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**CONTACT:**

Jennifer Rottner

312-743-1719

[jennifer.rottner@cityofchicago.org](mailto:jennifer.rottner@cityofchicago.org)

**CITY OF CHICAGO SHARES LATEST UPDATE ON FAMILIES IN TRANSITION PROGRAM**

*Joint initiative aimed at reducing homelessness located in at-risk communities has housed nearly 90% of initial families*

The Department of Family and Support Services today announced the latest update on the Families in Transition program, an unprecedented joint initiative with the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (the Coalition) and its HomeWorks Campaign, and the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) to address homelessness impacting families in the most at-risk communities. Since the initiative was launched in April of 2017, 88 of the 100 homeless families have been housed, which includes more than 500 individuals.

“When the Mayor launched this initiative, our goal was to help our city’s most vulnerable families to establish stability so that their children can succeed,” said DFSS Commissioner Lisa Morrison Butler. “Because of the hard work and coordination with our partners at the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, we have been able to deliver a coordinated response to ensure the needs of our most vulnerable families are met, and to prevent families on the cusp from experiencing homelessness.”

Last summer, the Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) and the Coalition, along with lead project partner, CSH, launched the first phase of this effort to identify families who were currently experiencing homelessness or who had touched the homeless shelter system in recent months, focusing on those with school-aged children. The second phase includes placement of the families into 100 new permanent supportive housing units added by the Chicago Low Income Housing Trust Fund, who have approved rental subsidies for 99 units and expect the one remaining unit/rental subsidy to be on track for approval this month. Other project service partners are Catholic Charities, Housing Opportunities for Women, Inner Voice, Inspiration Corporation, Metropolitan Family Services, and New Moms.

“This initiative is becoming a model for meeting a broader set of needs for families experiencing homelessness,” said Betsy Benito, CSH Director in Illinois. “By relying on our coordinated housing assessment utilized within the Continuum of Care for Coordinated Entry, the collaboration across community-based supportive housing services, homeless services, and the Chicago Public Schools is helping us better serve doubled-up and sheltered families through the same lens.”

Because families that are homeless are at a significantly higher risk for experiencing violence, the City and the Coalition focused on communities experiencing some of the city’s highest rates of violence, including: Austin, Humboldt Park, West Englewood, and Englewood. The City and its service partners identified families by working closely with shelters specializing in family services, and with Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to assess families. Out of the 100 homeless families that took part in this initiative, 40% were in shelters and 60% were living doubled-up with others.

The CPS FIT team has conducted extensive outreach and assessments in the schools, community centers, and shelters and assessed over 156 families. Families identified by CPS as doubled-up had never received a coordinated housing assessment of their housing needs before this initiative. Through this work, the team was able to learn more about the vulnerability of these families and work to connect them with appropriate services. The unprecedented work on the FIT initiative offers lessons on how to coordinate across systems of supports for families to improve the social safety net for our most vulnerable populations. Chicago is the first city in the nation to design an initiative around data on homeless families from both CPS and the Continuum of Care.

All 100 eligible families identified were referred to a supportive service provider, who worked to locate housing and will continue provide the supportive services the families need to stay permanently housed. Six elementary schools were selected to target families in the most at-risk communities: James Russell Lowell, Lillian R. Nicholson, Laura S. Ward, Julia Ward Howe, Charles W. Earle, and Edward K. Ellington Elementary Schools. These schools are located in the Austin, Humboldt Park, and Englewood neighborhoods. The CPS FIT team will also continue to work on specific procedures to pilot within the existing six schools in key community areas that participated in FIT, while increasing granular coordination between the CoC and CPS.

The initiative is funded in part by a \$1.7 million investment by the Chicago Low Income Housing Trust Fund (CLIHTF), with matched funds via the City's house sharing revenue stream. In 2016, the Chicago City Council enacted an unprecedented four percent surcharge on the house sharing industry, making Chicago among the first municipalities to leverage a dedicated funding source for homelessness. Just this week, Mayor Emanuel announced a proposed two percent home share surcharge that will generate \$1.3 million in annual revenue to increase housing options for victims of domestic violence while helping increase access to critical resources.

Since Mayor Emanuel took office in 2011, the City of Chicago has increased funding for homeless initiatives by more than 10 percent and invested in innovative new programs for veterans, youth, families, and victims of domestic violence. The 2017 Point in Time Count reported homelessness decreased 4% from the previous year, marking the lowest observed count of homeless individuals citywide in over a decade.

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