

Department of Social Services Preliminary Budget Testimony

Steven Banks, Commissioner

March 27, 2018

REFORMS

ADDRESS
POVERTY

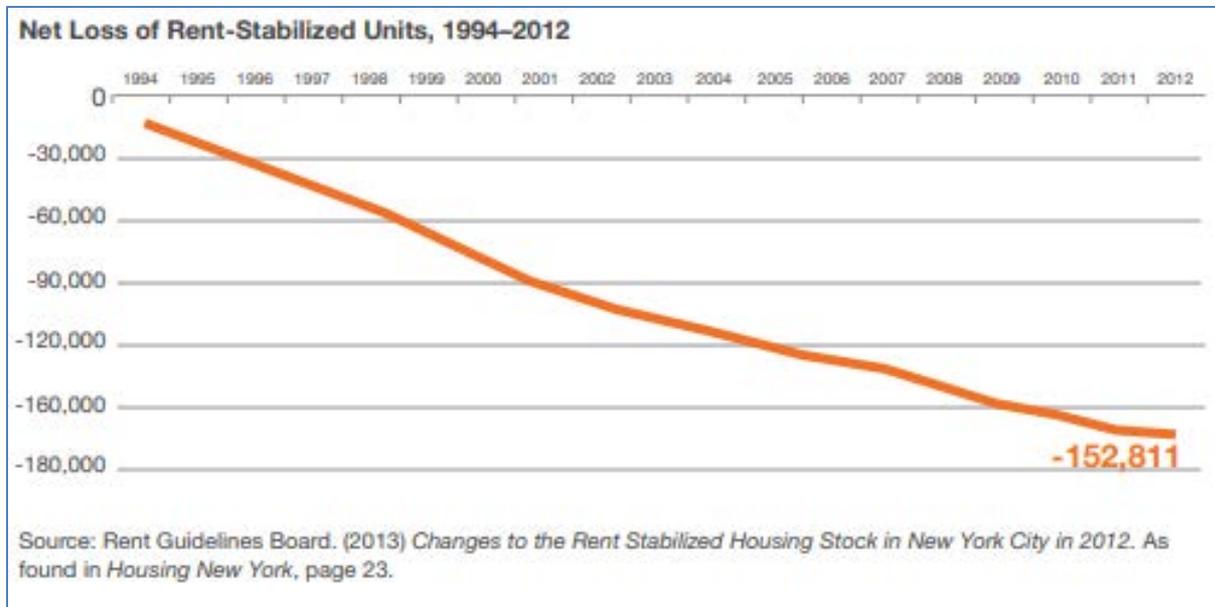
REDUCE
INCOME
INEQUALITY

PREVENTION
FIRST
FOCUS

TRANSFORM
THE APPROACH
TO SHELTER

The Rise of Homelessness

- Between 2000 and 2014, the median New York City rent increased by 18.4 percent in real dollars and household income increased by 4.8 percent in real dollars.
- Between 1994 and 2012, the city suffered a net loss of about 16 percent of the total rent-regulated housing stock, some 150,000 units.



The Rise of Homelessness

- Combined, these and other trends mean that by 2015 the city had only half the housing it needs for about three million low-income New Yorkers.
- Renters who are only able to afford an apartment costing \$800 or less must search in a market with a vacancy rate of a mere 1.15 percent.

Drivers of Homelessness



MAKING HRA BENEFITS MORE ACCESSIBLE

REDUCE
COUNTER-
PRODUCTIVE
CASE CLOSINGS

REDUCE
UNNECESSARY
FAIR HEARINGS

REDUCE
DUPLICATIVE
ADMINISTRATIVE
TRANSACTIONS

MAKE IT EASIER
FOR CLIENTS
TO OBTAIN
AND KEEP
BENEFITS

MAKING HRA BENEFITS MORE ACCESSIBLE

- HRA no longer imposes durational public benefits sanctions.
- Consistent with State law, we now afford clients the opportunity to comply with requirements so they can immediately cure a sanction without losing their benefits.
- Removed duplicative and unnecessary administrative transactions which adversely affect staff workload as well as our clients.
- State fair hearings have declined by nearly 40 percent — from 396,196 in FY14 to 247,253 in FY17 – and the City is no longer subject to a potential \$10 million annual State financial penalty for unnecessary State hearings.

The Employment Plan

- HRA eliminated and replaced the Work Experience Program (WEP).
- Left behind the one-size-fits-all approach of the past to offer more meaningful opportunities to clients, including education and training as permitted under federal and state law.
- We are seeing promising results:
 - Clients have enrolled into Alternative Engagement, which are opportunities for clients to access education and training programs external to HRA.
 - To date, 1,232 YouthPathways participants have engaged in financial counseling services, and 519 outcomes have been achieved relating to opening safe bank accounts, increasing credit scores, reducing debt, increasing savings, and taking financial steps toward enrollment in a training/education program.
 - 3,914 clients have enrolled in education and training offered directly by our contracted providers.
- In FY18, we were funded at \$278 million (\$103 million tax levy) for employment and related support services such as transportation and the Preliminary Budget continues these investments.

Reasonable Accommodations for Clients with Disabilities

- HRA's Customized Assistance Services provide both direct and contractual clinically oriented services and expertise in the areas of health, mental health, substance use and rehabilitation for clients served through HRA's programs.
- HRA settled the 2005 *Lovely H.* class action lawsuit.
- HRA developed and is now using tools to assess whether clients need reasonable accommodations as the result of physical and/or mental health limitations or other impairments.
- FYTD there have been increases in key service areas: a 12 percent increase in federal disability awards for clients and an 8.4 percent increase in the number of clients with disabilities placed in employment.

Benefits Reengineering

- Two primary goals for our continued modernization efforts – improve the client experience and optimize operational efficiency.
- We now permit applicants and clients to conduct a broad range of transactions with the Agency without the burden of having to physically come to an HRA location.
- These investments are helping to reduce our physical footprint and save on expensive lease costs while making it easier for clients to apply for and maintain their benefits. Our investment in benefits reengineering through FY17 was \$159.2 million.

Benefits Reengineering

- SNAP in-center foot traffic has declined 32 percent since 2014.
- The percent of SNAP applications submitted online increased from 23 percent in 2013 to 78 percent in 2018.
- The percent of SNAP application interviews conducted by phone increased from 29 percent in 2013 to 83 percent in 2018.
- In December 2017, the citywide average wait time was 53 minutes for Job Centers and 32 minutes for SNAP Centers.

ACCESS HRA

- As of February 2018 there were more than 1 million ACCESS HRA online accounts for SNAP/food stamps households.
- We receive over 24,000 online SNAP applications each month.

English

Español

العربية

中文

Kreyòl Ayisyen

한국어

русский



Apply Now

Start New Application / Recertification



Log In



Create Account



ACCESS HRA
YOUR WAY

Welcome to HRA's new online portal. Just one of the ways HRA is changing for you!

Apply online for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Cash Assistance, Medicaid renewal.

[No Title] [Image your benefits online.](#) Read agency notices.

ACCESS HRA- Home Screen

“My Cases” provides the client with case details alleviating the need for a center visit or phone call.

English Español العربية 中文 Kreyòl Ayisyen 한국어 русский

Home ACCESS HRA - My Home Log Out

Apply Now
Start New Application / Recertification

View My Cases
Track Benefits

My Documents
Track Documents and Notices

My Activity

Draft Applications 0
You have no in-progress applications.

Submitted Applications 1
SUBMITTED
SNAP (Food Stamps): You submitted a SNAP application on 3/27/20
View Applications

What's New
IDNYC is the new, free identification card for all New York City residents, which will give all of us the opportunity to show who we are—New Yorkers. To learn apply go here.

“My Documents” allows the user to view documents the agency has received and electronically filed to their case.

Draft Applications
AHRA will display any recent draft applications not yet submitted.

The due date provided alerts the user to submit prior to expiration of the application draft.

Submitted Applications
To prevent duplicate application submissions AHRA displays any applications submitted by that user to date.

Benefits Reengineering: On Demand

- SNAP recertification eligibility interviews can be conducted at a client's convenience by phone.
- In October 2015, before the implementation of the on-demand call center, only 52 percent of the completed SNAP recertification interviews were conducted via telephone. We now have 76 percent of the interviews held by phone – a 46 percent increase.
- Following our implementation of this service for Brooklyn clients last year, we have just announced an expansion that enables new Manhattan and Staten Island SNAP applicants to complete their eligibility interview using on-demand. The Bronx and Queens will be next.

Benefits Reengineering: HRA Mobile App

- A self-service mobile app to give clients the ability to use their mobile device to better manage their cases by having immediate access to case details and the ability to submit required documents from their smartphones.
- Since March 2017 clients have uploaded over two million images.
- We now have a suite of self-service tools, which include self-service check-in kiosks and PC Banks to utilize ACCESS HRA and self-service scanning of documents.

HASA for All

- In the State’s Fiscal Year 2014-15 budget, we successfully advocated for reinstatement of the a 30 percent rent cap to be applied for HASA clients.
- On August 29, 2016, medical eligibility for the HASA program expanded so as to permit all financially-eligible New York City residents with HIV to voluntarily seek and obtain HASA services.
- The financial requirements remain unchanged, an applicant need no longer have AIDS or be “symptomatic” in order to be eligible for HASA services.
- As of January 2018, HASA provides services for 33,772 cases, which include 34,354 clients and 10,289 associated case members, 3,822 of which were newly eligible pursuant to our HASA for All expansion.
- The FY19 Jan Plan allocates \$185 million (\$90 million tax levy) for HIV/AIDS housing and support services this year.

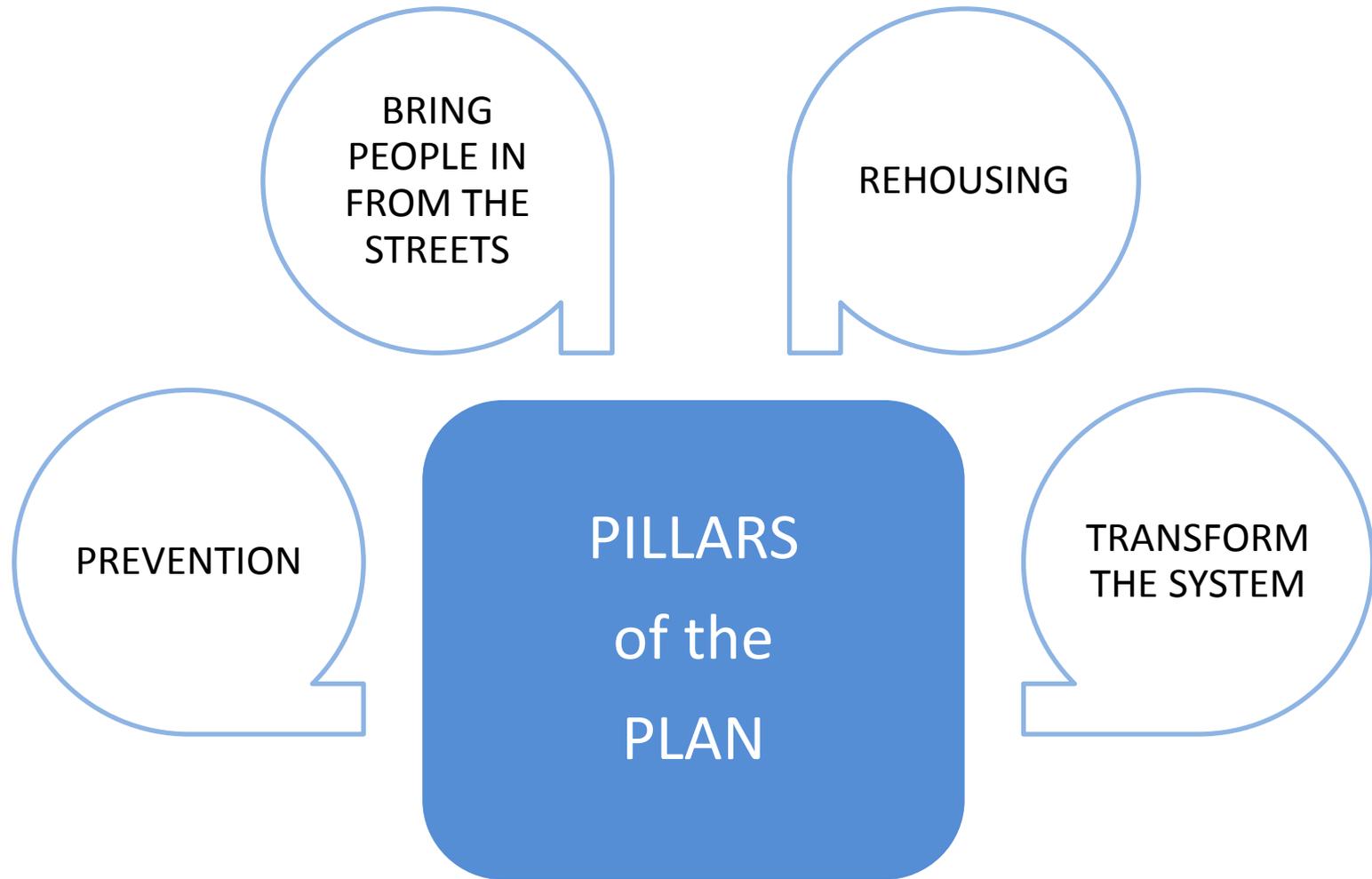
Additional Key Reforms

- Adding 239 emergency beds and 54 transitional units to our domestic violence shelter system – part of increasing our capacity to help 13,300 children and adults a year, an approximately 50 percent increase over the prior level served annually – the first increase since 2010.
- Participating as a member of the Food Collaborative in the first evaluations of food distribution, capacity, and food equity to identify gaps and address ongoing EFAP needs.
- Increasing baseline funding for legal assistance for immigrants from \$7 million in FY13 to \$29.7 million in FY18, which enabled immigrant New Yorkers to receive legal aid in approximately 15,000 cases in FY17, as a result of the fourfold increase in the City’s overall commitment to immigration legal assistance programs since FY13.
- Operating the IDNYC program, which last year issued its one millionth card, and as of the end of 2017 had issued over 1.2 million cards.

Addressing Homelessness

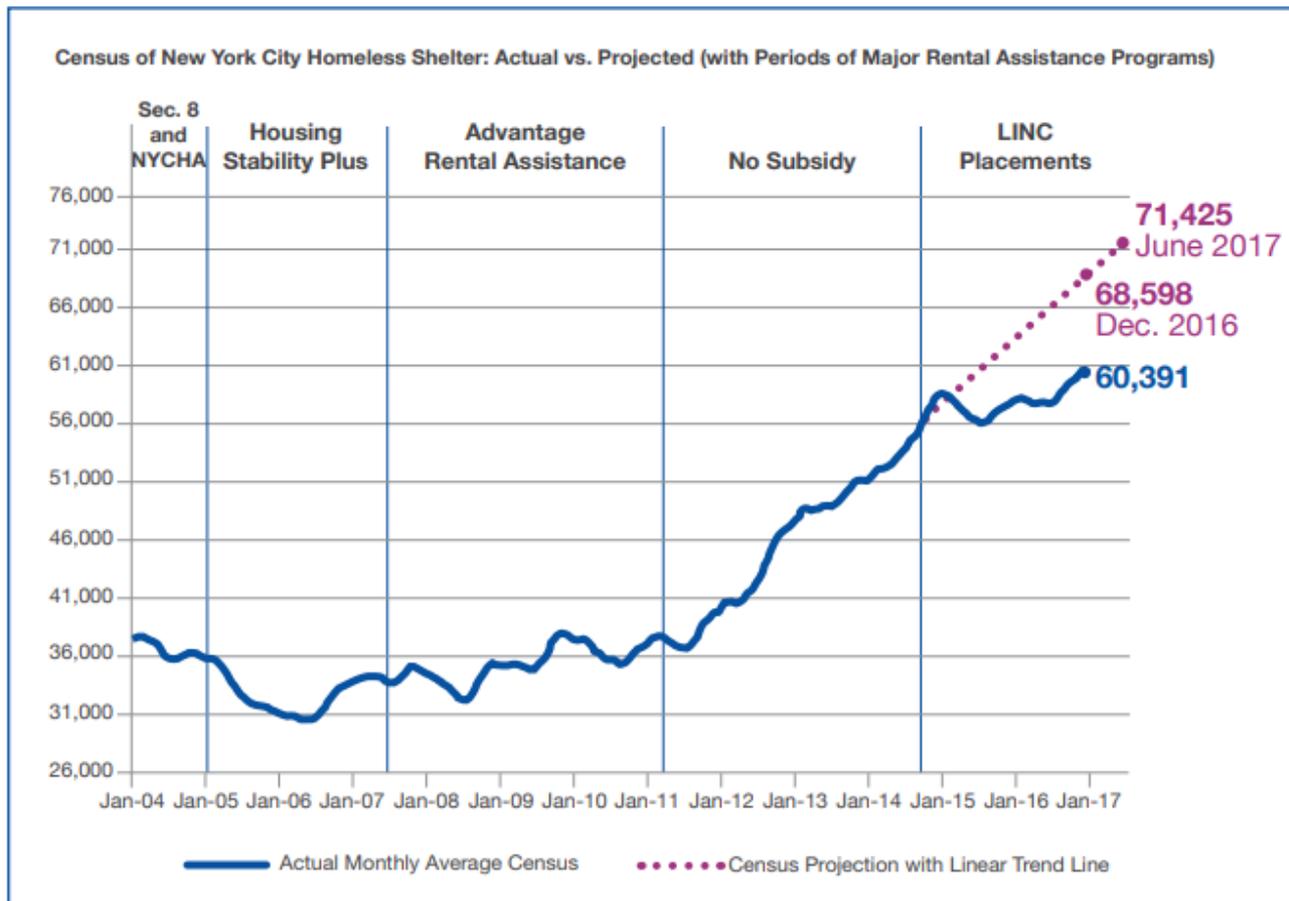
- *Turning the Tide* puts people and communities first.
- Commitment to ending the use of decades-old stop-gap measures, like cluster shelter sites and commercial hotel rooms.
- Help families and individuals stay connected to the anchors of life—like schools, jobs, health care, families, and houses of worship—as they get back on their feet.

Addressing Homelessness



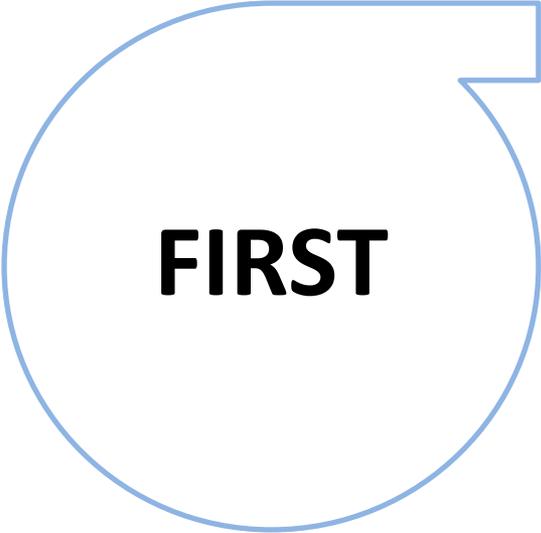
The Rise of Homelessness

- There has been a 115 percent increase in homelessness over the past two decades – from 23,868 men, women and children in January 1994 to 31,009 in January 2002 to 51,470 in January 2014.



Addressing Homelessness

- Without the initiatives that we have been implementing, the current DHS census would be in excess of 71,000.
- 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 Advantage rental assistance program ended, leading to a 38-percent increase in homelessness.
- **The shelter census for 2017 remained roughly flat year over year for the first time in more than a decade.**



FIRST

PREVENTION

Doing more to keep people in their homes by stopping evictions, helping families and individuals remain with family members in the community, and making housing more affordable.

Homebase

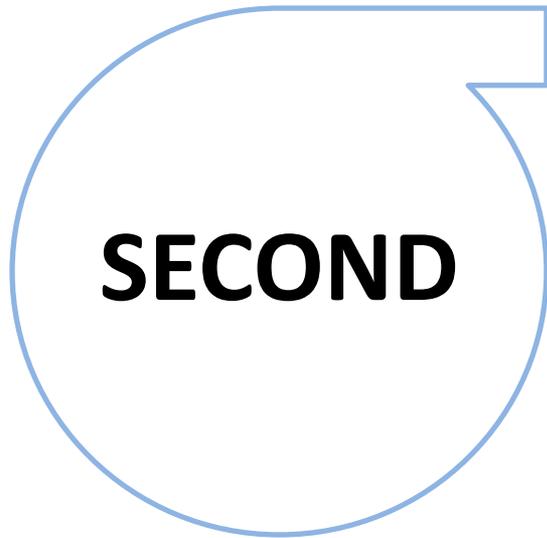
- Homebase's community-based prevention has expanded to ensure that Homebase is the first point of entry for those at risk of homelessness and that people can be served in their home borough.
- We expanded Homebase from 11 providers across the City to 16 providers operating at 23 locations and expanding to 25 locations by the end of FY18, more than doubling the program's funding.
- In FY18 we increased funding to include community-based Aftercare and other services, for a total budget of \$59 million, compared to \$39 million at the adoption of the FY16 budget.
- Assessments to determine what prevention and diversion tools clients are eligible for, which include: onsite processing and triage for public assistance and rental assistance, landlord and family mediation, educational advancement, employment, and financial literacy services.

Homebase/Rent Arrears

- Through January FY18, the Homebase program enrolled 12,865 Families with Children, 621 Adult Families, and 3,296 Single Adults.
- Since 2014, we have provided an increased level of emergency rent arrears assistance, both to cover the increasing costs of rent as well as serving more people so that more New Yorkers are able to stay in their homes.
- To date, this Administration has 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. We also made the payment process more efficient and quicker by replacing the old system of generating checks in each individual HRA Job Center with a centralized rent arrears processing unit.

Legal Services

- Implementing the universal access to counsel local law passed by Council and signed by the Mayor.
- We increased funding for legal assistance for tenants facing eviction and harassment from \$6 million in Fiscal Year 2013 to over \$77 million in Fiscal Year 2018 – a more than twelve-fold increase – and \$93 million has been allocated for FY19.
- 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.
- Residential evictions by marshals declined 27 percent since 2013, when there were nearly 29,000 evictions annually.
- Over the last four years, an estimated 70,000 people have remained in their homes as a result of decreased evictions.
- HRA's tenant legal services programs have provided more than 180,000 New Yorkers with legal services since 2014.



Bringing People Inside

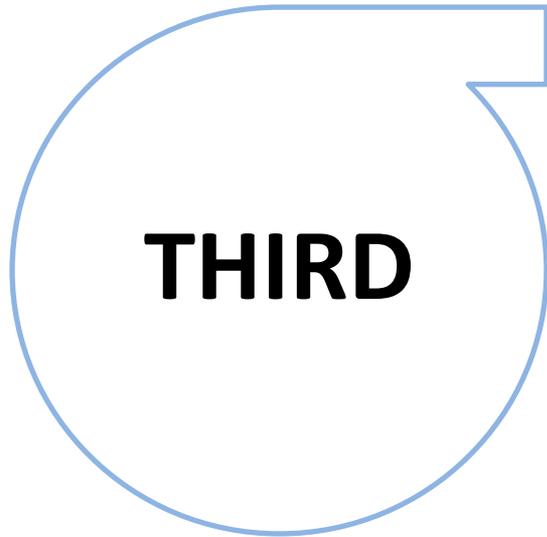
Continuing to enhance our HOME-STAT program to bring people in from the streets.

HOME-STAT

- Since the launch of HOME-STAT in the Spring of 2016, the City has helped 1,480 people come in from the streets into transitional programs or permanent housing and provided assistance so that they have remained off the streets.
- 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.
- We will have over 1,700 low-threshold beds to better serve our street homeless population, up from the roughly 600 beds that existed at the beginning of this Administration.
- We more than doubled the number of outreach staff canvassing the streets working to engage New Yorkers who are experiencing street homelessness from 191 in 2014 to nearly 400 outreach staff today.

HOME-STAT

- We've 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 \$97.6 million in FY18.
- We built the City's first-ever by-name list of individuals known to be homeless and residing on the streets to improve delivery of services.
- Outreach teams now know more than 2,000 individuals by name who are confirmed to be homeless and living on the streets.
- Outreach teams are actively engaging more than 1,500 other individuals encountered on the streets to evaluate their living situations and determine whether they are homeless as well as what specific supports they may need.



Rehousing

We created and implemented a variety of rental assistance programs and restored Section 8 and New York City Housing Authority priorities.

Rehousing

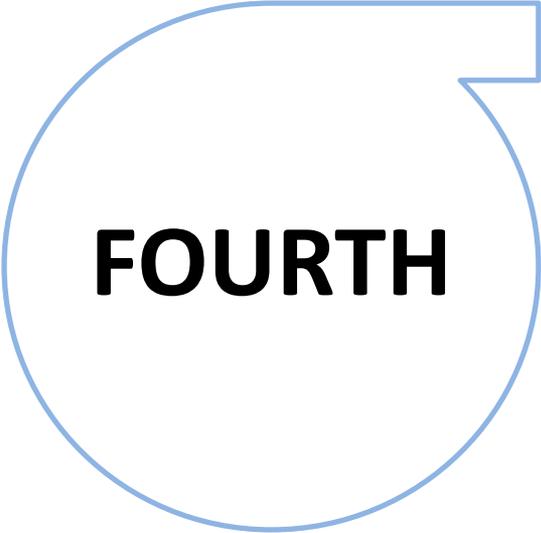
- We created and implemented a variety of rental assistance programs and developed associated incentives in order to address the fears of landlords who were concerned that the new rental assistance programs could be eliminated in the future like Advantage was.
- We formed a Source of Income Discrimination (SOI) unit at HRA to address the problem of individuals and families being discriminated against because of the source of their rental income.
- We 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, over 81,124 children and adults have moved out of, or averted entry into, shelter through December 2017. In FY18, the budget for rental assistance is \$165 million.

Rehousing: Move-Outs

FY15, FY16, FY17 & FY18 (thr. December)		
	Total Households	Total Individuals
DHS LINC 1	1,806	6,193
DHS LINC 2	772	2,663
DHS LINC 3	628	2,181
DHS LINC 4	3,045	3,424
DHS LINC 5	1,604	1,767
DHS LINC 6	107	342
HRA LINC 3	590	2,039
CFEPS	6,435	21,741
NYCHA	6,749	22,906
SECTION 8	2,174	7,017
SEPS	3,730	4,210
HOME TBRA	447	1,397
421a	291	749
TOTAL	29,768	81,124

Supportive Housing

- We made the single largest municipal commitment to Supportive Housing by announcing the creation of 15,000 units over 15 years in NYC 15/15.
- This cost-effective approach to deliver stable and permanent housing to New Yorkers struggling with mental illness, homelessness, and substance use is worth the investment.
- Since the beginning of this Administration, HPD's Housing NY Plan has funded 3,017 supportive units by leveraging a variety of City, State and Federal funding sources including NYC 15/15.
- In less than two years, since the release of the first NYC 15/15 supportive housing RFP in August 2016, HRA, using NYC 15/15 resources, has made 1,426 awards to providers, 406 of which are congregate units that have closed on financing and are included in the 3,017 units in the HPD production pipeline.
- To date, NYC has moved or is in the process of moving 488 clients into supportive housing funded by the Mayor's NYC 15/15 plan.



FOURTH

Transforming the Approach to Providing Shelter and Services

Our new approach will allow us to maintain a vacancy rate to ensure the flexibility necessary to give homeless New Yorkers, who come from every community across the five boroughs, the opportunity to be sheltered in their home boroughs, as close as possible to their support networks and anchors of life, including schools, jobs, health care, families, houses of worship, and the communities they called home, in order to stabilize their lives and return to living in the community as quickly as possible.

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Transforming the Approach to Providing Shelter and Services

- We have committed to getting out of 360 cluster shelter and commercial hotel sites in order to reduce our overall DHS shelter system footprint by 45 percent across the city, and open 90 new borough-based shelters across all five boroughs.
- To date, we've already gotten out of 100 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 547 buildings – a 16 percent reduction in one year.
- We've committed to a notification process that provides a minimum of 30-days' notice to elected officials and community leaders before opening a new permanent shelter.
- To date, with the 17 shelters we've notified on since the announcement of our plan just over a year ago, we've averaged 65 days' notice to communities.
- We have already opened 11 of those 17 sites so far and they include a site for women with special needs, the City's first dedicated site for homeless seniors, and DHS's first dedicated site for LGBTQ young people—all thanks to New Yorkers' fundamental compassion and understanding.

Getting Out of Clusters

- Since January 2016, when we were using a high point of 3,600 cluster units citywide, we have closed more than 1,500 cluster units, including transitioning over 300 cluster units to state-certified shelters, representing a more-than 42 percent reduction citywide in this 18-year old cluster shelter program.
- We recently announced our plans to transition another 800 cluster units into permanent affordable housing using eminent domain if necessary, which covers more than a third of the remaining cluster units. As we announced when we released the plan last year, we have prioritized ending the 18-year cluster program, and we are on pace to end the use of cluster units as shelter by our 2021 deadline.

Getting Out of Commercial Hotels

- The average monthly spending is \$32 million for commercial hotels, \$2 million for the remaining clusters, and \$96 million for actual shelters.
- To control costs more effectively and improve client services, the City entered into \$364 million in annual contracts to shelter homeless New Yorkers in hotels on an emergency basis over the next three years.
- The average nightly rate for a hotel room has been \$174, and no room costs more than \$250 on any given night.
- The quality of client services at these sites has been enhanced, and we will be able to hold service providers accountable for delivering the same social services found at contracted shelter sites, including case management, assistance with public benefits, help finding permanent housing, and job training and counseling.

Getting Out of Commercial Hotels

- We require accommodations for caseworkers, microwaves, refrigerators, bedding, and 24/7 security to ensure we are giving New Yorkers experiencing homelessness a safe, secure and supportive environment.
- We require that our providers have onsite social services so that clients can receive individualized assessments and referrals to meet their needs through their Independent Living Plans.
- As we work to phase out the use of cluster apartments first, followed by commercial hotels, and revamp the shelter system with our new borough-based approach, we are asking communities to come forward and help us identify sites for new shelters. It's better for our homeless neighbors and it's better for taxpayers, and could save the City a total of \$100 million per year if we utilize only shelters and end the practice of using hotels.

Invest in Maintenance, Security, and Services

- At the beginning of the 90-day review in 2016, there were three urgent problems that we needed to address:
 - the cumulative impact of years of underinvestment in shelter maintenance,
 - security, and
 - client services.
- Significant progress has been made to raise the bar for clients in each of these areas.

Invest in Maintenance: Shelter Repair Squad

- Launched the Shelter Repair Squad, an aggressive multi-agency task force in December 2015 to systematically identify and address shelter conditions that had previously been left unaddressed for decades.
- We conducted more than 34,000 shelter inspections in 2016 and 2017.
- The number of outstanding violations within traditional shelters has dropped 84 percent since January 2016, with many of the remaining repairs involving capital projects.

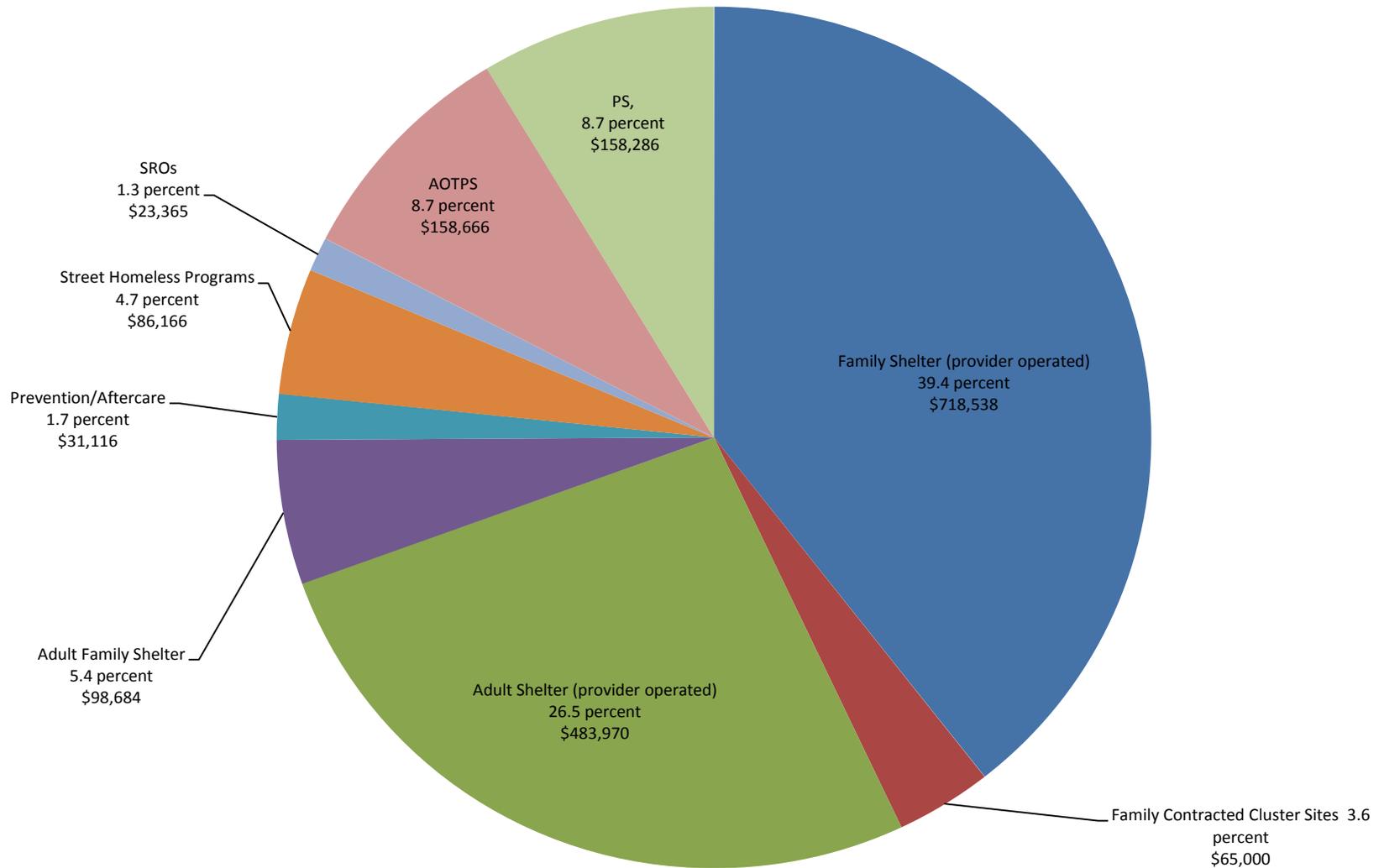
Invest in Security: NYPD and DHS

- The NYPD now oversees and manages shelter security. We have partnered with the NYPD to implement an NYPD Management Team at DHS overseeing shelter security citywide.
- This includes providing 200 hours of enhanced training developed by the NYPD to all new and in-service DHS Peace Officers, and implementing 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 for fiscal years 2017 and 2018.

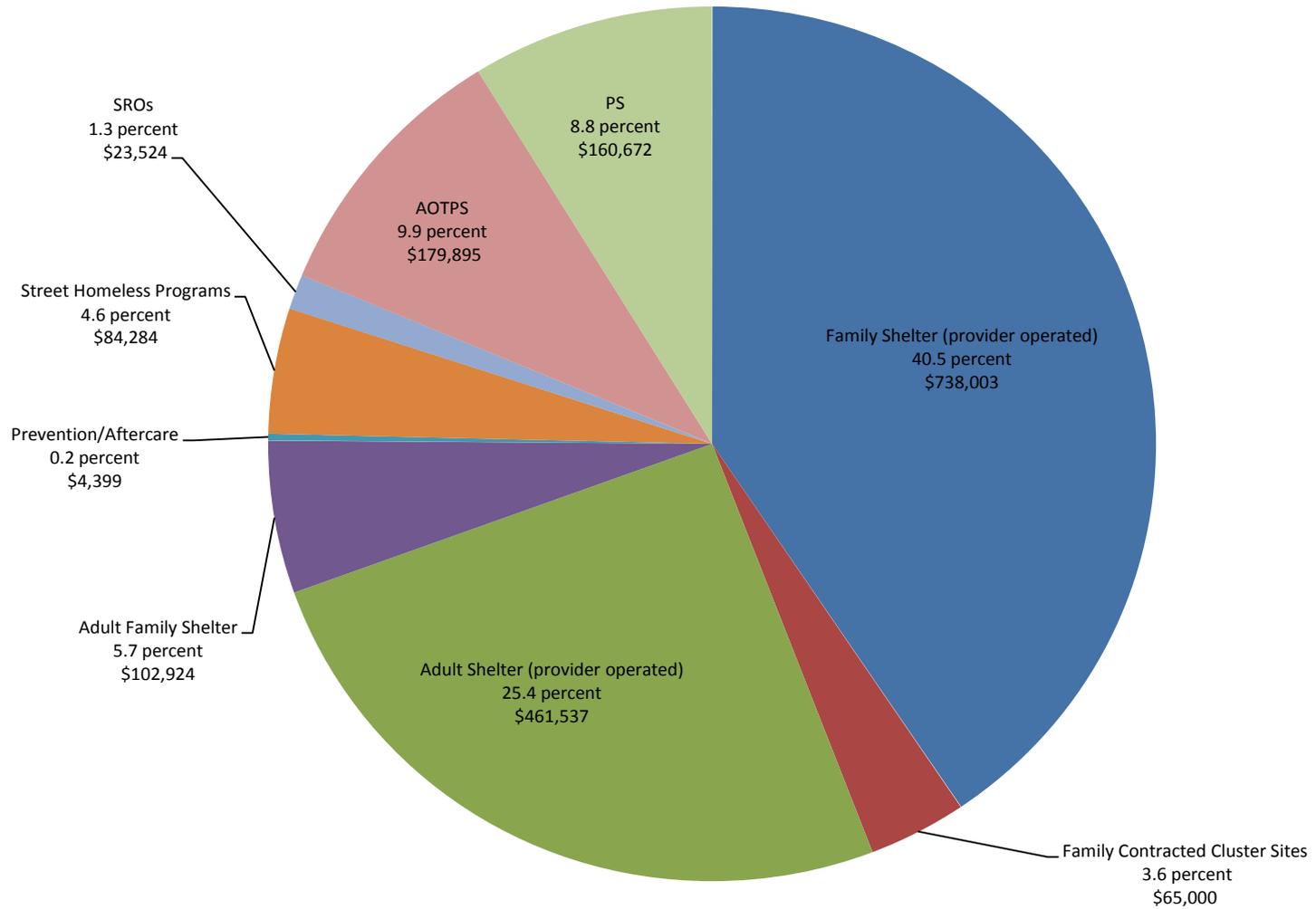
Invest in Services

- We dedicated unprecedented dollars to reform the rates not-for-profit social service providers' receive.
- In 2016, we announced we would rationalize payment rates for shelter providers, through a model budget exercise to reform the rates providers had been paid for years.
- DHS is making a \$236 million dollar investment which will result in better facilities and services for our clients. This investment is additive to the \$163 million we spend annually for health and mental health services.
- We spent this year working with providers in focus groups to develop the model budgets, which we are now in the process of implementing and which will result in less variability across providers.
- This investment included rationalizing caseload ratios, resources for specialized services and the facilitation of housing placement, real-time maintenance and repairs, security and funding for health and safety standards, and support staff.
- Overall, one-third of DHS's increased shelter budget is largely attributable to the social services, maintenance, and security enhancements that we have put in place to address years of underinvestment.

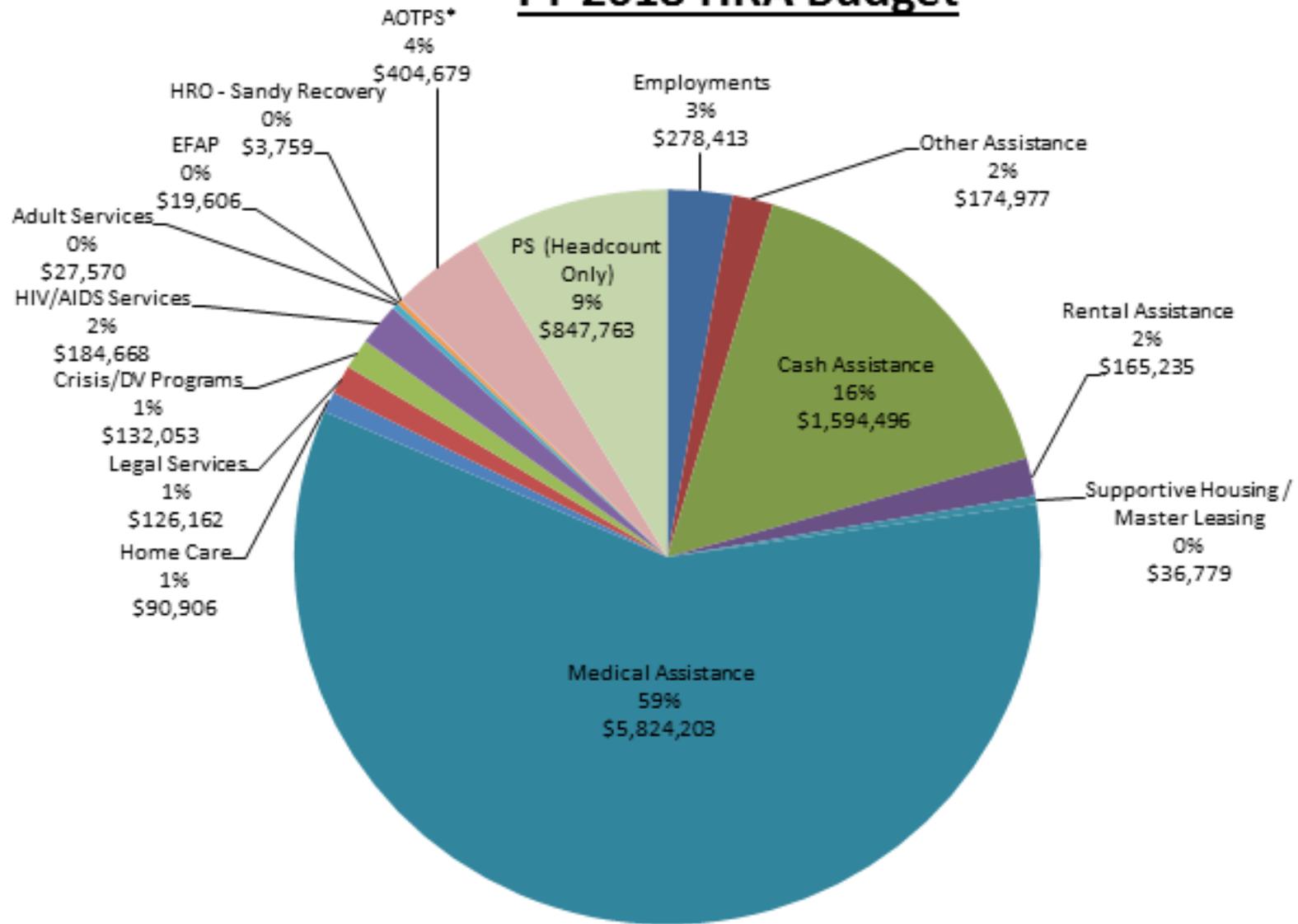
FY 2018 DHS Budget



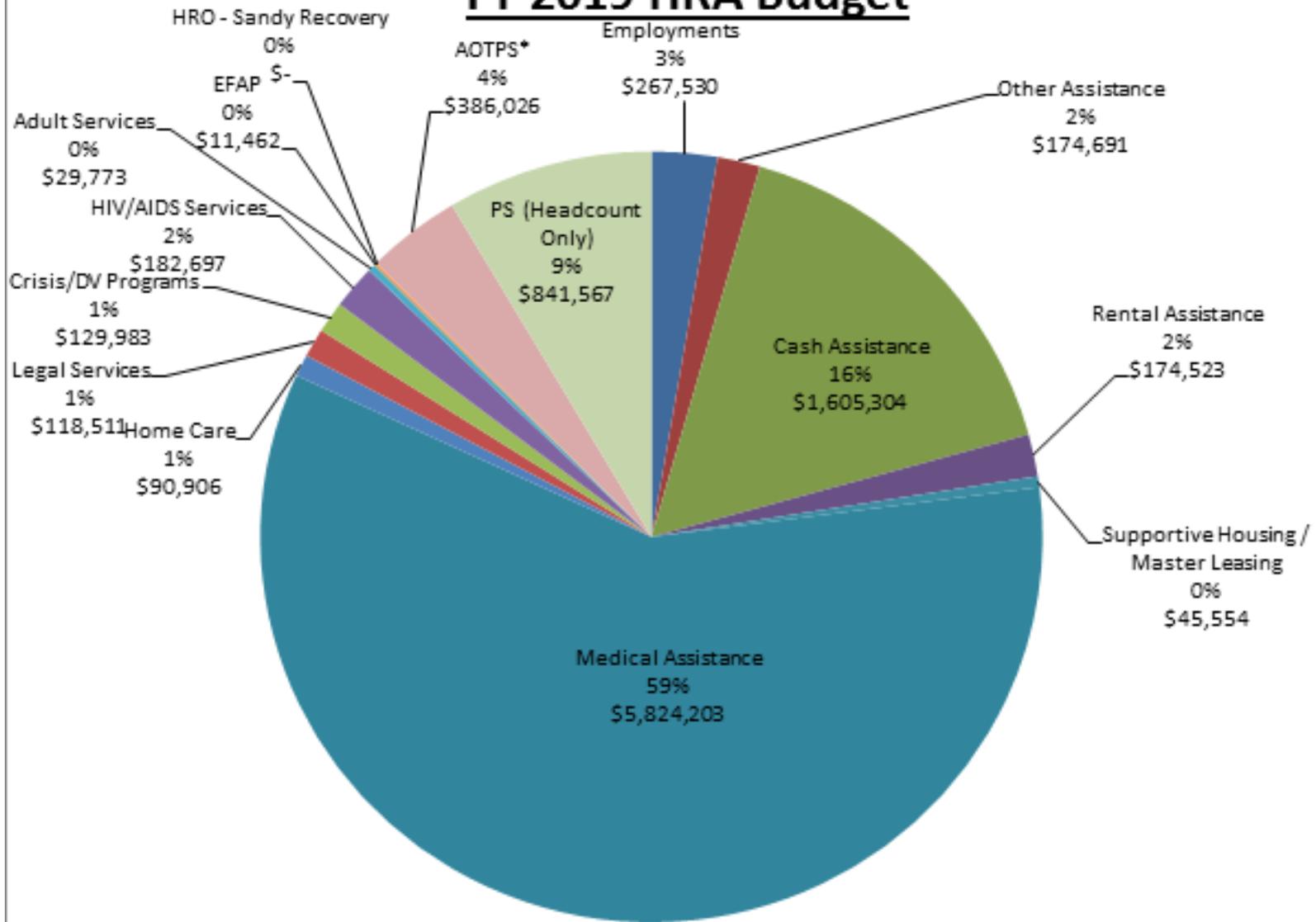
FY 2019 DHS Budget



FY 2018 HRA Budget



FY 2019 HRA Budget



Recent HRA Reforms

Implemented HRA's Opioid Overdose Prevention Program (OOPP) to prevent overdose deaths of HRA clients

Implemented the Pay It Off Program during the month of August 2017, which provided a match to noncustodial parents (NCP) who paid a minimum amount toward debt owed to HRA. NCPs also received an additional reduction in debt owed to HRA if they enrolled in the Arrears Credit Program

Partnered with CUNY Hunter College's Silberman School of Social Work to develop and implement a curriculum emphasizing the important role that fathers play in a child's life and the value of the child support program in reducing child poverty

On Demand application rollout in Brooklyn, Manhattan and Staten Island which allows SNAP clients to submit their applications online and then call an "On Demand" service agent for an interview

Launched HRA Express Demonstration Site - which allows for better client experiences and will assist clients receive and keep their benefits

Released the second annual OCJ report including a five year plan which outlines the next five years of legal services in the city

Created a newly developed centralized unit to receive applications, review cases, and make eligibility determination for all FHEPS applications

Developed and launched the first unified city-sponsored supportive housing website

Replaced VendorStat with CareerStat to focus more on program performance and service delivery

Recent HRA Reforms

Enhancements to ACCESS HRA functionality including: SNAP Periodic Report in ACCESS HRA, eNotices, My Cases, and My Documents (added to ACCESS HRA assists SNAP clients in accessing HRA services through a mobile application)

Increased DV residential service system size

Trained and initiated the use of the Interview for Abilities (IDA) by APS social workers and nurses

Developed new training curriculums for APS vendors and community Guardian vendors

Successfully decentralized Shelter and Senior cases – clients transferred to centers in the communities where they reside

Trained all HASA eligibility staff to review non-citizen applications for public benefits

Expanded existing employment and educational opportunities for HASA clients by implementing a contract to assist in obtaining employment

Expanded the Problem Solving Court Model to the Bronx

Launched a homelessness prevention initiative with the Administration for Children's Services

Recent DHS Reforms

Targeted outreach to doubled-up families with school-aged children

Fully launched HOME-STAT to address street homelessness, helping nearly 1,500 homeless New Yorkers off the streets who've remained off the streets and subways since its launch, while moving to triple the number of beds dedicated to supporting these individuals

In 2017 alone, the City opened and added 315 beds across 8 locations dedicated to supporting New Yorkers experiencing street homelessness comprised of 265 beds across 5 Safe Haven sites as well as 3 stabilization locations, bringing our current operating total to 1283, more than double what we had at the start of the Administration

Implemented a more extensive reporting system for critical incidents that occur in shelters

Expanded Shelter Repair Squad 2.0 Operations

Increased coordination among shelter inspectors

Implementing a DHS capital repair program

Eliminated the requirement for school-age children to be present at PATH for multiple appointments

Aligned access procedures for adult families with procedures for families with children

Recent DHS Reforms

Streamlined access to DYCD shelter for homeless youth through the deployment of youth liaisons at DHS entry points

Deployed social workers to assist families found ineligible who are returning to a community resource to provide on-the-spot assistance

In 2017, 2,323 DHS staff and clients were trained and 2,861 naloxone kits were dispensed by DHS. A total of 777 clients were trained by DHS, DOHMH and NYU.

Communicated more information to clients through flyers, posters and other media to provide information about available assistance and programs

Developed and implemented a procedure to bypass intake for Youth aging out from DYCD and coming to DHS shelter

Added ThriveNYC in Adult Mental Health Shelters

Increased safety in shelters through an NYPD management review and retraining program

Ended the use of more than 1,500 cluster units as shelter, reducing citywide cluster use by 42 percent and counting

Announced 17 high-quality borough-based shelters, 11 of which have already opened their doors, offering New Yorkers in need the opportunity to get back on their feet nearer to the anchors of their lives

Thank you!