

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 9, 2026

CONTACT: press@dss.nyc.gov

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS TO JOIN NYC'S 21st ANNUAL HOPE SURVEY EFFORT

The NYC Department of Social Services Holding Annual Survey to Estimate Number of New Yorkers Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness on January 27

HOPE 2026 Presents a Unique Opportunity for New Yorkers to Come Together to Support Their Vulnerable Neighbors

DSS Connected More than 1,000 New Yorkers Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness on Subways and Streets to Permanent Housing Last Year

24X7 Outreach Connected Thousands of Vulnerable New Yorkers to Shelter Services

NEW YORK – The NYC Department of Social Services (DSS) is calling on New Yorkers to volunteer for the 21st annual Homeless Outreach Population Estimate (HOPE) survey to help the city estimate the number of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness at a point in time. The survey effort will take place from 10pm to 4am on the night of January 27 into the early morning hours of January 28, 2026. HOPE is a unique opportunity for New Yorkers from all walks of life to come together to support their vulnerable neighbors and play a valuable role in the city's efforts to address unsheltered homelessness. In 2025, the city saw a stronger volunteer turnout than in recent years -- reflecting an 18% increase from 2023 when the agency brought volunteers back into the fold to conduct the survey after the pandemic. This year will mark the first HOPE survey under the Mamdani Administration. The city continues to engage community stakeholders to make this year's effort even bigger and better. New Yorkers can learn more and register to volunteer online at nyc.gov/hope.

During the survey effort, volunteers and outreach workers fan out across the five boroughs to identify how many individuals are experiencing unsheltered homelessness in public spaces, including city streets, subways, and parks. DSS is partnering with NYC Public Schools and the City University of New York to ensure a network of familiar and accessible training and deployment sites across the five boroughs. Outreach workers from DSS's not-for-profit provider network are integral to the effort which is implemented in close coordination with partner agencies, including NYC Parks, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and the NYC Police Department. Volunteers will be deployed in small groups with friends, colleagues, family members, and fellow New Yorkers to canvass designated areas in each borough. In recent years, the city has taken important steps to modernize the survey -- volunteers can now access trainings online and conduct the survey on a mobile app.

"In the richest city in the world, no one should be forced to sleep on the street or seek shelter in the subway. My administration will transform the approach to mental illness and homelessness, investing in meeting the needs of New Yorkers in crisis," said **Mayor Zohran Mamdani**. "The work of creating a better city requires our commitment, engagement, and effort every day. I encourage every New Yorker to not only join this year's HOPE Count but the work of building that better city as well."

"At a time when we're facing an onslaught of federal actions that threaten to gut the city's safety net and herald a concerning shift in the approach to addressing homelessness nationwide, we must all stand steadfast in our commitment to protecting the most vulnerable amongst us," said **Department of Social Services Commissioner Molly Wasow Park**. "HOPE 2026 offers a unique opportunity for everyday New Yorkers to come together and help build on the work our outreach teams do 24X7 to engage our neighbors experiencing unsheltered homelessness by building trust and connecting them to critical supports. The survey will help better inform resource allocations and vital investments in solutions that recognize that the stability of a home is foundational to recovery, and center the dignity, humanity, and struggle of marginalized communities that have been consistently failed by every level of society."

"We have made meaningful progress connecting thousands of New Yorkers experiencing unsheltered homelessness to transitional and permanent housing. This is only possible because of the dedication and compassion of outreach workers and frontline shelter staff who serve as the foundation of our safety net. They work closely with vulnerable New Yorkers by engaging them through trauma-informed, relationship-based care that builds stability and pathways to long-term housing security," said **Department of Homeless Services Administrator Joslyn Carter**. "On HOPE night, we invite all communities across the five boroughs to join us in this shared responsibility, as we continue to push forward with both new and existing initiatives that raise the bar on innovative models and enhanced supports for New Yorkers in need."

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires jurisdictions nationwide to conduct the survey every other year on what is anticipated to be one of the coldest nights during winter. NYC has conducted the survey every year. Using a consistent sampling methodology since 2005, HOPE remains one of the most methodologically rigorous efforts nationwide to estimate the number of individuals who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

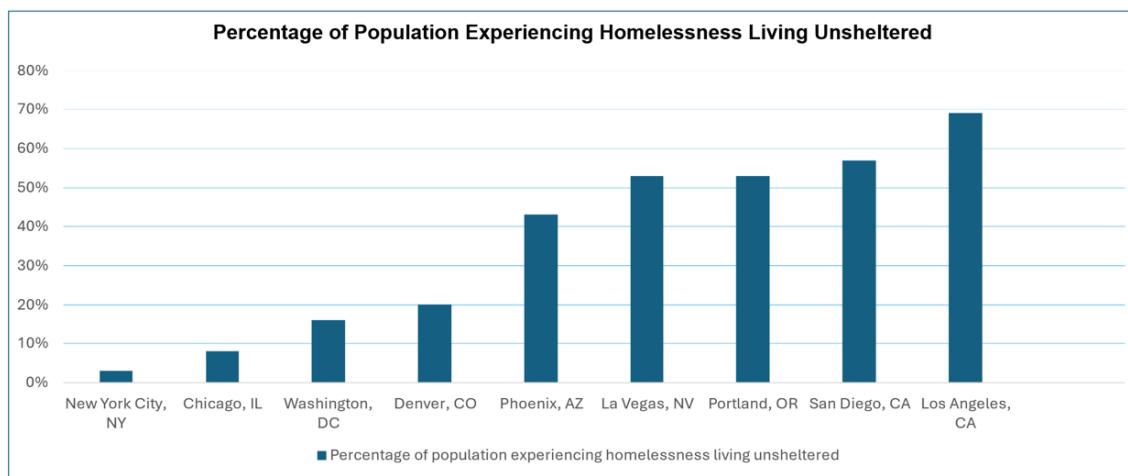
HOPE 2026 will help inform investments and new initiatives to strengthen pathways to stable housing for vulnerable New Yorkers. The City operates the most comprehensive outreach program in the nation with a robust network of not-for-profit provider and DSS outreach workers canvassing the five boroughs to engage New Yorkers in need by meeting them where they are, building trust through consistent on-the-ground engagement, and encouraging them to come inside. New Yorkers who see individuals they believe to be experiencing unsheltered homelessness should contact 3-1-1 via phone or mobile app to request outreach assistance. DSS continues to expand specialized bed capacity like Safe Haven and stabilization beds which are designed to address the unique needs of New Yorkers experiencing unsheltered homelessness. This meaningful continuum of care has helped the city connect more than 1,000 New Yorkers to permanent homes last year. As evidenced by the 2025 HOPE estimate, NYC continues to have one of the lowest rates of unsheltered homelessness of any major U.S. city.

In recent years, DSS has opened more than 1,300 high-quality Safe Haven and stabilization beds while intensifying engagement efforts with around 400 outreach workers providing coverage citywide. These focused efforts have helped connect thousands of New Yorkers to shelter and permanent housing. DSS is squarely focused on strengthening this safety net with hundreds of new Safe Haven beds in the pipeline. The agency has also bolstered end-of-line subway outreach efforts by enhancing interagency coordination across stations to engage harder-to-reach New Yorkers. Through these efforts over the last few years, the city has connected more than 8,000 New Yorkers to transitional housing.

According to HUD, NYC has one of the lowest rates of unsheltered homelessness of any major U.S. jurisdiction. Last year, around 3.5% of persons experiencing homelessness in NYC were living unsheltered -- in stark contrast to other large jurisdictions around the country. For example, according to HUD data from 2024 in Los Angeles, 70% of the total number of individuals experiencing homelessness were living unsheltered, whereas in NYC, more than 95% of those experiencing homelessness were sheltered.

New York City has the lowest rate of unsheltered homelessness of any major American city.

According to a 2024 federally-mandated count, 3% of New Yorkers experiencing homelessness are living unsheltered in NYC.



"CUCS serves nearly 35,000 New Yorkers experiencing homelessness each year, and our street outreach teams are the critical first point of contact for those living unsheltered," said **Dawn M. Pinnock, President and CEO of Center for Urban Community Services (CUCS)**. "They're on the front lines every day, building trust, showing up in extreme weather, remembering names and stories, and never giving up. HOPE night provides the essential data that funds this life-saving work. When New Yorkers volunteer to count our unsheltered neighbors, they're supporting outreach workers who turn that data into real relationships, real interventions, and lasting housing outcomes."

"The HOPE survey is a unique opportunity for everyday New Yorkers to have a direct impact on unsheltered homelessness within their borough and neighborhood, and we encourage everyone who

can to sign up and volunteer," said **Brenda Rosen, President and CEO of Breaking Ground**. "Breaking Ground is committed to addressing street homelessness through our mission-driven work, including: outreach teams working day and night to engage and connect unsheltered New Yorkers with opportunities to come indoors; a network of 700 safe haven beds across Manhattan and Brooklyn; and new permanent housing in development, including over 1,000 supportive and affordable apartments in Manhattan through residential conversions of hotels. The volunteers who make HOPE possible play a critical role in ensuring these resources are deployed effectively, and we are grateful to every New Yorker who helps us send the message that everybody counts."

"Project Hospitality takes the lead on organizing hundreds of local Staten Island volunteers to search the streets, parks and waterfronts of our borough in the hopes of finding and bringing to warmth and safety homeless individuals sleeping in cemeteries, cars, abandoned buildings and makeshift shelters in wooded areas," said **Dr. Terry Troia, President and CEO of Project Hospitality**. "Project Hospitality vans will be on hand to transport homeless persons to our drop-in center for food, warmth and safe shelter. Every year we encounter new homeless people in need of shelter with the support of the NYC Dept of Homeless Services, Project Hospitality staff and volunteers. These tireless emergency volunteers are a lifeline to our neighbors in desperate need. We say thank you ahead of time to faith community volunteers, high school and college students, Project Hospitality volunteers and staff who all make this night of counting homeless Staten Islanders a life-saving event."

"BRC's Outreach teams operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year meeting unsheltered individuals where they are, listening to them, and working to understand their issues and traumas so they can address the barriers to long-term self-sufficiency. Last year, BRC made over 10,000 placements from the streets, subways, and transit hubs into appropriate safe havens, shelters and housing resources," said **Kelly Quirk, Chief Operating Officer of Bowery Residents' Committee (BRC)**. "The annual HOPE survey gathers critical data and gives volunteers a glimpse into the work we do every day helping New Yorkers on their pathway from homelessness to home."

"BronxWorks is proud to join our city partners and community members once again as we come together for the HOPE Count," said **Alexandra Francis, Executive Vice President of Supportive Housing and Homeless Services at BronxWorks**. "The HOPE Count is a vital tool and a critical resource that ensures our collective outreach efforts and support continues for our most vulnerable neighbors."

###

About the New York City Department of Social Services: DSS, comprised of the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) and the Human Resources Administration (HRA), serves millions of New Yorkers annually through a broad range of services that aim to address poverty and prevent homelessness. DHS oversees a broad network of shelters, re-housing solutions, and outreach programs designed to help New Yorkers experiencing homelessness get back on their feet. HRA serves over three million New

Yorkers through the administration of more than 15 major public assistance programs. DSS is central to the City's mission to expand opportunity for New Yorkers in need, address housing insecurity, and ensure that low-income New Yorkers receive the benefits and assistance for which they may be eligible.