

**LOCAL LAWS
OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK
FOR THE YEAR 2017**

No. 217

Introduced by Council Members Espinal, Johnson, Levin, Palma, Chin, Cohen, Rosenthal and Menchaca.

A LOCAL LAW

To amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to a record of the unsheltered homeless population

Be it enacted by the Council as follows:

Section 1. Chapter 3 of title 21 of the administrative code of the city of New York is amended by adding a new section 21-319 to read as follows:

§ 21-319 Unsheltered homeless population record. a. Definitions. For the purposes of this section, the following terms have the following meanings:

Outreach staff. The term “outreach staff” means department staff or staff contracted by the department to contact and offer services to the unsheltered homeless population.

Unsheltered homeless person. The term “unsheltered homeless person” means an individual with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

b. To the extent such information is provided voluntarily, the department shall maintain a record of all unsheltered homeless persons who are receiving services from or have been contacted by outreach staff, which shall be updated in real time and shall contain, to the extent available: first and last name, date of birth, race or ethnicity, and the location where outreach

staff engaged the unsheltered homeless person, including but not be limited to, bus shelter, drop-in center, hospital, park, safe haven or subway. No later than September 1, 2018, and quarterly thereafter, the department shall submit to the speaker of the council and post online the total number of unsheltered homeless persons included in the record required pursuant to this subdivision, disaggregated to the extent available by the location where outreach staff first engaged the unsheltered homeless person.

§ 2. This local law takes effect immediately.

THE CITY OF NEW YORK, OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK, s.s.:

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true copy of a local law of The City of New York, passed by the Council on October 31, 2017 and returned unsigned by the Mayor on December 5, 2017.

MICHAEL M. McSWEENEY, City Clerk, Clerk of the Council.

CERTIFICATION OF CORPORATION COUNSEL

I hereby certify that the form of the enclosed local law (Local Law No. 217 of 2017, Council Int. No. 1066-A of 2016) to be filed with the Secretary of State contains the correct text of the local law passed by the New York City Council, presented to the Mayor and neither approved nor disapproved within thirty days thereafter.

STEVEN LOUIS, Acting Corporation Counsel.

December 2020 Report (reflecting July, August, and September of 2020)

Pursuant to Local Law 217 of 2017 to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to a record of the unsheltered homeless population, the Department of Homeless Services respectfully submits the report below.

In 2017, we announced our Turning the Tide (TtT) plan to transform the City’s approach to providing shelter, by putting people and communities first. Our plan accomplishes this goal by ending decades-old stop-gap measures like the 20-year use of ineffective cluster shelter sites and the practice of renting commercial hotel rooms, which dates back, on and off, to the 1960s. Instead, through our plan, we are opening a smaller number of new borough-based shelters to help families and individuals stay connected to the anchors of life – such as schools, jobs, health care, families and houses of worship – as they get back on their feet.

With significant investments, over the past year, we have been implementing our transformation plan – while at the same time making sure in the short-term that we provide shelter each night to the families and individuals who turn to us for help as required by the right to shelter guaranteed in New York City.

DHS’s transformative plan is built on four core pillars: preventing homelessness in the first place whenever we can; **bringing people in from the streets and subways 24/7**; rehousing people experiencing homelessness; and transforming the haphazard approach to providing shelter and services that has built up over the past four decades.

As we have testified previously, the average monthly census for DHS shelters increased 115 percent from 1994 into 2014 – rising from 23,868 men, women, and children in January 1994, to 31,009 in January 2002, and 51,470 in January 2014. But after nearly four decades of an ever-increasing homeless population in NYC, the de Blasio administration has finally broken the trajectory of growth in homelessness; and, while we know we have more work to do, with the new programs, reforms, and investments we are implementing, we are headed in the right direction, holding the DHS census essentially flat year over year in 2017, 2018, and 2019 for the first time in a decade and driving down the census over the past year.

Without the initiatives that we have been implementing, we projected that the current DHS census would be in excess of 71,000 instead of below the 54,000 level where it is today. We’ve also made progress driving down the number of families experiencing homelessness and residing in shelter on any given night, with the peak number of individuals across those families declining by more than 10,000 between 2014 and today. At the same time, through the initiatives outlined below, we’ve already shrunk

the NYCDHS shelter footprint by approximately 29 percent—well on our way towards our goal of shrinking the footprint by 45 percent overall—by getting out of more than 200 locations that did not meet our standards and siting a smaller number of borough-based shelters, down to approximately 459 locations from the 647 reported in TtT.

Addressing Street Homelessness – Bringing People Inside

HOME-STAT: 24/7/365 Outreach

The most comprehensive outreach program in the nation, HOME-STAT (Homeless Outreach & Mobile Engagement Street Action Teams) encapsulates all of New York City’s street homeless outreach efforts, from 24/7/365 in-field/on-streets outreach and engagement across the five boroughs, to case management, to dedicated facilities and tailored services.

Overall, we have quintupled the City’s investment in street homeless programs, increasing from approximately \$45 million in FY14 to more than \$240 million.

At the same time, we have made unprecedented investments in strengthening and expanding outreach programs citywide over the past several years. Between 2016 and 2019, we tripled the number of low-barrier beds dedicated to better serving our individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness, increasing the citywide total from 600 beds in 2014 to more than 1800 as of December 2019.

One year ago, in December 2019, we announced our “Journey Home” action plan to double down on the progress we’ve made through HOME-STAT. Since the launch of Journey Home/ since the start of 2020, we’ve done exactly that and more, especially as our City has responded to the unprecedented and unexpected COVID-19 pandemic aggressively and with urgency at a scale and speed never before seen, including: opening more than 1,200 specialized new beds this year alone dedicated to serving New Yorkers who have lived unsheltered, including Safe Haven beds and stabilization beds, which we have established in commercial hotel settings, with another 100+ opening within the next month ahead of winter – and hundreds more opening in the coming months and years.

Through these investments, programs, and enhanced efforts, including a near-tripling of the number of outreach staff canvassing the streets 24/7/365 from fewer than 200 staff in 2013 to nearly 600 citywide, our City has helped more than 3,000 New Yorkers experiencing unsheltered homelessness come in off the streets and subways from the streets into transitional programs or permanent housing.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to ending homelessness. With a dedicated not-for-profit provider for each borough (the Manhattan Outreach Consortium, led by CUCS working with Goddard Riverside and Breaking Ground, in Manhattan; Breaking Ground in Brooklyn and Queens; BronxWorks in the Bronx; and Project Hospitality on Staten Island; and Bowery Residents Committee (BRC) on the subways), HOME-STAT outreach teams work around the clock across the five boroughs by making regular contact with street homeless New Yorkers: getting to know them, developing trust, and sharing information about the resources available to them.

HOME-STAT outreach teams consist of multi-disciplinary teams working around the clock to seek out individuals living in public spaces, engage them about the resources and supports available to them, and

link them to services with the goal of bringing them indoors, always focused on building relationships with individuals who over time have historically rejected services. Outreach teams are also focused on reaching, engaging, and assisting the most vulnerable of those living outside to ensure they are safe and/or not at risk of injury or death. This health-protection aspect of their role becomes heightened during times of extreme weather. Outreach teams also perform crisis intervention assessments and work on housing placements through ongoing case management and supportive services, which includes connecting clients to medical benefits as they continue to work with these individuals throughout their journey back to permanency/stability. The outreach teams meet people “where they are” both literally and figuratively—whether that means conducting a psychiatric evaluation on a street corner or sending an outreach worker who can speak to a client in his or her native language.

With new collaborative approaches and creative interventions, we intend to achieve the breakthroughs and find the unique pathways off the streets that each of these individuals requires, in partnership with the dedicated, experienced outreach providers who’ve spent time getting to know them, building the trust and relationships that will ultimately change their lives.

HOME-STAT: Compassionate Individualized Engagement, and the By-Name List of Known and Prospective Clients

Central to the HOME-STAT effort, HOME-STAT outreach teams continue to build the City’s first-ever by-name list of individuals known to be homeless and residing on the streets, more effectively enabling the teams to directly and repeatedly engage New Yorkers in need where they are, continually offering supports and case management resources while developing the trust and relationships that will ultimately encourage these individuals to accept services and transition off the streets. This tool allows outreach staff to update client and case information in real time, which may include the client’s first and last name, date of birth, race or ethnicity, the location where outreach staff engaged the unsheltered homeless person, including but not limited to, a bus shelter, drop-in center, hospital, park, safe haven, or subway, and information about the factors that may have contributed to their homelessness.

As part of that by-name list, HOME-STAT outreach teams now know and are actively engaged with approximately 1,900 individuals by name who are confirmed to be homeless and living on the streets. HOME-STAT outreach teams are also continuing to engage another approximately 900 individuals encountered on the streets to evaluate their living situations, determine whether they are homeless, and assess what specific supports they may need.

To this end, pursuant to Local Law 217 of 2017 to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to a record of the unsheltered homeless population, the Department of Homeless Services respectfully submits the report below.

HOME-STAT

Total number of New Yorkers who are—

- (1) known to HOME-STAT outreach teams; AND
- (2) confirmed to be experiencing unsheltered homelessness; AND
- (3) currently being engaged by HOME-STAT outreach teams; AND
- (4) included in the record, also known as the City's 'by-name list' of street homeless individuals

—as of: September 30, 2020.

1,845

	Location of First Engagement	<u>Count</u>
Location of point of first engagement with HOME-STAT outreach teams, to the extent available, for those New Yorkers in the record referenced above—	Delayed Data Entry or No Entry*	381
	Bus Shelter	0
	Drop-In Center (DIC)	15
	Hospital	28
	Social service provider office	56
	Park	99
	Phone	15
	Playground	0
	Ferry Terminal	0
	Street	767
	Subway	450
	Other	34

	Grand Total	1,845**
--	--------------------	----------------

*Delayed Data Entry or No Entry reflects cases wherein HOME-STAT outreach staff either (1) did not enter point of first engagement OR (2) entered data only after successfully helping an individual off the street and into dedicated transitional housing settings, which include Safe Havens, stabilization beds, or faith-based beds, all of which require referrals from HOME-STAT outreach teams.

** For the remaining clients, upon engagement, outreach teams determined they were in need of immediate connections to alternative support settings or care, including detox treatment and emergency medical assistance.