

# Require Workforce Development in Family Shelter

**SUMMARY:** Reducing Return to Shelter Through Income Building & Workforce Programs.

**Estimated Cost for Income Building Programs in the Family Shelter System: \$41 million.\***

Families experiencing homelessness are often employed. In FY21, 565 people entered a Win shelter while working. But the cost of living for a family is still too high to live independently in New York City without a good paying job. By increasing investment in workforce development programs, NYC can ensure families leaving shelter can pay for their next home. To help families find stability, it's essential that parents can get stable, well-paid jobs and teenagers are supported in pursuing education and have the right skills to enter the workforce. Win recommends legislation requiring the Department of Homeless Services to create, implement, and fully fund income building programs in family shelters for all people 14 years and older to assist with job search, training and education, job retention and advancement, and financial literacy and planning.

**DHS should be directed to annually fund programs for both adults and youth at the following levels for every family shelter provider:**

- **AT LEAST 1 INCOME BUILDING SPECIALIST**  
for every 50 people in shelter age 14 and older
- **AT LEAST 1 SUPERVISOR**  
for every 7 Income Building Specialists
- **AT LEAST 1 JOB DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST**  
for every 10 Income Building Specialists
- **SUPPORT FOR OTHER PROGRAM EXPENSES**  
at a rate of \$10,000/Income Building Specialist (e.g., fees, transportation, attire, supplies, technology)

## THE PROBLEM

Family homelessness is a crisis fueled in large part by the lack of affordable housing. A family's ability to afford housing is a function of the cost of rent and a family's income. Yet, because of government funding requirements, homeless shelter support services focus almost exclusively on the housing side of the equation and neglect income. While state law requires that families in shelter be provided with job training and job placement services, it does not appear that the city has ever dedicated funds specifically to this obligation. So, inadequate funding often results in inadequate programming. Effective workforce development programs in shelter will decrease the amount of time families spend in shelter and increase their chances of staying stably housed once they leave shelter. NYC is squandering an opportunity by not meaningfully helping families with employment during the time they spend in shelter, which, on average, is more than a year.

\* Cost estimate based on shelter occupancy in January 2022. An increase in the number of families in shelter would necessitate an increase in services and funding.

SINCE 2014

**WIN KNOWS THAT OUR INCOME BUILDING PROGRAM WORKS**

**12,400** clients served

**3,668** clients obtained employment

**4,769** clients achieved other employment gains or employment certifications

In the first half of FY22, the average wage gain for people who gained wages was **\$4.09**/hour.

**win**

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# Require Workforce Development in Family Shelter (continued)

## THE SOLUTION

The City Council can help to end family homelessness by ensuring that high-quality workforce development and job training programs are fully funded in family shelters through new legislation.

Since 2014, Win has operated an Income Building program that helps our families achieve their financial and housing goals. Our Income Building Specialists help clients identify job interests, help conduct job searches, assist with resume preparation, and submit applications online. They also prepare for HSE (High School Equivalency) exams, offer support at job fairs, and make connections between our work-ready clients and employers. We also provide financial literacy and budgeting classes and guidance on how to open and manage a bank account. Through partnerships with businesses, Income Building has assisted clients in obtaining employment in a variety of industries. Some notable employers include: **Hotel Trades Council** (with whom we negotiated a multiyear relationship), **Brookfield Place, Amazon, various Charter Schools, City MD** (Medical Assistant), **NYC Health + Hospitals** (Certified Nursing Assistant), **NY Presbyterian Hospital** (Certified Nursing Assistant), **LaGuardia Airport**, and the **DOE/New York School Supportive Services** for maintenance and teaching positions. We also assist clients with the logistics for childcare, transportation, and appropriate attire, as well as with fees associated with job certifications, applications, and tests.

Prior to COVID, each client in our Income Building program was invited to attend onsite Win-sponsored and external job fairs where they met with representatives from targeted industries (now these fairs are remote). For example, in 2019, Win partnered with the Department of Labor (DOL) to host a Job Fair at our Junius location. Over 15 employers attended, including Nike, and over 100 clients from our 12 locations participated. We also partnered with the DOL to have their staff at our largest site weekly to support the job search process, the first ever DOL office in a homeless shelter.

Our team also works with youth aged 14 to 21 to help them pursue educational and employment-related goals, including helping them apply for internships, assistance with college searches, applications, and financial aid applications, and help obtaining employment. Win has helped over 200 students graduate high school and get accepted to college over the past four years, in part with the support of a scholarship program we developed with Kelly Ripa and Mark Consuelos. This is a vital component of our program because of the many well-documented challenges that homeless youth face pursuing their educational and vocational goals.

DHS budgets force us to choose between funding income building and other critical social services; other shelter providers choose to prioritize other important services, meaning they spend even less on employment services. **Win has been able to provide a robust program only because over 50% is paid for by private fundraising.** And, as effective as our program is, with additional resources to reach industry standards for caseload coverage and to add Job Development Specialists to our team, we could make a difference in the financial future and housing security of many more families.

With city funding to support adequate income building programs, the staff at all family shelters could ensure that homeless youth and adults have access to the support they need to make real employment gains, pursue college education, or prepare for stable career tracks. Improving the financial health and stability of NYC's homeless families is a critical component of preventing the return to shelter, and it deserves its fair share of funding.