

Domestic violence is the [#1 cause](#) of family homelessness in New York City. While the [City Fighting Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Supplement \(CityFHEPS\)](#) program has been a lifeline for domestic violence survivors and other New Yorkers in need of rental assistance, and there have been some recent system improvements, significant issues remain that delay move-ins, prolong shelter stays, frustrate landlords, and seriously threaten housing stability.

The following recommendations do not address every concern or opportunity for improvement, but they reflect some of the most significant and/or consistent issues experienced by New Destiny's clients and the navigators supporting them in their housing search. New Destiny is ready to partner with the city to effectively address these hurdles.

1. Implement the Set of Laws Passed to Expand CityFHEPS

The sooner the administration complies with the 2025 court ruling and implements the set of laws passed by the City Council in 2023, the faster we can reduce the number of households entering shelter. This will not only save funding from the expensive shelter system, but it will help save the lives of domestic violence survivors without a shelter history.

2. Invest in Housing Navigation to Expedite Placements

Utilize the services of housing providers who have navigation experience and can focus solely on finding voucher holders safe, affordable homes. This will help move people out of shelter faster and lift the burden of housing search assistance off the shoulders of shelter staff who do not have the capacity, skill set, and/or experience. This would involve:

- a. Contracting with housing providers to offer navigation and time-limited aftercare to ensure voucher utilization and long-term stability — modeled after New Destiny's successful [EHV Program](#). This is an enormous cost-saving measure, costing only \$4,250 per household placed, about 4% of the average annual shelter costs for a family with children.
- b. Making these housing navigation providers, plus HUD Continuum of Care funded navigation providers, *DSS Qualifying Providers* with *full access* to CurRENT and other systems (i.e. akin to Homebase providers' access).
- c. Where possible, contracting with population-specific providers that can offer the experience, wraparound services and service networks, specific to their needs.

3. Remove Unnecessary Disruptions to Receiving the Voucher for Move-In

Currently, move-ins are often delayed for months due to inconsequential changes to a CityFHEPS eligible household circumstance, triggering a new letter or type of voucher. This could be improved by:

- a. Allowing CityFHEPS eligibility and tenant share to be valid for at least one year to prevent disruptions in housing search and applications and/or allow for changes post-move since it will almost never affect eligibility.
- b. Avoiding shifting households from CityFHEPS to FHEPS, i.e. when they are cycling between shelter and "community" but without a permanent home yet. It is a difference without distinction and has the adverse effect of significantly disrupting moves.

4. Urgently Invest in Technology

Many of the delays with CityFHEPS could be improved through technology, specifically by automating more elements, increasing visibility, and reducing system glitches. This should include:

a. Modeling online application packages after the Section 8 program to increase transparency for applicants and landlords and allow for quick correction of minor errors, like typos. Additionally:

i. Utilizing online, fillable forms to ensure that information is not left blank.

ii. Ensure tenants and landlords can see lease-up status in real-time and sign documents electronically.

b. Making shopping letters directly accessible to voucher holders through a user-friendly online portal and, with client consent, giving viewing access to their navigators.

c. Identifying and mitigating the most common system glitches that stop payments and cause unnecessary arrears and eviction proceedings. Currently, the most frequent disruption is at the 4-month mark, the point at which landlords should start automatically receiving the rental subsidy and shelter allowance portions.

d. Creating a landlord portal that allows information to be saved for future use.

5. Reduce Length of Time to Submit Packages through Interagency Data Integration

By allowing DSS digital access to any documentation generated by, or already collected by, other city agencies, such as deeds, and not requiring providers to submit documentation initially generated within the DSS system.

6. Expedite the Inspection Process

The move-in timeframe could also be reduced by various improvements to the inspection process, including:

a. Passing and implementing Intro 1458 (Brewer), which offers solutions for quick fixes, documentation of inspection results to owners, process for follow-up inspections and virtual verification of repairs, and more.

b. Establishing a seven (7) day timeframe to complete inspections and any re-inspections from the date of request.

c. Meeting the seven (7) day expedited time frame by expanding the workforce responsible for conducting inspections. By implementing a standardized training protocol/certification process for DSS Qualifying Providers, they can perform apartment inspections at no additional cost to the city.

7. Secure Committed Units by Continuing to Provide “Unit Hold” Incentive Payments

With a record low vacancy rate in the city, it is critical to keep families from losing the apartments that were so hard for them to find. To that end, we advise keeping the Unit Hold Incentive for landlords until the median lease-up time is less than one month from the time of initial package submission (i.e., not from final package submission since that doesn't capture the months of delays while packets are getting rejected for immaterial reasons).

