2017-2018
Education Plan

Homelessness is a complex social issue that affects communities at every level and is a source of serious concern to federal, state, and local policymakers. The common threads among homeless families and individuals in New York City are poverty, sub-living wages, and lack of affordable housing, factors that contribute to homelessness here more so than they do in many other parts of the country. The Department of Homeless Services (DHS)' mission states **"With our partners, our goal is to prevent homelessness when possible; to provide temporary, emergency shelter when needed; and to help individuals and families transition rapidly into permanent housing. We do this through providing coordinated, compassionate, high-quality services and supports."**

DHS seeks to fulfill this mission through our 2017-2018 Operational Plan. The Operational Plan outlines the Agency's strategy to refocus our efforts to meet the challenges facing New Yorkers who are threatened with housing instability and homelessness. Specifically, this plan enables us to identify long-term sustainable strategies for assisting people in achieving housing self-sufficiency, through use of the existing system of resources and services, established as a safety net to best serve our clients, and to improve case management.

In conjunction, DHS has created an Educational Plan that focuses on improving the educational outcomes of clients, which will help reduce homelessness and improve lives.

This Education Plan is in alignment with our third goal of the DHS Operational Plan, *Shelter,* which focuses on:
- Re-envisioning the models of shelter provided in New York City
- Developing a model of practice that provides a full range of high-quality services and supports in all shelters
- Building strong partnerships with multiple government agencies and community-based organizations to provide services.

The following is an outline of our goals:

- **Improve School Stability:** DHS and the Department of Education (DOE) are collaborating to improve school stability for children. DHS staff have been granted access to the DOE Automate the Schools (ATS) database, in order to better identify the schools in which children are enrolled. As vacancies permit, every effort will be made to place families closer to the youngest child's school of origin.

- **Strengthening the Data-Matching Process:** DHS and DOE are committed to refining the data-matching process, which will help better track and improve school attendance and academic achievements.

- **Increase Ongoing Collaboration and Coordination with DOE's Students in Temporary Housing unit (STH) and Educational Advocates:** This collaboration will support agencies in ensuring that students receive all the services they are entitled to under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. DHS and its partners are coordinating trainings for shelter providers to increase awareness about the importance of education and resources available to shelter staff and DHS families.

- **Prepare Students for Going Back to School:** DHS is collaborating with DOE and Advocates for Children to facilitate an Annual Back-to-School Education Summit, which includes training for shelter providers to prepare DHS clients for the beginning of school. This training will inform shelter staff of procedures and policies related to engaging parents on topics such as school enrollment (e.g., Pre-K for All), McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act services, admission to high schools for families with seventh- and eighth-graders, college and career access, supports for over-age and under-credited students, linkages to Community Schools, and advocacy services.

- **Renew Focus on Early Education:** Our Early Childhood Enrollment will ensure that parents enroll their children in an EarlyLearn or Pre-K for All Program. This coordination with the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) and DOE includes aggressive outreach to better inform families about the benefits of early education.

- **Linking Families to Community-Based Educational Supports:** DHS is partnering with the NYC Children's Cabinet and DOE's Office of Community Schools to connect families and children to available services the lead school CBO provides. We are doing a mapping of the community schools and shelters nearby, as well as the Homebase offices, to identify linkages and build partnerships. Homebase is collaborating with the Office of Community Schools to provide training for DOE staff, CBO staff, parents, and students on a range of homeless prevention services in the community. This way, they'll be better equipped to avoid shelter whenever possible.

- **Increase Literary Programs:** Our pilot program to institute libraries in select family shelter sites makes reading materials available for school-age children and their parents in shelter. To help facilitate, we are linking shelters to volunteers, local public libraries, and other resources.

- **Increase Educational Supports for 14- to 25-Year-Olds:** We are creating stronger coordination with DOE District 79 Alternative Schools and Programs Office to build capacity and raise awareness of the options available to engage youth in meaningful educational and vocational activities. The goal of this partnership is to connect clients to educational services that will help them graduate and to receive services that may lead to internships and college.

- **Promote College Access and Opportunities:** DHS is partnering with DOE's Office of Postsecondary Planning and the City University of New York (CUNY) to increase awareness about events and fairs for DHS clients, as well as supports available to 12th graders. DHS will create various events to encourage DHS clients to attend college, such as the annual celebration of college-bound high school seniors from DHS shelters.

- **Access to Adult Basic Education and Vocational Services:** DHS is coordinating and collaborating with HRA, ACS, and DOE to improve and develop new resources for DHS adult clients and heads of households of families with children in obtaining adult basic education and vocational services.