

Emergency Executive Order 2: Action Plan

New York City Department of Social Services

February 19, 2026

Executive Summary

Emergency Executive Order 2 directs the City to submit a 45-day plan to return the shelter system to compliance with legal and regulatory standards that were suspended in response to the asylum seeker humanitarian crisis. This plan outlines the City's high-level strategy to achieve compliance while maintaining humane, safe shelter for vulnerable populations.

The plan focuses on three priorities:

- Closing the last remaining emergency asylum seeker shelter site and transitioning residents into compliant Department of Homeless Services (DHS) facilities;
- Bringing single-adult shelters into compliance with local capacity limits; and
- Meeting compliance standards for families with children shelter sites with a focus on addressing access to cooking facilities.

The City will pursue these goals through phased transitions as well as efforts to reduce the overall shelter census by accelerating exits to permanent housing and strengthening prevention and diversion programs.

Background

Beginning in 2022, New York City experienced an unprecedented influx of asylum seekers arriving from the U.S. southern border. Tens of thousands of adults and families fled dangerous conditions in their home countries and arrived in New York with little support, often within days of entering the United States.

Unlike earlier waves of migration, many recent arrivals lacked family or sponsor networks and required immediate shelter and services. The City mobilized rapidly across agencies to provide emergency housing, food, health care, and social services. While this response reflected New York City's longstanding commitment to welcoming immigrants, the sustained scale of new arrivals placed extraordinary strain on a shelter system that was already operating near capacity.

In October 2022, former Mayor Adams declared a state of emergency to allow temporary suspension of certain shelter regulations and to enable the rapid creation of Humanitarian Emergency Response and Relief Centers (HERRCs). In addition to the Department of Social Services/Department of Homeless Services (DSS/DHS), NYC Health + Hospitals (H+H), NYC Emergency Management (NYCEM), the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), the Mayor's Office of Housing Recovery Operations (HRO), and the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) opened and operated emergency shelters as part of the citywide crisis response. In total, the City opened 258 emergency shelters, including 18 HERRCs, to house more than 237,000 asylum seeking new arrivals who sought shelter between Spring 2022 and June 2025.

While necessary to meet the overwhelming needs posed by this humanitarian crisis, these sites were opened as temporary solutions and not designed for long-term integration into the City's homeless shelter system. For example, most HERRCs were much larger in scale than typically allowed under shelter regulations and were overseen by entities other than DSS/DHS.

Since late 2024, sustained reductions in the number of asylum seekers in care have allowed for the closure of dozens of emergency sites and the gradual consolidation of shelter systems under DSS/DHS. In January 2025, approximately 69,000 asylum seekers were in the City's care. Since then, the asylum seeker census has declined steadily to roughly 30,000 individuals as of February 2026. However, the overall shelter census remains high, with approximately 88,000 total individuals currently in shelter across the City, reflecting both longstanding homelessness trends and the residual impacts of the humanitarian response.

The start of the Mamdani Administration and Emergency Executive Order 2 mark a transition point. The emergency impacts of this humanitarian need have subsided, and the City is fully committed to restoring compliance with shelter regulations and transitioning from emergency operations toward a unified, sustainable system that ensures a high standard of care for all New Yorkers experiencing homelessness. At the same time, the City must carefully balance restoring compliance with maintaining sufficient capacity across intake, single adult, and family shelter systems.

Concurrently, the City is advancing a broader housing plan which will advance permanent housing solutions. Progress on these initiatives is closely linked to the feasibility and pace of the transitions described below. Together, these coordinated efforts are intended to stabilize the shelter system, restore compliance with appropriate standards, and transition away from emergency infrastructure in a sustainable manner.

Strategic Framework for Compliance:

The City's compliance strategy is guided by three principles:

- Continuity of care: Transitions should avoid service disruptions where possible for vulnerable residents, particularly families with children who have geographical schooling considerations.
- Operational feasibility: Changes must align with planned shelter openings and closures.
- Systemwide sustainability: Compliance efforts must be paired with initiatives to reduce the shelter census and increase permanent housing placements.

These principles inform the phased approach described below.

I. Closure of the Remaining Emergency Asylum Seeker Shelter Site

Objective: Close the remaining HERRC located at Bruckner Boulevard in the Bronx and transition all residents into standard Department of Social Services/Department of Homeless Services facilities by the **end of calendar year 2026**.

Background: The Bruckner HERRC was the final emergency shelter created to house asylum seekers outside of the DSS/DHS shelter system, opening in February 2025 with capacity for roughly 2,200 single adults. The site is operated by the Mayor's Office of Housing Recovery Operations (HRO) and their contracted staff, with resident resources provided by not-for-profit and City agency partners, as well as an on-site centralized mail room for all clients in the non-DSS/DHS shelter system. As of February 2026, Bruckner houses ~1,950 residents and is the last remaining emergency shelter being operated

outside of the DHS system. With the closure of this final site, all individuals in care will be able to access mail services and other resources through their new shelter placements in DSS/DHS facilities.

Implementation: The City will execute a phased plan that assumes some level of natural attrition and integrates Bruckner residents into the broader DSS/DHS system through two coordinated actions:

- Expansion of compliant shelter capacity: DSS/DHS will open several new shelters over the next six months that were delayed by the previous Administration.
- Reallocation of existing capacity: The number of families with children in the DSS/DHS system is projected to decline due to high levels of subsidized exits and the end of transfers from previously operational non-DSS/DHS emergency sites. This trend will free up additional capacity in the family system that DSS/DHS will convert to create additional beds for single adult men. Beginning in the summer, DSS/DHS will convert hotel rooms currently used for families with children to serve single adult men, timing these transitions to minimize disruption for families.

II. Compliance with Single-Adult Shelter Capacity Limits

Objective: Bring single-adult shelters operating above local law capacity limits into compliance and complete all necessary transitions by the **end of calendar year 2027**, while maintaining sufficient system capacity and service continuity.

Background: Local law limits most single adult shelters to 200 beds, with limited grandfathered exceptions. During the height of the asylum response, several facilities exceeded these limits. Restoring compliance requires a structured transition that avoids destabilizing the shelter system.

Implementation: The City will implement a phased strategy to bring sites into compliance that includes:

- Immediate capacity adjustments where operationally feasible; and
- Gradual relocation to newly opened or expanded compliant facilities

Immediately, DSS/DHS will reduce capacity at non-grandfathered sites that presently have an operating capacity marginally above 200 beds. There are three remaining sites that have a capacity that is more than marginally above 200 beds, and those will be brought into compliance through reductions and relocation to compliant facilities by the end of

2027. This approach avoids abrupt closures that could destabilize the system while steadily restoring compliance.

III. Compliance with Facility Requirements for Families with Children

Objective: Meet compliance standards for families with children shelter sites, including access to cooking facilities.

Background: The City has a long history of using commercial hotels as shelter and used them extensively as an emergency measure to shelter families with children during peak asylum arrival periods, beginning in 2022. A significant portion of families still reside in these temporary placements.

The City currently operates 112 commercial hotel sites serving approximately 11,486 shelter units and housing roughly 8,100 families with children. Hotels are not designed for long-term family shelter use and do not fully align with regulatory standards. Transitioning families into compliant facilities will improve living conditions and restore legal compliance.

Implementation: The City will pursue three complementary strategies:

- Expansion of compliant family shelter capacity through accelerated development and opening of new shelter facilities.
- Conversion of hotels to permanent shelters where feasible to meet regulatory standards
- Census reduction initiatives that increase exits to permanent housing and strengthen prevention and diversion programs to reduce shelter demand.

These strategies operate in parallel to both expand supply and reduce system pressure.

Conclusion

Emergency Executive Order 2 provides a framework for transitioning from crisis-driven emergency shelter operations to a sustainable, compliant system. This plan balances the urgent need to restore regulatory compliance with the City's responsibility to provide humane, safe, and dignified shelter.

Successful implementation will depend on sustained interagency coordination, continued investment in housing solutions, and strong partnerships with service providers and community stakeholders. By executing this phased strategy and maintaining focus on both compliance and census reduction, the City can build a more resilient shelter system that is better equipped to meet future challenges while protecting vulnerable New Yorkers.