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MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES COVENANT HOUSE INTERNATIONAL TO EXPAND SHELTER FOR HOMELESS YOUTH IN CHICAGO

Covenant House to work with City to address youth homelessness; Chicago selected as organization's first new site in 16 Years

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Covenant House International today announced plans of a new program to build on services by existing homeless service providers in Chicago and to increase shelter beds, street outreach, and additional opportunities for youth experiencing homelessness in Chicago. Covenant House will work alongside the Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS), service providers and community leaders to finalize details and identify a priority area for shelter space to best serve youth. Covenant House has begun work to identify a location for the new shelter, and will begin outreach to youth this summer.

"We as a City cannot thrive until each of our children has an opportunity for success. Having a safe place to call home is fundamental so that our children can be focused on their studies and their future, and not worried about where they will sleep at night," said Mayor Emanuel. "I want to thank Covenant House for their support as we work to increase opportunities for our youth, eradicate homelessness and ensure that none of our children is forced to sleep on the streets."

After meeting with Mayor Emanuel, Covenant House selected Chicago as its first expansion location in over 16 years, based on the City's demonstrated plan to reduce homelessness, the opportunity for collaboration by local partners and the City of Chicago, support by key stakeholders and service providers, and the generous support by the private philanthropy community in Illinois. This summer, the organization will open a facility that will expand citywide shelter capacity via 20 additional beds.

Covenant House will dispatch its Illinois outreach teams to engage homeless youth on the streets of Chicago for the first time ever. One of the organization's primary goals in the weeks to come is to begin conducting street outreach to better understand the population and their specific needs. A site for the new shelter will soon be identified by Covenant House, and will be determined by street outreach conducted to reveal areas where services will make the biggest impact on homeless youth.

"At our programs in 27 cities across six countries, we see every night the difference a safe, warm bed means to our kids," said Covenant House President Kevin Ryan. "A safe place to sleep literally means new life, transformation and hope. We are so grateful to the community leaders and especially our fellow service providers in Chicago who are on the front lines every night. Soon we

will be standing side by side with them and together we'll rescue more kids from the freezing cold, from the violence, and from the vile pimps and traffickers who prey on vulnerable homeless youth."

Over the next few months, the Emanuel Administration and the Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS)—the City's lead agency dedicated to addressing homelessness—will work closely with Covenant House to identify a site to locate shelter space that will add 20 additional shelter beds to the city's existing shelter network. DFSS coordinates with a network of shelters in the city to provide temporary shelter to those who need it most.

"The Mayor's personal dedication to serving homeless and his involvement in bringing Covenant House to Chicago will help us reach the City's most vulnerable youth," said DFSS Commissioner Lisa Morrison Butler. "We welcome Covenant House to Chicago and look forward to a strong partnership with them as we work to end youth homelessness and improve outcomes for our children."

Since Mayor Rahm Emanuel took office in 2011, the City of Chicago has increased funding for homeless services by more than 10 percent and invested in new programs targeting veterans, youth, families, and victims of domestic violence. These investments have allowed the city to add additional 100 youth beds, and expand regional drop-in centers which serve nearly 1,400 homeless youth annually.

In addition to the Mayor's Plan 2.0 to End Homelessness which has laid out a seven-year action plan focusing on homeless prevention, Mayor Emanuel recently launched his Task Force to Reduce Homelessness. This Task Force of more than a dozen city departments and agencies will focus on improved coordination between city and sister departments, increased efficiencies in service delivery, and identifying additional resources as we work to reduce homelessness overall, including among youth and families.

Over 1,800 homeless youth nationwide sleep in the safety of Covenant House programs each night. Covenant House provides food, clothing, shelter, short and long-term housing, educational support, job training, medical care and an array of other services to help homeless youth get and stay off the streets. Founded in 1972, Covenant House is the largest privately funded agency in the Americas helping homeless children, providing 24/7 crisis care and ongoing support in 27 cities across six countries. For more information, please visit www.covenanthouse.org

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