



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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**NEW ARRIVALS MISSION PROVIDES NATIONAL MODEL FOR COMPASSIONATE
ASYLUM SEEKER RESETTLEMENT AT THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL**

*Mayor Brandon Johnson uplifts work around cost savings, creative partnerships, and
resettlement services at the one-year mark*

CHICAGO – After one year at the helm of the New Arrivals Mission, Mayor Brandon Johnson has established a national model for compassionate resettlement of asylum seekers through a combination of intergovernmental collaboration, cost-saving measures, creative partnerships with the faith and philanthropic communities, and wrap-around services.

Today's release comes as the City recently decompressed temporary emergency shelter at the former Wadsworth Elementary School building at 6420 S. University Ave., and is the seventh in a series of recaps leading up to the May 15, 2024, first-year anniversary of the Johnson Administration. New arrivals who had been staying at Wadsworth have either been placed in nearby current temporary shelters, resettled or moved to permanent housing.

"When I took over this Mission a year ago, there were thousands of asylum seekers sleeping on police station floors with almost a thousand more living at our City's airports," said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. "I'm proud of the work that we have accomplished this first year to move folks out of police stations and into temporary emergency shelter where they have received medical services, become part of our public education system, and have made major strides on the path to independence and self-sufficiency. We have welcomed tens of thousands of families who needed help while saving taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars by making the Mission more efficient and by collaborating with anyone and everyone who has been willing to work with us to address this humanitarian crisis."

To date, Chicago has welcomed more than 41,000 new arrivals at the City's landing zone. Through our partnership with the State of Illinois, more than 23,000 new arrivals have been resettled in the area or reunited with sponsors or family. Chicago's temporary emergency shelter system for new arrivals currently has fewer



than 8,000 residents, down more than 50 percent from a peak of nearly 16,000 in December 2023.

Cost-Saving Measures

A significant portion of the costs related to the New Arrivals mission are a result of the staffing contract with Favorite Staffing that Mayor Johnson inherited from the previous administration. To address these costs and to employ more Chicagoans, Mayor Johnson renegotiated the contract multiple times, and as a result of these negotiations, the City has saved nearly \$3 million a week on staffing costs while increasing the number of employees from the Chicagoland area from 17 percent to 53 percent.

Mayor Johnson has also implemented cost savings by setting limits on shelter stay durations and decommissioning the use of the smallest and most expensive shelters in the City's emergency temporary shelter network. The City has reduced its total shelters from 27 to 16, saving taxpayers tens of millions of dollars over the course of the next year. The City has also returned all Chicago Park District sites to their normal community usage, saving additional taxpayer money and returning park programming to these communities.

Through shelter consolidation and continued partnership with the County and the State, the City anticipates saving more than \$200 million in costs over the course of the year.

Creative Partnerships

The City has worked diligently to reduce the substantial cost of shelter operations and staffing through a variety of partnerships and shelter models, including intergovernmental agreements, philanthropic partnerships, community-based organizations, informal mutual aid partnerships, and partnership with the faith community.

In September, the Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) released a [Request for Proposals \(RFP\)](#) for Community-Based Organizations to staff and operate shelter sites. Two sites have been selected to transition toward a community-based model for shelter operations, with more anticipated to be selected in the months ahead.

In late October, Mayor Johnson worked in collaboration with The Resurrection Project, the State of Illinois, and the Biden-Harris Administration to launch a series of one-stop-shop clinics to help expedite the process for asylum seekers to apply for



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



Temporary Protective Status and work authorization. The clinics have helped thousands of asylum seekers receive work authorization in the City while relieving pressure on the City's temporary emergency shelter system.

In November, Mayor Johnson joined faith leaders in announcing the Unity Initiative, a collaboration with Chicago's faith community to provide temporary shelter and resettlement services for asylum seekers. The Unity Initiative, led by Pastor John Zayas of Grace and Peace Church, activated 10 churches and faith institutions, providing emergency shelter and resettlement services for more than 200 new arrivals during the peak of the winter. Pastor Zayas and his network of faith institutions successfully helped resettle hundreds of asylum seekers who have moved through their network.

Throughout the Mission, Chicagoans from local churches, non-profits, mutual aid networks, and other volunteer organizations stepped up to offer a myriad of donations and services to help welcome new arrivals to Chicago and aid the City in its mission to welcome new arrivals with dignity and humanity. Volunteers have donated meals, hygiene products, clothing, and countless other necessities to new arrivals in desperate need. The Chicagoans who have generously assisted new arrivals represent the best of our city and the City of Chicago is deeply grateful for their work.

In February, Mayor Johnson announced the New Neighbors campaign to formally integrate volunteers into the City's Mission through partnerships with ChicagoCares, Chicago Refugee Coalition, and Americorps VISTA. ChicagoCares partnered with a number of Community-Based Organizations to bring volunteer opportunities to community members to serve New Arrivals. Volunteer opportunities included supporting CityKey events and food pantries across the City. The Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) also launched the Chicago Medical Reserve Corps to integrate medical volunteers into the City's system for providing medical care.

In April, Mayor Johnson announced a unique partnership with the Archdiocese of Chicago, Cook County, and the Zakat Foundation to open a temporary shelter for as many as 320 people at the former St. Bartholomew parish convent and school. This partnership required months of careful planning led by the Mayor's Office of Immigrant, Migrant, and Refugee Rights to align all partners. This site will be fully funded and operated by the Zakat Foundation at no cost to the City and represents an innovative interfaith partnership that exemplifies the spirit of the Mission.



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



Additional investments in non-profit organizations, local restaurants and food providers not only helped new arrivals meet basic needs, but also amount to a substantial investment in the small businesses of Chicago which has helped scale up their work, employ more Chicagoans, and expand capacity. The City is particularly grateful to the Greater Chicago Food Depository and Chi-Care for stepping up to meet a growing demand for meals at police stations and shelters when the number of new arrivals was at its highest point.

Compassionate Resettlement

The cornerstone of the City's compassionate resettlement efforts has been the ongoing partnership with local community partners, the State of Illinois, Cook County, and federal partners throughout this Mission. The City's collaborative approach, particularly in the partnership between Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, State of Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker, and Mayor Johnson, has worked to support new arrivals on the path to self-sufficiency by providing basic necessities including food, temporary emergency shelter, urgent medical care, education, vaccines, case management, rental assistance and other resettlement supports.

CDPH has helped connect new arrivals to medical services at Cook County Health, resulting in more than 90,000 visits to the Belmont Cragin Health Center and other healthcare locations. CDPH has also mobilized partners to provide more than 16,000 vaccinations on-site at shelters and police districts, helping to limit spread of COVID-19, measles and other illnesses. As a result, the City has not encountered a confirmed case of measles in nearly one month.

Since August 2022, Chicago Public Schools has enrolled nearly 12,000 children who meet the newcomer criteria of students in temporary living situations, entering after August 2022 and whose home language is not English. New arrival students have made positive contributions to our school communities through their participation in sports, on stage, and at school celebrations as well as their daily contributions to the classroom environment.

Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS), through collaborative efforts of its Children Services and New Arrivals divisions, has enrolled nearly 700 New Arrival children ages 0-5 years old, and expectant mothers, in quality Early Learning programs. DFSS Youth Services division has connected new arrival youth ages 6-24 years old with hundreds of hours of enrichment programming on-site at shelters, and off-site at schools and center-based locations.



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



As part of the partnership with the State of Illinois, shelter residents receive wrap-around services to aid them on their path to independence. These services include Benefits Enrollment, Temporary Protective Status (TPS) and work authorization workshops, and resettlement assistance. The City's partnership with the State has successfully resettled or reunited more than 22,000 new arrivals.

At the City level, the New Arrivals Mission has largely been a collaboration between DFSS, the Office of Emergency Management and Communications, Fleets and Facilities Management, Chicago Department of Aviation, Chicago Park District, the Chicago Police Department, Chicago Department of Public Health, Office of Budget & Management, and the Mayor's Office of Immigrant, Migrant, and Refugee Rights.

Mayor Johnson and the City of Chicago express sincere appreciation for the hard work, dedication, and sacrifice of all City workers who have played a role in the New Arrivals Mission over the course of the past year. They have gone above and beyond, and we are grateful for their tremendous service.

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