

March 2021 Report (reflecting October, November, and December 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. Today, the NYC DHS census is approximately 52,000.

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 53,000 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 to below 2012 levels. 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 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 450 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.

At the same time, we have made unprecedented investments in strengthening and expanding outreach programs citywide over the past several years. Between 2016 and 2019, we tripled the number of low-barrier beds dedicated to better serving our individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness, increasing the citywide total from 600 beds in 2014 to more than 1800 as of December 2019.

One year ago, we also announced our "Journey Home" action plan to double down on the progress we've made through HOME-STAT and help more New Yorkers experiencing unsheltered homelessness get back on their feet. Since the launch of "Journey Home" plan, we've done exactly that and more, especially as our City has responded to the unprecedented and unexpected COVID-19 pandemic aggressively and with urgency at a scale and speed never before seen, including: opening more than 1,200 specialized new beds in 2020 alone dedicated to serving New Yorkers who have lived unsheltered, including Safe Haven beds and stabilization beds, which we have established in commercial hotel settings, with hundreds more opening in the coming months and years.

Through these investments, programs, and enhanced efforts, including our near-tripling of the number of outreach staff canvassing the streets 24/7/365 from fewer than 200 staff in 2013 to nearly 600 citywide, our City has helped more than 4,000 New Yorkers experiencing unsheltered homelessness come in off the streets and subways from the streets into transitional programs or permanent housing. The 4,000 unsheltered New Yorkers helped off the streets includes outreach teams' positive progress engaging and helping unsheltered New Yorkers come off the subways through the enhanced, intensified subway outreach that NYC DHS implemented in response to the MTA's shutdown of overnight subway service during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this intensified subway outreach, outreach teams are deployed every night to end-of-line subway stations citywide to engage any unsheltered individuals who are utilizing the subways and departing the subways when they close – both on the subway trains, on the subway platforms, and outside of the subway stations. As a result, hundreds of individuals have accepted referrals to shelter services and are in shelter now, rather than on the subways. (Clients interested in receiving services go through an abbreviated assessment and are transported to shelter services/placement. Throughout this outreach process, we are ensuring placements are expedited.)

Creative Interventions: No One-Size-Fits-All

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 street homeless New Yorkers: 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.

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.

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 2,100 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 900 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		
<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, 2020.</p>	2,069	
	Location of First Engagement	<u>Count</u>
<p>Location of point of first engagement with HOME-STAT outreach teams, to the extent available, for those New Yorkers in the record referenced above—</p>	Delayed Data Entry or No Entry*	409
	Bus Shelter	0
	Drop-In Center (DIC)	11
	Hospital	29
	Social service provider office	51
	Park	85
	Phone	15

	Playground	0
	Ferry Terminal	0
	Street	720
	Subway	720
	Other	29
	Grand Total	2,069**

*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.