

# FY 2020 Borough Budget Consultations

## Manhattan - Department of Homeless Services

Meeting Date 9/12/2018

### AGENDA ITEM 1 : General Agency Funding Discussion:

The purpose of holding the Borough Budget Consultations is to provide Community Boards with important information to assist in drafting their statement of District Needs and Budget Priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. As you know, Community Board Members are volunteers who may not be familiar with the budget process and how agencies' programs are funded. At the same time, Community Board members are very knowledgeable about local service needs.

This year's Manhattan agendas have three sections:

I. Agencies begin the consultation with a presentation of their goals, funding decision process, and highlights of their funding needs.

II. Then, the agenda continues with Community Boards asking about specific program funding.

III. Lastly, the agendas include Boards' requests on district-specific budget questions. We request that the agency respond in writing, but have any further discussions on these items with the Community Boards outside of the consultation.

For the first section, please present on the four topics below for 10-15 minutes at the beginning of our Consultation. Also, please provide written responses or even a PowerPoint presentation that we can use to fully and accurately educate our Board Members.

1. What are your priorities and operational goals for FY19 and projected priorities and operational goals for FY20?
2. What are the current proposed FY19 and FY20 service and operational goals and proposed funding?
3. Which programs is the agency adding, dropping, or changing for FY19 and projected for FY20?
4. What are your benchmarks for new and existing programs and what are your benchmarks/key performance indicators for measuring success?

### AGENCY RESPONSE:

Please see attachment for agency responses to the four questions in this item.

### MEETING NOTES:

#### COMMENTS:

- 6 performance metrics by which we are measuring effectiveness of SS providers: Exits, return rate, length of stay, holding providers accountable in reporting "serious incidents", facility conditions, (1 more) (\*What is deemed a "serious incident?" As defined by state, we report all arrests, hospitalizations, environmental hazards, overdoses, abuse by staff)
- Goal: Open approximately 90 shelters as part of a 5-year plan
- Street homelessness: We have doubled resources since FY '16; We expect to bring another 250 safehaven beds by 2020 (safehaven beds have tripled over last 2 years)
- CUCS pioneering work with Health & Hospitals
- Community Concern: NYPD NCOs unaware of homeless outreach organizations operating within the same areas

### FOLLOW-UP:

## AGENDA ITEM 2 : Safety in Larger Shelters

There are homeless individuals who refuse shelter in large dormitory-style facilities and wait for smaller safe haven beds. Some stay on the street because they believe the street may be safer or better than the shelter--this has been reported to us by NYPD outreach. Additionally, some of these larger shelters are perceived as unsafe for residents because of drugs or violence as well as for the neighbors.

Will there be funding to create separate units within existing shelter facilities, which would enhance perceived safety for the residents?

Will the agency make an effort to increase funding to have DHS peace officers at shelters contracted out to non-profits?

The shelters would greatly benefit from the additional responsibilities that DHS police have. However, currently DHS prioritizes the worst shelters and those run by DHS for DHS police as there is lack of adequate funding. It seems as if DHS is resistant to request increased funding to expand DHS police to men's shelters not run by DHS.

Since NYPD has taken over the review of DHS shelter security, how many facilities have they recommended to have an increase in DHS Police? What would be the budgetary impact of funding that increase? What progress has been made to follow these recommendations?

### AGENCY RESPONSE:

1.

In addition to redoubling and enhancing proactive round-the-clock street outreach efforts, DHS operates facilities dedicated to serving street homeless New Yorkers—and is in the process of opening more. Drop-In Centers and Safe Havens are low-barrier programs specifically targeted toward homeless individuals who may be resistant to accepting other services, including traditional shelters. Both Drop-In Centers and Safe Havens are equipped with on-site services and staff who work closely with the clients to deepen those relationships, stabilize their lives, and encourage them to transition further off the streets, and ultimately into permanent housing. These facilities are often the first step towards bringing street homeless New Yorkers indoors.

- Drop-in Centers provide baseline services with the goal of meeting immediate needs for individuals, such as showers, meals, and clothing. They also have on-site case management services and provide an immediate option for individuals who want to transition off the streets
- Safe Havens are transitional housing options geared toward chronic street homeless individuals. Safe Havens only take referrals from street outreach teams, offer overnight beds, and have physical and program characteristics more suitable for engaging street homeless New Yorkers, who may be more resistant to accepting services, including case management services to stabilize chronically homeless individuals in an effort to move them into permanent housing

We are nearly tripling the number of beds dedicated to supporting street homeless New Yorkers citywide since 2014, with hundreds of beds opened during this Administration, hundreds more coming online this year, and an additional commitment to another 250 beds, increasing the operating total from roughly 600 beds to nearly 1,800 beds.

At the same time, thanks to our partnership with PD, with NYPD overseeing shelter security citywide, shelters are seeing better policing, increased monitoring, and improved data, resulting in more effective reporting and enforcement. In January 2017, we implemented the NYPD Management Team at DHS to manage and oversee security in all shelters citywide and implemented 24/7 security staffing at commercial hotels. As part of our commitment to improving safety for clients and staff alike, DHS' security budget has doubled from \$100 million in the prior administration (FY14) to over \$240 million today. We have dramatically increased security staffing, training and resources, with nearly 900 DHSPD Peace Officers currently—double what DHS had at start of Administration. In addition, DHS continually evaluates and approves new needs for additional security staff and equipment with the advisement of NYPD where necessary and appropriate.

DHSPD Peace Officer recruits are trained in accordance with NYS Division of Criminal Justice System (DCJS) peace officer certification guidelines and selected in accordance with DCAS civil service guidelines with DSS/HRA support.

NYPD developed the 200-hour DHSPD Peace Officer training curriculum, which goes above and beyond what the State requires. Under the direction of the NYPD Management Team, DHS security personnel, including DHS Peace Officers, have received and are continuing to receive enhanced training from the NYPD on security-related topics, new approaches to policing, DHS policy and practice, and the intersection between the two, including enhanced training in access control, understanding mental health and disorder, victimization and trauma, domestic violence, crisis communication, physical training, tactical training, and scenario-based training exercises.

Through improved access control, we continue to work to keep contraband out. And in addition to improved training on access control, we also include training on topics such as crisis intervention, including de-escalation and homelessness 101, so that they can more effectively be a force for calm, stability, and rational mediation on site.

To better serve homeless New Yorkers, all front-line staff, including Peace Officers, must continually improve our coordination efforts, with an understanding of the experiences and hard times that may bring a client to shelter. To that end, we recently expanded our efforts to provide Mental Health First Aid training to staff, committing to train all DHS and provider frontline staff system-wide/citywide, including social workers, case managers, facilities, maintenance, fleet, and security staff over the next two years, to improve staff ability to empathize with clients and deescalate any situations. To date, approximately 500 have been trained, with additional trainings ongoing.

2.

As part of our commitment to improving safety for clients and staff alike, DHS' security budget has doubled from \$100 million in the prior administration (FY14) to over \$240 million today. We have dramatically increased security staffing, training and resources, with nearly 900 DHSPD Peace Officers currently—double what DHS had at start of Administration.

## **MEETING NOTES:**

### **COMMENTS:**

5 types of shelters: General, mental health, substance, employment, special population

-DHS: We now allow clients to bypass intake and assessment process of being placed in a shelter; DHS believes this will start helping shift culture and perception of safety in shelters

-Security has been expanded shelters, peace officers expanded,

-Training (Bedford Atlantic Assessment Facility) - 200-hour program required for peace officers

-DHS fully accepts referrals from DYCD if a client ages out of a youth shelter

-DHS open to expanding young adult shelters (LGBT shelters as well)

-Oasis has piloted in 10 DHS sites a peer program (program will be expanded to 30 sites): Each substance user is paired with a substance abuse specialist

-In last 6 months, DHS has seen peer program work well

### **FOLLOW-UP:**

## **AGENDA ITEM 3 : street outreach**

Street outreach teams appear to be fully staffed. Please confirm this.

Please give break down of qualification of outreach workers: how many are social workers, what are the other levels of qualification?

What percentage of street homeless are evaluated by psychiatrists or clinical workers?

What is the follow up to these evaluations?

What is benchmark to monitor the success of these evaluations and follow ups?

## **AGENCY RESPONSE:**

1.

We have more than doubled the number of outreach staff canvassing the streets engaging New Yorkers 24/7/365 since 2014, from 191 to nearly 400. Those outreach staff spend months building relationships by making regular—often daily—contact with street homeless New Yorkers— getting to know them, building trust, and sharing information about the resources available to them. It can take months of persistent and compassionate engagement to successfully connect street homeless individuals with City services (5 months on average).

2.

Outreach teams consists 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. 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.

Most outreach workers have Bachelor’s degrees. Their qualifications are assessed based both on their level of education and previous experience in the field. Currently, there are 44 social workers across all outreach providers. This is a higher number than what’s contractually indicated. Given the nature of this work, social workers are often hired for positions that don’t require a social work degree or license.

Not-for-profit outreach provider partners and outreach teams also have psychiatrists who perform psychiatric evaluations which sometimes occur on the streets and thereby help outreach teams understand and better meet the individual needs of each street homeless New Yorker. These clinicians and psychiatrists help outreach teams make more effective connections with clients who may be difficult to engage, in many cases due to significant mental health challenges.

3.

All caseload clients are assessed under supervision of licensed social workers. Additionally, not-for-profit outreach provider partners and outreach teams also have psychiatrists who perform Psychiatric evaluations on the streets.

4.

Psychiatric evaluations performed on the streets by outreach teams’ dedicated psychiatrists help outreach teams understand and better meet the individual needs of each street homeless New Yorker. These clinicians and psychiatrists help outreach teams make more effective connections with clients who may be difficult to engage, in many cases due to significant mental health challenges. HOME-STAT also provides aftercare services, continuing to work with individuals who receive placements to ensure that they get the supports they need to remain in housing and off of the street.

5.

Helping street homeless New Yorkers off the streets and indoors is a top priority citywide, and doing so requires persistent and compassionate outreach coupled with facilities geared towards clients who are often resistant to accepting services—such Safe Havens, which are low-barrier programs with on-site services are often the first step towards bringing these individuals indoors more permanently. Since the start of HOME-STAT, outreach teams helped 1,815 homeless New Yorkers off the streets citywide, thanks to new investments and a doubling of the size of those teams. Earlier this year, we announced that, building on last year’s progress, those outreach teams have increased their average monthly placements by 51%, achieving 276 placements per month.

## **MEETING NOTES:**

### **COMMENTS:**

-Once a psychiatrist sees a client, they are then under the care of a social worker  
-958 certification (social workers have it, most street outreach teams have it): if an individual is an immediate threat to themselves or others, then they can be removed against their will

**FOLLOW-UP:**

-Jackie Bray to follow up with CUCS to get stats on number of interactions between psychiatrists and street homeless

**AGENDA ITEM 6 : "Crusties" Program 1**

For the last two years there has been specific questions regarding seasonal "traveler" street homeless, who identify themselves as " crusties." The agency response was for homeless in general and did not discuss programs or plans for this subset of the homeless population that do not respond to MOC outreach efforts. There are still no programs funded and seemingly no attempts to resolve how to engage this population. Last year DHS responded "DHS is in the process of collecting data and developing additional interventions to address the needs of this population as appropriate." Can you report on the data collected and progress made in interventions for this population?

**AGENCY RESPONSE:**

Conducted during Summer and Fall 2017, HOME-STAT canvassers engaged individuals panhandling on the street in an attempt to assess their housing situations and what services they may be seeking or what interventions would be most effective for helping them transition off the streets.

As we've stated previously, it can take months (5, on average) for our outreach teams to build the trust and the relationships that will ultimately encourage street homeless New Yorkers to transition indoors. Similarly, for those panhandlers with who outreach teams attempted to engage to assess their situation and needs, as discussed above, it could take many contacts for them to be open to engagement and willing to share their personal details and discuss resources and alternatives.

This survey confirms what we've long suspected: that while panhandlers are on the street for a variety of reasons, a majority are experiencing homelessness. We remain undeterred in our mission to connect New Yorkers in need with support, employment services and shelter. To more effectively connect these individuals to services, we updated our outreach materials and resources, including the Palm Cards and Street Sheets referenced in the memo, with additional information regarding HRA Job Centers, where these individuals can go to obtain job training.

**MEETING NOTES:**

**COMMENTS:**

- DHS does not have a targeted response to "Crusties"
- Individuals tend to be service-resistant

**FOLLOW-UP:**

**AGENDA ITEM 7 : Hotels/Shelter Beds**

It has recently been reported by DHS in Council testimony that the number of shelter residents has stabilized. Does this include homeless housed in hotels? How many hotels beds were added in fy 18? There are some shelters that have had an increase in the number of residents (such as Catherine Street Shelter)--why are beds being added to shelters if the population has stabilized? Is there a shift in the demographics of street homeless?

**AGENCY RESPONSE:**

Please see attachment for agency response to this item.

**MEETING NOTES:**

## COMMENTS:

- The # of shelter residents has stabilized due to family homelessness declining (single adult homelessness rising)
- We've moved 95,000 out of temporary shelters into permanent housing in last 5 years
- Only 8% of families in shelter system have 5 or more members (our census is going down, but the same number of units needed)
- DHS: When we come out of a building (cluster sites, contracted sites) we send that address and info to DHCR to ensure enforcement of rent-regulated tenants occurs
- DHS' use to operate on a contract with a building does not absolve landlord of re-registering building as rent-stabilized
- Landlords aware of DHS' need for capacity (new buildings) and is no longer caving to landlords' high demands
- Houses of worship used as shelters? They staff their facilities with volunteers and take in clients just as night (those clients are referred from drop-in centers); Houses of worship will give specific criteria that may be hard to match e.g. clients with no criminal record, no substance abuse issues

## FOLLOW-UP:

Jackie Bray: Will provide list of buildings that DHS is exiting to Community Boards to help provide enforcement in ensuring landlords return building to rent-regulated status

## AGENDA ITEM 8 : Additional Safe Havens

Please report on the success of opening additional safe haven facilities and shelters in Manhattan in the last year. Please report on the number of shelters that are planned for completion in FY19 and FY20.

## AGENCY RESPONSE:

Helping street homeless NYers off the streets and indoors is a top priority citywide—all New Yorkers can agree on that goal. Doing so requires persistent and compassionate outreach coupled with facilities geared towards clients who are often resistant to accepting services—such low-barrier programs with on-site services are often the first step towards bringing these individuals indoors more permanently.

Safe Havens are not shelters—they are low-barrier programs dedicated to serving street homeless New Yorkers that only take referrals from street outreach teams and include overnight beds, and have physical and program characteristics more suitable for engaging this more service-resistant population with the goal of helping them transition off the streets.

As of the start this year, there are 1,301 such 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 one previously-existing Safe Haven site that we expanded.

The Hand Up Safe Haven on 17th Street in Manhattan, operated by not-for-profit social service provider partner Bowery Residents' Committee (BRC), serves as our newest Safe Haven for 28 street homeless clients, as street homeless individuals are often best served at smaller, low-barrier sites rather than larger shelters. This facility began serving New Yorkers in need in April 2018.

Clients are referred by experienced outreach teams at BRC—and the goal with this location, as with similar locations, to provide a space wherein outreach workers can work closely with homeless New Yorkers to build the trust and relationship that will ultimately result in them accepting services and transitioning off the streets. To most effectively achieve that goal, the street outreach teams who make referrals to this location aim to work with a consistent set of clients.

Our outreach teams canvass the five boroughs 24/7/365 in the ongoing effort to engage and bring street homeless New Yorkers indoors. Our experienced nonprofit service provider partner, BRC, helps coordinate those outreach efforts in parts of Manhattan and the subways. In addition, we regularly carry out joint operations with agency partners to connect these individuals with services and are undeterred in our efforts to engage clients proactively and aggressively until we make the connection that will help them transition off the streets.

Outreach teams helped 1,815 homeless New Yorkers come off and stay off the streets citywide, thanks to new investments and a doubling of the size of those teams—and we are committed to continuing and improving that work every day. This site helps us do that—and is part of our citywide overall effort to bring more facilities targeted to addressing street homelessness online, including drop in centers and safe havens.

## **MEETING NOTES:**

### **COMMENTS:**

DHS: We need specific types of beds in specific neighborhoods (oftentimes an SRO bed needed in the neighborhood of areas where clients come from)

### **FOLLOW-UP:**

## **AGENDA ITEM 9 : Domestic Violence Programs**

Do all shelters have domestic violence programs in place with full time staff? Do all shelters have full time social workers? How are dv programs and social workers assigned to hotels used as shelters?

### **AGENCY RESPONSE:**

Not all shelters have DV programs, but staff is equipped to address DV situations and educate clients on how to get assistance and resources if experiencing DV, including transfer to a safe facility. However, HRA maintains the City's DV shelter system geared specifically towards families and individuals experiencing DV. A part of the screening and intake process is to assess the family or individual for DV and direct them to the appropriate placement. In the event that someone exceeds their length of stay at a DV shelter, they may be placed at a safe location within the DHS shelter system for further services.

Under the model budget, DHS is working across providers to ensure that adequate staffing and services are provided.

There are no specific DV programs or DV social workers assigned to hotels or shelters, all of our staff are equipped to direct clients to the appropriate resources if they are experiencing DV. The safety of our clients is a priority.

## **MEETING NOTES:**

### **COMMENTS:**

- Calling Safe Horizon or HRA team at PATH in incident with abuser can place you in DV shelter (some cases don't meet state threshold for being placed in DV shelter)
- DV beds exist under HRA
- If you are not NOVA-eligible or space does not exist, then you are referred to DHS system (HRA may be full, but DHS is never full)
- HRA needs funding for DV-specific services

### **FOLLOW-UP:**

## **AGENDA ITEM 10 : District Specific Budget Questions**

(CB 4) What progress has DHS made to close the Aladdin shelter on West 45th Street?

(CB 7) What funding would be required to have security guards patrol outside of the entrance of DHS shelters in addition to their currently budgeted duties?

(CB 10) Is there a proposed moratorium on the creation of new shelters in CD 10, as it has the most shelter out of the Manhattan boards.

## AGENCY RESPONSE:

(CB4)

As we implement the Mayor's borough-based plan and reimagine the City's approach to providing shelter, we are evaluating capacity and need in every community across the five boroughs—and in addition to ending the use of all clusters and commercial hotels, we are phasing out a small number of other facilities that do not deliver the services our neighbors in need deserve.

As a result of feedback received from our clients during this Administration's comprehensive 90-day review of homeless services, this site is being phased out by 2021, during the course of the Mayor's "Turning the Tide." [<https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20170319/hells-kitchen-clinton/departments-of-homeless-services-aladdin-hotel-shelter-closing/>] Communities will be the first to know as we identify sites for opening or closure.

FYI: despite the word 'hotel' in the name, the Aladdin is a shelter location, not a commercial hotel. This location serves 157 Adult Families experiencing homelessness as they get back on their feet and has been in operation dating back many years

Adult families are comprised of individuals over the age of 18 and can include, for example:

- ? 1. a young couple trying to make ends meet,
- ? 2. an elderly couple who cannot afford rent after decades living in New York City,
- ? 3. young person supporting an aging parent, and/or
- ? 4. an older parent supporting an older child who may have physical or developmental challenges.

(CB7)

DHS works in conjunction with NYPD to assess the security needs for each site and approve any adjustments/enhancements as appropriate. Where appropriate, DHS has utilized Community Engagement Specialists to patrol the perimeters of some of our facilities. These patrols consist of members of the shelter staff engaging any individuals who may be loitering near the facility to determine if any of those individuals are homeless and/or clients of the facility—and, if so, to encourage them to return to the facility and participate in programming. If the individual encountered is not a shelter client, but is residing on the streets, staff will request outreach assistance for that individual via 311. If the individual is a community resident who is not homeless, staff may encourage them to move along, but cannot take any additional actions with these individuals if they are not posing a danger to themselves or others. If the individual does pose a threat to safety or is committing a criminal act, the community should call 911.

(CB10)

In February 2017, the Mayor announced "Turning the Tide on Homelessness in New York City," his comprehensive plan to turn the tide on homelessness, neighborhood by neighborhood, laying out a blueprint for transforming a shelter system that built up in a haphazard way over decades, including taking the reforms that resulted from the 90-day review even further, finally ending the use of ineffective stop-gap measures that date back decades, like the 18-year-old cluster program and use of commercial hotels on and off since 1960s, through an achievable, operational commitment to completely phasing these locations out and replacing them with a smaller number of high-quality borough-based transitional housing facilities. This will reduce the number of Department of Homeless Services' facilities by 45 percent across New York City and allow us to maintain a vacancy rate to ensure the flexibility we need to implement a more equitable, borough-based system that takes into account the individual needs of the children and adults we must shelter.

The plan's guiding principle is community and people first: giving homeless New Yorkers, who come from every community across the five boroughs, the opportunity to be sheltered in their home boroughs closer to their support networks and anchors of life, including schools, jobs, health care, family, houses of worship, and communities they called home, in order to more quickly stabilize their lives.

Our mission is ensuring that, over time, our neighbors experiencing homelessness have access to high-quality facilities in all five boroughs.



To that end, we are phasing out the use of decades-old stop-gap measures, like the 18-year-old cluster program and the use of commercial hotels, which dates back on and off to the 1960s, once and for all and replacing them with a smaller number of high-quality borough-based facilities. As a result, we anticipate identifying high-quality traditional borough-based shelter capacity in communities across NYC to give New Yorkers experiencing homelessness that opportunity to be sheltered in their home boroughs when appropriate as they get back on their feet.

## **MEETING NOTES:**

### **COMMENTS:**

CB7

DHS: In most of our new shelter budgets, we have funded community coordinators (not security guards) who are not-for-profit staff that walk around the perimeter of the shelter to engage both with clients and non-clients

Opening new shelters

-DHS: Running a plan where we're looking to open shelters in areas where clients have their social support, homeschool, neighborhood

### **FOLLOW-UP:**

Jackie Bray (follow up for CB7): She will pinpoint buildings where Community Engagement Specialists are not staffed to ensure those buildings have staff

General follow up: DHS to strengthen communication with NYPD in regards to enforcement issues where drug dealers may be selling to clients near clients' shelter

-Organize Manhattan Boards to meet again with DHS in November

## AGENDA ITEM 1: General Agency Funding Discussion

### 1. What are your priorities and operational goals for FY19 and projected priorities and operational goals for FY20?

#### *Agency Response*

While the devastating impacts of economic inequality and past inaction from prior administrations led to the homeless crisis we face today, the initiatives of the Department of Social Services (HRA and DHS) are beginning to reverse the trend. A recent Furman Center study, for example, found that the year over year shelter census growth from calendar year 2015 to calendar year 2016 was the lowest increase since 2011 before the Advantage program ended. And the shelter census for 2017 remained roughly flat year over year for the first time in more than a decade: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/nyc-homeless-shelter-population-flat-last-year-for-first-time-in-decade-1519819201h>

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 the new programs, reforms, and investments we are implementing are taking hold, helping us turn the tide, and will help us achieve a steady, sustained reduction in New York City’s homeless population. Without the administration’s initiatives, projections indicate there would be 71,000 people in shelter today instead of the current number of roughly 60,000.

Since coming into office, Mayor de Blasio has restored the City’s rental assistance and rehousing programs and directed unprecedented resources toward a new comprehensive and holistic approach to fighting homelessness focused on prevention, street homeless outreach, expanded transitional housing options, averted shelter entry, improved shelter conditions, expanded civil legal services, and more robust rehousing and aftercare services.

Our strategies are starting to take hold, headed in the right direction: as indicated above, the shelter census for 2017 remained roughly flat year over year for the first time in more than a decade; and through the strategies outlined above and below, we’ve already reduced our shelter footprint by nearly 30 percent (~28%), from the 647 buildings we reported in the *Turning the Tide* plan a year ago to our current use of 468 buildings. The FY19 Plan reflects these strategic reforms and investments since FY14 that have enhanced our services and assistance, including the following initiatives:

- Immediately upon taking office, the de Blasio Administration stepped in to fill the gap left by the City and State’s cancellation of the Advantage rental assistance program in 2011 (which led to a 38 percent increase in homelessness between 2011 and 2014) by creating and implementing new rental assistance programs as well as reinstating rehousing programs—which have helped over 94,365 children and adults exit or avoid shelter altogether through this commitment of permanent housing resources, with the vast majority exiting shelter.
- Ending the use of nearly half of all cluster units citywide—and counting—and we recently announced our plans to transition another 800 cluster units into permanent affordable housing, which covers more than a third of the remaining cluster units

- Siting 21 high-quality borough based shelters under the Mayor's *Turning the Tide* Plan with 15 already operating, offering families and individuals the opportunity to get back on their feet closer to support networks and home boroughs
- Providing emergency rental assistance to 217,000 households, helping rent-burdened New Yorkers at risk of eviction stay in their homes
- Aggressively expanding free legal assistance for New Yorkers in danger of illegal eviction, increasing funding for legal services for tenants more than 15-fold, from roughly \$6 million to more than \$93 million. Evictions then dropped by 27% and more than 70,000 New Yorkers were able to stay in their homes in 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017
- Phasing in over the next five years the funding necessary to provide universal access to legal services for all New York City tenants facing eviction in housing court
- Launching the largest municipal commitment ever to build and expand supportive housing by committing to develop 15,000 new units in 15 years

## **2. What are the current proposed FY19 and FY20 service and operational goals and proposed funding?**

### *Agency Response*

The national challenge of homelessness didn't occur overnight and it won't be solved overnight, but our City's comprehensive strategies are taking hold, with the shelter census remaining flat for the first time in over a decade and more than 94,000 homeless New Yorkers exiting or avoiding shelter and getting back on their feet through the rehousing and rental assistance programs we rebuilt upon taking office. Recognizing there is no one-size-fits-all solution to this citywide and nationwide challenge, we continue to transform the shelter system that built up in a haphazard way over decades by making unprecedented investments in our not-for-profit partners, including renovating facilities and repairing conditions that went unaddressed for decades, reforming rates for historically underfunded providers, and working collaboratively to enhance and deliver the services and supports our homeless neighbors deserve.

In the FY19 Executive Plan specifically, the addition of \$207 million (\$186 million City) in FY18 and \$256 million (\$159 million City) in FY19 and the out years in shelter re-estimate funding along with baseline funding added in the Preliminary budget reflects the composition of our caseload and the tenets of *Turning the Tide*, in that it supports getting out of clusters, opening more expensive new high quality shelters, and using hotels as a bridge while we transform the City's approach to providing shelter. At the core of these reforms we are maximizing a client-centered and cost-effective prevention-first focus to avert homelessness whenever possible and to transform the City's approach to the provision of shelter and homeless services.

For the first time in a decade, the DHS shelter census has not continued to grow. But we know that the transformation of these programs and services will not occur overnight and that we continue to have much more work to do to address the problems that built up over many years. What drives our clients to seek our services is their need for support to lead independent lives. We want to provide the helping hand our clients need and we are making the investments necessary to do so effectively. In order to implement these reforms over the past four years, we repurposed approximately 550 central

administrative positions to front-line client-facing positions to improve services for our clients. This generated \$13 million in City tax levy savings each year to re-invest in many of the client services reforms implemented under this Administration. Overall, the FY19 Executive Plan reflects cumulative City savings of \$369 million that we have achieved in DSS, HRA, and DHS from FY14 through FY18. And the FY19 Plan incorporates over \$200 million in additional City savings: \$38 million in recurring annual savings are related to the DSS integration, \$45 million are related to the Client Benefits Re-engineering project, \$40 million are due to revenue maximization initiatives and the remainder are the result of programmatic and administrative efficiencies and re-estimates, including insourcing, overtime savings, and Citywide initiatives such as procurement reform.

Our reforms are aimed at addressing the head on the stigma our clients face, which is based in the idea that poverty and homelessness are often attributed to individual decision-making and individual circumstances, rather than underlying systemic and structural inequality. For the three million clients we serve annually, that structural inequality is very real; our clients are living in a city where between 2000 and 2014, the median New York City rent increased by 18.3 percent in real dollars and household income increased by only 4.8 percent in real dollars. And while the most recent Housing and Vacancy Survey showed some sign of change in estimating that household incomes among renters rose by 10.9 percent in real terms while rents increased 6.2 percent in 2017, we continue to combat the long-term trend. Roughly three out of every ten of New York City's renters are severely rent-burdened, and many of these individuals and families are also those who cycle in and out of poverty. As a result of these structural economic factors, 70 percent of today's DHS shelter census now consists of families. More than a third of the families with children in DHS shelters have a working adult. At the same time, 30 percent of the families with children in the DHS shelter system report having a history of domestic violence.

### **3. Which programs is the agency adding, dropping, or changing for FY19 and projected for FY20?**

#### *Agency Response*

One year ago, 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 18-year use of ineffective cluster shelter sites and renting commercial hotel rooms that dates back 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 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 the agency has 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. 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. In fact, a recent Furman Center study found that the year-over-year shelter census growth from calendar year 2015 to calendar year 2016 was the lowest increase since 2011, the year the State and City ended the Advantage rental assistance program, leading to a 38-percent increase in homelessness. And the DHS shelter census for 2017 remained roughly flat compared to 2016 – this is the first time in more than a decade that the DHS census has remained level. And during the first four months of Fiscal Year 2018 compared with the same period in the prior year, the number of families with children entering the DHS shelter system declined by 15.1 percent and adult family entrants declined by 10.8 percent. While our efforts and investments are beginning to work, we know we have more work to do. The FY19 Plan reflects continuing investments in these four key areas.

Pillar One: Prevention First Our first priority is stopping homelessness in the first place – an expanded Home base network providing neighborhood-based prevention services in all five boroughs aims to achieve this by providing increased access to rent arrears grants to keep people in their homes, and universal access to counsel in Housing Court to prevent evictions. The Home base program remains at the core of New York City’s homeless prevention efforts. At Home base sites, New Yorkers are assessed to determine prevention and diversion tools for which they are eligible, including: onsite processing and triage for public assistance and rental assistance, landlord and family mediation, educational advancement, employment, and financial literacy services. We now operate 24 locations through 7 providers, 16 Contracts, and we will be expanding to 26 locations in early 2019. Since 2014 we have nearly tripled the program’s funding because we recognize it is critical to keep New Yorkers in their homes. In FY18, we increased funding to include community-based aftercare and other services, for a total annual budget of \$59 million. Between FY16 and FY17, enrollments at Home base increased by 1.2 percent for Families with Children, 28.7 percent for Adult Families, and 30.4 percent for Single Adults. We have also provided emergency one-time rent arrears assistance to 217,000 households from FY14 through FY17. The FY17 expenditures for this assistance program were \$210 million. Working with the Council, we have also exponentially increased access to counsel in Housing Court and these services are leveling the playing field for tenants. We increased funding for legal assistance for tenants facing eviction and harassment from \$6 million in 2013 to over \$77 million in FY18 – a more than twelve-fold increase – and \$93 million has been allocated for FY19 for a more than fifteen-fold increase since 2013. When the universal access to counsel law is implemented fully in five years, the annual funding will be \$155 million to handle a projected 125,000 cases that will benefit 400,000 New Yorkers each year. Since 2014, HRA’s tenant legal services programs have provided more than 180,000 New Yorkers with legal services. As noted earlier, the results from these investments are promising – residential evictions by marshals declined 27 percent since 2013 and in 2017 alone evictions decreased five percent. Over the last four years, an estimated 70,000 people have remained in their homes as a result of the reduction in these evictions.

Pillar Two: Addressing Street Homelessness – Bringing People Inside – 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 1,815 people come in from the streets into transitional programs or permanent housing. And today these 1,815 individuals remain off the streets. 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. Since 2015, through our new investments, we doubled and are now tripling to nearly 1,800 the number of low-threshold safe haven beds to better serve our street homeless population. 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 \$97.7 million in FY19.

Pillar Three: Rehousing - The end of the Advantage rental assistance program in 2011 had devastating results and by 2014 the DHS shelter census increased by 38 percent, or by approximately 14,000 people. To fill the gap left by the elimination of the City’s rental assistance program and other rehousing programs from 2011 to 2014, beginning in 2014 we created and implemented a variety of rental assistance programs and developed associated incentives for landlords. We also restored Section 8 and New York City Housing Authority priorities that had been eliminated prior to 2014. As a result of our restoration of rental assistance and rehousing programs, 94,365 children and adults have moved out of, or averted entry into, shelter through June 2018. In FY18 the budget for rental assistance is \$190.5 million, increasing to \$200.8 million in FY19. This reflects the fact that many of our clients who were moving out with CityFEPS are now eligible for State FHEPS (the Family Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Supplement), which is part of the public assistance budget. We also made the single largest municipal commitment to Supportive Housing by announcing the development of 15,000 units over 15 years in NYC 15/15. And from 2014 to date, the Administration has provided Supportive Housing to over 5,000 New Yorkers from shelter and additional New Yorkers in our street homeless programs through a combination of units that have come available through the prior NY/NY pipeline and other initiatives including the new NYC 15/15 initiative. We continue to ramp up the NYC 15/15 program, which improved prior NY/NY plans through 23 recommendations made in the Supportive Housing Task Force’s December 2016 report. Through the 15/15 plan thus far, we have made 2,200 awards to providers, including 705 scattered and 1495 congregate units, 596 of which are congregate units that have closed on financing with HPD. Through HPD’s overall supportive housing production pipeline, between January 1, 2014 and June 30, 2018, HPD has funded more than 4,000 supportive units including NYC 15/15, preservation of existing supportive projects, remaining NY/NY III commitments, and other federal and state projects. And in order to try to accelerate move outs to supportive housing which the Speaker and Chair Levin have urged us to do, we have raised the maximum rent level for studios to the Fair Market Rent (FMR) level, thereby bringing the monthly rent payment to \$1,514 for scattered-site Supportive Housing rentals, and we are making the landlord incentives for our rental assistance program available for scattered-site Supportive Housing rentals. While HPD and HRA are on-track with respect to the 15-year Supportive Housing Plan targets, this increase in rents for studios and the related landlord

incentives are aimed at enhancing our ability to find scattered-site apartments for clients, as congregate units are built and brought online over time.

Pillar Four: Transforming the Approach to Providing Shelter and Services - In the *Turning the Tide* plan announced last February, we committed to get out of 360 cluster sites and commercial hotel locations and to shrink the DHS shelter footprint by 45 percent. To date, DHS has gotten out of 169 locations bringing our shelter footprint from the 647 buildings we reported in the *Turning the Tide* plan a year ago to our current use of 468 buildings – a near 30 percent reduction in one year. In order to shrink the footprint of the DHS shelter system by 45 percent and get out of a total of 360 cluster shelter sites and commercial hotels, we need to site approximately 18 shelters per year so that we can open 90 borough-based shelters instead. The borough-based approach will enable families and individuals to be sheltered as close as possible to the anchors of life – schools, jobs, healthcare, houses of worship, and family.

Getting Out of Clusters and Commercial Hotels: We have ended operation of more than 1,700 cluster units, which is nearly a 50 percent reduction in the 18-year cluster apartment shelter program that had 3,658 active cluster site units in January 2016 when the closure plan was first announced. When we complete the transition of another 800 cluster units into permanent affordable housing, we will have reduced citywide use of clusters by 70 percent. As we announced when we released the plan last year, we have prioritized ending the cluster program, and we are on pace to end this Giuliani Administration program by our 2021 deadline. We are also committed to the goal of eliminating the use of commercial hotel rooms that dates back to the 1960s. However, the hard truth is that the transformation of the shelter system will take time. We have been transparent in saying that it will take five to seven years for our plan to be fully implemented, as the new borough-based shelters are developed and opened and the use of clusters and commercial hotels is fully phased out. Until those borough-based shelters come online we will need to continue the use of commercial hotel locations to meet immediate nightly capacity needs. During the commercial hotel phase-out period, we are improving that experience for homeless New Yorkers and getting a better deal for taxpayers when we have to rely on commercial hotels to address emergency capacity shortfalls. Actual spending will be based on the fluctuating emergency needs of the families and individuals who turn to us for help, including weather conditions, the different demographics of households, level of services and security required, and types of shelter settings available, among others. However, under our contracts, the average nightly rate for a hotel room has been \$174, and no room costs more than \$250 on any given night. But even under contract, rates may sometimes exceed what you and I might pay to rent a hotel room for a night or two—and that’s due to our provision of accommodations for caseworkers, microwaves, refrigerators, bedding, and 24/7 security. We also require that our providers have on-site social services. Transforming the decades-old approach to shelter and implementing our plan is better for homeless New Yorkers and it’s better for taxpayers: and it could save the City a total of \$100 million per year when we are able to utilize only shelters and end the practice of using both clusters and commercial hotels.

Addressing Underinvestment in Maintenance, Security, and Services: We continue to make progress in addressing the cumulative impact of years of underinvestment in shelter maintenance, security, and client services. As we have reported previously, the Mayor’s Interagency Shelter Repair Squad Task Force conducted more than 34,000 shelter inspections in 2016 and 2017, reducing violations that went

unaddressed for many years by 84 percent. And today many of the remaining repairs involve capital projects, which we are funding. The NYPD now oversees and manages shelter security and this has been a game changer. We implemented 200 hours of enhanced training developed by the NYPD for all new and in-service DHS Peace Officers, and created a new DHS Peace Officers tactical training facility at the Bedford Atlantic Men's Assessment Shelter. We doubled previous investments in DHS shelter security, with a total annual security budget of \$240 million. We have enhanced access control procedures to keep contraband like weapons and drugs out of shelter – and we recently announced that in addition to DHS Critical incident reporting, which is social service reporting, we will provide verified NYPD arrest data as a supplement to that reporting.

Finally, we dedicated an unprecedented amount of funding to reform the rates not-for-profit social service providers receive to ensure our not-for-profit partners are appropriately funded to deliver the services our homeless clients rely on as they get back on their feet; to deploy social workers in family shelters as part of the First Lady's NYC Thrive initiative; and to increase funding for providers for shelter maintenance and repairs. This \$236 million investment in our not-for-profit sector will result in better facilities and services for our clients, and is in addition to the \$163 million we spend annually for health and mental health services.

While there is still more work to be done, our comprehensive strategies for addressing the citywide challenge of homelessness, decades in the making, are making progress and headed in the right direction.

#### **4. What are your benchmarks for new and existing programs and what are your benchmarks/key performance indicators for measuring success?**

##### *Agency Response*

The Department of Social Services, comprised of the Human Resources Administration (HRA) and the Department of Homeless Services (DHS), serves more than three million New Yorkers annually through a broad range of services that aim to address poverty, income inequality, and prevent homelessness. In April 2016, following a comprehensive review of the City's homelessness policies, Mayor de Blasio announced a major restructuring of homeless services in New York City and appointed Commissioner Steven Banks to lead the Department of Social Services, which integrated HRA and the Department of Homeless Services under a joint management structure. HRA serves over 3 million New Yorkers through the administration of more than 12 major public assistance programs with 15,000 employees. DHS oversees a broad network of shelters and services with 2,000 employees, and is dedicated to helping New Yorkers experiencing homelessness get back on their feet as quickly as possible. DSS is central in implementing Mayor de Blasio's agenda to expand opportunity for more New Yorkers, help homeless New Yorkers secure stable housing, address income inequality, and ensure that New Yorkers receive the benefits and assistance to which they are entitled. We remain focused on continuing to prevent homelessness before it occurs, address street homelessness and assist as homeless New Yorkers as possible in transitioning from shelter and the street to permanent housing.



## AGENDA ITEM 7

**It has recently been reported by DHS in Council testimony that the number of shelter residents has stabilized. Does this include homeless housed in hotels? How many hotels beds were added in FY 18? There are some shelters that have had an increase in the number of residents (such as Catherine Street Shelter)--why are beds being added to shelters if the population has stabilized? Is there a shift in the demographics of street homeless?**

### Agency Response

Homelessness in New York City and jurisdictions across the country is the very real result of decades of changes in our economy and past choices made in New York City, Albany, and Washington. From 1994-2012, the City suffered a net loss of about 150,000 rent-stabilized units, or 16 percent of the total rent-regulated stock. Between 2005 and 2015, rents increased by 18.4% whereas incomes increased by only 4.8%. While the city's overall rental vacancy rate of 3.5 percent poses problems for people of all incomes, renters only able to afford an apartment costing \$800 or less must search in a market with a vacancy rate of just 1.15 percent in 2017, down from 1.8 percent in 2014. Homelessness increased 115% citywide between 1994 and 2014—and in just three years between 2011 and 2014, it grew almost 40 percent, from 38,000 to more than 51,000 following the end of the Advantage rental assistance program as a result of State and City cuts—and we saw the results of what happened to homelessness in our City when rental assistance was taken away.

While the devastating impacts of economic inequality and past inaction from prior administrations led to the homeless crisis we face today, the initiatives of the Department of Social Services (HRA and DHS) are beginning to reverse the trend. A recent Furman Center study, for example, found that the year over year shelter census growth from calendar year 2015 to calendar year 2016 was the lowest increase since 2011 before the Advantage program ended. And the shelter census for 2017 remained roughly flat year over year for the first time in more than a decade: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/nyc-homeless-shelter-population-flat-last-year-for-first-time-in-decade-1519819201h>

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 the new programs, reforms, and investments we are implementing are taking hold, helping us turn the tide, and will help us achieve a steady, sustained reduction in New York City's homeless population. Without the administration's initiatives, projections indicate there would be 71,000 people in shelter today instead of the current number of roughly 60,000.

Since coming into office, Mayor de Blasio has restored the City's rental assistance and rehousing programs and directed unprecedented resources toward a new comprehensive and holistic approach to fighting homelessness focused on prevention, street homeless outreach, expanded transitional housing

options, averted shelter entry, improved shelter conditions, expanded civil legal services, and more robust rehousing and aftercare services.

Our strategies are starting to take hold, headed in the right direction: as indicated above, the shelter census for 2017 remained roughly flat year over year for the first time in more than a decade; and through the strategies outlined above and below, we've already reduced our shelter footprint by nearly 30 percent, from the 647 buildings we reported in the Turning the Tide plan a year ago to our current use of 468 buildings. The FY19 Plan reflects these strategic reforms and investments since FY14 that have enhanced our services and assistance, including the following initiatives:

- Immediately upon taking office, the de Blasio Administration stepped in to fill the gap left by the City and State's cancellation of the Advantage rental assistance program in 2011 (which led to a 38 percent increase in homelessness between 2011 and 2014) by creating and implementing new rental assistance programs as well as reinstating rehousing programs—which have helped over 94,365 children and adults exit or avoid shelter altogether through this commitment of permanent housing resources, with the vast majority exiting shelter.
- Ending the use of nearly half of all cluster units citywide—and counting—and we recently announced our plans to transition another 800 cluster units into permanent affordable housing, which covers more than a third of the remaining cluster units
- Siting 21 high-quality borough based shelters under the Mayor's Turning the Tide Plan with 15 already operating, offering families and individuals the opportunity to get back on their feet closer to support networks and home boroughs
- Providing emergency rental assistance to 217,000 households, helping rent-burdened New Yorkers at risk of eviction stay in their homes
- Aggressively expanding free legal assistance for New Yorkers in danger of illegal eviction, increasing funding for legal services for tenants more than 15-fold, from roughly \$6 million to more than \$93 million. Evictions then dropped by 27% and more than 70,000 New Yorkers were able to stay in their homes in 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017
- Phasing in over the next five years the funding necessary to provide universal access to legal services for all New York City tenants facing eviction in housing court
- Launching the largest municipal commitment ever to build and expand supportive housing by committing to develop 15,000 new units in 15 years

In compliance with the right to shelter court order, the City places people in hotels under emergency situations when there is not enough shelter capacity on a given night. Until we are able to fully implement our plan and since the City is under court order to provide shelter under emergency circumstances at all times there will be some cases in which we need to provide emergency shelter and place families and individuals in hotels if we have reached capacity—and we notify communities regarding the use of these locations as early in advance of use as possible.

- We are currently utilizing 89 commercial hotel locations citywide on a temporary basis in emergency situations to meet immediate capacity needs and provide shelter to

approximately 11,000 New Yorkers experiencing homelessness, including individuals and families with children, who would otherwise be turned out onto the streets.

- At the same time, to date, since January 2016, when we were using a high point of 3,600 cluster units citywide, we have closed more than 1,700 cluster sites altogether, ending the use of nearly half of all cluster units citywide—and counting—and we recently announced our plans to transition another 800 cluster units into permanent affordable housing, which covers more than a third of the remaining cluster units.

As part of transforming a haphazard shelter system decades in the making, we are ending the use of stop-gap measures, including the 18-year-old cluster program and use of commercial hotels, which dates back on and off to the 1960s, and replacing them with a smaller number of high-quality borough-based transitional housing facilities. This will reduce the number of Department of Homeless Services' facilities by 45 percent across New York City and allow us to maintain a vacancy rate to ensure the flexibility we need to implement a more equitable, borough-based system that takes into account the individual needs of the children and adults we must shelter. To that end, we are evaluating shelter capacity and need in all communities citywide. While some sites may be identified for closure, other sites may be identified for renovation, repairs, enhancement, expansion, or modification to ensure that, over time, our neighbors experiencing homelessness have access to high-quality facilities citywide.

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 \$97.7 million in FY19. Since the launch of HOME-STAT, the most comprehensive street homeless outreach program nationwide, outreach teams have helped 1,815 homeless New Yorkers off the streets, thanks to new investments and a doubling of the size of those outreach teams—and we are committed to continuing and improving that work every day.

The de Blasio Administration has committed unprecedented new resources to street outreach programs and providers. The City has nearly tripled the number of beds dedicated to supporting street homeless New Yorkers citywide since 2014, with hundreds of beds opened during this Administration, hundreds more coming online this year, and an additional commitment to another 250 beds, increasing the operating total from roughly 600 beds to nearly 1,800 beds. As of the start this year, there are 1,301 such 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 one previously-existing Safe Haven site that we expanded.