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NYC DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES COMMISSIONER PARK ANNOUNCES KEY AGENCY ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023

In 2023, the Department of Social Services Served More New Yorkers in Need, Connected More Vulnerable Households to Permanent Housing, and Implemented New Tools, Programs, and Reforms to Better Assist Those the Agency Serves.

As 2023 comes to a close, New York City Department of Social Services (DSS) Commissioner Molly Wasow Park today highlighted the agency’s key accomplishments over the past year, underscoring how DSS continues to deliver for vulnerable New Yorkers while developing and implementing innovative programs and tools that enhance services and improve access to critical supports.

“Thanks to our incredible staff and an administration that continues to take the necessary steps to support our most vulnerable neighbors, DSS was able to implement numerous initiatives and program reforms that benefited those we serve,” said **DSS Commissioner Molly Wasow Park**. “From connecting more households in shelter to permanent housing and further expanding CityFHEPS to using social services contracts to support the creation of permanent housing and replacing stolen public benefits, DSS has taken meaningful action to enhance the supports and services we offer. We have seen the positive impacts of these changes, and we look forward to building on these successes with all our partners in the new year.”

Notable accomplishments from the past year include:

Connecting More New Yorkers to Permanent Housing: In Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23), following Mayor Adams’ package of CityFHEPS reforms, [more New Yorkers than ever were able to use their CityFHEPS voucher to obtain permanent affordable housing](#). Furthermore, DSS helped a total of nearly 15,000 households move out of shelters and into permanent housing using a variety of tools and subsidies, reflecting a roughly 17 percent increase fiscal year-over-fiscal year. The agency also increased overall placements in supportive housing by 32 percent over the same period. This success has continued into FY24 – permanent housing placements from shelter using CityFHEPS vouchers have increased 10 percent during the first three months of FY24 compared to the first three months of FY23.

Supporting New Yorkers Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness: The Adams administration’s unprecedented investments to address unsheltered homelessness continue to pay off. [Over 50 of the 100 hardest to reach New Yorkers living on city streets and subways are now stabilizing their lives in a supportive setting](#). This marks a 145 percent increase over the prior year. Since January 2022, homeless outreach staffing has increased by 60%, and during FY23, outreach staff referred over 8,5000 individuals to shelter – 70 percent more people than were referred in FY22. Additionally, approximately 1,000 people in DSS-DHS low-barrier programs

moved to permanent housing during FY23 — a 130 percent increase over FY22. DSS-DHS continues to build on this progress by ramping up training for outreach staff and by opening 270 Safe Haven and stabilization beds during this winter season, including the newly opened, hybrid low-barrier program near one of the city’s busiest end-of-line subway stations.

Eliminating the 90-Day Rule: Building on [last year’s robust package of CityFHEPS reforms](#), which included expanding eligibility to include single adults working full-time and earning minimum wage, even if their income is slightly higher than 200 percent of the federal poverty level, reducing the monthly contribution by CityFHEPS tenants who move into single-room occupancy units from 30 percent of their income to a maximum of \$50 per month, reducing the number of hours families are required to work to become eligible for CityFHEPS, and covering the cost of apartment application fees for New Yorkers living in DHS shelters, Mayor Adams [eliminated the 90-day length of stay requirement](#) for New Yorkers in shelter to become eligible for CityFHEPS vouchers. This reform significantly expanded access to this critical rental assistance for all populations in shelter and allowed for expedited moves to permanent housing by removing unnecessary barriers and red tape.

Expanding CityFHEPS Statewide: In order to expand the pool of housing available to voucher holders and provide the long-requested flexibility clients have requested, [Mayor Adams and DSS took the commonsense step to allow CityFHEPS voucher holders to utilize their voucher anywhere within New York State](#), not just within New York City. This further aligns CityFHEPS with federal rental assistance standards. Since the statewide expansion, 15 households are already in the process of moving or have moved to localities outside of New York City.

Implementing Technological Improvements for CityFHEPS: DSS made technological enhancements to the CityFHEPS program to [allow voucher holders to renew their voucher and check its status online](#) using DSS’s benefits portal [ACCESS HRA](#) and the [ACCESS HRA mobile app](#).

Providing Replacement Benefits to Victims of Electronic Benefits Theft: As a result of state and federal legislation, DSS-HRA was able to begin administering replacement benefits to New Yorkers who had their Cash Assistance and/or SNAP benefits electronically stolen. Since the replacement process began in August, DSS-HRA has replaced over \$15 million in stolen benefits – reconnecting New Yorkers with the vital benefits that are rightfully theirs.

Launching Online Medicaid Applications: Beginning August 26, 2023, DSS launched a major new module in [ACCESS HRA](#) that allows New York City residents to complete and submit their Medicaid or Medicare Savings Program application online, instead of completing hardcopy forms. The [ACCESS HRA mobile app](#) can also be used to submit supporting documentation. The online Medicaid application can be accessed through www.nyc.gov/accesshra.

Expanding Fair Fares Income Eligibility: [Mayor Adams, in partnership with the City Council, invested an additional \\$20 million in the Fair Fares program](#), bringing baseline funding to \$95 million annually and allowing DSS-HRA to, for the first time, expand income eligibility standards for the Fair Fares transit discount. Income eligibility was increased from 100 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) to 120 percent FPL making more New Yorkers eligible for

half-priced fares on subways, eligible buses, or MTA Access-A-Ride paratransit trips. New Yorkers can visit the [Fair Fares website](#) to learn more and apply online.

Connecting New Yorkers to Jobs Through the HIRE-NYC Program: The HIRE-NYC program requires organizations with human services contracts to hire one Cash assistance recipient for every \$250,000 in annual contract value. This ensure that contractors who benefit from city money are, doing their part to employ low-income New Yorkers. This program has resulted in 5,860 hires in FY23.

Honoring our Future Leaders: After several years of remote ceremonies and alternate locations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, DSS-DHS's annual celebration of high school graduates experiencing homelessness returned to the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian. This year's ceremony saw Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Anne Williams-Isom, DSS Commissioner Molly Wasow Park, Department of Education Chancellor David C. Banks, and DHS Administrator Joslyn Carter recognize the accomplishments of students in shelter who graduated high school and award \$2,000 scholarships to ten college-bound high school seniors. All students participating in the Future Leaders program received DHS-funded laptops and those who made a post-graduate commitment received a "Move-in" duffel bag full of supplies.

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About the Department of Social Services (DSS): The Department of Social Services, comprised of the Human Resources Administration (HRA) and the Department of Homeless Services (DHS), serves millions of New Yorkers annually through a broad range of services that aim to address poverty, income inequality, and prevent homelessness. HRA serves over three million New Yorkers through the administration of more than 12 major public assistance programs. DHS oversees a broad network of shelters, services, and outreach programs dedicated to helping New Yorkers experiencing homelessness get back on their feet. DSS is central to the City's mission to expand opportunity for more New Yorkers, address income inequality, help New Yorkers experiencing homelessness stabilize their lives, and ensure that vulnerable New Yorkers receive the benefits and assistance for which they may be eligible.