS will be consolidated with groups that perform the same function at HRA.
 - DHS’s Homebase prevention unit will join HRA’s Homelessness Prevention Administration.

- A unified HRA management structure based on the veterans move out initiative will focus on finding permanent housing for shelter residents.
- DHS will focus on managing and improving shelter operations, including developing new types of shelters.
- The two agencies will share administrative support services resulting in substantial savings.
- To advance accountability for preventing and alleviating homelessness across multiple City agencies, the City will create an Interagency Homelessness Accountability Council reporting to the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Herminia Palacio.

There are four key elements to the new plan – prevention, rehousing, street homelessness outreach and improving shelter conditions – and a total of 46 individual systemic reforms. As a result of the proposed reforms, there will be administrative and programmatic savings estimated at \$38 million by eliminating duplicative administrative operations and streamlining management, which will offset new program costs of \$66 million that will be presented in the Executive Budget.

PREVENTION

Preventing homelessness before it occurs is critical to reducing the number of families and individuals living in shelter, and is a cost-effective and common sense solution to our City’s homelessness problem that has gotten worse over the last 20 years. These reforms refocus the system to place greater emphasis on the role of prevention services, expanding the tools and resources available to those in need and pro-actively identifying and serving those who are most at-risk of becoming homeless.

Structural Reform: Consolidate the DHS Homebase Program with HRA’s homelessness prevention program.

Programmatic Reforms:

- Expand the scope of Homebase as the first point of entry for those at risk of homelessness so that people are served in their home borough rather than at one citywide intake center.
- Realign roles of HRA staff at Homebase to prevent evictions and provide assistance.
- Use data analytics to proactively target prevention services for the most at-risk.
- Target rental assistance for at-risk clients with mental health needs cycling between Rikers and homelessness.
- Target services for youth in DYCD shelters before they transition to DHS shelters.
- Target outreach to doubled up families with school-aged children.
- Call on the State to participate in 2 task forces with the City to:
 - Implement alternatives to avert discharges from state prisons to shelter.
 - Implement community-based programs to replace mental health shelters.

REHOUSING

Finding safe and affordable housing is essential to addressing homelessness. Coordinating rehousing resources in the City under one management structure, making the rental assistance program easier to navigate, enhancing aftercare services, and enforcing housing discrimination laws will improve shelter move outs and housing stability.

Structural Reform: Establish a unified HRA management structure based on the veterans move out initiative to promote move outs to reduce the shelter census.

Programmatic Reforms:

- Streamline shelter relocation programs by consolidating and streamlining the LINC, SEPS and City FEPS rental assistance programs.
- Increase enforcement of the source of income discrimination law.
- Streamline the housing placement process to connect homeless clients to HPD-financed units that are available and appropriate for their needs.
- Continue to utilize NYCHA apartments within the annual needs-based allocation for clients on the waiting list who are in DHS and HRA domestic violence shelters.
- Enroll qualified shelter residents on SSI/SSD to increase income and promote rehousing.
- Implement more effective aftercare services.
- Incorporate Continuum of Care strategic planning into homeless strategy development and establish a leadership reporting structure:
- Call on the State to permit use of Medicaid funds for apartment search and shelter relocation services for homeless clients with disabilities and to approve FEPS plan modifications.

STREET HOMELESSNESS

The City's street homelessness reforms work together to better identify, engage and transition homeless New Yorkers from the streets to appropriate services and permanent housing. The full launch of HOME-STAT builds on our street homelessness prevention and response initiatives, and enhanced funding for additional safe haven beds, drop in centers and supportive housing units ensures that those living on the streets have opportunities to come inside and connect to the services and supports they need.

Programmatic Reforms:

- Fully launch HOME-STAT to address street homelessness: The HOME-STAT initiative partners existing homeless response and prevention programs with a series of new innovations designed to better identify, engage and transition homeless New Yorkers from the streets to appropriate services and permanent housing.
- Enhance tools for outreach teams to bring people in from the streets: The City will increase safe haven beds, increase the number of drop in centers and develop 15,000 units of supportive housing to provide essential tools to address street homelessness.

Last week, the City launched the HOME-STAT daily dashboard, an on-line reporting system that maps requests for homeless outreach assistance from the public and HOME-STAT canvassers and other related data. A monthly dashboard that reports on aggregate outcomes, conditions and performance will be launched later this month. Together, these dashboards will offer an unprecedented consistent, transparent and broad set of data to track the City's efforts in reducing street homelessness and improving lives for our fellow New Yorkers.

IMPROVE SHELTER SERVICES

The City is committed to providing decent living conditions and high-quality social services to every family and individual living in shelter. These reforms address immediate concerns around shelter security and building conditions and include long-term strategies for sustaining these reforms into the future. These reforms also address pressing social service needs, targeting services to specific high-risk populations and giving clients opportunities to enhance their income-building capacity by developing a career pathway while in shelter.

Structural Reform: Focus DHS operations on overseeing the not-for-profit shelters and related services and implement new accountability systems.

Programmatic Reforms:

- Improve shelter security:
 - Deployment of an NYPD management team to develop an action plan to upgrade security at all shelters
 - NYPD is retraining all DHS Peace Officers.
 - Enhanced domestic violence and family conflict services.
 - Improve reporting and tracking of critical incidents.
- Improve shelter conditions and operations by:
 - Expanding Shelter Repair Squad 2.0 Operations:
 - Establishing a unit of City staff to identify and address conditions and continue reporting on and repairing violations.
 - The Shelter Report Card will be produced regularly to hold the City and providers publicly accountable.
 - The City will ensure that all providers have clear information about the standards and regulations against which they are measured.
 - Continuing semi-annual, multi-agency inspections and calling on OTDA and the Comptrollers to participate.
 - Assessing the potential conversion of existing shelters to permanent housing and replacing clusters and hotels with models like Gateway and Homestretch.
 - Expanding the capital repair program.
 - Rationalizing shelter provider rates.
 - Addressing ADA compliance in shelters.
- Promote career pathways for shelter residents by:

- Implementing adult literacy and High School equivalency programming at shelters.
- Implementing a training and employment program for residents to learn trades by providing system-wide shelter maintenance services in private shelters.

“The homelessness situation requires immediate action. That’s why we have been announcing reforms throughout the 90-day review period and why we picked a structure – shared management – that produces maximum coordination with the least amount of bureaucratic issues to put in place quickly,” said **First Deputy Mayor Anthony Shorris**. “Given his 30 years of leadership on homeless issues in New York City and two years of effectively reforming HRA, Commissioner Steven Banks was the obvious choice to implement this new structure.”

“While this reform plan focuses on two City agencies, HRA and DHS, success in dealing with homelessness requires cooperation and coordination throughout City government. The Interagency Homelessness Accountability Council will ensure that all City resources are brought to bear as effectively as possible,” said Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Herminia Palacio.

“Our goal is to provide seamless services to clients designed to best help them with their specific problems, whether it’s to prevent homelessness or move from shelter permanently into the community. Since many people are served by both HRA and DHS, the best way to do that is to have the two agencies work closely together and have all the prevention services in one agency,” said **DSS and HRA Commissioner Steven Banks**.

“This reform plan demonstrates the City’s commitment to efficiency and accountability through its focus on shared services and citywide oversight. It also emphasizes the City’s efforts to be transparent and publicly accountable through the continued public posting of the Shelter Repair Scorecard and the newly launched HOME-STAT dashboard that will allow the public to follow daily street homeless outreach activity,” said **Mindy Tarlow, Director of the Mayor’s Office of Operations**.

During the course of the 90-day review the City has already announced and begun implementing the following:

- Launched HOME-STAT to address street homelessness.
- Doubled the number of drop-in centers.
- Created the shelter repair scorecard.
- Implemented an enhanced shelter repair program.
- Increased security at all hotels that house homeless families and individuals.
- Provided 24/7 security coverage at mental health shelters.
- Begun enhancements of domestic violence services at shelters.
- Initiated a New York City Police Department (NYPD) shelter security review and retraining of Department of Homeless Services (DHS) peace officers.
- Committed to ending the cluster and commercial hotel programs.

- Implemented a plan to create 15,000 new units of supportive housing over the next 15 years.

In mid-December 2015, Mayor de Blasio ordered a comprehensive operational review of New York City's homeless operations. Leadership and staff from City Hall, the Human Resources Administration, the Department of Homeless Services and the Mayor's Office of Operations began a review of the 20-year-old system of providing homeless services to assess the strengths and challenges of the current system and identify how to deliver client services more effectively and improve client outcomes. The review was guided by three key principles: providing quality services to vulnerable residents, efficient use of City resources, and achieving cost effectiveness by avoiding duplication.

The 90-day review included interviews with a variety of stakeholders in order to obtain feedback on service gaps for homeless New Yorkers and how New York City can best address homelessness. HRA Commissioner Steven Banks, Operations Director Mindy Tarlow and City Hall Health and Human Services staff interviewed more than 400 people. They met with homeless people in shelters, on the streets and in focus groups; advocates, shelter and homeless services providers, other non-profit organizations, national experts and researchers; former DHS Commissioners and elected officials; and staff union leadership and managers and staff at DHS, HRA and other City agencies. They also surveyed best practices in other jurisdictions and received feedback from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. In all, 24 different government agencies and 60 non-profit providers participated in the review process.

Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer said, "I have confidence in Commissioner Banks' ability and expertise. Getting how our city handles homelessness back on the right track will take a lot of work, but I look forward to working with Commissioner Banks as he implements these reforms and am confident we'll make progress."

Borough President Jimmy Oddo said, "We appreciate the fact that the city is working hard to find a better approach to a societal challenge vexing municipalities across the nation."

State Senator Toby Ann Stavisky said, "Shelters should always be a last resort, particularly for families. Prevention and greater access to affordable housing is a much more viable and permanent solution. I am glad the mayor has put both at the center of this plan. I am particularly happy the mayor will be coordinating with the NYPD to create a stronger line of communication between shelters and police. Having the Pam American shelter in my district, I have seen the conditions families are forced to live in. 40 percent of those living at the Pan Am are employed. These are people who are working hard to get back on their feet, but the rising rent costs and low pay have prevented them from doing so. But those living in shelters are not the only ones affected. The surrounding community is also impacted, a fact that cannot be ignored. I have worked hard to ensure the residents and surrounding community needs are addressed and have long said changes at DHS are overdue. I look forward to seeing these changes take effect, and I thank Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Steven Banks for establishing a commitment to our City's most vulnerable."

Assembly Member Andrew Hevesi, Chair of the Committee on Social Services, said, “I am confident that pursuant to the findings of the 90-day review of New York City’s homeless programs, Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Banks are on a path to appropriately adjust and enhance the City’s efforts. I very much appreciate the extensive review undertaken by the City and look forward to working together in our efforts to assist this vulnerable population in order to combat the worst homeless crisis since the Great Depression.”

Assembly Member Diana Richardson said, “The implementation of these structural steps to prevent homelessness, reestablish stability and spread awareness will help to eliminate barriers which keep individuals from obtaining more permanent housing. Mayor de Blasio’s 90-day review has led to a comprehensive plan to improve homeless services, and it is a great step forward in combating our city’s housing issue as a whole.”

Council Member Stephen Levin, Chair of the Committee on General Welfare, said, “These solutions to service provision and interagency communications will be key to providing safe, affordable, and permanent shelter for all New Yorkers. This review was necessary to ensure that agency structure and shelter operations are effective in addressing the significant challenges that the city faces when it comes to homelessness. As Chair of the Committee on General Welfare, I look forward to ongoing collaboration with advocates, the administration and city agencies to review the progress of these comprehensive recommendations.”

Council Member Vanessa Gibson, Chair of the Committee on Public Safety, said, “This 90-day review process has illuminated several key missteps in our existing homeless services, and has provided us with a roadmap to make targeted reforms to improve the City for all. I’m particularly pleased to see a focus on the safety as well as eviction prevention and hope that the youth continues to be areas of focus in the future. I thank Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Steve Banks, First Deputy Mayor Tony Shorris, and Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Herminia Palacio for leading the charge on this significant review.”

Council Member Julissa Ferreras-Copeland, Chair of Committee on Finance, said, “I am pleased that Mayor de Blasio is bringing substantial resources to bear on addressing this City’s homelessness issue. I am interested in partnering with the administration to keep families out of the homeless system, improve conditions for those already in it and ensure that those leaving it can find stable housing. I know my colleagues in the Council are too. I am especially concerned about working women and mothers in this system and look forward to addressing the issues that they face.”

Council Member Annabel Palma said, “I support the mayor’s aggressive stance on tackling the systemic issue of homelessness within our city’s borders. Due to the results of the 90-day review, it has become evident to the de Blasio administration that this is a multi-pronged problem that needs to be addressed utilizing a suite of proactive and reactive strategies. Many families in my district have suffered or are one financial calamity away from becoming homeless themselves – relief from this social ill is key to developing a more humane approach to providing social services for our most vulnerable of residents.”

Council Member Ben Kallos, co-founder of the Eastside Taskforce for Homeless Outreach and

Services, said, "We can and must help our homeless off the streets by starting with investing in prevention, improving shelter conditions with increased safety and mental health support, and a focus on permanent housing. Ninety days is not much time to fix a longstanding problem, but the City has not waited, with the launch of HOME-STAT and investments into mental health, job training, and enrichment for our city's most vulnerable. Thank you to Mayor de Blasio, Deputy Mayors Shorris and Palacio, and Commissioner Banks for their focus on the helping the homeless."

Council Member Mark Levine said, "This comprehensive plan will help keep more vulnerable New Yorkers in their homes, off the streets and out of the shelter system. This plan will also improve shelter conditions while reducing costs through more efficient programming and services. And I'm especially pleased by the administration's steadfast focus on prevention, which will allow countless New Yorkers to stay in their homes."

Council Member Jumaane D. Williams said, "The Department of Homeless Services and the Human Resources Administration's 90-day review of homeless services is the first step to addressing a problem that has been prevalent in the City for decades. In 2015 alone, more than 100,000 New Yorkers relied on a City shelter to have a place to sleep. These staggering numbers, which are 92 percent higher than 10 years ago, are reasons why City shelters need to be clean and livable. I also commend DHS and HRA for focusing on rehousing efforts to ensure shelters do not become permanent solutions to a long-term problem."

Council Member Margaret Chin said, "In order to fully address the pervasive problem of homelessness in our City, we need to invest more in our efforts not only to keep people in their homes, but to create housing for New Yorkers who desperately need it. This administration's comprehensive homeless services plan, which has already begun to be implemented, gives us new tools to prevent New Yorkers from becoming homeless and provides a framework to find permanent homes for individuals and families. I thank Mayor de Blasio for his leadership on this incredibly important issue."

Council Member Brad Lander said, "Putting our efforts to prevent homelessness, improve shelter safety, and get people back into permanent housing under the coordinated leadership of Steve Banks makes a lot of sense. HRA will be able integrate the City's prevention, re-housing, and social service efforts, while DHS can focus on making sure the shelters are safe. It's incumbent on all of us to do more to end the shame of homelessness in our city – and that's also going to take more resources to get people into permanent, affordable housing. This reorganization is a good place to start."

Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez said, "This restructuring will help cut through red tape to ensure services are delivered promptly and effectively for those most in need. The de Blasio administration has taken a fresh and meaningful approach to the long-standing issue of homelessness, and I am encouraged by the steps they are taking in prevention, shelter safety and service delivery. This is in addition to the partnership between the administration and the Council to put forward the most ambitious affordable housing plan in the nation that will provide many with the housing they need."

Council Member Vincent Gentile said, “The 90-day review of homeless services in New York City was essential to the rehabilitation process of our citywide homeless operations and to homeless prevention. I am pleased to see that the infrastructure, administration and modus operandi of our homeless systems will be restructured and enhanced to ensure that we are well-equipped and organized to tackle and improve our homeless crisis. As a result of Mayor de Blasio’s mandated review and comprehensive homeless services plan, our city will move forward on a repaved path that will lead us to appropriate solutions for homeless prevention and effective rehousing for those in need.”

Council Member Chaim Deutsch said, “I commend Mayor de Blasio for taking on the challenge of addressing rampant homelessness within our city. We have already seen some changes implemented, including the retraining of Department of Homeless Services’ peace officers – something that I strongly advocated for. The new changes announced today are comprehensive and demonstrate the Administration’s effort to make a notable difference in the shelter system. Combining DHS and the Human Resources Administration will streamline the ability of homeless individuals to acquire entitlement services and seek long term housing. This is essential to ensuring that the City’s homeless do not return to living on the streets. The four prong approach that Mayor de Blasio has created – prevention, rehousing, street homelessness outreach and improving shelter conditions – will tackle the problem at each interval and work to correct systematic issues that have been plaguing our city for years.”

###