

**DHS AND MAYOR'S CLERGY ADVISORY COUNCIL ANNOUNCE "OPENING DOORS,"  
INITIATIVE GEARED TOWARDS HELPING CITY'S STREET HOMELESS POPULATION**

*This program recruits participation from citywide faith leaders, who commit space in their houses of worship and community organizations to shelter and support unsheltered homeless*

**SEPTEMBER 17, 2015** – Today, the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) and Mayor's Clergy Advisory Council (CAC) gathered in Manhattan to address a new measure for addressing street homelessness - the "Opening Doors" program. This information session was convened to gauge the interest of New York City faith leaders to commit use of unused space at their specific houses of worship for sheltering some of our city's most vulnerable – the street homeless population. This city-funded, partner-operated initiative will open at least 500 faith-based "Safe Haven" beds, providing shelter and social services to New Yorkers in need.

"The support of faith leaders is essential to our efforts in serving unsheltered homeless clients to get them on their path to housing and transformation," said **DHS Commissioner Gilbert Taylor**. "With over 300 beds already committed, this program will go a long way in helping us to meet our goals of assisting our fellow New Yorkers who are in need."

Since July, DHS and the de Blasio administration have been collaborating closely with advocates and faith leaders throughout all five boroughs, to evaluate how such groups can support New York City's homeless population and the overall community. This initiative builds upon the city's ongoing efforts to add resources for the unsheltered homeless population and will be guided by support from the Clergy Advisory Council (CAC), as well as several members of the faith-based community which have already committed space. DHS is working closely with the CAC to map out and engage religious institutions throughout the city with available space, focusing on the areas with the highest need.

Those who participate in the *Opening Doors* initiative will commit to providing between 10-19 beds, dinner, and social services in their houses of worship or community space to unsheltered homeless residing in their specific neighborhoods. All sites will be open overnight, but some programs may choose to remain open around-the-clock and provide daytime services as well. Some sites will operate year-round and others during the colder months of November-May. Partners will work closely with DHS' Street Outreach team to identify and engage those homeless individuals in the area, helping get them off the street and into shelter. Outreach staff will also assist social services providers in their efforts to obtain permanent placement for the homeless individuals.

There are currently 10 Safe Havens in the city with one program each in Staten Island and Brooklyn, three in the Bronx, and five in Manhattan for a total of 672 beds citywide.

###

**Media Contact:** Nicole Cueto (212) 361-7973