

DHS AND CAMBA “ROLL OUT” NEW MOBILE UNIT IN GRASS ROOTS EFFORT TO HELP STOP HOMELESSNESS BEFORE IT STARTS

New ‘You Can Van’ is a mobile office bringing Homebase prevention services directly to the doorsteps of New Yorkers at high risk of losing their homes.

SEPTEMBER 30, 2015 – The Department of Homeless Services (DHS) in partnership with CAMBA, a New York City multi-service organization based in Brooklyn, launched its “You Can Van” today. Made possible with a private grant given by the Durst Family Foundation, the van in a highly visible RV, outfitted with computers, Wi-Fi and private office space, bringing DHS’ highly effective homeless prevention program, HomeBase, directly to homes and neighborhoods where people are at imminent risk of losing their homes, possibly entering City shelters.

“DHS is excited to collaborate with our community partners in exploring new, innovative approaches aimed at combating homelessness before it even begins” said **DHS Commissioner Gilbert Taylor**. “Providing our highest-risk communities with a visible, accessible platform to help residents understand their options, is critical in meeting our goals to help New Yorkers in need.”

CAMBA is harnessing the van to a data-driven outreach approach, using mapping technology integrated with court-based housing data to identify “Hot Zones” with high concentrations of people at risk of becoming homeless due to eviction. Initially, the van is serving areas in the high-need Bedford-Stuyvesant community of Brooklyn, where evictions are rampant.

Housing counselors and specialists are on board the van to provide assessment for shelter risk, intensive case management services, housing assistance and community-based program referrals such as legal services and benefits advocacy. CAMBA Legal Services staff is available to help with housing court issues, negotiations with landlords and other services that help clients stabilize their housing.

“These innovative new strategies will help address the homeless crisis. Keeping vulnerable families and individuals in their homes – and out of expensive homeless shelters – is far more cost-effective for tax-payers and much less destructive for families,” said **Joanne M. Oplustil, President and CEO of CAMBA**. “The You Can Van represents a unique partnership model: government, nonprofit, philanthropy and private business working together to tackle tough social issues in our community.”

The You Can Van mobilizes DHS’ highly successful HomeBase program, which has a 95% homelessness prevention rate, and is funded by the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) and the City Council. It is expected to reach at least 3,000 people annually and to serve at least 300 families eligible for CAMBA HomeBase services.

“The prospect of homelessness can throw families into a state of overwhelming physical and psychological distress. For help to be meaningful at such a moment, it must be readily available” said **New York City Council Member, Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.** “With this mobile van, Homebase is extending the reach of the helping hand it provides to households at imminent risk. I know that this will mean a great deal and offer a much-needed service to the people of central Brooklyn.”

Pro bono graphic designers Julia Beardwood of Beardwood& Co., and Joe Marianek of Small Stuff, created an eye-catching look for the van, designed to welcome and encourage people facing housing crises who are often afraid or reluctant to seek help.

"If we can help families avoid eviction, it is obviously better for all New Yorkers," said **Julia Beardwood, Partner, Beardwood&Co.** "CAMBA offered us, with our friends at Small Stuff, an irresistible opportunity to use our branding and design skills to help make the van more appealing to people to visit. We're really proud of the You Can Van and looking forward to seeing the difference it can make."

Earlier this week, the de Blasio Administration announced an expansion of legal services for those facing eviction, citing \$12.3 Million to be used for homeless prevention services. This tenant protection program will serve over 113,000 individuals per year when fully implemented.

For more information on the You Can Van and CAMBA Home Base, [click here](#).

CAMBA will post the van's locations and useful resources on Twitter, at @YouCanVan.

About DHS

DHS is one of the largest organizations of its kind committed to preventing and addressing homelessness in New York City. As it engages in this mission, DHS employs a variety of innovative strategies to help families and individuals successfully exit shelter and return to self-sufficiency as quickly as possible. Collaborating with other public agencies and nonprofit partners, DHS works to prevent homelessness before it occurs, reduce street homelessness, and assist New Yorkers in transitioning from shelter into permanent housing.

About CAMBA

CAMBA is a nonprofit organization that provides services that connect people with opportunities to enhance their quality of life. Started in 1977, CAMBA offers integrated services and programs in: Economic Development, Education & Youth Development, Family Support, Health, Housing and Legal Services. CAMBA's HomeBase programs serve 4,000 high-need families annually at four service locations that cover all of Staten Island and the majority of Brooklyn neighborhoods. CAMBA serves more than 45,000 individuals and families, including 9,000 youth, each year. Learn more about CAMBA's life-changing services at www.Camba.org.

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Media Contact: Nicole Cueto (212) 361-7973