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**CITY MOVES OVER 850 INDIVIDUALS FROM STREET TO HOUSING THROUGH
INNOVATIVE OUTREACH**

First anniversary of new homeless services approach sees success

New York City Department of Homeless Services Commissioner Robert V. Hess announced today that in the first year of revamped street outreach services, more than 850 individuals have moved from the street to housing. Through an 'outside-the-box' approach and utilization of low-threshold housing known as Safe Havens, dedicated outreach teams have helped the City's most vulnerable restructure their chronic street lifestyles and move to housing.

In September, 2007, DHS restructured the City's approach to street homelessness by developing an effective system of accountability by borough. Funding was allocated in correlation to percentage of street population by borough, and outreach teams reorganized to a single provider overseeing each borough. Direct relationships between providers and DHS, along with key interagency partnerships, have allowed for an efficient system reaching out to those most in need, 24 hours a day across New York City.

"By streamlining the system into single borough providers, we have eliminated bureaucratic red tape and enabled our outreach teams to share information and do what they know best—reduce street homelessness," said Commissioner Hess. "By listening to and learning what those individuals accustomed to the street most need in order to transition back to housing, we have developed an outreach strategy that will make a lasting impact on the City's street homeless population."

A frequent roadblock to placing unsheltered individuals is their rejection of the traditional shelter system. To address that, the City has developed 300 Safe Haven beds over the past year and a half, with the goal of 500 online by June, 2009. Safe Havens are an individualized housing alternative, developed with feedback from the street population who have refused to enter shelter in the past. Safe Havens offer a customized approach, with fewer rules, no curfews and no sobriety requirements for entrance. Clients residing in Safe Havens spent an average seven and a half years on the streets before accepting this tailored housing option. Over the past year, more than 600 chronically homeless individuals were served at Safe Havens, and more than 100 of those clients went on to permanent housing in FY 08.

The City's first Safe Haven was launched as a pilot program, in coordination with nonprofit partner the BRC, in December 2006 with a private grant provided to the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City. Based on the success of this pilot DHS took steps to increase its portfolio of Safe Haven beds throughout the city.

Currently, outreach teams are working with an additional 900 chronic street homeless individuals to find permanent housing. These targeted efforts show a significant reduction in New York's unsheltered homeless population of 25 percent over the past three years, amounting to 1,100 fewer New Yorkers living on the street, a 12 percent decrease from the previous year. Of the clients who have been placed into permanent or transitional housing since September, 2007, 426 were in Manhattan, 215 were in Brooklyn and Queens, 140 were in Staten Island, and 95 were located in the Bronx.

At any time, New Yorkers can call 311 to have a street outreach team dispatched to the aid of street homeless individuals. Over the last 10 months, nearly 4,000, 311 calls were received by the City from concerned citizens regarding homelessness. The average response time by outreach teams to these locations was less than one hour.

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