

**CENTER FOR NEW YORK CITY AFFAIRS
THE NEW SCHOOL**

Spanning the Neighborhood:

The bridge between
housing and supports for families

*Community strategies for preventing
homelessness and family crisis*

June 2005

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A year ago, Mayor Michael Bloomberg pledged to reduce the number of people in city homeless shelters by two-thirds by the end of 2009. The city has now begun to reshape and expand its services to prevent homelessness in a more comprehensive and coordinated way than ever before. The changes have coincided with a modest turnaround in the number of families entering the shelters—a number that had been rising since the last years of the Giuliani administration.

But to drive the number of shelter users down far enough to achieve substantial savings—without simply shutting the front door to the system, which is not allowable under New York State law—the city will have to find new ways to identify and work with the huge number of families living in overcrowded, doubled-up housing situations and who, without help, may otherwise end up seeking a room in a shelter.

Research shows that a large majority of families in the city’s shelter system arrived there after leaving crowded housing with relatives or friends. Most also come from just a few communities where families face a huge array of issues that range well beyond homelessness.

This report explains how the city could pursue a substantial new effort to mesh homelessness prevention with a stronger and wider neighborhood-based safety net, rooted in the programs run by community-based organizations. The best of these organizations are already well known, trusted and accessible in their districts, and they bridge services of many kinds.

The city’s data show that seven of every ten families entering the homeless shelter system in recent months came from 18 of the city’s 59 community districts. These are, in most cases, the very same neighborhoods that have:

- the highest percentage of families with children living below the poverty line;
- the highest number of domestic violence incident reports filed with the police;
- the highest rates of children placed in foster care;
- the highest percentage of families with children headed by single mothers; and
- the highest rate of serious building code violations.

In many cases, these are also neighborhoods with a high percentage of housing units that are overcrowded. (See chart, page 31.)

In order to reach more families and help them remain housed and out of the shelters, New York City can weave family supports, community organizing and human services together with its strategy for homelessness prevention, grounding the entire enterprise in these 18 neighborhoods.

In their everyday work, community groups ranging from social service agencies to tenants’ rights organizing groups get to know scores of families who live in tenuous economic circumstances. Many of these organizations could play a much larger role. The city’s Department of Homeless Services has begun to experiment with such a strategy, signing new contracts worth a total of \$12 million with six neighborhood-based organizations providing services ranging from eviction prevention to case management and benefits advocacy. (See page 10.)

But this is only a beginning. “Homelessness prevention” ought to be defined as much more than last-minute anti-eviction and emergency rent assistance. With so many New York families in overcrowded or otherwise unstable situations, more of them

should have access to holistic support services such as those that have worked well in fields as diverse as child welfare, public health, early education and literacy, food distribution and tenant organizing. (See page 18.)

Nearly all research points to one fundamental fact: affordable housing is the best solution to keeping families housed. But as the city's population has grown and property values have risen in recent years, the severe shortage of affordable housing has worsened. Census data show that more than 220,000 city households are in potentially unstable situations simply because of crowding. Federal funds for public housing are on the chopping block and federal rent subsidies have been capped, leaving few new Section 8 vouchers for families. And more than a half million New York City families are spending more than half their income on rent. Even the mayor's efforts to spur the development of 65,000 new units of housing will not help most of these families in the near future. (See page 14.)

New York City could devote one-quarter of its current family shelter expenditure—about \$100 million—to cultivate a more accessible network of community-based services, and serve about 25,000 families.

A community-centered prevention strategy, therefore—one that uses local organizations to provide flexible, accessible and individualized services—may make a tremendous difference. Linking these to community or tenant organizing, designed at least in part to identify families who could use some help, would extend the reach of the project and help overcome barriers of mistrust in communities. The case studies included in this report, of Northern Manhattan Improvement Corp., WHEDCO and the collaboration between West Side Campaign Against Hunger and the Urban Justice Center, each point to different valuable elements of outreach and coordination for families.

If New York City were to devote one-quarter of its current family shelter expenditure—about \$100 million—to cultivate a more accessible network of community-based services for families, new programs could be developed to serve roughly 25,000 families in some of the 18 community districts that are the communities of origin for 70 percent of the families entering the shelter system.

These new resources would be linked in partnerships with foster care preventive services, child care and preschool programs, youth programs and schools and other community institutions as well as specialized services—job training and placement, substance abuse treatment, domestic violence advocacy, counseling and health care, among them—to ultimately help families in ways that include but reach well beyond the prevention of homelessness.

None of this can be accomplished, however, without greater flexibility in the way funds are distributed by government and foundations and in the ways in which performance standards are measured. Holistic community building strategies and comprehensive services are rare in today's neighborhoods, not because organizations don't seek to build their programs this way, but because most funding is categorical and tightly structured. (See page 22.)

Targeting preventive services to the families that are truly likely to end up in shelters if they are not helped is one of the greatest challenges in city government. Researchers have concluded that even in the best of circumstances, with the most effectively targeted programs, perhaps one in five families served would in fact have otherwise ended up in shelter. (See page 14.)

But even at that rate, quality community-based programs could keep thousands of people out of shelters. With the cost of shelter estimated at about \$33,000 annually per family, reducing the nightly shelter census by 3,000 families could save the city as much as \$100 million per year—and greatly improve the lives of many thousands more.

KEY LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Even assuming the city's efforts to develop and preserve affordable housing continue for years to come, there will still be a shortage of supply relative to the demand.

Unavoidably, tens of thousands of New York families will continue to live close to the edge of instability.

- Nearly 9,300 families were found eligible to enter the city's hugely expensive shelter system last year. New York City currently spends \$404 million per year on shelter and services for homeless families, according to the Department of Homeless Services. This is a last-ditch solution, not a long-term answer to homelessness—and it may not be the only option.
- Five large community districts account for more than one-fourth of all recent eligible shelter entrants. Eighteen districts account for nearly 70 percent. Focused programs of a reasonable scale, established in carefully chosen communities and targeting families with children in poverty, could reach a significant portion of the population, assisting thousands of families in their homes and keeping many stable and out of shelters.
- The Department of Homeless Services' \$12 million HomeBase experiment in six neighborhoods is a significant step toward a more comprehensive, individualized approach to supporting families at risk of homelessness. The program's recent focus on identifying and working with young, single mothers and doubled-up families is based directly on evidence that these groups are among those most likely to seek shelter from the city.
- Most families experiencing homelessness in New York City are black and Latino, as are most families connected to the city's child welfare system. In recent years, many child welfare practitioners have become more respectful of families' integrity and strengths and more responsive to the multiple factors at play in families' lives, including economic, cultural and health issues, education, housing, domestic violence, addiction and more. This same attention to the full range of family issues should be central to community-based homelessness prevention programs. The most effective programs will be capable of dealing with the family as a whole and able to offer a cafeteria of services—legal, financial and social—on the spot.
- To reach families who need help, a community-based nonprofit must have a trusted presence in the neighborhood and an effective ability to organize and work with residents. By investing in the organizing and engagement capacity of these groups, the city can widen the entryway to preventive programs and more easily identify isolated and at-risk families.
- City Hall should establish a safety net policy that breaks through the silos of individual government agencies to support a comprehensive approach to social programs and community building. Neighborhood-based services should span the work of foster care preventive services, youth programs, education, economic supports, settlement house programs and homelessness prevention, among others.
- Government and other funders can encourage greater effectiveness among strong community-based nonprofits by providing more flexible funding and contracts that allow for individualized, responsive family services. This would include funding for community organizing efforts—in support of tenants' rights, public health or some other objective—and for a broad approach that encompasses early education, recreation, adult literacy and other programs that draw families into the fold of the organization and build trust.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Mario Drummonds isn't paid to keep families out of the homeless shelters, but nonetheless this is an important part of his job. Drummonds runs the Northern Manhattan Perinatal Partnership, a social service agency in Harlem charged with helping about 1,200 mostly poor women master the art of new motherhood. Drummonds estimates at least 25 percent of the women his agency assists have problems with their household budgets or issues with their landlords that, unattended, could leave them homeless. His staff is trained to spot these problems quickly and work with mothers to make sure they don't turn into crises that force young families out of their homes and into the homeless shelters.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg has committed his administration to reducing the number of people in city homeless shelters by two-thirds by the end of 2009.

The Perinatal Partnership is part of a legion of community-based nonprofits throughout New York City that have long provided an important, but largely unnoticed, bulwark against family homelessness. In their day-to-day work, these groups—ranging from social service agencies to tenants' rights organizing groups—build trust within their communities and, in that capacity, get to know scores of families who live in tenuous economic circumstances and could easily lose the security of a roof over their heads.

These groups constitute an important front in the city's campaign to end homelessness—particularly family homelessness. At a time when family homelessness continues to be painfully common in many low-income and working-class communities, costing the city \$404 million each year, it is becoming increasingly clear that many of these organizations could play a much larger role in the prevention of homelessness. Groups that have solid roots in the community, skillful outreach staff, effective human services and the trust of residents provide the strong framework for a neighborhood-based safety net for families facing many kinds of crises.

In June 2004, Mayor Michael Bloomberg committed his administration to reducing the number of people in city homeless shelters by two-thirds by the end of 2009, freeing up some of the hundreds of millions of dollars the city spends on shelters and related services for more productive uses. Department of Homeless Services (DHS) Commissioner Linda Gibbs has emphasized that a key agency priority is to keep people from becoming homeless in the first place.

Since last summer, DHS has taken two routes toward shrinking the shelter system. The first makes shelters a less attractive and less accessible option for families who might otherwise find a friend or relative with whom to live. The second includes a series of point-of-crisis interventions similar to but more closely coordinated than those the city has long practiced: one-shot rental arrears payments; temporary and ongoing rental supplements; landlord-tenant mediation; Housing Court representation; and family counseling. While this work is critically important and often effective, it's likely the city will have to do more if it is to meet its ambitious goals.

DHS has also strengthened its modest reliance on community-based preventative services for families, signing new contracts worth a total of \$12 million with six neighborhood-based organizations.

Several studies have shown that a majority of families—anywhere from 55 to 77 percent—in the city's shelter system recently left a crowded, doubled-up situation with relatives or friends.¹ One survey also found that a very high number of families in the shelter at one point in time had not sought help from government or community insti-

tutions as they tumbled toward homelessness, even as they were facing an eviction, being forced out of a doubled-up situation, or losing their welfare benefits.²

This is where community groups, particularly those with a broad mission, have skills to be honed and experience to put to use. Directors of neighborhood settlement houses, which tend to be holistic in their approach, have long argued that small acts of support at critical moments can do more to help a family than the most elaborate social service programs. A new bunk bed can keep two children from quarreling, allowing a crowded family more calm. A social worker can negotiate financial assistance and child care for a grandmother seeking to quietly care for her grandchildren while her daughter deals with a drug addiction. A translator can help an immigrant father demand repairs from an errant landlord and, afterwards, arrange for English language classes, helping to ensure that communication is less of a problem for the family in the future. Some community organizations can provide legal assistance, or even find a temporary apartment outside the shelter system while a family finds a new home.

Community groups often have the access to see problems that could lead to a family crisis—and the flexibility to respond immediately—because they already know the family, or have the trust of neighbors and relatives who may know of the situation.

But there is limited government funding available for the kind of flexible, boundless and enterprising family assistance that many community groups are suited to provide. Some organizations, such as the Northern Manhattan Perinatal Partnership, cobble together city, state and federal funding to work with families in the most holistic way they possibly can. Some nonprofits weave together family support counseling with community health outreach, early education, youth programs, adult literacy and other services.

This approach has had a substantial impact in the child welfare field. The Partnership is one of many community-based organizations that have been part of a highly successful foster care prevention strategy steered by the city's Administration for Children's Services (ACS). These preventive services organizations assist thousands of families, reaching many of them before they run into deep trouble, such as having their children placed in foster care. The \$117 million that ACS spent last year on preventive services contracts with nonprofit organizations is part of a larger set of policy initiatives that has shaved \$158 million off the city's annual foster care expenditures since 1999.³

Settlement house community-building strategies and the most holistic child welfare family support models highlight key principles that can be put to work to help prevent more families from falling into homelessness—at a time when there are very few resources for affordable housing in New York City.

Drummonds and his colleagues agree there is no substitute for the emergency assistance the city provides to families facing eviction or living in situations that are too crowded to be tenable. But government and the community can do much more, Drummonds says. “The secondary piece is the overall well-being of the family. Anything that creates family crisis, emotionally or socially, can be a precipitator for homelessness.” Community-based agencies, particularly those that aim to help families in a wide variety of ways, can respond immediately to a growing crisis—and are committed to strengthening families over the long haul, he says. “We have the expertise in stabilizing family life.”

Community groups often have the access to see problems that could lead to a family crisis.

II. NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

Today, DHS officials are beginning to experiment with a neighborhood-oriented approach. In announcing a package of initiatives designed to meet the mayor's goals, Commissioner Gibbs announced a pilot program called "HomeBase," charging six community-based social service organizations each with the goal of helping at least 400 families a year avoid homelessness. These six organizations are working in neighborhoods that are among those with the highest number of families entering the homeless shelters. With the new program, they are responsible for the traditional anti-eviction work the city has long provided—but they are also expected to pursue more ambitious outreach strategies in order to find and assist families in tenuous housing situations, including many that are doubled or tripled up with friends and family. The HomeBase program is intended to give targeted, individualized help to families facing a housing crisis, keeping them from entering the city's expensive shelter system.

More than 220,000 crowded city households are in potentially unstable situations simply because of crowding.

The program's architect, DHS First Deputy Commissioner Fran Winter, concedes little is known about which types of help—ranging from one-shot arrears payments to family counseling to rent subsidies—will be most effective. Well-regarded researchers in the field have found that rental subsidies and affordable housing, rather than social work interventions, offer the best hope for keeping economically fragile families housed.⁴

Those research findings leave the city with a conundrum. Nearly one-quarter of the city's renter households, more than a half million families, spent at least 50 percent of their income on housing in 2001.⁵ Providing new long-term housing subsidies to hundreds of thousands of New York City families is not plausible without massive increases in state and local taxes (see "Beyond All Your Means," page 14). And while strategies to increase the supply of affordable housing in New York City remain a high priority for policymakers in the Bloomberg administration, this alone will not quickly resolve the problem.

A more comprehensive family support system is needed in several city neighborhoods in order to provide the kinds of interventions and assistance that will help keep more families stable and housed, so that the city's extremely expensive shelters can be reserved for those in the most severe straits. HomeBase and a mix of related legal services, family support services and other programs are the first steps toward creating that community safety net.

The city has given wide latitude to the six nonprofits with HomeBase contracts, asking them to develop a range of less-costly supportive interventions using a flexible pot of city money and their own front-line expertise. "We're working in an area that's so under-known. It's just so new. We can afford, a little bit anyway, to learn as we go and make mistakes and self-correct," Winter says. "It's daunting," she adds. "There is no formula for this."

About one in 25 New York City renter households lived in severely overcrowded quarters at the time of the 2002 Census Bureau Housing and Vacancy Survey, and more than one in ten were in crowded apartments. Given that the large majority of families in city shelters come directly from overcrowded apartments, we can estimate that more than 220,000 crowded city households are in potentially unstable situations simply because of crowding.⁶

Most of them will never enter the shelter system. Indeed, many of the most crowded neighborhoods in New York City are immigrant communities—including much of

central Queens—where few families use the shelter system. But in other neighborhoods, crowded apartments are among the prime sources of families entering shelters.

“Homelessness prevention,” therefore, has to be defined as much more than last-minute anti-eviction and emergency rent assistance. Prevention must include greater access to trusted, neighborhood-based and holistic services such as those that have worked well in fields as diverse as child welfare, public health, early education and literacy, food distribution and tenant organizing.

The success of these efforts lies in three key concepts:

- establishing trust,
- building networks, and
- reaching out with an array of offerings that people both need and want.

“This can’t be a stigmatized service that you put off and put off and put off, like going to the dentist,” says Carol Cohen, an associate professor at Adelphi University School of Social Work who specializes in youth and child welfare services. Families with their backs up against a wall are less likely to go out and seek help, compared to their more secure neighbors, she says. And yet they are the ones most in need of help.

Organizations intending to find and help families in marginal situations, if they are to be effective, must design their programs with skillful outreach and community building in mind. Cohen adds there is good evidence that an organizing approach, over time, can help reduce the wider incidence of homelessness in a given area. “Connecting people with their neighbors will lead to a much stronger community overall.”⁷

III. WHERE THE CITY STANDS NOW

At the end of April 2005, more than 8,340 families were living in New York City’s shelter system, including more than 14,000 children. The number of families in the system has grown by more than 20 percent since Mayor Bloomberg took office in January 2002, and by more than 50 percent since the summer of 2000, when Rudy Giuliani was still mayor.

This has greatly driven up the cost of the shelter system. DHS reports that its total expenditures on shelter and services for families now exceed \$404 million annually. The fast-growing cost of family shelter—up more than \$50 million in just two years—was one major impetus driving Mayor Bloomberg and Commissioner Gibbs to address the crisis. Overall, the annual DHS budget increased \$210 million between July 2002 and the 2005 fiscal year, largely because of the growing cost of shelter.⁸

In addition to expanding preventive programs, the city aims to reduce the amount of time families spend in shelter and improve the coordination of social services. The mayor has also said he is committed to redirecting government money saved from the shrinkage of the shelter system to more prevention programs and long-term solutions, including affordable housing development and rental subsidies.⁹ This will include supportive and service-enriched housing for families that need ongoing, long-term counseling, health or mental health care, substance abuse treatment and other supports. There are currently 457 such units for families, managed by dozens of nonprofit organizations in New York City with city and state funding; another 109 such apartments are scheduled for completion by 2007, according to the Supportive Housing Network of New York. The mayor has committed his administration to building thousands more supportive units over the next several years.

Overall, the annual DHS budget increased \$210 million between July 2002 and the 2005 fiscal year, largely because of the growing cost of shelter.

At the same time, the city shelter reduction strategy includes policy changes that make the shelters less accessible—and a less rational economic choice—to some families.

Last fall, DHS began closing its long-criticized Emergency Assistance Unit (EAU) on 151st Street in the Bronx, the entryway to the citywide family shelter system. New applicants for shelter go to the new, temporary Prevention Assistance & Temporary Housing (PATH) office, also in the Bronx, where a phalanx of social workers assesses each family that comes in the door, looking for any safe, viable option other than shelter. The PATH office has been praised for being more responsive and helpful for families than its predecessor, and its workers aim to coordinate with the city's other benefit agencies—particularly the Human Resources Administration—in order to get families the financial assistance that could keep them out of the shelter system. Still, Commissioner Gibbs has been blunt in saying the new intake system will turn away families that have asked for shelter in the past and been deemed ineligible. Those who have been rejected in the recent past must instead go to the old EAU on 151st Street, but this practice will phase out over the coming months.

As a further deterrent, those admitted into the shelter system are no longer eligible for the permanent rental subsidies many homeless families received in the past. The city's new policy eliminates the practice of giving families in shelters priority for the popular federally funded Section 8 rental subsidies, as well as for public housing.

HOMEBASE: A NEW STRATEGY FOR COMMUNITY-BASED PREVENTION

New York City is more than eight months into a \$12 million experiment with a new strategy for homelessness prevention, and it's already revealing some important lessons about the necessity of linking flexible neighborhood-based services with strong outreach and deep community roots.

The city is trying to develop programs that will identify and preemptively assist thousands of families who are staggering toward homelessness but are not yet there. In the past, such efforts have focused primarily on assisting households facing eviction by their landlords for nonpayment of rent. Now, the HomeBase program, launched in September 2004, aims to work with the much larger number of families who rarely seek help even as their housing situation deteriorates—including the majority of families in the shelter system who were never formally evicted, and who in many cases have never held a lease.

A recent survey of about 300 shelter residents by the Vera Institute found that 71 percent of the

families surveyed came to the shelters directly from crowded, doubled- or tripled-up situations with friends or relatives, where they were not leaseholders. Overall, the families reported living under very crowded conditions, with an average of 2.8 people per bedroom.¹⁰

HomeBase is funded by the city and run by nonprofit community organizations in six community districts that are among those with the highest numbers of families entering the shelter system.

Through HomeBase, families can seek and receive help intended to keep them where they are, in their community—at least until they can find somewhere to move other than a homeless shelter. This assistance may include small one-time cash grants or rent payments, or voluntary services such as job training and placement, budget counseling, child care, youth programs, drug treatment or health care.

Each of the organizations running a HomeBase program has an annual budget of

\$2 million dollars, up to \$800,000 of which can be used for short-term financial assistance.

But the work has proven more complicated than many of the planners had expected. Staff at some of the six HomeBase organizations say many people who would benefit are unwilling to seek help or participate in services, at least until they enter the final stages of a full-fledged crisis. By that time, it's much harder to help families stay out of the shelters.

"Most of the folks who come through are coming to us in the final hour, so we have to move quickly," says Renee Fueller, director of HelpUSA's HomeBase program serving the East Tremont-Belmont area of the Bronx. Some have already gotten six-day eviction notices from the City Marshall's office, she says. Others come in the day they're scheduled to be evicted. And some owe huge amounts of money to their landlords.

In such cases, HomeBase is not much different from a more traditional eviction prevention program. Fueller says the most common problem she's seeing is rent arrears, with some clients owing their landlords as much as \$16,000. For clients in such situations, the first step must be trying to pay off their debts. "After we pick our mouths up off the floor, we try to package a deal," says Fueller. The quest for resources often begins with assistance applying for a "one-shot" grant from the city's Human Resources Administration to help pay back rent. In many cases, the next move is to refer clients to legal services to apply for relief through the Jiggetts program, which provides families on public assistance and facing eviction with a court-ordered increase in the shelter allowance portion of the standard welfare grant.

The true objective of HomeBase, however, is to identify and work with families who would not otherwise have found their way to eviction prevention programs. For many of the organizations involved, the outreach effort has caused a high degree of frustration.

"It was slow getting the word out," says Scott Auwarter, assistant executive director of

the Citizen's Advice Bureau, which runs a HomeBase program in the South Bronx. While each of the six HomeBase agencies is supposed to help at least 400 families per year stay out of the homeless shelters, Auwarter had only 30 cases in the first few months the program was open. But the organization made more than 100 discrete efforts to connect with families living in the neighborhood. "We met with just about every single church and foster care prevention program in the community district," says Auwarter. And, by April, Auwarter says, the program was running "at capacity," opening 45 new cases per month.

Some of the difficulty locating clients can be explained by the nature of the problems they're trying to address. "If the person's depressed or can't keep their welfare case open because they can't get out of bed in the morning, they're not coming through our door," says Auwarter. Indeed, single mothers who are socially isolated are common in the city's shelter system.

Once families in precarious situations are identified and encouraged to take part, the HomeBase agencies have tremendous flexibility in how they use resources. HomeBase may help pay some rent arrears from its own financial assistance budget, but there are other ways the money can be used. "If we go on a home visit and we learn that grandma is sick of having these kids taking up all this floor space, we might assist with buying a bunk bed," says Fueller. "Or, if you need help paying the babysitter, we can help you there."

HomeBase workers help clients navigate the maze of public benefits as well as community programs. "We're like a reference point," says Fueller. "We make sure that where we're sending them can help them. And we're able to explain what's going on, and be there for them when they cry, so they have a friend."

One important outreach tool is provided by the Department of Homeless Services: maps indicating the previous addresses of people who recently applied for shelter. "You can see clusters of clients within the catchment area," says Garnethia Pettiford, director of Palladia's HomeBase program

in East Harlem. HomeBase outreach workers then go to these blocks and buildings, where other families may be doubled up or renting from the same landlords. They knock on people's doors, hand out fliers and talk to anyone who is willing. The programs also give out information through schools, churches, libraries, soup kitchens, day care centers and the New York City Housing Authority.

New recruits aren't necessarily willing to participate in social services, however. "Often they just want the check," says Palladia's Pettiford. "And sometimes people we've given grants to disappear," she says.

One of the most successful strategies to engage clients in services is to link the services to financial assistance. "We'll ask them to enroll in job training in order to get a check. We're willing to incentivize behavior with money," says Melissa Mowery, director of the HomeBase program at the Church Avenue Merchants Block Association (CAMBA). "But often people are still not in a place where they're willing to make a change. They don't necessarily understand that they have to do some work."

"We have to give them ultimatums," says Pettiford. You can't force people to participate in services, she adds, "but you can say, 'We don't want to see you back here. We have to deal with the underlying issues.'" Palladia's clients also sign a contract agreeing to participate in the full program.

When housing problems are clearly tied to larger issues, such engagement can be the key to housing stability. One of Palladia's HomeBase clients, for example, was threatened with eviction because she didn't pay her rent. A woman in her 50s who received Social Security disability checks, she had enough money to cover her rent, but, because she had mental health issues, didn't always remember to pay it. HomeBase workers arranged for the woman to have her check received and rent paid by an intermediary, and also provided her with ongoing case management.

Inevitably, many HomeBase clients are straightforward casualties of the upwardly spi-

raling housing market—and they can be hard to help. While several HomeBase programs have relationships with local real estate companies, affordable apartments are "like needles in a haystack," says Fueller. For Mowery's program, which serves Bedford Stuyvesant, many of the clients are facing sharply rising rents because of gentrification. The same is true in East Harlem, where multiple-unit buildings are being sold and converted into single-family homes.

"Rents are high, says CAMBA's Mowery, "And if you're only making \$7 per hour, all I can offer you is, 'Do you want another job?'"

The Department of Homeless Services is directing the agencies to pay particular attention to doubled-up families, in particular single mothers who live in other people's homes. In mid-March, HelpUSA's program in the Bronx began an outreach campaign targeted toward them. Workers put fliers describing services for non-lease-holders in laundries, telephone booths and grocery stores. Soon after, HelpUSA's Fueller saw an increase in doubled-up families seeking services through her office.

Some, though, fear that focusing on those who have already lost their own apartments may not be the wisest use of resources. "It's better to get them upstream," says Auwarter of the Citizens Advice Bureau. After families lose their leases, he says, "the snowball has probably rolled halfway down the hill and it's going to be very hard to stop it."

In Bedford Stuyvesant, Mowery says she's struggling to recruit more single mothers between the ages of 24 and 34, the typical profile of a person entering the shelter system from her neighborhood. "We need to find them, but these aren't the people who typically seek out services," says Mowery, who is considering holding a movie night on the premises to attract potential clients. "We need to develop a marketing strategy to reach these people. We'd make popcorn, show a G-rated movie, and then explain what we can do for people."

IV. STEERING FAMILIES CLEAR OF THE SHELTERS

In place of Section 8 and public housing, most shelter residents are now eligible for a new temporary rent subsidy called Housing Stability Plus, which is slated to assist 6,500 families over the next year (see “A Bush-Era Housing Subsidy,” page 17). But this temporary housing subsidy, along with other city efforts to establish and preserve affordable housing, will help only a fraction of the families who come close to the edge of crisis.

The expansion of community-based support services represents one more possible solution. The city’s \$12 million HomeBase initiative aims to assist at least 2,400 families per year (see “HomeBase,” page 10). And DHS evaluators hope the effort will yield a significant decline in the number of families entering shelters from the six neighborhoods where HomeBase has been established.

The program began in earnest last October, and there is no hard data yet on what has worked or failed. However, First Deputy Commissioner Fran Winter reports that DHS officials already have asked the contract agencies to focus less on traditional, court-based anti-eviction work and more on finding the families most likely to show up at the shelter door: those that are doubled and tripled up and unexpectedly “evicted” by friends and family.

“We’re at the point now where we are going to shift gears and push the agencies—require them, to some degree, to go out and find the double-ups,” Winter says. She insists that there is much the city can do to help these tenuously housed families avoid shelter. Staffers working for both HomeBase and the city’s PATH intake office are trained to look for opportunities and patterns, as well as public benefits that might not have been thought of or utilized sufficiently in the past.

Most of all, DHS is relying on the community-based organizations themselves to innovate, allowing groups to approach their job as they see fit so long as they find families who might otherwise have landed in the shelter system. The groups were chosen, in part, for their ties to the community and the different approaches they took to outreach.

In order to appreciably reduce the number of families seeking assistance, HomeBase must somehow identify and assist the types of families that in the past have gone into shelters without ever seeking out the small number of homeless prevention programs that have long offered legal interventions and benefits advocacy. These include doubled-up families as well as others who are somehow isolated and unlikely to reach out for help.

The trick is finding families that are in fact headed for homelessness, and then figuring out what will help them.

“How do you serve those who are doubled up? It’s not so obvious what they need, except they need a new place of their own and an income stream to support them,” Winter explains. “And that’s not something that you easily create. But finding them, that’s really what we are grappling with now.”

“There are clearly implementation challenges,” agrees Dawn Jahn Moses, director of public education and policy for the National Center on Family Homelessness. “The community-based organizations are a wonderful group to be engaged in this effort,” she says. The question is, how?

“It’s a question of resources. With limited resources you have to target. And right now, we don’t know how.” There are plenty of tantalizing clues, Moses adds, but no solid answers. “Just how do you target prevention efforts when there is so much need?”

V. THE DIFFICULT QUESTION OF TARGETING PREVENTION

The facts are staggering: More than 220,000 families live in overcrowded housing in New York City. Poverty rates in many neighborhoods exceed 33 percent. More than a half million households pay more than half their income in rent.

So who among them is most likely to make use of the city’s shelter system, and who should therefore be targeted for help? New York University Professor Marybeth Shinn, one of the country’s leading researchers on family homelessness, argues that even the most carefully targeted homelessness prevention program will inevitably serve many people who never would have gone into the shelters, simply because it is so hard to predict exactly who will become homeless. This doesn’t mean prevention shouldn’t be tried—but rather, expectations need to be realistic. Policymakers have to assume government resources will be used for many families—probably a large majority of those served—who never would have become homeless. But done well, these programs will reduce the number of people using shelters.

Shinn’s early-1990s research on families entering shelter found that ten factors could be used as predictors of “homeless risk” for poor families. These include being African American, being pregnant or having an infant, growing up in poverty and experiencing domestic violence, as well as housing-related factors such as being doubled up or overcrowded, lacking housing subsidies and moving frequently.

HOUSING: BEYOND ALL YOUR MEANS

The mismatch between people’s incomes and their housing costs in New York City is stark: there are simply too many people competing for too few affordable apartments on the city’s rental market.

The city’s population has been growing far faster than its housing stock. During the 1990s, the city added nearly 800,000 people—but the number of apartments for rent in the five boroughs grew by fewer than 50,000.

Scarcity and the booming housing economy have driven up rents but not incomes. The median monthly rent of a vacant apartment in New York City was \$900 at the time of the Census Bureau’s 2002 Housing and Vacancy Survey (HVS). The same survey found a median household income of \$31,000 among

renters—and calculated more than half a million households spending more than half of their total income on rent.

Yet the city has formidable housing programs for low-income people. Most notably, there are more than 181,000 units of public housing. An additional 118,000 city households benefit from federal Section 8 rent subsidies, which ensure they pay no more than 30 percent of their income on rent. Even so, a remarkable number of New Yorkers just barely manage to keep a roof over their heads. A recent analysis of the 2002 Census Bureau data by the Community Service Society of New York found that more than 100,000 poor households in New York City spent 57 percent of their total household income on rent.¹

¹ Victor Bach, “Housing Hardship and Rent Burdens Among Poor New Yorkers,” presented to the NYC Rent Guidelines Board. Community Service Society, April 12, 2005.

But predicting risk is different from accurately predicting each family's future. Hundreds of thousands of New York City families fall into several of these categories at once, and the large majority of them will never enter the shelters. Shinn and her colleagues Jim Baumohl and Kim Hopper have calculated that even the most effectively targeted prevention program will have to serve five families to reach just one family that would in fact have used the shelter system. "With respect to preventing shelter entry, over 80 percent of the services would be wasted (although such help might be valuable to families for other reasons)," they write.¹¹

Shinn says the only way to effectively prevent homelessness on a large scale is to provide substantially more affordable housing. In a paper presented to the federal government's National Symposium on Homelessness Research in 1998, Shinn brought up the game of "musical chairs." Homeless prevention programs certainly help some families find new housing, but in New York, where housing and subsidies are scarce, finding one family a home often means that another equally needy family misses out. With far more people seeking inexpensive homes than are available on the market, any limited housing assistance program is essentially reallocating an inadequate resource.

(continued on next page)

FEDERAL HOUSING SUPPORTS WANE

A Bush administration cutback on public housing subsidies and a cap on federal rent subsidies will affect a large portion of the city's affordable housing resources: between them, public housing and federal Section 8 rent subsidies account for nearly one-tenth of the city's residential housing.

The New York City Housing Authority, which manages the largest public housing system in the nation, has more than 420,000 people living in its apartments—and stands to lose one-fourth of its federal operating subsidy if Congress follows through with cuts recently proposed by the Bush administration. The planned \$185 million reduction over five years would greatly affect the maintenance of public housing, city officials say, slowing repairs and perhaps forcing the authority to sell off some of its property.

These cuts follow other recent reductions in federal funding. Between 1999 and 2004, NYCHA's capital construction and repair grant was reduced from \$435 million to \$366 million, according to the New York City Independent Budget Office.

Families in NYCHA housing had an average income of \$18,344 as of June 2004 and paid an average of \$311 in rent. As of September 2004, 136,944 families were on the waiting list for city public housing, according to the agency.

The other substantial source of rent supports, the Section 8 voucher program, has been capped by Washington in an effort to restrain its growing cost to taxpayers as housing costs continue to rise rapidly. With current restrictions, there are very few new vouchers available to New Yorkers.

Under Section 8, which is primarily administered by NYCHA, tenants usually pay about 30 percent of their income toward rent, and the federal subsidy covers the difference between the tenant's contribution and the fair-market rent. (The city's Department of Housing Preservation and Development and the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal also distribute Section 8 vouchers in smaller numbers.) About 118,000 low-income households relied on Section 8 in New York City in 2004, and another 120,000 are on the waiting list. About 6,000 vouchers can be transferred to new tenants each year, after previous recipients give them up.

“Reallocation,” Shinn concludes, “affects who gets the housing units, not how many are left homeless when the music stops.”¹²

What’s more, the factors that predict homelessness cease to have any marked influence over residential stability after a family has obtained affordable housing. Shinn and her colleague Beth Weitzman followed a cohort of homeless families in New York City and found that 97 percent of those who received subsidized housing when they left shelter were still living in their own apartments more than three years later, as contrasted with just 38 percent of families who did not receive housing subsidies.¹³

“It’s very hard for young families to break into the housing market on their own,” Shinn says. “You might say that the city should have some program to help young families make the transition to housing. Or there should be a whole lot more affordable housing out there so families could make the transition to housing without assistance.”

Yet the fact remains that there are no near-term prospects for a dramatic increase in the supply of affordable housing or rental subsidies. There are, however, a wide range of temporary income and shelter subsidies available to families on public assistance—and a big part of the city’s homelessness prevention plan rests on making this help easier and faster to obtain.

DHS officials say the success of their homeless prevention efforts will rest within the families themselves, in particular their capacity and willingness to remain doubled up and in otherwise crowded living situations. Certainly, the majority of poor families, particularly new immigrants, already choose this option over shelters.

And that explains why the six community organizations contracted under the HomeBase program have a mandate to find ways to make potentially unstable doubled-up situations more tenable, with the goal of helping families stay where they are, at least until they can muster the resources—a job, child care, food stamps—to find a way to move out on their own.

In this version of musical chairs, the rules have changed and two people are sharing the same chair. If two families are capable of sharing the same “chair,” at least for a time, then a case of homelessness has indeed been prevented. New York University’s Shinn says this approach could work, provided that the city and the community organizations are capable of providing genuinely useful assistance.

“There are a lot of doubled-up situations that do stay reasonably stable,” Shinn says. “And it’s possible under some circumstances that some additional resources would really help that situation.”

Helping a family find and pay for child care, preschool or after school programs is one example. “It gets kids out of the house and into structured situations so that when they come home, they are less rambunctious,” Shinn says. “Meanwhile things are quiet. Mom gets to go to school or go to work. You put all of those things together and maybe that makes a crowded situation a more tenable situation.”

“One could stabilize some of these situations,” she adds. “Perhaps not permanently, but perhaps to the point where the family could develop resources that would allow them to move out on their own.”

A BUSH-ERA RENT SUBSIDY: HOUSING STABILITY PLUS

New York City made a radical break with the past in December 2004 when officials ceased giving residents of homeless shelters preference for federal Section 8 rent vouchers and apartments in public housing. Instead, the city and state have pooled \$60 million in funds for a new, temporary rent subsidy for homeless New Yorkers, Housing Stability Plus.

The move comes in response to the federal cap on Section 8 spending, which has drastically limited the number of new rent vouchers. There was another motive as well: city officials said they wanted to eliminate the link that has long existed between shelter and permanent rent subsidies. For years, skeptics inside city government have argued that the lure of a long-time rent subsidy encouraged some people to claim homelessness when they may have had other housing options.

The new Housing Stability Plus (HSP) vouchers lose 20 percent of their original value each year, and the subsidy disappears entirely after five years. Only families receiving public assistance are eligible for the voucher, which is combined with the modest rent allowance received by welfare recipients and paid directly to landlords. The two subsidies together provide a family of three with \$925 per month for rent payments during the first year.

Bloomberg administration officials say they hope to house up to 6,500 families a year through HSP. As of mid-June 2005, a total of 2,020 families had signed leases using the new vouchers, according to the Department of Homeless Services.

During the first three months of 2005, the number of families applying for shelter declined by about one-fifth compared to the same period in 2004, according to city data. In addition, families already in shelter have begun to leave on their own at a more rapid rate. One possible explanation for both of these trends is the end of the linkage between shelter and permanent rent subsidies.

Critics of the HSP program argue that many families will be unable to make up for the steep year-to-year reduction in the amount of the subsidy. Even as HSP phases out, the small welfare rent allowance will remain constant and continue as a rent supplement as long as a family remains on public assistance. But families that remain on welfare are unlikely to also earn enough money to cover the growing gap. The city is reportedly negotiating with state officials to eliminate the requirement that all HSP recipients also be on welfare.

Currently, many families housed in the domestic violence shelter system run by the Human Resources Administration are not eligible for HSP because they are not on public assistance.

Homeless families on welfare who have lived in the shelter system for at least 90 days can qualify for the new HSP program, as can homeless adults who have lived in the shelters for at least nine months. HSP will also serve a small number of families with children in foster care whose only obstacle to reunification is a lack of housing.

The introduction of HSP brought an end to three other city subsidy programs for homeless families—the Emergency Assistance Rehousing Program (EARP), the Employment Incentive Housing Program and the Long-term Stayer Program. Under EARP, the biggest of the three which cost the city almost \$17 million in 2004, the Department of Homeless Services had offered cash bonuses to landlords who rented to homeless families with Section 8 vouchers. Funding for these programs has been used to pay part of the cost of the HSP vouchers.

In May 2005 the state also introduced another new, time-limited housing subsidy specifically for families on welfare who are threatened with eviction by their landlord. The Family Eviction Prevention Supplement (FEPS) provides a family of four with a \$900 per month public assistance shelter allowance for five years.

VI. A HOLISTIC VISION: LESSONS OF STRATEGIC PREVENTION

There are many successful prevention models in other arenas. One of the most promising comes from the city's experience with child welfare services and foster care. The city's Administration for Children's Services has in the last few years focused on improving the quality of front-line child protective investigators, giving them the training they need to ensure that children are safe in their homes following a report of abuse or neglect, while also increasing their reliance on community-based support services for families at risk of losing their children to foster care.

This strategy has helped the city significantly reduce the number of foster care placements each year from a high of 12,000 in 1998 to fewer than 6,000 in 2004, saving the city more than \$158 million per year in foster care expenses.

As with foster care, most of the families facing homelessness in New York City are black and Latino. As the child welfare system has become more respectful of families' integrity and strengths in recent years, the system has also become more responsive to the multiple factors at play in families' lives, including economic and health issues, domestic violence, substance abuse and more.

This same attention to the full range of family issues should be used in homelessness prevention programs. This requires both a sensitive eye and an open-minded approach by the workers who make the first connections with a family. Many families are struggling with immediate economic problems—an unexpected job loss, a dramatic rent increase or rent arrears that have gotten out of control. Others are hobbled by personal problems. In each case, it is imperative these families receive help tailored to their needs. Forcing social workers onto a family that requires only economic help can be intimidating or insulting. But failing to deal with obvious substance abuse problems, for example, leaves family members vulnerable to continuing bouts of homelessness along with the specters of foster care, chronic unemployment, incarceration and other disasters. The most effective homelessness prevention programs will have staff capable of dealing with the family as a whole and able to offer a cafeteria of services—legal, financial and social—on the spot.

But that's not all that's needed. A trusted presence in the community and an effective ability to organize and work with residents are also essential.

The Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC) boasts that its lawyers are able to keep more than 95 percent of the tenants they represent from getting evicted. That's making a big difference in the agency's neighborhood, Washington Heights, where nearly all of the housing stock is private and subject to the dramatic price increases that many of the city's gentrifying neighborhoods are experiencing. But the agency's lawyers wouldn't have this track record without NMIC's presence in the community and its reputation for delivering a whole range of useful services, says Executive Director Barbara Lowry.

“We would never be successful with the legal part of it if we didn't have strong social services, strong paralegal services, and if we weren't known as a place to come to be able to talk,” Lowry says. Staffers at NMIC routinely hear about issues with doubled-up apartments, rising rent arrears or feuds with landlords—early signals that allow the agency to move on a case when its help can still be effective. Because NMIC believes in a holistic approach, caseworkers have more than a dozen different options to

The most effective homelessness prevention programs will have staff capable of dealing with the family as a whole and able to offer a cafeteria of services—legal, financial and social—on the spot.

employ to avert a housing crisis. Like thousands of families citywide, NMIC staff see doubling up as a sensible step for some families to deal with a housing crisis.

“When you’re looking at \$2,000 a month rent, you’ve got to be doubled up,” Lowry says. “So, then, it’s about how many resources you can throw into the family.

“We look at asset building,” Lowry says. “What’s the future of your family finances? How many resources can we give you? Are your children acting out? Should they be part of an after school program? With resources, especially emergency funds, along with somebody who is doing the Jiggetts work, someone who is a good public assistance advocate, getting the family every nickel they can, you can help.”*

Other families require more sustained attention and support. Many are dealing with significant issues such as domestic violence, untreated childhood trauma and mental illness, says Dawn Jahn Moses at the National Center on Family Homelessness. Her organization conducted a longitudinal study in the mid-1990s comparing two groups of women living in Worcester, Massachusetts. Both groups were demographically similar, but one group was homeless and living in shelters while the other was extremely poor and had not experienced homelessness at the time of the study. Those in the latter group were more likely to be receiving cash assistance and/or a housing subsidy, to have graduated high school, and to have larger social networks. In contrast, the mothers living in shelter were more likely to be black or Latino, to have lived in Worcester for a short time, to have been evicted, to have had conflicts in their social networks, to be using alcohol or heroin and to have had a recent mental health hospitalization. In addition, these homeless mothers were more likely to have been in foster care as a child and to have had a primary female caretaker who abused drugs.¹⁴

These patterns align starkly with much of the research on the characteristics of families that have had their children placed in foster care. “I think the child welfare connection is huge,” Jahn Moses says.

Given the strong overlap in these families, it makes sense to train workers in child welfare and foster care prevention to keep their eye out for housing crises and to learn how to assist families without their having to enter the shelter system except when shelter is absolutely necessary, such as in a domestic violence situation. Similarly, staff in organizations that work on substance abuse issues, mental health and benefits advocacy could broaden their portfolio of services, making sure that families that are already stressed are spared the additional disruption of negotiating the city’s shelter system.

“If we properly trained child welfare workers in housing and how to prevent homelessness, think of all of the families you could prevent from going into the system,” says Ruth White, housing director for the Child Welfare League of America.

“Folks that do homeless services are really afraid of casting their net too wide,” White adds. “But it seems to me that there are enough systems—whether it’s a school or a medical professional—that these families are involved with earlier, before they get to shelter, that we could target it. You would just be targeting it through those professionals. I don’t care how widely you cast this net, I just don’t believe it’s going to be as expensive as waiting until they’re standing at the edge of the cliff.”

Any effective strategy, whether it involves community-based organizations, city workers or a combination of both, will demand that outsiders win the attention and

Any effective strategy will demand that outsiders win the attention and trust of a family before that family loses its home.

* “Jiggetts” is a court-ordered increase in the public assistance shelter allowance available to those faced with eviction.

trust of a family before that family loses its home. And that, for the most part, requires the organization to have a trusted community presence.

“The people’s tendency is to wait to ask for help until it’s too late. That, I think, is everybody’s experience in this business,” says Nancy Wackstein, executive director of United Neighborhood Houses, a coalition of the city’s settlement houses. “So how do you find out that things are getting to the boiling point, or that the mother is about to throw the daughter out, unless you know the family beforehand?”

The answer is intuitive, Wackstein says. “It’s having events and contacts with families in a regular way, not a crisis-driven way,” she says. “You can do things for these families like child care and youth programming. These, in and of themselves, could be preventive activities. But this also allows you to get in and know a family, so they are more likely to ask you for help.”

“It’s sort of like mental health services,” Wackstein adds. “If you have a sign over your door saying mental health services, nobody’s coming. If you have a sign that says recreational services, people come.”

ORGANIZING COMMUNITY TRUST: NORTHERN MANHATTAN IMPROVEMENT CORP.

Ana Gonzales* is visibly relieved when the case worker she approaches at the Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC) speaks to her in Spanish. Gonzalez, an elderly woman who arrived at the non-profit, multi-service agency on a recent winter morning with an eviction notice in her hand, could never have explained her story in English.

That is where Sandra Rogers comes in. A bilingual resident of Washington Heights and case manager who sits at the front desk at NMIC’s Wadsworth Avenue headquarters, Rogers listens as Gonzales explains that her landlord is taking her to court over the apartment she has lived in for the past 10 years. Rogers quickly kicks into gear. She shows Gonzales how to get a postponement from the court at the next day’s hearing, and arranges an appointment with a NMIC attorney so he can properly prepare her case.

“After living there ten years, she should be able to convince the judge that she’s the primary tenant. But she’s going to need a lawyer,” Rogers says after making all the arrangements and giving Gonzales additional written information in Spanish.

Rogers knows the ins and outs of the fights to protect housing both from her years as a case manager and from her own personal struggles, which first brought her to NMIC as a client several years ago. “My landlord overcharged me and I thought I was going to lose my apartment. A friend told me to come here,” Rogers recalls. Later, she began volunteering and was eventually hired as full-time staff.

Though most clients don’t end up working here, NMIC has served many purposes for community members. The organization began more than two decades ago, as the neighborhood’s 1920s-vintage apartment blocks deteriorated following many years of rising poverty rates and landlord neglect, and a small group of NMIC lawyers dedicated themselves to helping tenants fight for repairs. But over the years, the organization grew to provide a wide array of services, creating a “one-stop” center for stabilizing families in their homes and communities. Every NMIC program is closely linked to others, and most community residents who find their way here avail themselves of more than one service.

The group’s community organizing team has helped to build tenant associations in dozens of local buildings over the years and is

well known throughout the neighborhood. This has helped build a steady stream of clients for the legal and social services NMIC now offers. The agency's reputation for fighting on behalf of tenants spills over to its other assistance programs, so NMIC is among the first institutions many neighborhood residents think of when they need to find solutions to difficult problems.

Take Maria Lopez, for instance. A 21-year-old on public assistance who replaces Gonzales in the chair across from Rogers' desk, Lopez first tells the case worker in Spanish that she has fallen behind on the \$672 rent on her studio apartment. Rogers is reassuring. "I'm pretty sure you'll qualify for Jiggetts," she tells Lopez, referring to a rent subsidy supplement for families on welfare known by the name of a decade-old lawsuit.

But, after chatting for some time, it becomes clear Lopez has other needs, too. The young mother quietly begins to voice concern about her four-year-old daughter's day care arrangements. It turns out that Lopez must leave her with neighbors during the day when her mother cannot watch her. On days when that falls through, she misses her workfare assignment—which means she risks losing her welfare check and the rental assistance that comes with it. Rogers sends Lopez upstairs to enroll her daughter in one of NMIC's child care programs. The young woman may need even more help than she's already let on, Rogers observes as Lopez heads upstairs. "The social worker at the day care center will follow up," she says.

*Clients' names have been changed to protect their identities.

The young father who is Rogers' next client first heard about NMIC when it was organizing tenants in his building. Now he has come back to the office bearing a rent bill he thinks is incorrect. "Most of these are illegal charges," she tells him after looking at the bill. "We can take care of these without an attorney."

If NMIC's housing advocacy work is most likely to bring in clients, its holistic approach is what makes it easy for them to return and participate in a wide range of services, from job training and placement to adult education, child care and benefits advocacy. Rogers and her front-line colleagues know to ask questions that can help bring issues to the surface. The office is staffed with Spanish-speaking locals and provides a welcoming environment for potential clients. And despite the fact that it performs many of the same functions of a typical city welfare office—securing government subsidies, facilitating referrals to services and performing ongoing case management—NMIC's assistance center exhibits none of the chaos associated with city bureaucracy. The two desks where Rogers and her co-workers sit are purposely located in the middle of the waiting room so that clients can ask questions. And their attentive behavior contributes to the calm atmosphere in the room.

Because it is well-known and trusted by many in the neighborhood, this community-based tenant organization is an ideal hub for providing residents with needed human services. But Sandra Rogers at NMIC isn't focused on these larger issues. She says she's just trying to do for others what NMIC did for her, several years ago.

TRADITIONAL HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION PROGRAMS

The city and state fund a number of homelessness prevention programs that primarily provide emergency grants, legal services and landlord-tenant mediation. For example, the state provides \$4.2 million to about two dozen New York City nonprofit organizations to provide eviction prevention and post-shelter aftercare services to about 4,200 households.

For more information on these and related programs, please see the November 2003 report of the New York City Family Homelessness Special Master Panel, "Family Homelessness Prevention Report." Also, the city's Independent Budget Office published an October 2003 analysis of homelessness prevention spending, and a May 2005 update.

VII. THE NEED FOR FLEXIBLE SERVICES AND FUNDING

Broad, effective community-based prevention strategies are multifaceted and have many moving parts, and their successes are often difficult to measure using the simple outcome reports required by government performance-based contracts and evaluations. Important elements don't fall within traditional government funding rules for social services—in particular, the organizing and other trust-building efforts that are essential if an agency is to become a strong and respected community institution.

HomeBase is extraordinary in the flexibility that it allows its agencies, yet even Fran Winter of the Department of Homeless Services says it is imperative her agency and its contractors stay tightly focused on serving families that are likely to become homeless if they are not helped. Families that don't have housing problems should be sent elsewhere, for more appropriate services, Winter says. "If we are not supremely attuned to solving people's housing crises," she adds, "nobody will be."

This makes perfect sense for a government official who must document the impact of taxpayer dollars that could have been spent some other way. But it also points directly to the silos that restrict even the most creative government programs. The city's Administration for Children's Services administers \$117 million in preventive services contracts with nonprofit organizations, but even these are limited to serving families who agree to comply with specific guidelines and monitoring requirements, and who are approved by ACS. Flexibility in government only goes so far.

But City Hall could take a different stance, supporting a broader, more comprehensive approach to integrated social services and community building. If there were more flexible pots of money for settlement houses and other organizations, argues Adelphi University's Carol Cohen, more people would know about, trust and have access to services they truly need. If more people found the right kind of help at the right time, then fewer families would enter homeless shelters—and fewer children would land in foster care or juvenile detention, more parents would learn literacy skills and help their children get better educations, and on and on.

In recent years, Cohen has worked with community-based organizations and a number of nationwide groups focusing on how to structure programs so that neighborhoods benefit more broadly from the social assistance programs in their midst. In the case of homelessness prevention, she explains, programs might be designed to benefit families in permanent ways—housing subsidies, education or day care—while also using community organizing and events to try to bond family members with others in their neighborhood, helping them to build supportive social networks.

The key, Cohen says, is that community-building agencies must know what they want to accomplish in their neighborhood and be willing to do whatever it takes to achieve their larger vision. Cohen calls this "principle-governed behavior," as opposed to the more standard "rule-governed behavior" that is a fact of life for most nonprofits, particularly those working under government contracts. Too often, community groups and nonprofit agencies are afraid to experiment with new ideas that could provide truly welcome services to families because they worry too much about the rigid expectations of government and foundation funders.

Cohen adds that the principle-governed approach only works with nonprofit agencies that are well-managed and deeply committed to their neighborhoods. "Flexibility is

Too often, community groups and nonprofit agencies are afraid to experiment with new ideas because they worry about the rigid expectations of funders.

no good unless you have a strong sense of mission,” she says, adding that the best programs always find a way to serve as many people as they can, the best they can. They get by, she says. “But there shouldn’t be so many barriers.”

The barriers to flexible strategies are, indeed, formidable:

- **Emergency services are almost always mandated by law; community-based support services are not.** Child protection regulations, right-to-shelter rules, legislated policy and program requirements, criminal statutes and court orders all specify in great detail what emergency services the city or state government must fully fund. With spending finite in even the best of times, preemptive, community-based initiatives are secondary concerns, even when they could be expected to reduce the necessity for emergency services in the future.
- **Emergency service funding streams tend to be non-transferable.** Often, funding for emergency services cannot be applied to community-based services and supports that could reduce the demand for such services. What’s more, eviction prevention services for families are nearly all linked to public assistance—excluding families with working adults as well as many immigrants, except for very short-term one-time grants that often have to be repaid.
- **Measuring the effectiveness of community-based services can be difficult.** In a successful program, families typically receive an array of complementary services and supports that help them maintain social, economic and residential stability. It can be hard to ascribe positive outcomes to any one intervention. Government agencies and foundations rightly want greater accountability from their contractors and grantees, often tying payment to performance measures. But often these performance measures may not capture wider benefits to a family, a community and to the city at large. For example, a rent subsidy provided through the Administration for Children’s Services housing program may help children avoid foster care—while also preventing homelessness, improving their educational attainment and reducing their long-term reliance on other crisis services. The problem is, there is no easy way to measure this good news—and thus the political benefit of good social policy is diluted.
- **Even the most effective services and supports may not be able to counter the negative impacts of powerful economic forces.** The declining value of public benefits, the very low incomes of many working families, and the most severe housing shortage in decades all make it increasingly difficult to keep families stable.

Yet despite these barriers, a number of community-based organizations in New York City have developed principled, mission-driven approaches to integrated services and community support programs. The challenge is in filling the gaps and streamlining connections.

“We have our own networks, so we are part of a broader system,” explains Mary Abbate, assistant executive director at the Forest Hills Community House in Queens. “We also naturally connect people to their own networks and other support networks.”

“We start from a strength model,” she adds. “We see that there is an immediate need, but we also see this as a long-term investment.” In thinking this way, any family helped—whether they would have become homeless or not—is considered a gain, she says. Families that remain stable are better positioned to take care of themselves and others in the community.

TYING TOGETHER MANY THREADS OF SUPPORT: WHEDCO

Cheryl Wilson made her way out of a homeless shelter and into subsidized housing last year, but she still needed a job. Her public assistance worker told her she qualified for “Innovations at Work,” a two-week training seminar offered by the Women’s Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDCO) in the Bronx, so she joined and soon learned how to work as a case manager for a company that processes benefits applications for the city. Weeks later, this single mother of three had found a job.

Shortly after, she received a letter in the mail inviting her to take part in another WHEDCO program that helps recently homeless families settle into their new homes, live on a budget and deal with issues that could threaten their stability. Soon Cheryl was taking part in support programs she hadn’t imagined when she first approached the organization. WHEDCO’s housing unit even connected her with a counselor who helped her and her 18-year-old daughter resolve difficulties that had threatened to break up the family.

Wilson has been lucky not only to land at an organization that is committed to providing a wide range of services, but also to have been selected for a special pilot program WHEDCO staff developed in an effort to maximize their flexibility and meet clients’ true needs, rather than simply plugging people into one pre-designed program at a time.

Most poor people in need of social services must navigate a rigid and unforgiving system. Instead of encountering variety and flexibility—something most middle class and wealthy Americans are accustomed to in this service-oriented society—they often encounter programs designed to limit the extent of support they receive or that are entirely inappropriate for their individual situations.

This “user-unfriendliness” often stems from the sources of funding. Government money comes with many strings attached, including rigid rules that determine whom organizations can enroll in their programs and how services

must be delivered. Private philanthropic foundations also parcel out resources with very specific requirements, usually targeted only for a particular program or project.

Government contracts and foundation grants are also increasingly “performance-based,” meaning programs are paid according to the number of clients who reach a certain clearly defined endpoint, such as employment or housing. The concept makes sense, helping government and foundations identify and weed out or improve ineffective programs. Yet poorly designed or overly specific outcome requirements can limit an organization’s effectiveness, because the family issues these programs are paid to address often grow out of a complex thicket of troubles.

“The problem with both government and philanthropy that gives categorical money is that somehow they’ve gotten into the business of widget counting,” says WHEDCO’s executive director, Nancy Biberman. “But working with human beings dealing with complex social problems doesn’t lend itself to widget counting.”

Biberman contrasts the current performance-based approach with the health care system. While physicians seek to resolve underlying medical conditions that give rise to the symptoms of an illness, the opposite is usually true in taxpayer-supported human services. “Social service agencies are incentivized to put a band-aid on problems, but they are not incentivized to cure the illness,” says Biberman. “Nobody in this field wants to take the long view.”

Located less than a dozen blocks from Yankee Stadium in one of the city’s poorest neighborhoods, WHEDCO has served as a key part of the community’s infrastructure since it opened its doors in the renovated, formerly abandoned Morrisania Hospital building in 1997. With the goal of integrating services and serving families holistically, WHEDCO provides a wide variety of services, including Head Start and day care, job training and assistance for small-scale entrepreneurs, housing, youth services

and family support and counseling. The agency has also trained more than 140 women who now manage their own family day care programs.

Yet despite its best intentions, WHEDCO is constantly constrained by rules that dictate how city, state, federal and private money can be spent. Enrolment in WHEDCO's workforce development program, for instance, is restricted by its primary funder, the city's Human Resources Administration, which requires that participants not only be on public assistance, homeless or very recently homeless, but that they also be approved by HRA to receive services.

Frustrated with such limitations, Biberman and her colleagues debated how best to make sure clients received exactly the services they needed rather than those dictated by external guidelines. In June 2004 the organization received a one-year grant allowing them to begin enrolling women in several programs at once while tracking their progress and learning how different services might work more effectively with one another. Though clients throughout the organization had always been informed about the range of services available, those in the pilot group receive extra attention. Ivaese Melendez, a social worker hired through the grant, regularly calls all clients to ask how they're doing and to assess their changing situations.

Sixty families are currently in the pilot project. WHEDCO tracks which services they use and what outcomes they achieve along the way. This data will help identify gaps in its programs and document instances in which clients haven't used certain services because of problems with eligibility criteria. The tracking also provides the agency an opportunity to learn about itself. "It was really to break down barriers between departments that had been

artificially created by this categorical eligibility problem," says Barbara Zerzan, WHEDCO's vice president for programs.

Representatives of WHEDCO's five service units now gather for monthly intensive case conference meetings to discuss the client families they have in common. These sessions are time-consuming, but Zerzan deems them invaluable. "They encourage people to share their expertise," she says. "We have a lot of talented staff but they don't frequently have opportunities to collaborate."

Biberman has found that the grant doesn't come close to covering the cost of service integration, however. "It's a great program. I wish we could afford it," she laughs. The only lasting solution, she adds, will come when government and foundations comprehend that families will receive cross-cutting, effective supportive services only when greater funding flexibility becomes the norm, not the exception. "It's hard work," she says. "Nothing happens the way it's supposed to, that's the inevitable nature of social services and government. That's why we need to be flexible for our clients, constantly, constantly."

Cheryl Wilson, after finding a job and other help through WHEDCO's pilot program, missed several days of work when she had to bring two of her children, who both suffer from sickle cell anemia, to doctor's appointments. Within five months of taking her new job, she was fired. It's a common problem for low-wage working mothers who have little job security—and lots of family responsibilities. WHEDCO staff members are now assisting Cheryl with a second job search, updating her resume and identifying job opportunities. Even after she finds her next job, WHEDCO will be there to help.

Also available from the Center for New York City Affairs:

"Community Collaboration in New York City: Charting the Course for a Neighborhood-Based Safety Net." An assessment of the NYC Administration for Children's Services Neighborhood Networks project. By Andrew White, Nancy Rosenbaum, Sharon Lerner and Sasha Nyary. March 2005.

"Pivot Point: Managing the Transformation of Child Welfare in NYC," *Child Welfare Watch*, Volume 10. Winter 2004-2005.

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VIII. THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Gaining access to immediate, appropriate help is critical to any family facing a housing crisis. Community organizations are in an excellent position to open the door to many more families than those currently gaining access to homelessness prevention services.

Executive directors and other community organization staff interviewed for this report note that the services their groups offer vary greatly depending on the community they serve, its housing stock, its population and its resources and institutions. They also vary based on the experience and expertise of the organizations themselves.

By investing in the organizing and engagement capacity of community-based organizations in neighborhoods where many families become homeless, the city can dramatically widen the entryway to preventive programs.

Many also consider their programs to be flexible despite all the constraints imposed by funding. They attempt to integrate the services they already have, and to assess, enroll and refer families for services that will make a positive difference in their lives. Many of them aim to present a seamless façade, so that their constituents don't necessarily see how a variety of programs and services fit into larger categories of need.

Still, it is useful to look at the various components—and how each might be most usefully employed in a broader program of family homelessness prevention.

Community-based providers offer services that can be divided into six categories:

- **Engagement and assessment.** Among the most invaluable services provided by community-based programs is the ability to offer timely assessments and knowledgeable advice to families in a welcoming environment. By having a prominent profile in the local community as a place families can go to get trustworthy assistance, these programs play a vital role in ensuring that available services are truly accessible to those who need them. In addition, some programs (especially those linked to community and tenant organizing) connect with community residents in their homes, schools and elsewhere; building relationships and alliances; strengthening people's capacity to assert their rights and even influence policy, and generally gaining trust.

By investing in the organizing and engagement capacity of community-based organizations in neighborhoods where many families become homeless, the city can dramatically widen the entryway to preventive programs and more easily identify isolated and doubled-up, at-risk families. This is one area where increased funding flexibility is especially important.

- **Direct crisis intervention.** The success of most community-based service and support programs hinges on their ability to intervene directly on behalf of families by securing public benefits (welfare, food stamps, Medicaid and emergency aid) preventing evictions, providing counseling and advocating for children's needs. This assistance is frequently the key factor in gaining access to the government services and supports to which families are entitled.

This structure is fundamental to most longstanding homelessness prevention programs. With more flexibility, program directors say they could serve more families—including those who don't qualify for public assistance.

- **Financial supports.** In addition to linking families to government subsidies, some nonprofit organizations have access to additional resources for one-shot deals and other modest, charitable assistance for food, shelter and other expenses.

One strength of the city's HomeBase initiative is the freedom that each agency has to spend up to \$800,000 per year on short-term financial assistance in any way that will help to keep families housed.

- **Referrals.** A thorough knowledge of available services and supports—and strong relationships with partner institutions and their staff—is another attribute of the most effective community-based organizations. By providing (and following up on) referrals, community-based services play a critical clearinghouse function that increases families' access to more specialized programs.
- **Case management.** Many programs have the capacity to offer some level of case management to families who need ongoing assistance.
- **Counseling, training and treatment.** Some programs have the in-house capacity to provide all kinds of specialized services, making the referral process more seamless.

The case studies in this report identify a number of strategies community organizations use to build relationships with families at risk of homelessness. More importantly, the experiences of these and other groups show how finding and connecting with families who have housing problems is not so different from connecting with families who need help with benefits, or food, or even subsidized preschool programs.

When community groups offer a full range of approaches, the effect can transform a family's prospects, says Charles Barrios, director of community-based programs at Good Shepherd Services in Brooklyn. Barrios heads up the group's Single Stop program, funded by the Robin Hood Foundation, designed to better coordinate services for a wide variety of families in need. Groups like his provide families with the ability to navigate the city's multi-layered bureaucracy in a way that individual governmental agencies, at least right now, are incapable of doing themselves. They are also armed with the information and skills families need to plan their way out of their crises, he says. This can be a particularly valuable service for doubled-up families.

"We help them prepare," Barrios says. "We would ask, 'What are your resources like? If you needed to leave tomorrow, do you have somewhere else to go? What's your income? Anyone else in the house have an income? What are the implications if you move? Is that going to be a problem in terms of work? In terms of child care?'"

"It's really about planning. And I don't know how much of that actually gets done," he says. "People are always looking for an immediate fix and sometimes it just isn't there." Like nearly everyone else interviewed for this report, Barrios adds that many of the families he works with are doing their best to find affordable housing—and too often it simply can't be found.

New York City, if it is truly interested in preventing family homelessness, must hold up its end of the bargain, says Barrios, enforcing housing quality and health standards in housing where low-income people live, pushing new affordable housing construction to the front of City Hall's agenda and ensuring that families have access to income supports when crisis strikes. "I think it's good to start with the idea of prevention, but you need a safety net," he says. "They go hand in hand."

The case studies in this report identify a number of strategies community organizations use to build relationships with families at risk of homelessness.

A FOOD PANTRY OPENS THE DOOR: WEST SIDE CAMPAIGN AND URBAN JUSTICE CENTER

When Rosario Reyes went with her friend to a food pantry, she had no idea they would issue her a check for her overdue rent. But that's what happened when the Bronx single mother talked with representatives from the Urban Justice Center, which runs a legal clinic in tandem with the West Side Campaign Against Hunger's food pantry.

"When I went to the legal clinic, it only took one week and they gave me a check," Reyes recalls. "They helped me a lot because they gave me another name for another center, a Catholic church that gave me another month, and it solved my problem."

It's not for nothing that the Campaign's motto is, "The answer to hunger is more than food." The organization's collaboration with the Urban Justice Center feeds client needs ranging from income tax assistance to second hand clothing. For Reyes, the partnership meant help securing housing, gaining access to public services, successfully navigating the court system and taking part in job training.

Most people who rely on the city's hundreds of food pantries are not homeless, but are just getting by. With a trusted reputation and a large clientele, the West Side Campaign's pantry turns out to be an excellent base for catching families before they tumble into a more dire situation, such as losing their home.

A year after her first visit, Reyes has not only used grants and referrals to stave off eviction by repaying \$1,356 in past-due rent, she has gotten groceries from the food pantry, had her food stamp benefits reinstated in a hearing with representation from the Urban Justice Center, and graduated from the food pantry's three-month class on nutritious food preparation.

"They helped me all along the way," she says. "They went with me to the fair hearing, helped me to get retroactive food stamps, then helped me with money and a check."

The way the staff attacked Reyes' situation is the type of multi-level interventions that were

intended when the Robin Hood Foundation developed its Single Stop grants initiative, from which the hunger campaign receives an annual grant. The philosophy fueling these partnerships says that smart service providers will recognize clients' interrelated needs and respond with multifaceted, flexible services—preferably in one location.

The need to juggle several escalating crises at once, according to West Side Campaign Against Hunger's social services director Holly Park, is the challenge facing many food pantry clients who are also in danger of eviction.

"Very few people plan in advance. They wait and get behind in rent for all of these months and then at the end they really don't have enough to buy food," she says. The West Side Campaign estimates that 42 percent of its customers fall behind on bills, while 37 percent skip meals and a third have cut the size of their children's meals.

Elisa Kaplan, an advocate with the Urban Justice Center's Homeless Outreach and Prevention Project, says Reyes' case includes many of the most common issues she sees. Consequently, legal advocates at the center have come to specialize in helping clients with public benefits issues.

"The idea behind focusing on a single-stop strategy is to combine the expertise of various organizations and hopefully best serve clients because they will be able to access more and better services," Kaplan says. "For instance, every person who uses the food pantry sees a social services counselor. But if our clients don't come through the pantry, we make sure and ask if they have enough food."

The collaborative project also works on health and employment issues. "We are particularly committed to providing assistance with health insurance and navigating problems with the health care systems," Park says. "We really feel that we are treating the whole person and encouraging both physical and mental wellness."

IX. CONCLUSION

New York needs both short-term and long-term strategies if it is to achieve a steep reduction in the need for the city's extremely expensive homeless shelter system. The city will have to invest in housing as well as services that will help families near the edge of disaster hold on to—or regain—stable, housed, safe and productive lives.

This report aims to provide guidance in the expansion of short-term preventive solutions at the community level, so that these immediate solutions will contribute substantially, over the long term, to the development of a permanent, effective neighborhood-based safety net for families.

The fundamental lessons are:

- *Community-based organizations can be the primary vehicle for delivering a new, more broadly conceived array of family support services, in many and varied forms, geared toward preventing homelessness.*
- *Accessible, integrated and well-coordinated services at the community level can create an interlaced web of family supports that prevent people from entering shelter, prevent children from needing foster care and bridge the gaps into which families in crisis sometimes fall.*
- *Organizing and outreach performed by community organizations—to build a community presence, establish trust and expand access—must be a central element of any attempt to reach and assist families who otherwise will not seek help.*
- *Flexible funding, along with outcome measures that are not too narrowly conceived, are essential for development of an integrated, community-based safety net that includes effective outreach and broad access.*
- *Expansion of affordable housing resources—preservation, new development and new government rent supports—must be the long-term priority for any administration truly committed to ending reliance on overly expensive homeless shelters.*

If New York City were able to devote just one-quarter of its current family shelter expenditures—about \$100 million—to cultivate a more accessible, effective and comprehensive network of community-based services for families, new outreach and extensive services could be developed to serve roughly 25,000 families in many of the 18 community districts that have a high rate of families entering the homeless shelters.

These new resources would be linked in partnerships with foster care preventive services, child care and preschool programs, youth programs and schools and other community institutions, as well as specialized services—job supports, substance abuse treatment, counseling and health care—to ultimately help families in ways that reach well beyond the prevention of homelessness.

Department of Homeless Services officials say they hope, over time, to shift much of the money saved from the shelter system to community-based supports devoted to helping more families cope with housing problems. “I think we would probably want something like 20 to 25 neighborhood offices,” says Fran Winter, in order to work with families who may be headed toward homelessness as well as those who have already been in the shelters. “We are not there yet, but the idea would be that it’s a city-wide prevention program, available to anybody in the city who needs it. And we would couple

aftercare in the same program, because it's a very similar service and it's the community organization who would be doing it, not the city. You build on the notion that they are known in the community. You come to them if you are having a housing problem. Whether you have been in shelter or not becomes irrelevant."

Reinvestment will depend on evidence of effectiveness. The building blocks are in place. The six HomeBase organizations are the experimental vanguard, although they face a major challenge given the limited size and scope of the program as it is now conceived. Thus far the city intends to measure success by analyzing shelter system intake data each month, determining if there is a noticeable drop in shelter entries from the HomeBase communities. If the organizing, outreach, targeting and community linkages are in place—and if the resources are forthcoming—then many families will receive valuable help.

If New York City is to develop a truly effective and comprehensive safety net and support system for families facing adversity, then expanding the HomeBase approach is only a partial solution. Families in many communities face multiple issues that ultimately land parents and children in costly, government-funded crisis services, ranging from homelessness to foster care, youth detention and more. True prevention will be flexible, accessible, rooted in neighborhoods, and it will cover the gamut of assistance that families need to be stable, housed, safe and moving up.

"The idea would be that it's a city-wide prevention program, available to anybody in the city who needs it...and it's the community organization who would be doing it, not the city."

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CONCENTRATION OF HOMELESSNESS, CONCENTRATION OF POVERTY

There's a strong case to be made for increasing the focus on a range of preventive services to help stabilize families in a handful of New York City neighborhoods.

Most of the families entering the city's homeless shelters come from just a small number of neighborhoods. More than one-fourth of the families entering the shelter system during the first three months of 2005 came from just five community districts: Highbridge, Soundview and University Heights in the Bronx, and Bedford Stuyvesant and East New York in Brooklyn. Department of Homeless Services data also reveal that 70 percent of the families found eligible for shelter during this time period came to the system from 18 of the city's 59 community districts.

Not surprisingly, these same communities—listed in the accompanying chart—also have the highest rates of children living in poverty, children entering the foster care system, single mother-headed households, domestic violence reports to police and serious building code violations. In addition, severe crowding was a factor in about half the neighborhoods.

COMMUNITY DISTRICT	Percent of all eligible families entering shelter, by community of origin (Jan-March 2005)	Children placed in foster care from this community per 1,000 children under age 18 (2004)	Domestic violence incident reports per 1,000 residents (2004)	Percent of families with children below poverty level (1999)	Percent of families that are single mothers with children (2000)	Percent of residential units that are severely crowded (2002)	Serious building code violations per 1,000 rental units (2002)
Concourse/Highbridge	5.8%	5.6	47	45.4%	56%	5.0%	87.0
Bedford Stuyvesant	5.4%	5.1	59	39.0%	61%	1.4%	93.9
East New York	5.3%	3.9	45	37.2%	53%	1.9%	63.5
Unionport/Soundview	5.2%	4.6	35	34.5%	50%	4.5%	58.3
University Heights	4.6%	4.9	41	46.5%	59%	5.3%	89.4
Morrisania	4.3%	7.3	53	49.5%	63%	1.9%	55.7
East Tremont	4.2%	6.5	49	50.7%	61%	1.9%	112.1
Central Harlem	4.1%	7.7	54	40.1%	64%	1.0%	53.6
Mott Haven	3.9%	5.2	47	50.9%	62%	3.4%	29.9
East Harlem	3.8%	9.0	27	42.1%	60%	1.0%	46.3
Fordham	3.5%	4.2	52	38.8%	50%	5.8%	80.4
Brownsville	3.5%	5.3	85	46.5%	67%	1.9%	81.4
Bushwick	3.4%	2.2	44	42.8%	49%	3.5%	193.0
Jamaica/St. Albans	3.3%	3.3	34	17.5%	38%	1.8%	49.2
East Flatbush	2.6%	1.8	32	23.3%	50%	7.5%	86.4
Hunts Point	2.4%	5.9	73	50.4%	56%	3.4%	70.9
Crown Heights North	2.2%	3.9	53	31.6%	59%	0.9%	96.1
Washington Heights	2.0%	2.4	23	35.8%	47%	3.7%	77.3
Median— All NYC Communities	1.2%	2.2	27	23.2%	32%	2.2%	26.4

Sources: NYC Department of Homeless Services, Management Analysis and Evaluation; NYC Administration for Children's Services; NY Police Department; U.S. Census 2000; 2002 NYC Housing and Vacancy Survey, U.S. Bureau of the Census; NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development; Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy, New York University

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