



## 2021 NYC Policy Priorities

### Homelessness and Domestic Violence in New York

Domestic violence has long been the number one driver of family homelessness in New York City, with 41% of families entering shelter because of abuse.<sup>1</sup> Despite the scale of this crisis, domestic violence survivors and their children traditionally have not had equitable access to housing resources. This inequity plays a significant role in perpetuating the cyclical nature of homelessness and abuse.

COVID-19 has brought a renewed sense of urgency to the plight of survivors. Stay-at-home orders forced survivors to make the impossible choice between shelter or remaining with their abusers. In New York State, there has been a 67% increase in calls to the Domestic Violence Hotline.<sup>2</sup> In New York City, the domestic violence resource website, NYC Hope, saw a 110% increase in traffic when COVID-19 first took hold.<sup>3</sup>

As we emerge from the pandemic, New York City will face a precipitous rise in survivors and their children seeking housing that is safe from abuse. We must take steps to better meet this moment.

### Proposed Solutions

New Destiny recognizes there are many root causes for family homelessness and that there is no single solution. However, adopting these four recommendations would significantly expand access to housing for domestic violence survivors and put the City on the path to effectively ending homelessness for this population.

#### Open the Door to HPD Homeless Set-Aside Units

NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) creates a critical pipeline from shelter to permanent housing for homeless New Yorkers by requiring most developers who receive their funding to set aside at least 15% of their units for homeless households. **While this program creates over 2,000 homeless set-aside units annually, none of them are made available to homeless families living in the Human Resource Administration's (HRA) domestic violence shelters.**<sup>4</sup> Currently, the administration only allows individuals and families in the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelter system to access these units. *New Destiny urges the City to allow HRA shelter residents equal access to this housing.*

#### Level the Playing Field for Homeless Families Looking for Housing with a Local Rental Subsidy

Currently, most homeless families, including domestic violence survivors, need a rental subsidy to afford housing in New York. The City created a local rental subsidy, CityFHEPS, to help meet this need but, by including a severe income limitation, a time limit, and a static rent amount, 29% less than what the competing Section 8 voucher offers, few families are able to use it. The majority of City Council Members have co-sponsored a bill, **Intro 146-B**, that would eliminate these deficiencies with CityFHEPS and set the rent in accordance with Section 8 rates. Housing a family for

41%

% of families that report domestic violence as primary reason for entering shelter

18,941

# of New Yorkers that entered shelter due to domestic violence in a single year<sup>7</sup>

0

# of HPD homeless units made available to domestic violence survivors in HRA shelter

CityFHEPS is worth today what Section 8 was worth in

2005<sup>8</sup>

89%

% of survivors in domestic violence shelter who are Black or Latinx<sup>9</sup>

96%

% of survivors in domestic violence shelter who are women<sup>10</sup>

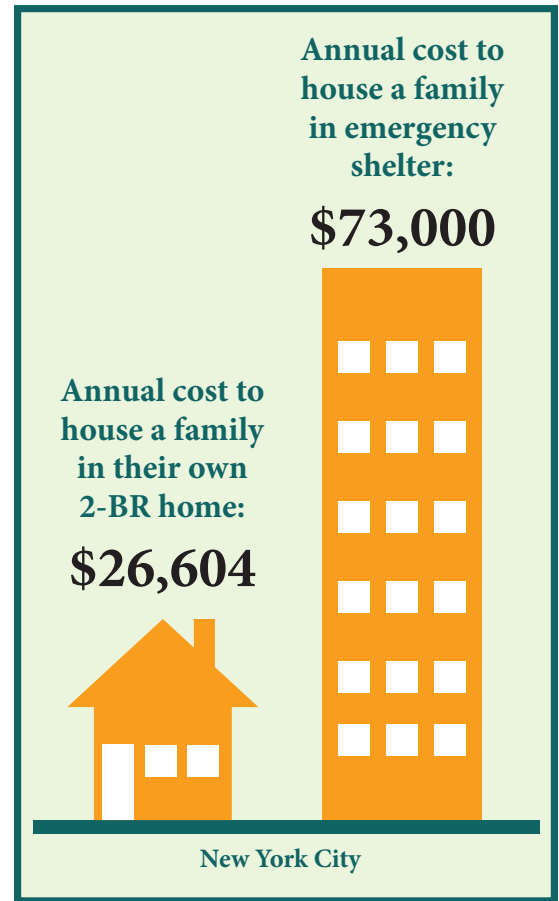
one year in emergency shelter costs the city approximately \$73,000,<sup>5</sup> whereas housing a family at Section 8 rates costs only \$26,604.<sup>6</sup> If raising the subsidy rate reduces the time it takes for families to leave shelter by even a few weeks, the program will pay for itself in shelter savings. *New Destiny encourages the City Council to pass Intro 146-B immediately.*

### Bring Sunlight & Accountability to the Domestic Violence Homeless System

While the DHS shelter system is required to maintain a daily census, the number of people living in HRA's domestic violence shelters is only reported once a year. This lack of ongoing available data hides from view some of the City's most vulnerable people, including homeless domestic violence survivors, individuals living on the street, homeless youth, homeless individuals living with HIV/AIDS and those in HPD's shelter system. This results in budget and policy decisions focused on those that are in the public view, with less attention and accountability for those that are not. *New Destiny urges the City to include all homeless New Yorkers in its daily homeless census.*

### Create \$10M Innovation Fund

While survivors become housing unstable because of domestic violence, there is no single solution for regaining that stability. Communities across the country have been developing agile approaches to housing survivors of domestic violence and preventing their homelessness. This includes Rapid Rehousing, Flexible Funding, Housing Navigators, and Transition in Place programs. *New Destiny encourages the City to develop a \$10M Innovation Fund to support emerging best practices that mitigate or avoid the trauma of homelessness for survivors and their children.*



To effectively end homelessness, government needs to address the institutional racism and sexism that has contributed to this epidemic and disproportionately affected women and people of color; invest in the anti-poverty programs that prevent homelessness in the first place; and realign its housing production priorities to meet the needs of the poorest New Yorkers. To that end, New Destiny also supports various coalition-based platforms, including those of the **Family Homelessness Coalition** and the **New York Housing Conference**, and urges City leadership to prioritize extremely low-income housing and homelessness programs in their funding requests to federal and state governments.

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### References

- 1 NYC Comptroller, Housing Survivors: How New York City Can Increase Housing Stability for Survivors of Domestic Violence, 2019, [comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/housing-survivors/](https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/housing-survivors/), accessed 2/1/2021.
- 2 NYS Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (OPDV).
- 3 Safe Horizon, Visits to New York City's Domestic Violence Website Surged Amid Coronavirus Pandemic, [www.safehorizon.org/safe-horizon-in-the-news/nyc-domestic-violence-website-visits-coronavirus-pandemic/](https://www.safehorizon.org/safe-horizon-in-the-news/nyc-domestic-violence-website-visits-coronavirus-pandemic/), accessed 1/29/2021.
- 4 NYC Dept. of Housing Preservation and Development, The Housing Plan, [www1.nyc.gov/site/hpd/about/the-housing-plan.page](https://www1.nyc.gov/site/hpd/about/the-housing-plan.page), accessed 1/29/2021. Units include both homeless set-aside and supportive housing units.
- 5 NYC Mayor's Management Report, FY 2020.
- 6 The new Section 8 rate amount is \$2217 per month. Source: [www1.nyc.gov/assets/nycha/downloads/pdf/Section-8-HCV-VPS-NYC-Gov-Version-2021.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/nycha/downloads/pdf/Section-8-HCV-VPS-NYC-Gov-Version-2021.pdf).
- 7 NYC Comptroller, Housing Survivors: How New York City Can Increase Housing Stability for Survivors of Domestic Violence, 2019, [comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/housing-survivors/](https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/housing-survivors/), accessed 2/1/2021.
- 8 Based on CityFHEPS voucher of \$1,580/month and Section 8 voucher of \$2,217/month.
- 9, 10 NYC Comptroller, Housing Survivors: How New York City Can Increase Housing Stability for Survivors of Domestic Violence, 2019, [comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/housing-survivors/](https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/housing-survivors/), accessed 2/1/2021.