



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

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CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES PILOT TO ADDRESS CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS WITH VIABLE HOUSING OPTIONS FOR RESIDENTS

Mayor's Homeless Task Force launches pilot seeking to initially house 75 chronically homeless residents and identify more long-term housing solutions for homeless

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today announced the launch of a pilot program aimed at housing residents experiencing chronic homelessness. The Mayor's new citywide task force dedicated to addressing and reducing homelessness in Chicago, which launched last month, will partner with advocates, non-profits who serve the homeless, and representatives of the homeless community in a new pilot program designed to leverage permanent housing options for residents who have experienced recurring and extended homelessness.

The Mayor's Task Force, with the support of the Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS), has been directed to identify solutions to address chronic homelessness through the pilot program—which marks the city's most comprehensive approach to housing residents impacted by chronic bouts of homelessness to date.

"We as a City cannot thrive until each and every one of our residents can thrive, which is why we are committed to addressing homelessness in a holistic, comprehensive and compassionate manner," said Mayor Emanuel. "This pilot will enlist stakeholders from all over the city to ensure that we are all doing our part in ensuring that our neighbors have a place to call home, and that those who are struggling can get the support they need to get back on their feet."

During phase one of this pilot, DFSS and non-profit outreach teams conducted assessments of residents of multiple homeless encampments to gain a person-by-person account of how many people were living in those areas, and to identify their specific housing and service needs. Based on those assessments, the pilot will focus securing housing and supportive services for 75 individuals experiencing chronic homelessness.

"As a city, we are working to create a system where cases of homelessness are rare, brief, and non-recurring" said DFSS Commissioner Lisa Morrison Butler. "We believe the chronically homeless pilot program will be an integral next step in creating that system. Success in this program will be getting these 75 individuals housed and off the streets and then apply the lessons learned to the other residents experiencing chronic homelessness."

To address chronic homelessness, the pilot will identify rental subsidies and aid opportunities for residents across the city that have experienced chronic homelessness, which is defined as being homeless continuously for at least 12 months or on at least 4 separate occasions in the last 3 years. Rental subsidies will be provided by the Chicago Housing Authority, the Chicago Low-Income Housing Trust Fund, and some existing Permanent Support Housing providers to assist the chronically homeless, specifically those who regularly sleep outside. Placement of eligible residents will be led by the DFSS delegate agencies.

The Task Force to Reduce Homelessness, chaired by DFSS Commissioner Lisa Morrison Butler, is using lessons learned from the city's End Veterans Homelessness Initiative (EVHI). Nationwide, cities have been confronting the issue of homelessness among veterans, which prompted President Obama in 2014 to announce a campaign to put an end to the issue. Since Chicago signed onto this effort by launching the EVHI, it has developed one central list of homeless veterans and brought together key stakeholders to better coordinate efforts across services, amplify resources, and attract new investments. To date, the City has housed 2,100 homeless Veterans.

Building on coordination efforts from EVHI, the Task Force has engaged with elected officials, community activists, non-profit service providers, as well as the homeless residing in this area to make this pilot a collective and community-driven initiative.

"This pilot is the next frontier in our work to eliminate homelessness," said Ald. James Cappleman. "This approach will strengthen the coordination and collaboration of services, which follows best practices of getting people more quickly into permanent housing."

The City has in recent years experienced an uptick in the number of individuals residing in encampments under some of the city's viaducts and other areas of the public way. DFSS and delegate agencies work tirelessly with residents who are street homeless and chronically homeless to assist them in securing services, shelter and, ultimately, permanent housing. On any given night, DFSS houses more than 3,000 people through a citywide network of overnight shelters and interim housing.

"The City's commitment to engaging stakeholders, including residents of the encampments, in planning and decision making makes us hopeful for this pilot," said Doug Schenkelberg, Executive Director of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless. "This process is in line with federal guidance on ending homelessness for those living in encampments and is a good first step to an adequately resourced systemic solution."

"Housing will allow us to get back on our feet, get back in the community, get things straightened out again," said Laura Schwartz, a resident who has been identified to participate in the pilot. "I won't have to worry about where to get my next shower, where to use the bathroom. I can make my own food, and have a place where my husband and I can finally be together and where my children can visit."

Since 2011, Mayor Emanuel 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. The Mayor's Plan 2.0 to End Homelessness is a broad-ranging, seven-year action plan focusing on homeless prevention, the "housing first" approach, and wraparound services for youth and

families in order to break the cycle of homelessness. Since the plan launched, the City has housed 400 households via Rapid Rehousing, expanded shelter space for youth by 33 percent and established three regional drop-in centers which serve nearly 1,400 homeless youth annually.

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