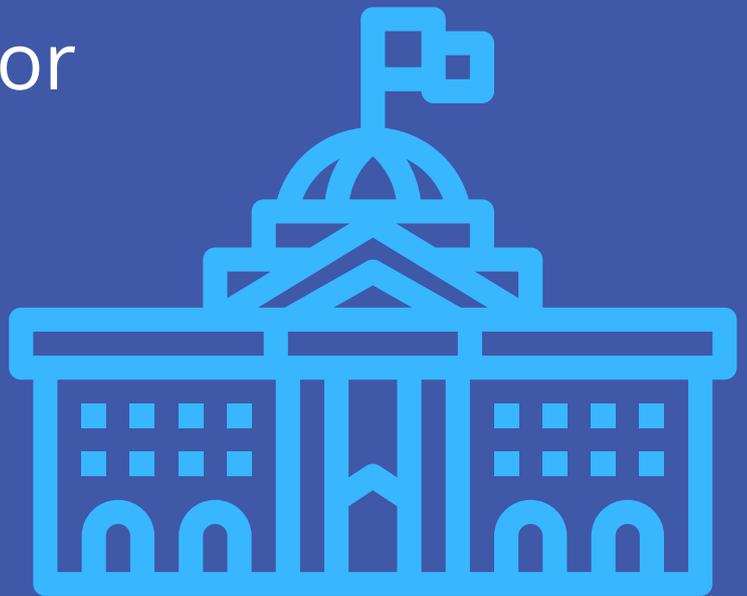


DECEMBER 2021
WIN POLICY BRIEF SERIES

Every Family Housed

The first steps for
the next mayor



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Generous support for the report was provided by Trinity Church Wall Street Philanthropies. The content reflects the views of the authors and does not represent an endorsement by Trinity Church Wall Street Philanthropies.

Introduction

With 35 years of experience serving families with children in shelter and in supportive housing, Win has seen New York City take the wrong approach to understanding and addressing the family homelessness crisis. The consequences of this wrong approach are manifold and devastating for the families and children who have no choice but to turn to broken systems. New York City needs to make far-reaching reforms that encompass how agencies plan, organize, coordinate, invest, and prioritize, both within agencies and across them. Real change is overdue.

Deep and meaningful change is only possible with the leadership, focus, and action that a mayor can bring to bear. Win has developed a [blueprint](#) for how Mayor Elect Adams can correct the errors of the past and bring an end to family homelessness. We are committed to working alongside the Mayor to implement the meaningful reforms that will end family homelessness. Here we delve with greater detail into the operational changes needed to create the conditions to tackle this problem.

I. Ending homelessness begins with a new approach led by City Hall.

Goals dictate actions. At City Hall, for far too long, the goal has been to manage homelessness, not end it. New York City's homelessness crisis can be solved if Mayor Elect Adams makes ending, not managing, homelessness an explicit, priority goal that flows down from the top, across city agencies and deputy mayors. Realizing that goal will require the alignment of city government toward ending homelessness. That means replacing the current silos with coordinated cross-agency efforts and bigger investment in our social safety net. The Mayor must also place New Yorkers with experience with homelessness at the center of efforts, making clear that city leaders cannot end homelessness without the involvement of those who have experienced it.

Fundamentals and initial steps the next mayor must lead:

Ending homelessness begins with appointing a high ranking official to do it.

To tackle a problem of the magnitude of New York City's homelessness crisis, the operational, policy, budgetary, and other shifts that are necessary will require a clear mandate from, and accountability to, the very top. Mayor Elect Adams first step toward ending homelessness must be to appoint a high ranking official to

direct and coordinate the integration of homelessness-ending strategies and goals into the fabric of every city agency. An appointed official charged with ending homelessness must be given the authority to set budget priorities and direct deputy mayors and commissioners to establish goals, metrics, and procedures that are aligned across agencies and that contribute to ending homelessness.

This will establish ending homelessness as a priority goal for every agency and will create accountability for achieving it. It will also make possible coordination across agencies, which have operated with siloed and sometimes duplicative efforts that are inefficient and ineffective. This position could be structured as a new position reporting directly to the mayor or it could be the responsibility of the first deputy mayor, who then supervises a person dedicated solely to leading this effort.

A chief to end homelessness will:

Signal ending homelessness is a priority for the Mayor

Direct the deputy mayors to integrate ending homelessness into their plans and goals

Create accountability

Ending homelessness is a multifaceted goal that requires every city agency.

The city's current approach to homelessness has been run out of the Department of Homeless Services (DHS). DHS is a social service agency tasked with providing shelter to eligible families and individuals, and with connecting homeless households with needed social services. DHS is not designed or equipped to end homelessness alone. Homeless shelters are a needed response to homelessness, but they will never end it alone.

Ending homelessness requires access to quality, stable housing; to affordable health and mental health services; to childcare and education; and, access to justice. Each one of the many government agencies in the city that address these issues must be enlisted explicitly in the fight to end homelessness. Not only are these

agencies needed to help meet this shared goal, but the goals of each agency depend on it. The failure to stem the homelessness crisis is undermining the individual goals of these agencies. We must develop a system that acknowledges and acts on the fact that housing stability, economic wellbeing, health, education, and safety are all inextricably linked. The range of agencies that work with people experiencing housing instability all have a role to play in this solution. The City Hall appointed official discussed above must convene a cross-agency working group to write a city-wide agenda that incorporates ending homelessness into the plans of each relevant city agency.

All must work together to *identify touchpoints for intervention* and to **provide the resources** families need to remain housed. This includes the major systems families interact with including:

- Department of Education
- NYC Health + Hospitals
- Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
- Department of Youth and Community Development
- Human Resources Administration
- Administration for Children's Services
- Housing and planning agencies
- Small Business Services and the other agencies/offices involved in workforce development
- Department of Corrections
- Civil and criminal courts
- New York Police Department

By accurately describing homelessness as a citywide problem, and framing ending homelessness as a citywide objective that every agency must play an active role in achieving, the next administration can infuse this goal into the

operations of the range of agencies needed to truly move the needle. This will not only reduce homelessness but also result in better

One Way the Department of Corrections Can Help End Homelessness

Before people are released from NYC jails, the DOC should work with other city agencies to identify and secure the housing option they are being released to, and to put in place an aftercare plan to access supports needed for housing stability.

One Way the Department of Education Can Help End Homelessness

Schools can function as resource hubs. Affirmative outreach through schools should be the norm to make parents experiencing housing vulnerability aware of resources offered by other agencies such as HRA, HPD, and DHS and to provide a mechanism for accessing resources.

One Way the Department of City Planning Can Help End Homelessness

Land use applications should be reviewed with an eye towards whether they increase or decrease housing supply. Projects that increase the availability of low-income housing should be streamlined and fast-tracked for approvals.

outcomes across our city's human service agencies.

Ending homelessness will require bigger investments in housing, services, and our social safety net, and commitment to advocating for resources from the state and federal governments.

Homelessness is an economic insecurity problem that requires both housing and income-support solutions. People experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity must have access to services that will make it possible for them to remain stably housed in the long-term, with enough support to help them weather the challenges that so often destabilize families – a mental health or physical health crisis, a child or adult family member in need of care, a job or income loss. Ending homelessness means providing the supports people need to stay housed even during tough periods. To achieve this goal, the next mayor will need to make this a budget priority for the city budget and including it in the city's state and federal legislative and budgetary agendas. Existing opportunities to garner support include the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) that has been proposed in Albany, as well as the Universal Section 8 proposal put forth in Washington D.C. Once in office, Mayor Adams should begin to build his state and federal agendas with these proposals.

Government can tackle the hardest problems when priorities are clear, resources are available, and efforts are aligned. The next mayor can end homelessness by creating these conditions.

II. The work city agencies must do to end homelessness.

With a clear directive in place from City Hall, city agencies will need to do the work of aligning programs, policies, and resources with what works for ending homelessness. This will require three fundamental shifts in the city's response, which [Win's Blueprint to End Family Homelessness](#) details.

Reorient housing resources to work for the lowest income New Yorkers.

Expand and target housing resources to meet the needs of the New Yorkers who struggle most to pay the rent.

- Rental assistance is a powerful tool for ending homelessness; fix the issues that limit its effectiveness.
- Commit to substantial investments in subsidized housing: create deeply affordable housing, supportive housing, and invest in NYCHA.
- Create at least 8,000 units a year for extremely low income (ELI) renters.
- Set aside 3,000 of the ELI units annually for homeless households.
- Invest in 2,000 units a year of permanent supportive housing.
- Invest \$1.5 billion to restore and preserve NYCHA.

Recalibrate benefits and expand services to prevent homelessness.

Investing in communities is homelessness prevention. Community based services help families sustain housing after leaving shelter or avoid shelter in the first place.

Ending homelessness means that every low-income New Yorker has access to:

- Affordable, reliable child care;
- Quality health care, including clinical mental health and behavioral health services;
- Jobs with fair pay, including workforce development and other ladders to opportunity.

Redesign homeless services to be trauma-informed and human centered.

Adopt a new approach to the **people** experiencing homelessness in order to recognize and correct the racism and sexism that creates and perpetuates homelessness.

- Eliminate distrustful and punitive policies, program rules, and requirements.
- Replace politicized performance metrics with person-centered indicators that reflect housing stability and family well-being.
- Establish upstream, trauma-informed interventions that prevent homelessness and support healing.

Win's [Blueprint to End Family Homelessness](#) provides additional details and context for these recommendations, which are based on the expertise of Win families and Win staff.

Now is the time for bold leadership.

Mayor Adams will be leading a city recovering and healing from deep economic, social, and personal devastation. And despite being in the midst of those challenges, over the past 18 months, the city also confronted racism and demanded justice with a force not seen in decades. To continue the failed approaches of the past would be a betrayal of the New Yorkers who have lost so much and fought for so much since this pandemic hit. The Mayor has the opportunity to radically break from business as usual to bring about greater equity, opportunity, and quality of life for all New Yorkers. This break begins as he builds his administration, picking leaders who will play a central role in shaping the agenda and conditions of the years ahead. Win looks forward to working with the Mayor's team toward a future in which every family is housed.

Additional Resources Needed to End Homelessness

\$2.35 billion of new investment in affordable housing to:

- Create 8,000 units/year affordable to extremely low-income renters, with 3,000 set aside for households leaving homelessness
- Expand supportive housing
- Improve NYCHA

\$200 million added to rental assistance:

- Upstream CityFHEPS so tenants can access vouchers before losing their home

\$960 million in new city spending to expand social services, beginning with:

- Housing search
- Workforce development
- Child care
- Youth development programs
- Equity for the human services workforce



ABOUT WIN

Win is New York City's largest provider of shelter and services for homeless families with children. Across its shelters and supportive housing, Win transforms the lives of New York City's homeless women and their children by providing a holistic solution of safe housing, critical services and innovative programs they need to succeed on their own—so the women can regain their independence and their children can look forward to a brighter future.

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