



# THE HIDDEN HOMELESS: What NYC Candidates Should Know About Family Homelessness

May 8, 2025

## 1 Children and families are the hidden face of homelessness.

The majority (69%) of individuals living in Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelters in New York City are members of families with children.<sup>1</sup> Slightly more than one out of three people in shelter in NYC is a child. Half of the children in DHS shelters are age five and under,<sup>2</sup> and therefore in a critical developmental stage of their lives. The number of children sleeping in shelter each night—over 31,000—would fill nearly every seat at a concert at Forest Hills Stadium, a basketball game at Barclays Center, and a show at the Apollo Theater combined.<sup>3</sup>

The number of children sleeping in shelter each night—

**over 31,000**

—would fill nearly every seat at a concert at **Forest Hills Stadium**, a basketball game at **Barclays Center**, and a show at the **Apollo Theater** combined.

## 2 Shelters with support programs will help families confront the barriers contributing to their housing instability.

Sufficient funding should be allocated toward shelter-based services such as job training for parents. Without these supports, homeless families will have a slim chance of maintaining their housing and will return to the shelter system when their time-limited housing voucher expires.

## 3 Reducing family homelessness requires a multipronged approach.

City and State officials will need to invest resources wisely in policies that both provide immediate assistance and offer long-term solutions. This multipronged approach would include:

Protecting the right to **high-quality, service-rich, emergency temporary shelter** for families.

**Helping homeless parents grow their income**, benefits, and savings so they can maintain housing in the community.

**Increasing the supply of housing that is affordable to families living in shelter.** The currently available “affordable” housing is rarely within budget for a family residing in shelter.

**Building on homelessness prevention** and aftercare service models with proven track records.

## 4 Students in shelter experience worse educational outcomes.

During the 2023-2024 school year, over 38,900 public school students stayed in NYC DHS shelters.<sup>4</sup> Compared to their housed peers, students in shelter experience lower attendance rates, proficiency levels, and rates of high school graduation.<sup>5</sup> City officials need to be ready to support efforts that improve the educational outcomes for homeless students.

Over  
**38,900 public school students**  
stayed in NYC DHS shelters.

## 5 City officials need to ensure that at-risk and homeless families do not fall through the cracks given the current federal funding environment.

The City currently receives over \$8 billion in federal funding for direct use in its annual Operating Budget. Over 80% of these dollars flow to departments that support families experiencing homelessness. Such programs help subsidize the cost of housing, education, and childcare.<sup>6,7</sup> New York Governor Hochul has made clear that it would be impossible for the State to make up lost federal revenue. New York City could be in the same sinking boat.<sup>8</sup> Should such cuts happen, **NYC officials will be challenged to minimize reductions in services and/or resources for homeless families.** Candidates must therefore offer strategies for dealing with proposed cuts to federal funding.

1. [nyc.gov/assets/dhs/downloads/pdf/dailyreport.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dhs/downloads/pdf/dailyreport.pdf) Note: DHS updates this file daily and does not archive reports in full. Data used for this document pulled from DHS Daily Report 3/18/2025 (Data from Monday, March 17, 2025). NYC's shelter system consists of different sections, which vary based on the operating NYC agency and the population it serves (families with children, domestic violence survivors, people living with HIV/AIDS, etc.) The statistic given reflects ICPH's expertise and experience with families with children in DHS shelters. To learn more about the different segments of the shelter system in NYC, visit [City Limits' NYC shelter count](#).
2. <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dhs/downloads/pdf/dashboard/tables/FY24-DHS-Data-Dashboard-Data.pdf>
3. [nyc.gov/assets/dhs/downloads/pdf/dailyreport.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dhs/downloads/pdf/dailyreport.pdf), <https://www.foreshillstadium.com/about/>, <https://www.barclayscenter.com/center-info/about-us> and <https://www.apollotheater.org/visit-the-apollo> Note: DHS updates this file daily and does not archive reports in full. Data used for this document pulled from DHS Daily Report 3/18/2025 (Data from Monday, March 17, 2025)
4. <https://infohub.nycfed.org/reports/government-reports/students-in-temporary-housing-reports> Reported Data for School Year 2023-2024
5. [https://advocatesforchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/sth\\_edu\\_indicators\\_2023.pdf](https://advocatesforchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/sth_edu_indicators_2023.pdf) Note: Information is based on 2022-2023 school year
6. <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/nycs-federal-funding-outlook-under-trump/#federal-funding-beyond-the-citys-budget>
7. <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/nycs-federal-funding-outlook-under-trump/#federal-funding-beyond-the-citys-budget> Note: These agencies include The Department of Education, the Department of Social Services, the Administration of Children's Services, the Department of Homeless Services, and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development
8. <https://gothamist.com/news/albany-budget-plan-banks-on-washington-dollars-that-may-disappear>

The Institute for Children, Poverty & Homelessness (ICPH) raises awareness and advances the public conversation about family homelessness through the production and dissemination of publications, resources, and other tools. Its public policy insights are informed by field-based practices in education, employment, and social services at family shelters.

For questions or to schedule meetings, presentations, or for media inquiries: [INFO@ICPH.org](mailto:INFO@ICPH.org)

(212) 358-8086

[ICPH.org](http://ICPH.org)

 [ICPH\\_org](https://www.instagram.com/ICPH_org)

 [ICPHorg](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ICPHorg)

 Institute for Children and Poverty

 [ICPH\\_org](https://www.youtube.com/ICPH_org)