
LETTER FROM OUR CEO

Dear Friends,

Homelessness is at an all-time high in New York City, with more than 60,000 people living in shelter. However, most New Yorkers do not know that 70 percent of them are families with children. Twenty percent of these children are five years old or younger. They are the forgotten faces of homelessness and the New Yorkers we serve every day.

At Win, breaking the cycle of homelessness is our key priority. We house 4,500 people a night, including 2,500 children. Through our child care services, income-building programs, counseling, and financial literacy efforts our goal is to provide families the support they need to build independent and successful lives.

Unfortunately, the City is now trying to adopt new regulations to limit the amount of time children can spend in our child care centers to 10 hours per child, per week. The proposed limit would unquestionably place an undue burden on our parents, who are attempting to maintain or secure employment while also taking steps to obtain stable housing. In addition, it would reduce the developmental support, healthy socialization, and trauma informed care that is so vital for the children at Win.

Additionally, most neighborhoods where our shelters are located do not have enough available community-based child care seats to meet the needs of our nearly 600 child care aged children. Out of the 65 child care centers in our communities, 60 percent of them do not have any open seats. Infant and toddler spots were only available in two of the six neighborhoods we serve.

To make matters worse, approximately 720 homeless families, including 275 children, in Win shelters do not meet eligibility requirements for a child care subsidy. This represents nearly 50 percent of all child care aged children in Win shelter. Limiting the resources available to homeless families only further punishes them, and makes it harder for them to leave shelter. It is imperative that we put our children's well-being first if we truly aim to break the cycle of homelessness once and for all.

Yours,

Christine C. Quinn
President & CEO

SHELTER-BASED CHILD CARE & DOHMH PROPOSED RULE

OVERVIEW

Homeless families with children contend with unique needs and challenges as they work to leave shelter for a permanent home. By providing comprehensive services that are tailored to the distinct circumstances of homeless families- including shelter-based child care that meets high quality standards- service providers fulfill their commitment to support families in their journey out of homelessness. Quality, shelter-based child care is an opportunity to provide a space for young children with activities and interactions that address the effects of trauma and promote healthy social, emotional, and cognitive development, while also providing safe, quality child care homeless parents need in order to work and move their family out of homelessness.

The NYC Department of Health (DOHMH) is proposing amendments to Article 47 of the New York City Health Code that impose strict new requirements and permitting processes on child care provided in homeless shelters for families with children. The proposed regulations would impact all aspects of child care services in shelters, and many are nearly identical to those in place for community-based child care programs currently licensed by DOHMH,

with a major exception. As proposed, regulations would limit the amount of time a child can spend in shelter-based child care to ten hours per week.

All child care must operate at high standards of quality and safety and provide a nurturing, supportive environment for children to learn, socialize, and grow. However, the proposed regulations would leave thousands of homeless families



The ten-hour per child weekly limit on care would place an undue burden on parents attempting to maintain or secure employment while also taking the necessary steps to obtain stable housing. It would also reduce the amount of developmental support, healthy socialization, and trauma informed care available to vulnerable young children.

with children without access to safe, quality child care that meets their unique needs. The ten-hour per child weekly limit on care would place an undue burden on parents attempting to maintain or secure employment while also taking the necessary steps to obtain stable housing. It would also reduce the amount of developmental support, healthy

socialization, and trauma informed care available to vulnerable young children. Rather than help homeless parents and children cope with the immense stress, sense of loss, social and environmental disruption, and resource scarcity that they experience, these changes would only hinder their journey out of shelter.

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

The disruption homelessness causes to the familiar routines, spaces, and relationships young children rely on for safety, comfort, and learning is traumatic. Unfortunately, many homeless children experience disproportionately high rates of trauma, including exposure to domestic and community violence and involvement with child welfare agencies, among others. On average, each homeless child will spend nearly a year of time critical to their social, emotional, and academic development in shelter. Shelter-based child care presents a valuable opportunity to help children and families build resiliency and protective factors that can buffer young children from the potentially negative effects trauma can have on child development, learning, and well-being. Shelter-based care also offers a much needed opportunity and space for children to socialize and play with each other.

To help mitigate the negative effects homelessness and other trauma can exert on child development and learning, Win provides trauma-informed child care at each of its shelters for homeless families with children. Win's shelter-based child care provides an environment, activities,

and interactions that nurture early learning and meet the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of children experiencing and healing from trauma. Win child care is provided and overseen by highly qualified staff trained and coached in trauma informed care and other evidence-

based practices for meeting the unique needs of homeless families. Win child care staff participate in on-going training and coaching provided by Bank Street College of Education to build knowledge and applied skills in early childhood areas, including: developmental milestones; emotionally responsive curriculum, including the “Unsmiling Faces” lesson plan and the “Teddy Bear” curriculum; and, inviting, containing, and responding to difficult behaviors, among others.

Shelter-based childcare is an opportunity to provide children the long-term

benefits of developmentally appropriate, trauma informed care. It also affords homeless moms who are contending with trauma a needed sense of safety and support. Community and interpersonal violence is an unfortunate theme in the lives of many homeless families, with a disproportionately high number of homeless moms experiencing domestic violence. Shelter-based child care allows moms to leave their children in a familiar “home”, with social service and security staff they have relationships with.

CHILD CARE AND THE WORK OF LEAVING SHELTER

In addition to providing the long-term benefits of developmentally appropriate, trauma informed care, shelter-based child care meets an immediate, practical need. When a mom is placed at a homeless shelter with her children, she often arrives to an unfamiliar neighborhood far from her home community and support networks, separated from the formal and informal child care arrangements she relied on. She also arrives to new and immediate demands on her time that do not wait while child care options are identified and required paperwork assembled, submitted, and approved. Shelter-based child care is a critical resource for stabilizing families when they first arrive at shelter, as well as for allowing moms who work to maintain their employment and income despite the disruption homelessness can create.

Beyond arrival, much of the work of leaving shelter for permanent housing involves obligations such as viewing apartments, appointments for healthcare services, meetings with counselors, court hearings (just to name a few), coupled with maintaining or securing employment. Most of these obligations, appointments, and meetings are not appropriate for or open to children

and often arise on short notice or at unexpected times. Shelter-based child care provides moms the flexibility to respond to unexpected and changing opportunities and responsibilities by providing a hassle-free option in a safe, healthy space with experienced staff qualified to provide trauma-informed, developmentally appropriate care and activities.

COMMUNITY-BASED CHILD CARE

Shelter-based child care not only provides long-term benefits and immediate services and flexibility for homeless families, it also bridges the gap families face in accessing community-based child care. Child care from a licensed provider in the community may be an appropriate option for many homeless families, but many families face financial and availability obstacles to accessing it. On average, children attending Win shelter-based child care spend more than ten hours a week in care. Win child care fulfills varied needs, with children spending a minimum of three hours in Win child care in a given week in July 2017, and a maximum of thirty hours that same week. Given wide range in need, regulations that cap hours of service would not work for homeless families.

Child care seats are scarce in the communities where family shelters are located. Based on the licensed centers listed on the NYC Department of Health (DOHMH) resource website, sixty-five child care centers are located in the neighborhoods where Win shelters serve nearly 600 child care aged children (under the age of five). Relative to the number of children staying in a Win shelter, few

licensed centers provide community-based child care and even fewer have open seats for children with a subsidy. Based on a representative, point-in-time phone survey of the licensed child care centers listed on the DOHMH website as located near Win shelters, approximately 60 percent of child care centers do not have any open seats. Table 1 below presents a summary of survey findings.

Table 1: Child Care Centers Accepting Subsidies Without Available Seats Near Win Shelters*

	Child care aged children at Win shelter	DOHMH listed child care centers	Centers with <u>no</u> open seats	Percentage of centers with no open slots
East Flatbush	96	9	6	66%
Harlem	154	9	6	66%
Astoria	43	10	9	90%
Central Brooklyn	247	18	6	33%
South Bronx	19	7	5	71%
East Tremont	30	23	13	56%
TOTAL ACROSS WIN	589	76	45	59%

*Information was gathered via a phone survey of all licensed child care centers listed on the DOHMH website as located in the communities where Win shelters are located. Only centers accepting a child care subsidy are included.



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In Harlem, where more than 150 child care aged children stay at Win shelters each night, there are nine licensed child care centers. Each child care center would have to serve about 16 homeless children from Win shelters alone, which does not account for all homeless families in the community. Yet only three out of nine licensed child care centers in Harlem had an open seat. In Central Brooklyn, twelve out of eighteen licensed child care centers near Win shelters had open seats at the time of the survey. If each of the 247 child care aged children staying at Win homeless shelters in Central Brooklyn needed child care at the time of the survey, each center with an opening would need to have seats to accommodate about 20 homeless children.

The dearth of available slots is especially notable for infants and toddlers, for which there is the greatest need among Win families. Children under two years of age represent the majority (approximately 54 percent) of child care aged children in Win shelter. Out of the 65 child care centers located near a Win shelter, only six had vacancies for children under the age of two. Further, **infant and toddler spots were only available in two of the six neighborhoods where Win shelters are located.** For example, in Harlem, where over 100 children under the age of two sleep in a Win shelter, there are no child care slots available for infants and toddlers (under the age of 2).



In some neighborhoods like East Flatbush there are no child care centers that serve children under the age of 2.

Table 2: Child Care Centers Accepting Subsidies with Available Seats for Infants and Toddlers

	Children age 2 & under at Win shelter	Centers with at least one slot for children under 2	Children ages 3 and 4 at a Win shelter	Centers w/ at least one open seat for 3-4 yr olds
East Flatbush	53	0	43	3
Harlem	107	0	47	3
Astoria	16	0	27	1
Central Brooklyn	123	3	124	9
South Bronx	6	0	13	2
East Tremont	13	3	17	7
TOTAL	318	6	271	25

* Information was gathered via a phone survey of all licensed child care centers listed on the DOHMH website as located in the communities where Win shelters are located. Only centers accepting a child care subsidy are included.

INELIGIBILITY FOR CHILD CARE SUBSIDIES

Approximately 720 homeless families in Win shelter do not meet eligibility requirements for a child care subsidy. This represents an estimated 275 homeless young children whose families are not eligible for a child care subsidy, which is nearly 47 percent of all child care aged children in Win shelter.

Homeless families' access to community-based child care is also constrained by subsidy eligibility requirements. Being homeless does not itself qualify a family for a child care subsidy. In order to qualify, a homeless parent must have an active public assistance case and must be eligible to work. Families sometimes experience delays or sanctions in their public assistance case due to issues related to documentation requirements or a missed appointment, among others. Additionally, **some homeless families may not be eligible for public assistance based on their immigration status.** If a parent experiences a delay or sanction and is not receiving public assistance, or receives assistance but is exempt from work, which can be the result of a disability, for example, the family is not eligible for a child care subsidy.

Based on Win data, approximately 720

homeless families in Win shelter do not meet eligibility requirements for a child care subsidy. This represents an estimated 275 homeless young children whose families are not eligible for a child care subsidy, which is nearly 47 percent of all child care aged children in Win shelter. Without a subsidy, these homeless families cannot afford community-based child care while also saving to move their family out of shelter. Without the on-site child care Win provides for its families at each shelter, the 275 young children whose families are not eligible for a subsidy will not have access to the socialization, developmental support, and trauma informed care that quality child care provides. Additionally, the 720 families ineligible for a child care subsidy would not have access to safe, quality care for their young children while parents work, look for housing, receive social services, and take other steps necessary for moving out of shelter.

Without the on-site child care Win provides for its families at each shelter, the 275 young children whose families are not eligible for a subsidy will not have access to the socialization, developmental support, and trauma informed care that quality child care provides.

CONCLUSION

Shelter-based child care provides homeless children with specialized care that addresses the effects of homelessness and facilitates healthy socialization and development. It also provides homeless parents with quality, flexible care that they often cannot access outside of shelter. Breaking the cycle of homelessness requires services that are tailored to meet the unique needs, strengths, and circumstances of homeless families with children as they work toward a brighter future. For most homeless families with children, ten hours of shelter-based child care is not sufficient to meet their needs. Limiting the resources available to families without other options makes it harder to leave shelter and is a missed opportunity to provide the long-term benefits of specialized early childhood care.

All child care must meet high standards of safety and provide nurturing, supportive environment for young children while parents work and fulfill other obligations. To ensure homeless families have access to needed shelter-based child care, DOHMH must provide time and resources to support the transition into the new rules. Further, high-quality shelter-based child care should remain open during the transition to continue to provide these vital services to vulnerable families.



Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness
for Women and their Children

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thousands of NYC homeless families.

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