



## **State of the Homeless 2011**

**“One in Three”:  
A Plan to Reduce Record New York City Homelessness  
and Reverse the Failed Policies of the  
Bloomberg Administration**

April 11, 2011

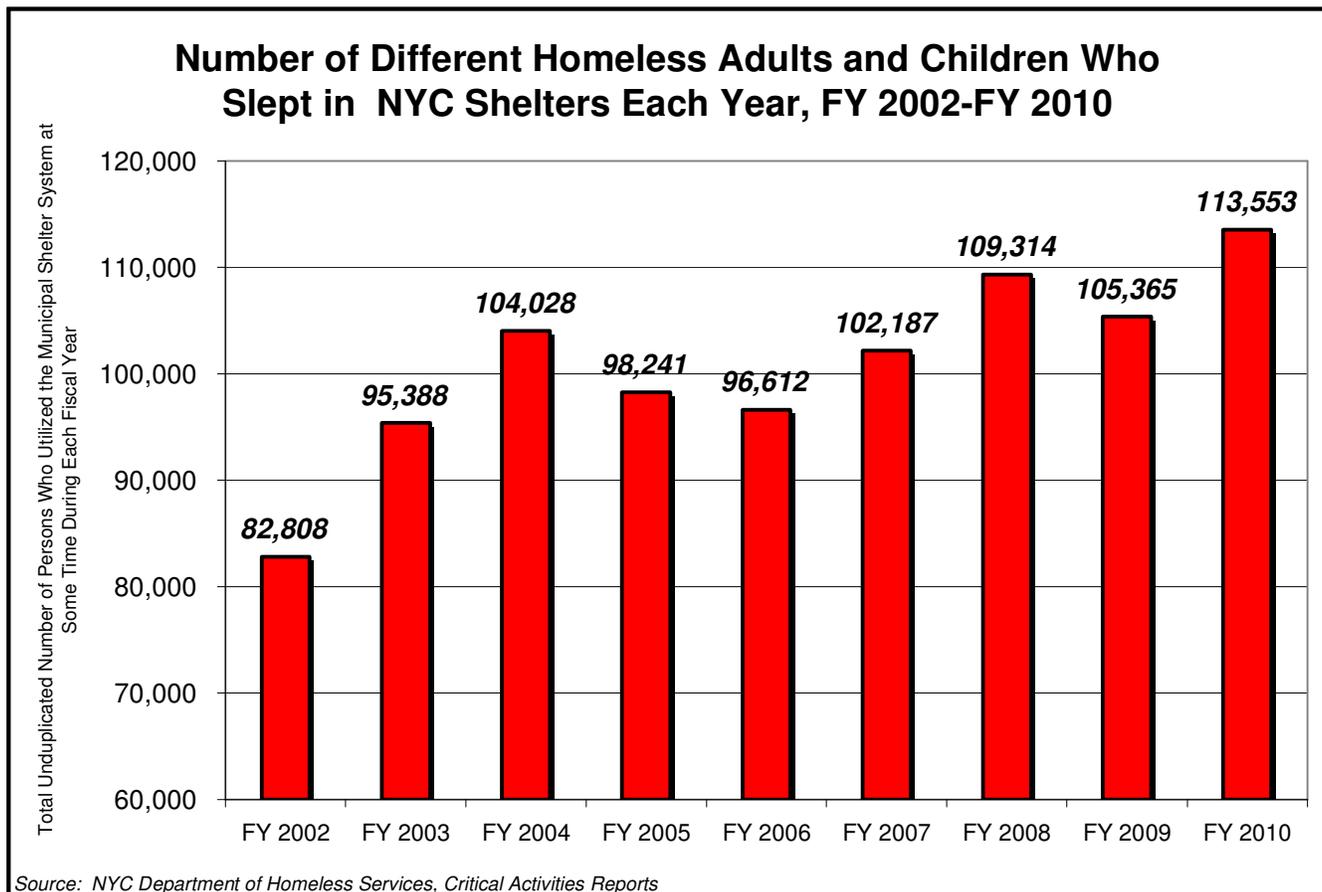
By Patrick Markee, Senior Policy Analyst, and  
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## Coalition for the Homeless State of the Homeless 2011

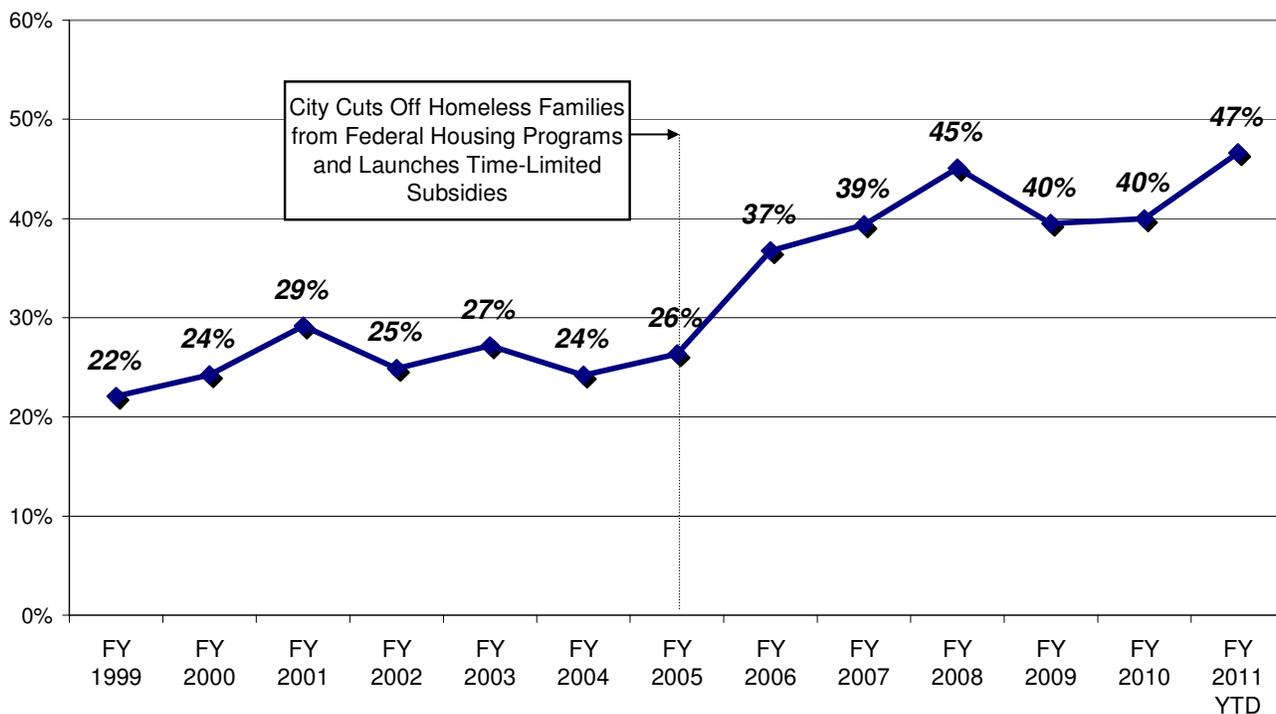
In the midst of high unemployment, the steady loss of affordable housing, and years of failed policies under the Bloomberg administration, ***an all-time high number of New Yorkers turned to homeless shelters last year and the New York City homeless shelter population is now larger than at any time since the City began keeping records.***

- ***An all-time record 113,553 homeless people – including 42,888 children – slept in municipal shelters in FY 2010, an 8 percent increase from the previous year and a 37 percent increase from FY 2002 when Mayor Bloomberg took office.***
- This includes ***a record 28,977 families, a 10 percent increase from the previous year and a remarkable 81 percent more than when Mayor Bloomberg took office.***
- And by the end of February of this year, ***the nightly census of homeless adults and children in the municipal shelter system – 39,542 people – reached the highest point ever recorded.***



In the midst of this historic homelessness crisis, the Bloomberg administration's only response has been to defend its failed policies. ***Unlike previous New York City mayors from Ed Koch through Rudy Giuliani, Mayor Bloomberg refuses to use proven and cost-effective Federal housing programs to move homeless families from shelters to stable homes.*** Instead, for more than six years the Bloomberg administration has ***replaced proven Federal programs with a series of untested, time-limited subsidies*** like the recently-terminated Advantage program.

## Larger Share of Homeless Families Entering Shelter System Are "Repeat Families," FY 1999-FY 2011



Source: Mayor's Management Reports and NYC Department of Homeless Services, "Critical Activities Reports"

However, City data show that these **flawed time-limited subsidies have forced thousands of formerly-homeless children and families back into the shelter system and homelessness, at tremendous expense to taxpayers.**

- Since the Bloomberg administration cut off homeless families from proven Federal housing programs and replaced them with time-limited subsidies like the Advantage program, **more than twice as many formerly-homeless families enter the shelter system each year.**
- In the seven years before Mayor Bloomberg's misguided policy change, an average of 2,003 formerly-homeless "repeat families" entered the shelter system each year, but **in the five years after the change an average of 5,020 "repeat families" entered the shelter system each year, a remarkable 151 percent increase.** And in FY 2010, **an all-time record 6,294 "repeat families" entered the shelter system.**
- **Before the Mayor's time-limited subsidies were implemented, only one in four families (25 percent) entering the shelter system was formerly-homeless, while now nearly half (47 percent) of all families entering the shelter system was once homeless.**
- The record number of so-called "repeat families" entering municipal shelters has **already cost taxpayers an estimated \$370 million in shelter costs alone** and has **contributed to the all-time record number of homeless children and families.**

Faced with all-time record homelessness and the end of the failed Advantage program, Mayor Bloomberg and his administration must look to the proven policies of previous mayors. **To address rising family homelessness in the past, Mayors Koch, Dinkins, and Giuliani marshaled Federal housing resources to help homeless families move from costly shelters to stable, permanent homes.** In particular, previous mayors targeted roughly **one in three public housing apartments and**

***Section 8 vouchers administered by the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) to homeless children and families.***

As a result, Mayors Koch, Dinkins, and Giuliani saved hundreds of millions in taxpayer dollars, oversaw much smaller homeless shelter populations than Mayor Bloomberg, and helped tens of thousands children and families secure safe, affordable housing.

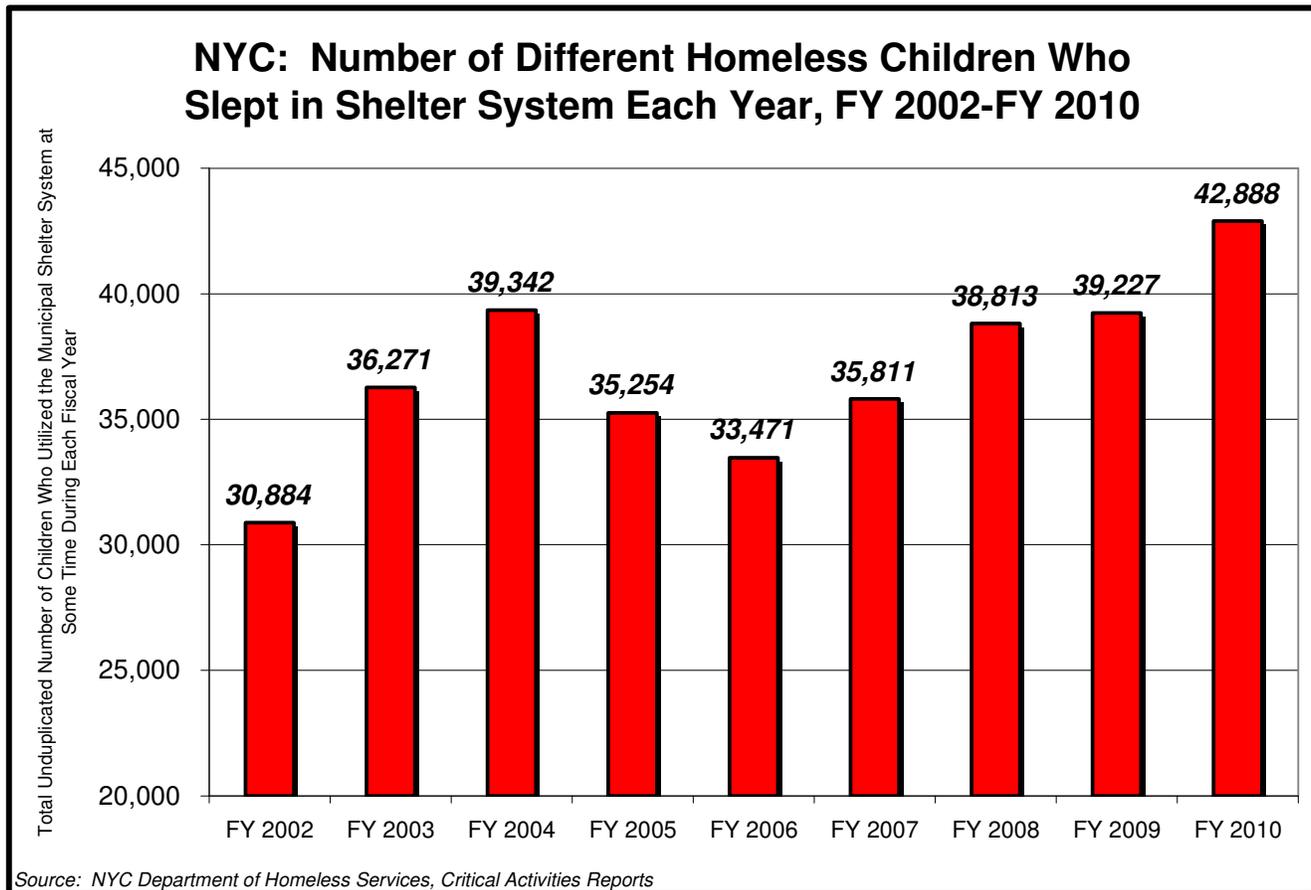
- Taking a lesson from the past, ***Mayor Bloomberg and his administration should target one of every three NYCHA public housing apartments and Section 8 vouchers to help homeless families move from shelters to permanent housing.***
- ***The “one in three” policy will reduce family homelessness, save taxpayer dollars, and improve the lives of vulnerable children and families.***

The following “State of the Homeless 2011” report summarizes the major trends in New York City homelessness over the past year, and highlights data showing a new all-time record homeless population and the failures of the Bloomberg administration’s experiment with time-limited rent subsidies.

## Part I More New Yorkers Experiencing Homelessness Than Ever

In the last City fiscal year, according to City data, *more New Yorkers slept in New York City municipal homeless shelters than at any time since the City began keeping records.* And as of the end of February 2011, *the nightly census of homeless people in the municipal shelter system – 39,542 people – was the highest ever recorded.*

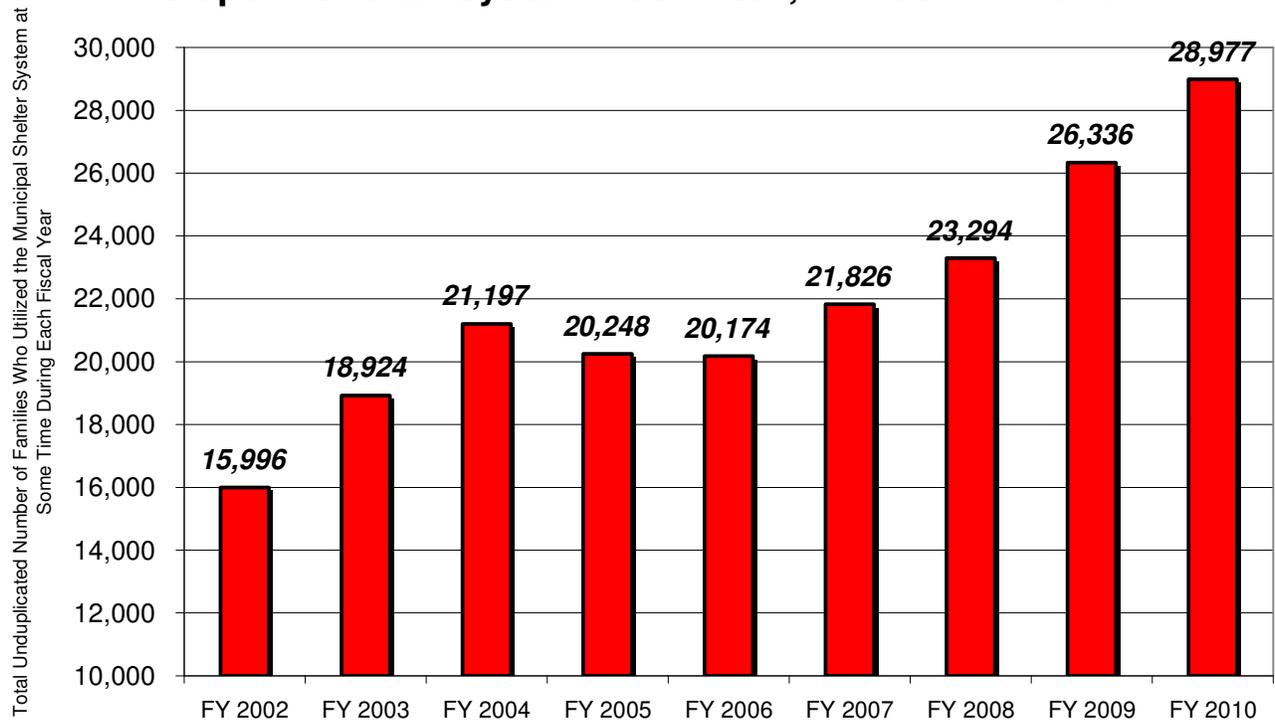
All in all, the City data indicate that *last year more New Yorkers experienced homelessness than at any time since the Great Depression of the 1930s.*



### Overview of the Past Year

- *In FY 2010 a record 113,553 homeless people slept in municipal shelters, an 8 percent increase from the previous year and a 37 percent increase from FY 2002 when Mayor Bloomberg took office.*
- *During the same period a record 42,888 children slept in municipal shelters, a 9 percent increase from the previous year and 39 percent more than when the Mayor took office.*
- *During the same period a record 28,977 families slept in municipal shelters, a 10 percent increase from the previous year and a remarkable 81 percent more than when Mayor Bloomberg took office.*
- *On February 28, 2011, there were 39,542 homeless men, women, and children sleeping in the municipal shelter system, the highest nightly shelter census ever recorded.*

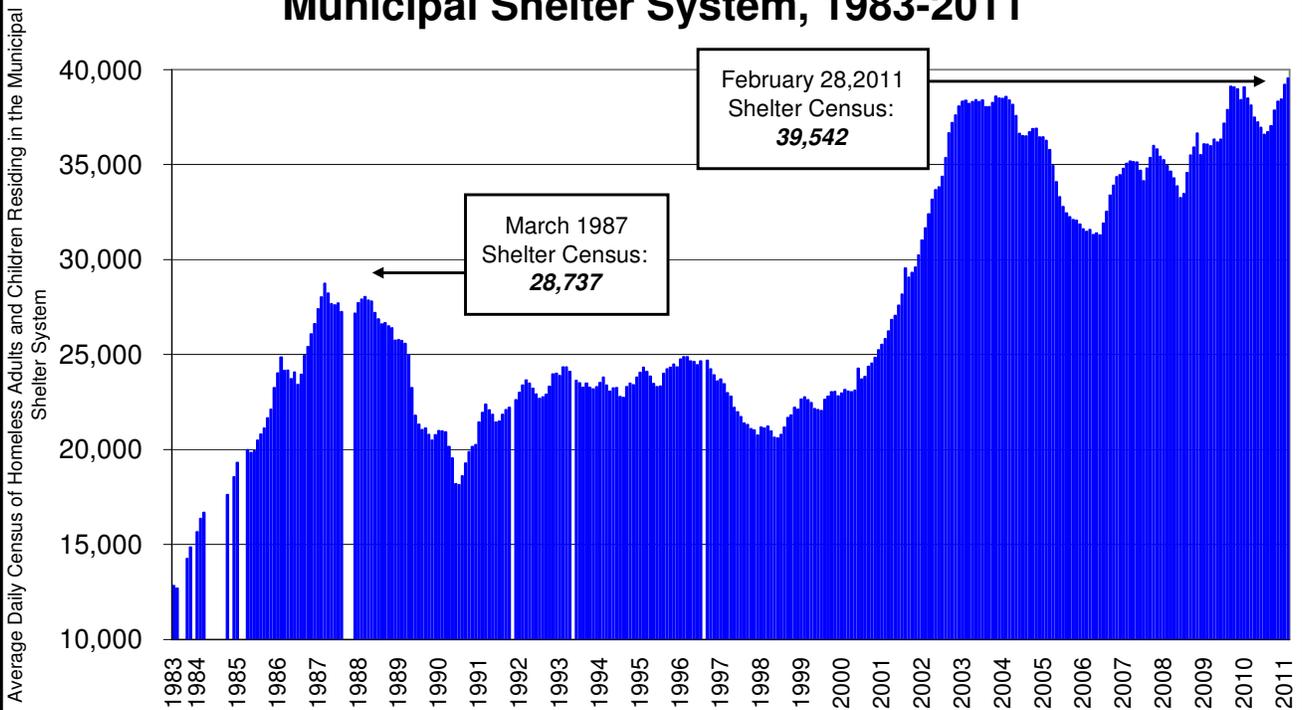
## NYC: Number of Different Homeless Families Who Slept in Shelter System Each Year, FY 2002-FY 2010



Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services, Critical Activities Reports

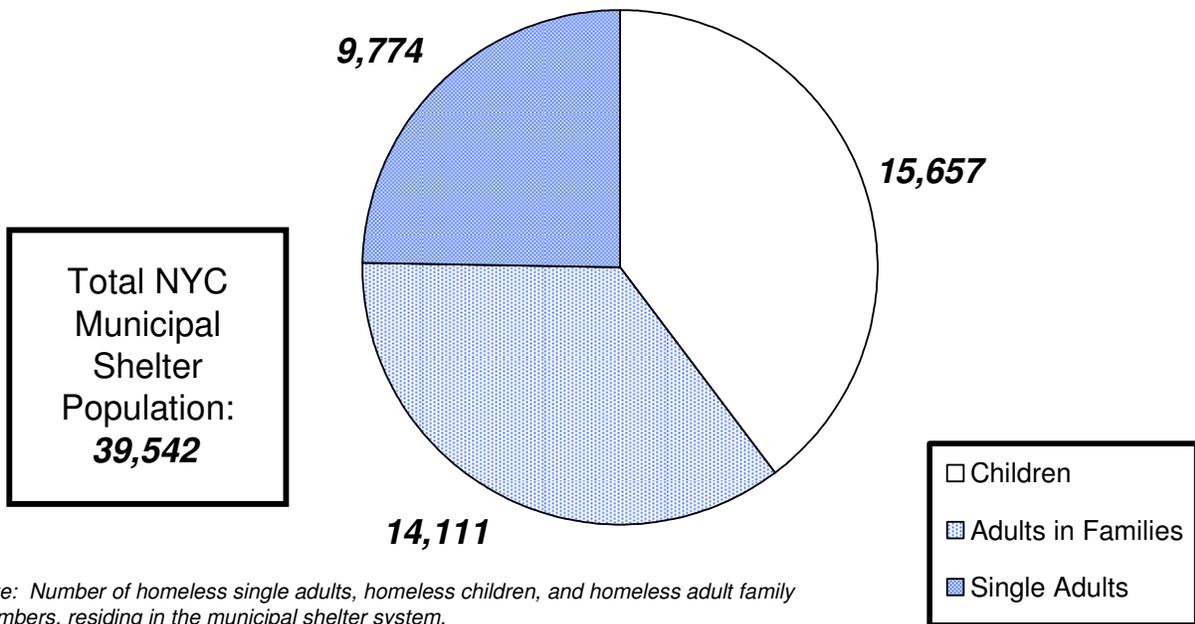
- At the end of February there were **15,657 homeless children sleeping in New York City municipal shelters**. During the past six months, the **number of homeless children has increased by 8 percent**.
- At the end of February there were **9,864 homeless families sleeping in New York City municipal shelters**. During the past six months, the **number of homeless families has increased by 4 percent**.
- During the past year the number of homeless single adults in municipal shelters has soared to **the highest levels since the late 1980s**.
- During the past year, the **average nightly census of homeless single adults in the shelter system increased by 17 percent**.
- At the end of February, the number of homeless single adults in municipal shelters was **9,774 people (including 7,033 men and 2,741 women), the highest number since 1989**.
- During the past year **the number of homeless single women in the shelter system reached the highest point since the City has kept records**.
- During the past year, the **average nightly census of homeless single women in the shelter system increased by 20 percent**.

## New York City: Census of Homeless People in the Municipal Shelter System, 1983-2011



Source: New York City Department of Homeless Services and Human Resources Administration, shelter census reports  
 Prepared by Patrick Markee, Coalition for the Homeless, 212-776-2004

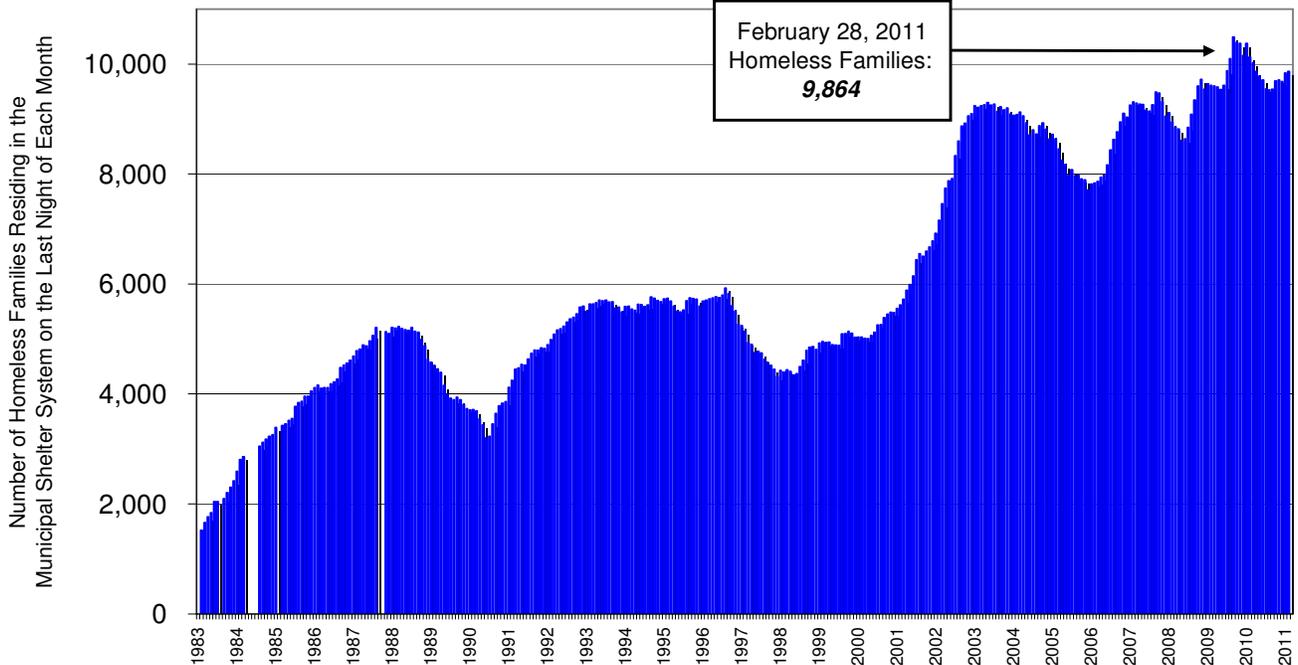
## New York City: Census of Homeless People in the Municipal Shelter System, February 28, 2011



Note: Number of homeless single adults, homeless children, and homeless adult family members, residing in the municipal shelter system.

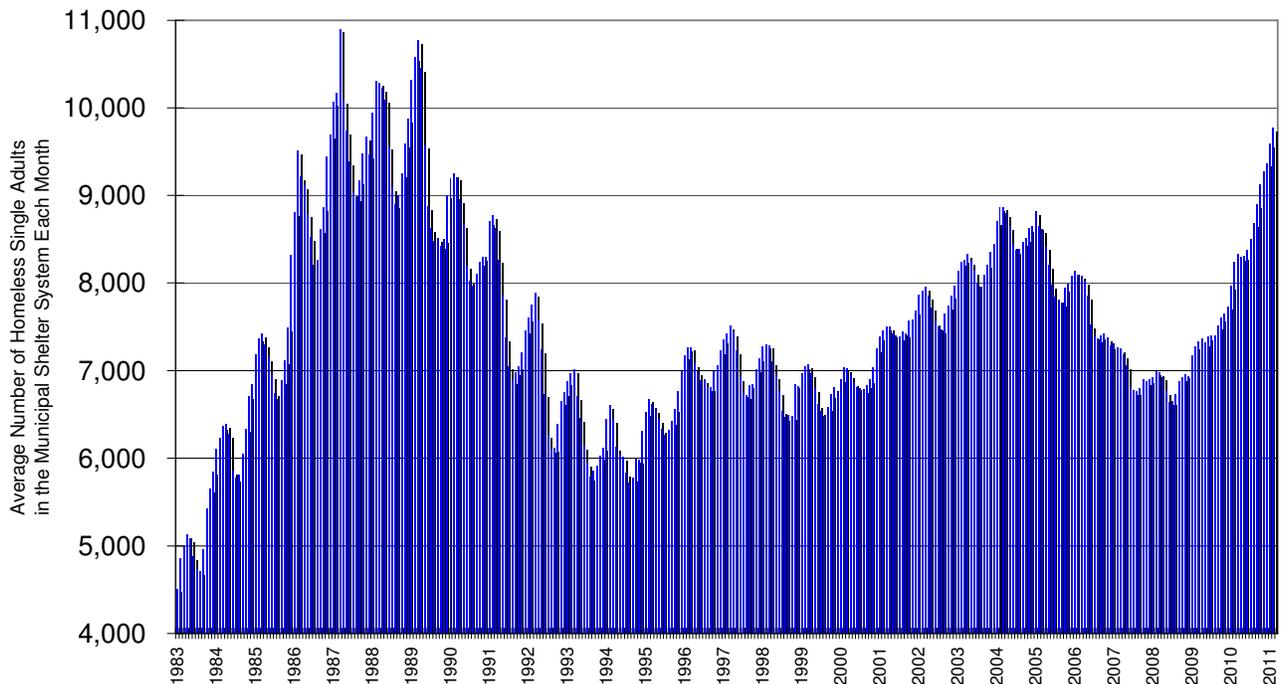
Source: New York City Department of Homeless Services, shelter census reports  
 Prepared by Patrick Markee, Coalition for the Homeless, 212-776-2004

## Number of Homeless Families in the New York City Shelter System, 1983-2011



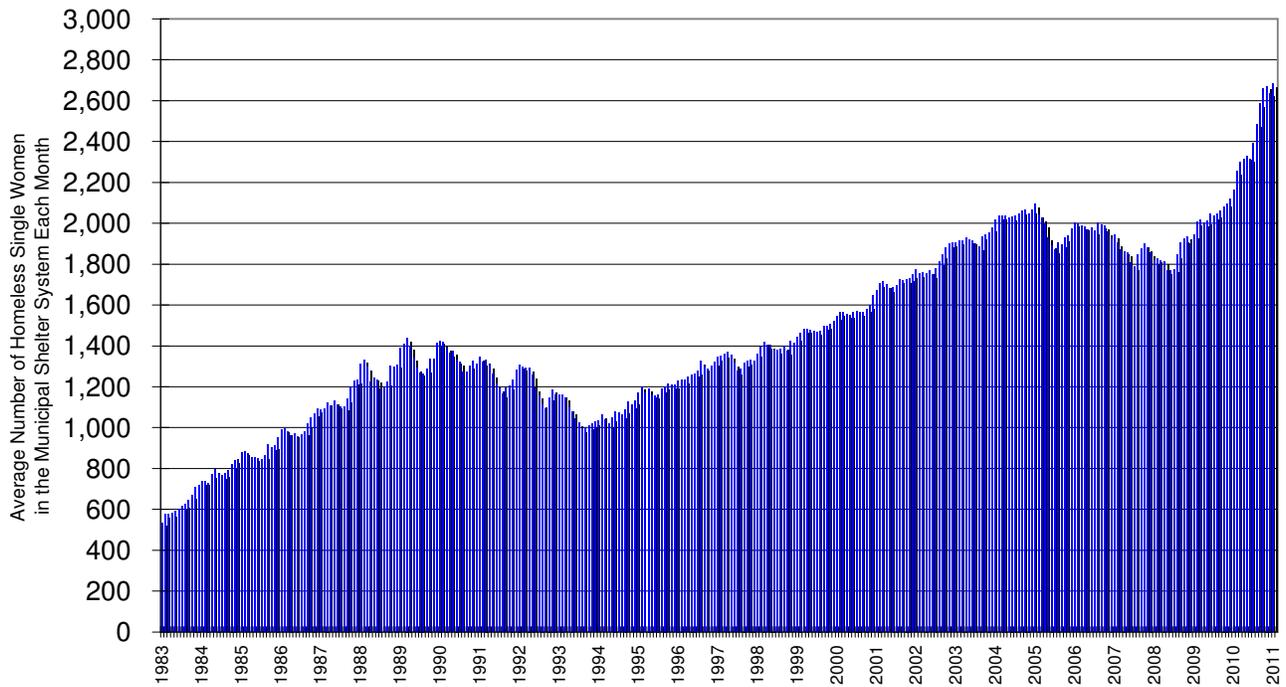
Source: New York City Department of Homeless Services and Human Resources Administration, shelter census reports  
 Prepared by Patrick Markee, Coalition for the Homeless, 212-776-2004

## New York City: Average Daily Census of Homeless Single Adults in the Municipal Shelter System, 1983-2011



Source: New York City Department of Homeless Services and Human Resources Administration, shelter census reports  
 Prepared by Patrick Markee, Coalition for the Homeless, 212-776-2004

## New York City: Average Daily Census of Homeless Single Women in the Municipal Shelter System, 1983-2011



Source: New York City Department of Homeless Services and Human Resources Administration, shelter census reports  
Prepared by Patrick Markee, Coalition for the Homeless, 212-776-2004

## Part II

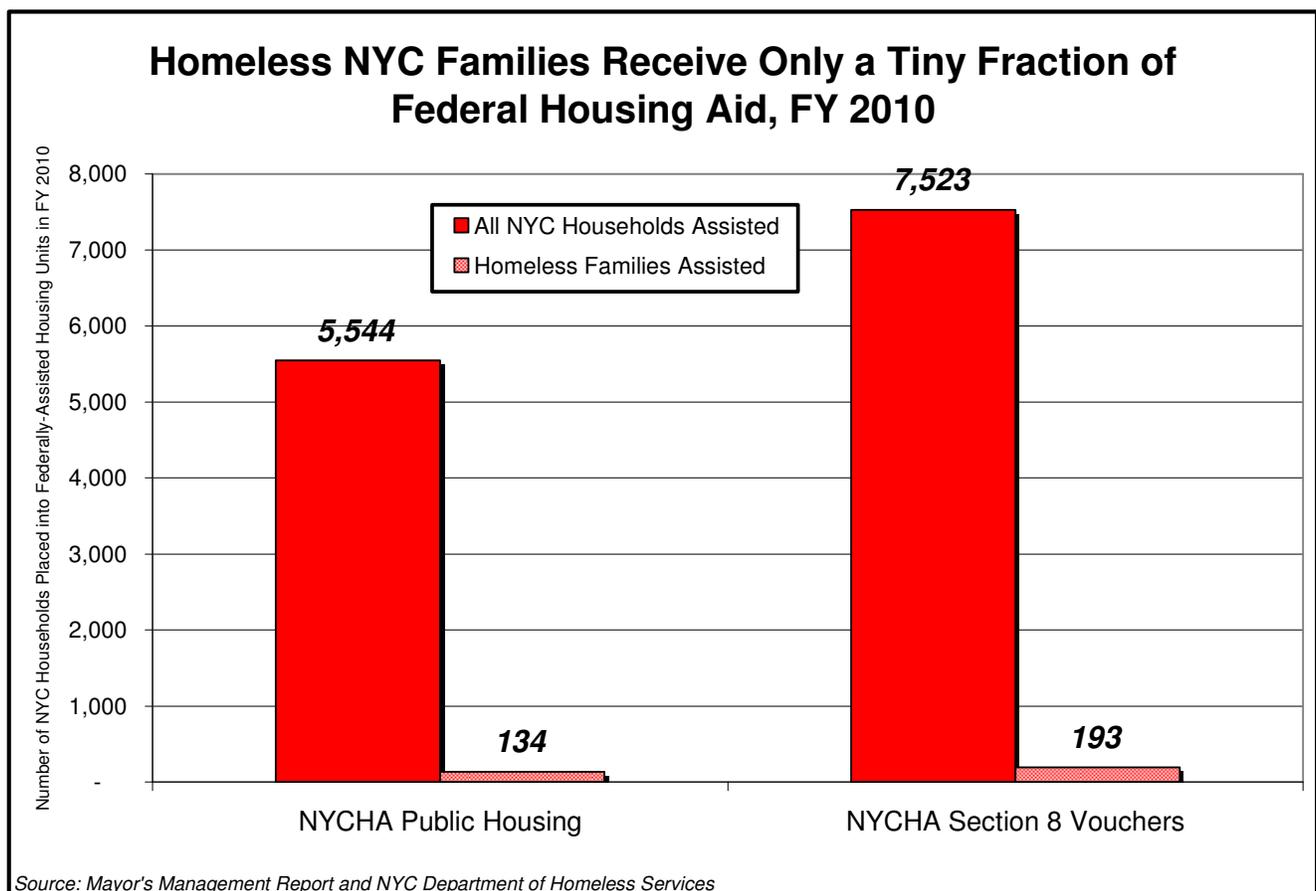
### The Bloomberg Administration's Failed Experiment with Time-Limited Subsidies Instead of Proven Federal Housing Programs

For more than six years, the Bloomberg administration has **denied homeless New Yorkers access to Federal housing programs**, despite overwhelming evidence that those programs successfully help homeless families move from costly shelters to long-term, stable housing. In contrast, **previous New York City mayors, from Ed Koch through Rudy Giuliani, all allocated a modest share of New York City's scarce Federal housing resources to move homeless children and adults from the shelter system to stable homes.**

**Mayor Bloomberg replaced those proven Federal housing programs with a series of untested, time-limited rent subsidy programs** – first the abandoned Housing Stability Plus program, and then various versions of the recently-terminated Advantage program. Those programs provided limited, restricted subsidies and then **cut off rental assistance even when formerly-homeless families were too poor to afford their apartments.**

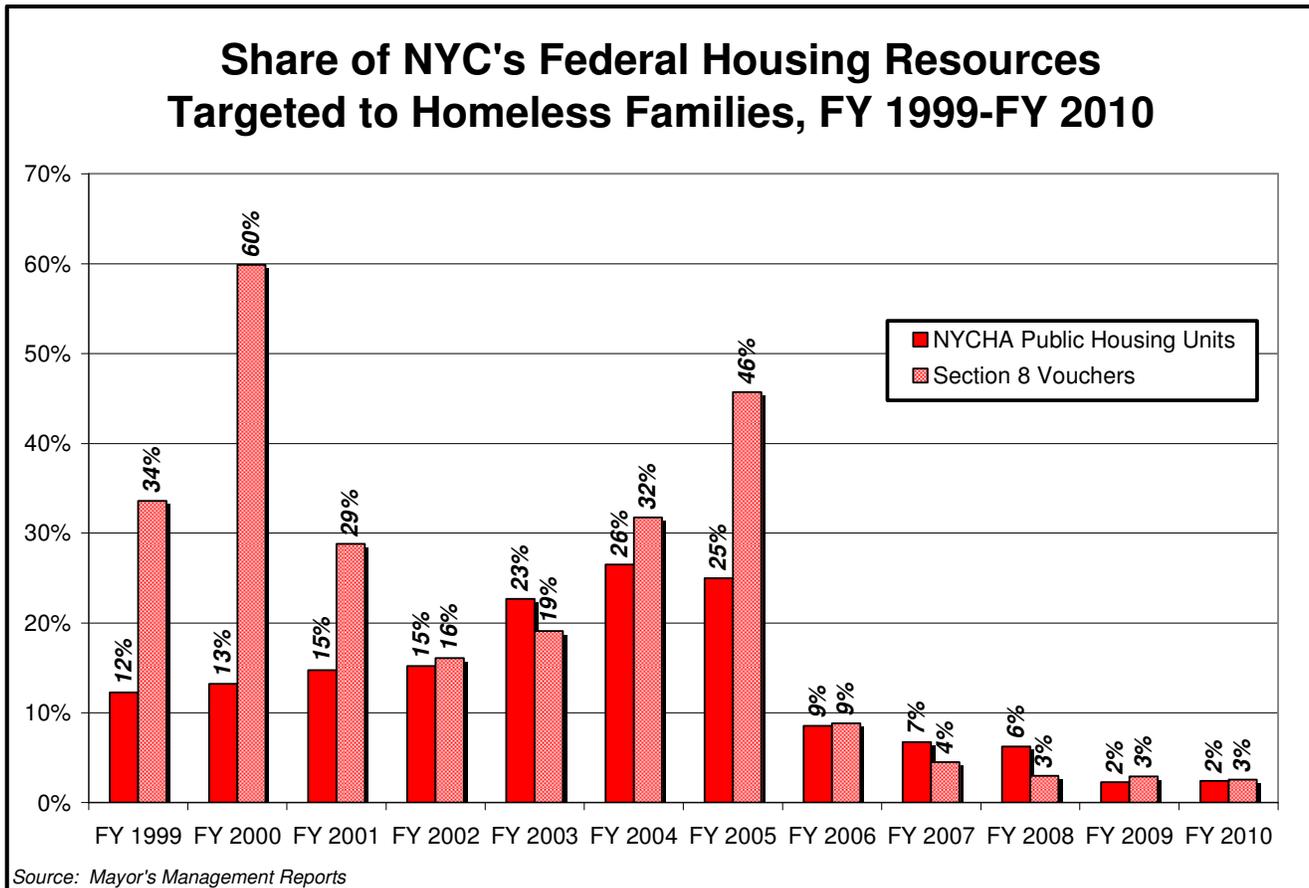
The results of the City's experiment with time-limited rent subsidies are clear:

- **Thousands of formerly-homeless children and families have been forced back into homelessness, with some making a third trip through the shelter system;**
- **The homeless shelter population has reached all-time record levels;** and
- **City and State taxpayers have paid hundreds of millions of dollars more in shelter expenses than if the City had maintained the policy of using Federal housing programs.**



City data confirms the failures of time-limited rent subsidies, and also shows how **New York City, unlike other cities around the country, denies vital Federal housing assistance to the neediest families and children.**

Recently, the Bloomberg administration chose to end the Advantage program after a dispute with Governor Cuomo and his administration over the City's failure to use Federal and other housing resources to address the problem of homelessness. **The end of the Advantage program offers New York City the opportunity to abandon the failed experiment with time-limited subsidies and return to the use of proven Federal housing programs.**

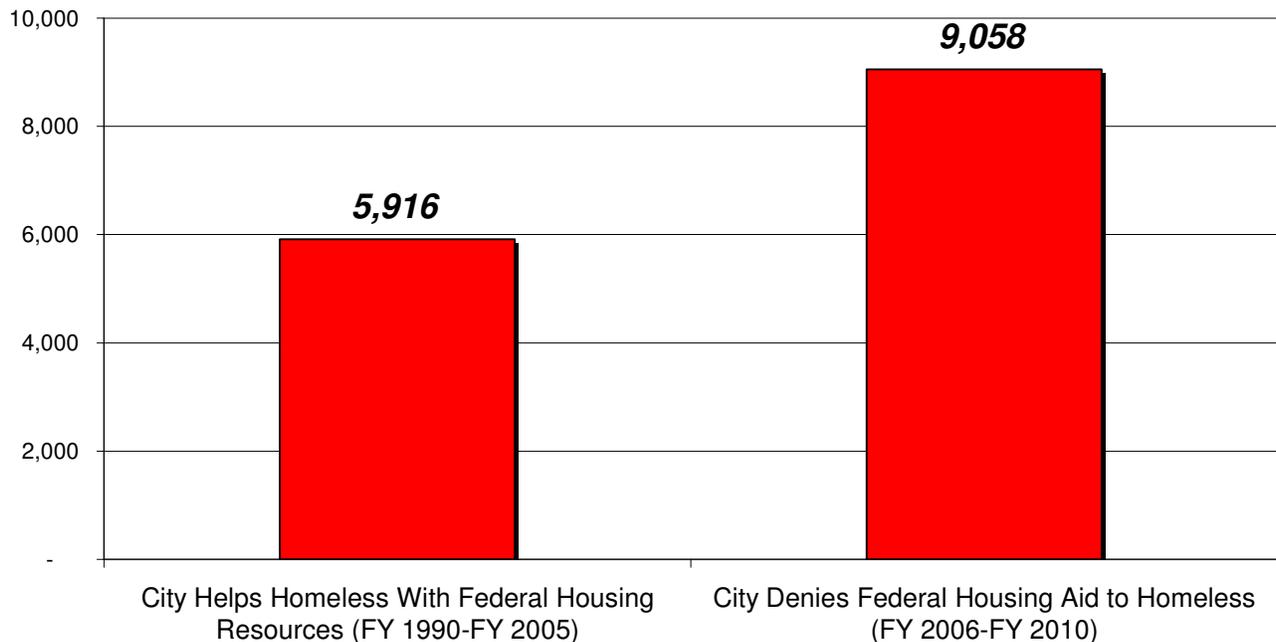


#### How the Bloomberg Administration Denies Federal Housing Aid to Homeless Children and Adults

Beginning under the Koch administration, the City of New York began helping homeless families relocate from the municipal shelter system to permanent housing by **allocating a modest share of scarce Federal public housing apartments (administered by the New York City Housing Authority, or NYCHA) and Federal housing vouchers, known as Section 8 vouchers.** This policy was continued under Mayors Dinkins and Giuliani and even under Mayor Bloomberg in his first term. The Bloomberg administration announced its break with this successful policy in October 2004, with the denial policy fully enacted a year later.

- From FY 1990 through FY 2005, **under four New York City mayors, the City helped 53,302 homeless families move to long-term, permanent housing with Federal housing programs** (18,340 families with public housing and 34,962 families with Section 8 vouchers).
- Over the same period, **an additional 11,292 homeless families were moved from shelters to City-funded apartments** assisted by the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development.

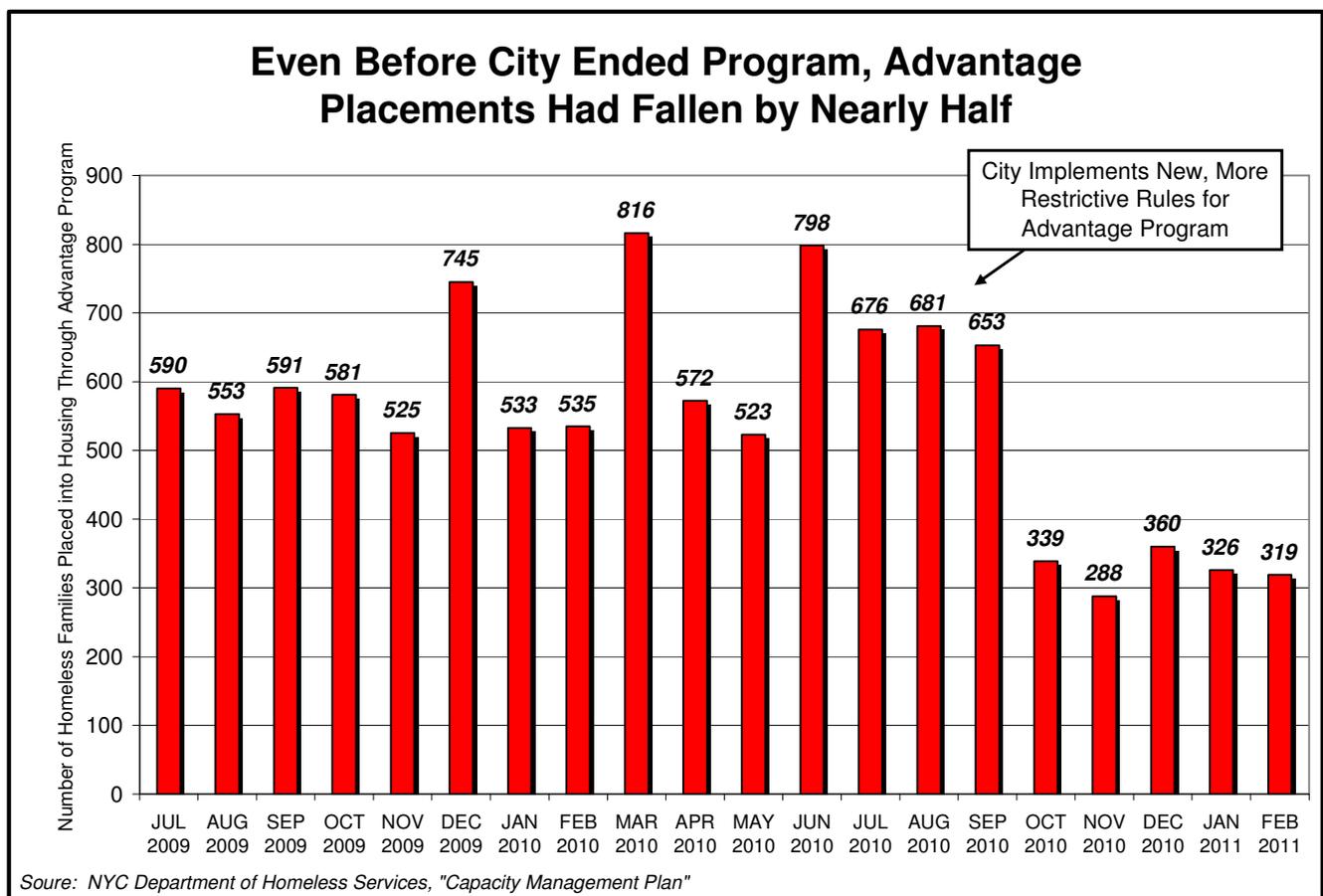
## Before and After NYC Helps Homeless Families with Federal Housing Resources: Average Number of Homeless Families in Shelter Each Night



Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services

- Since FY 2005, when the Bloomberg administration enacted its denial policy, **only 2,899 homeless families have been assisted with Federal housing programs** (1,548 families with public housing and 1,351 with Section 8 vouchers).
- In FY 2010, during which an **all-time record 28,977 different homeless families** slept in the municipal shelter system, **the City assisted only 327 families with Federal housing programs** (134 families with public housing and 193 families with Section 8 vouchers).
- Thus, in FY 2010 **only 1 percent of all homeless families in New York City received Federal housing assistance.**
- During the period when the City used Federal housing resources (FY 1990-FY 2005), **an average of 5,916 homeless families resided each night in municipal shelters.**
- In the period since the Bloomberg administration enacted its denial policy (FY 2006-FY 2010), **an average of 9,058 families resided each night in municipal shelters, 53 percent more than under the previous policy.** At the end of February 2011 there were **9,864 homeless families with 15,657 children** sleeping in the municipal shelter system.
- In the seven years before the denial policy was enacted (FY 1999-FY 2005), an average of **one in five poor New York City families (19 percent) which was placed into a NYCHA public housing apartment was homeless.**
- During the same period, an average of **one in three poor families (34 percent) placed into housing by NYCHA Section 8 vouchers was homeless.**

- However, since the denial policy was enacted (FY 2006-FY 2008), only **one in twenty poor families (5 percent) placed in NYCHA public housing was homeless**. And only **one in twenty-five families (4 percent) placed in housing with a NYCHA Section 8 voucher was homeless**.
- In FY 2010, at a time of record family homelessness in New York City, **homeless families were only 2 percent of families placed into public housing apartments and 3 percent of families placed with Section 8 vouchers**.
- When the Bloomberg administration announced the denial policy in late 2004, City officials claimed that cutting off homeless New Yorkers from Federal housing assistance would lead to fewer families entering the shelter system. **The opposite has happened**.
- In FY 2005, when the Bloomberg administration first enacted the denial policy, 8,986 homeless families entered the shelter system. In FY 2006, the following year and **before the economic recession began, 10,251 homeless families entered the shelter system, a 14 percent increase**. And in FY 2010, **an all-time record 15,748 homeless families entered the shelter system, a remarkable 75 percent more than in FY 2005**.

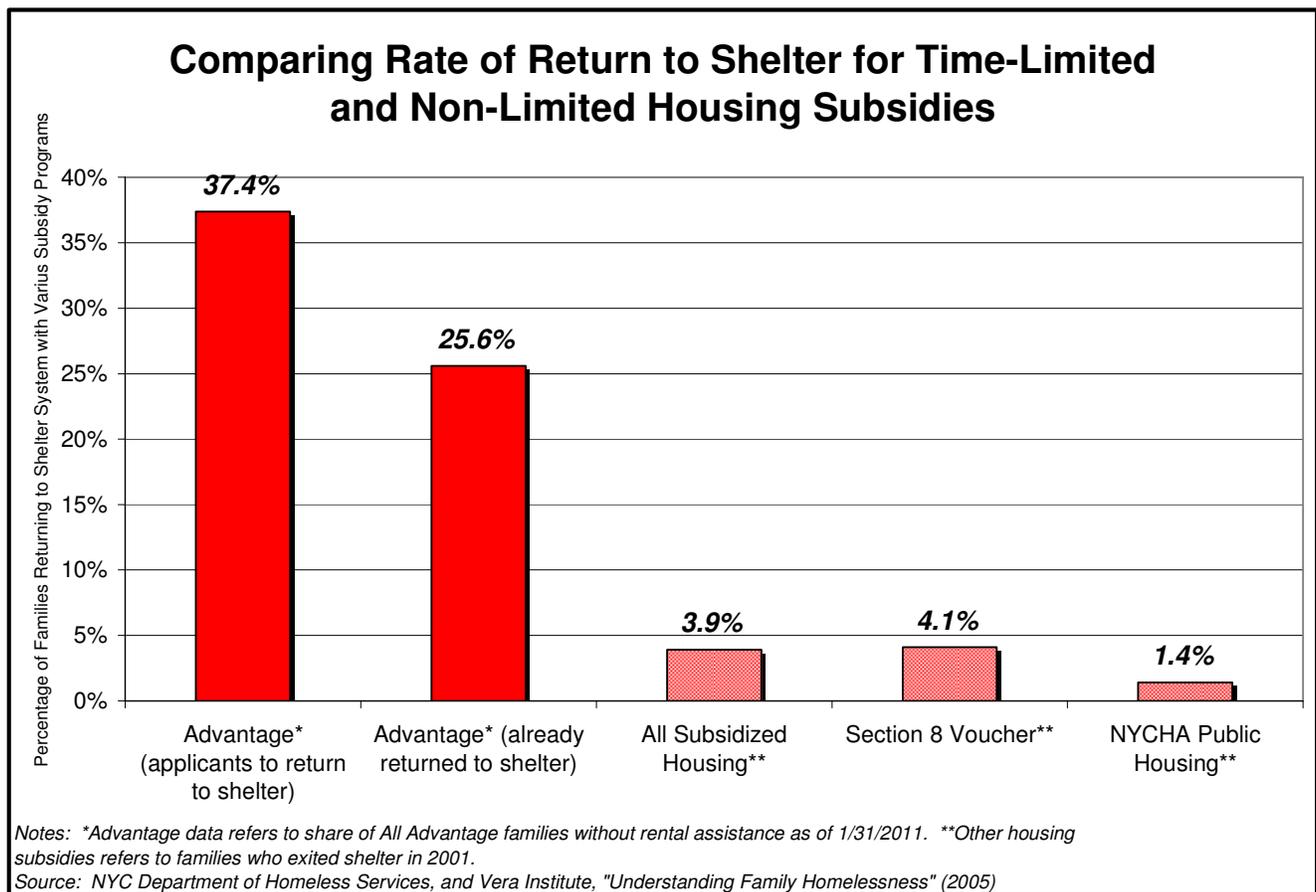


### The Failure of the Bloomberg Administration's Time-Limited Rent Subsidies

In 2005, the Bloomberg administration **replaced proven Federal housing programs with a series of untested, time-limited rent subsidies**. The time-limited subsidies were widely criticized because numerous research studies – including an acclaimed Vera Institute Study commissioned by the NYC Department of Homeless Services itself – found that (1) **families without rental assistance return to shelters and homelessness at high rates** and (2) **families with long-term, non-limited subsidies (like public housing and Section 8 vouchers) have remarkably low rates of return to shelters**.

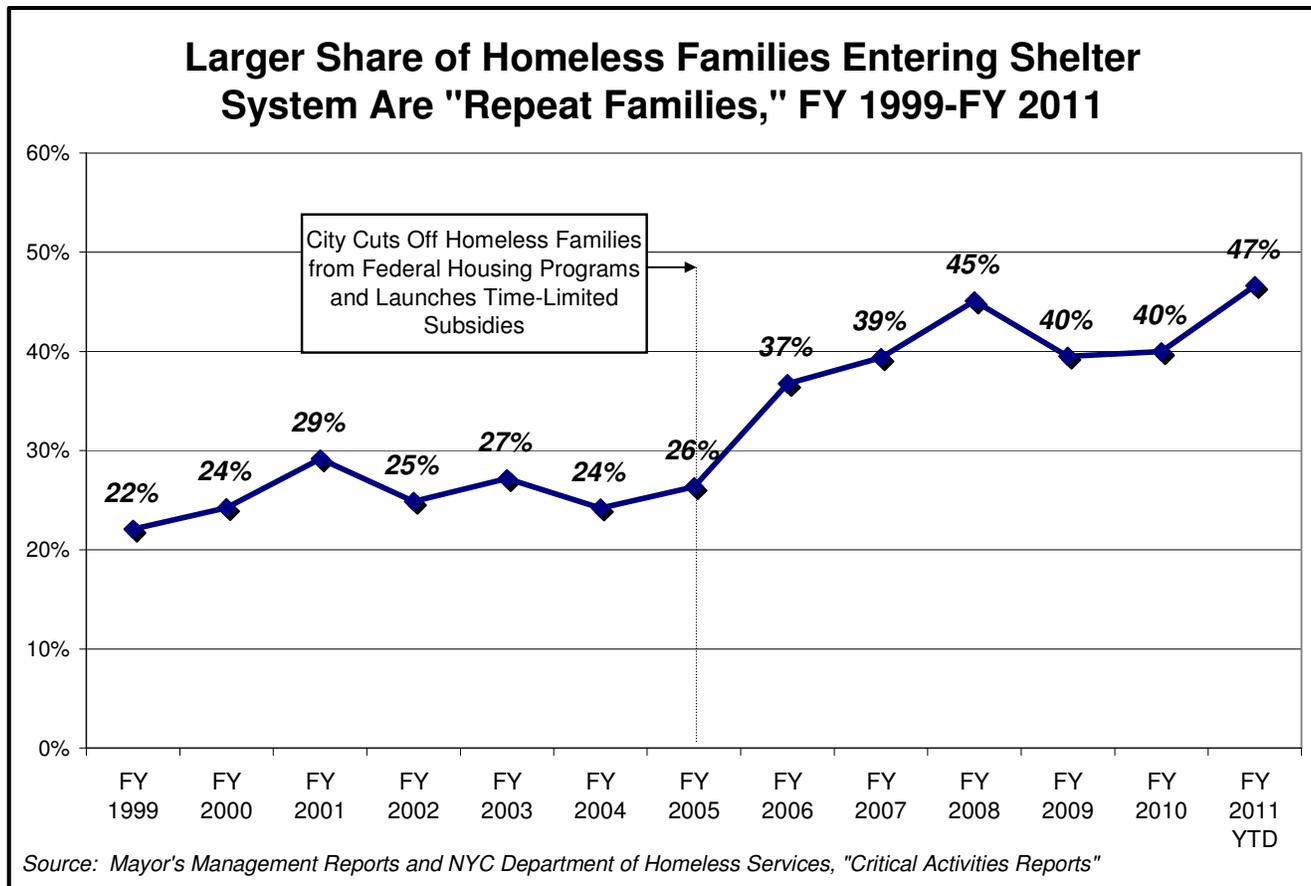
The Bloomberg administration's first experimental program, Housing Stability Plus, limited rent subsidies to five years but cut the value of the subsidy by 20 percent each year while requiring recipients to remain on welfare. The City abandoned the program as a failure in 2007, and replaced it with a series of time-limited subsidy programs under the label "Advantage." The most recent Advantage program, launched in August 2010, **limits rent subsidies to only two years, but, due to restrictive requirements, cuts off subsidies for many families after only one year.** Indeed, City officials projected that **40 percent of all Advantage families will receive only one year of subsidy.** And after the August 2010 implementation of more restrictive requirements, **the number of families placed into housing under the Advantage program had fallen by nearly half.**

More than six years after the Bloomberg administration launched its experiment with time-limited rent subsidies, the verdict is clear. City data shows that the **time-limited programs have forced thousands of formerly-homeless children and families back into the shelter system, at tremendous cost to City and State taxpayers.** And the programs have played a significant role in **driving New York City's homeless shelter population to all-time record levels.**



- The City-commissioned Vera Institute study found that **families leaving the New York City shelter system with long-term subsidized housing have very low rates of return to shelter.** Only **1.4 percent of families who left to NYCHA public housing returned to shelter** after two years, and only **4.1 percent of families leaving with Section 8 vouchers returned** after two years.
- In contrast, City data shows that, by the end of January 2011, **37.4 percent of Advantage families who'd lost rental assistance had applied for shelter**, and **25.6 percent of such families had already returned to the shelter system.**

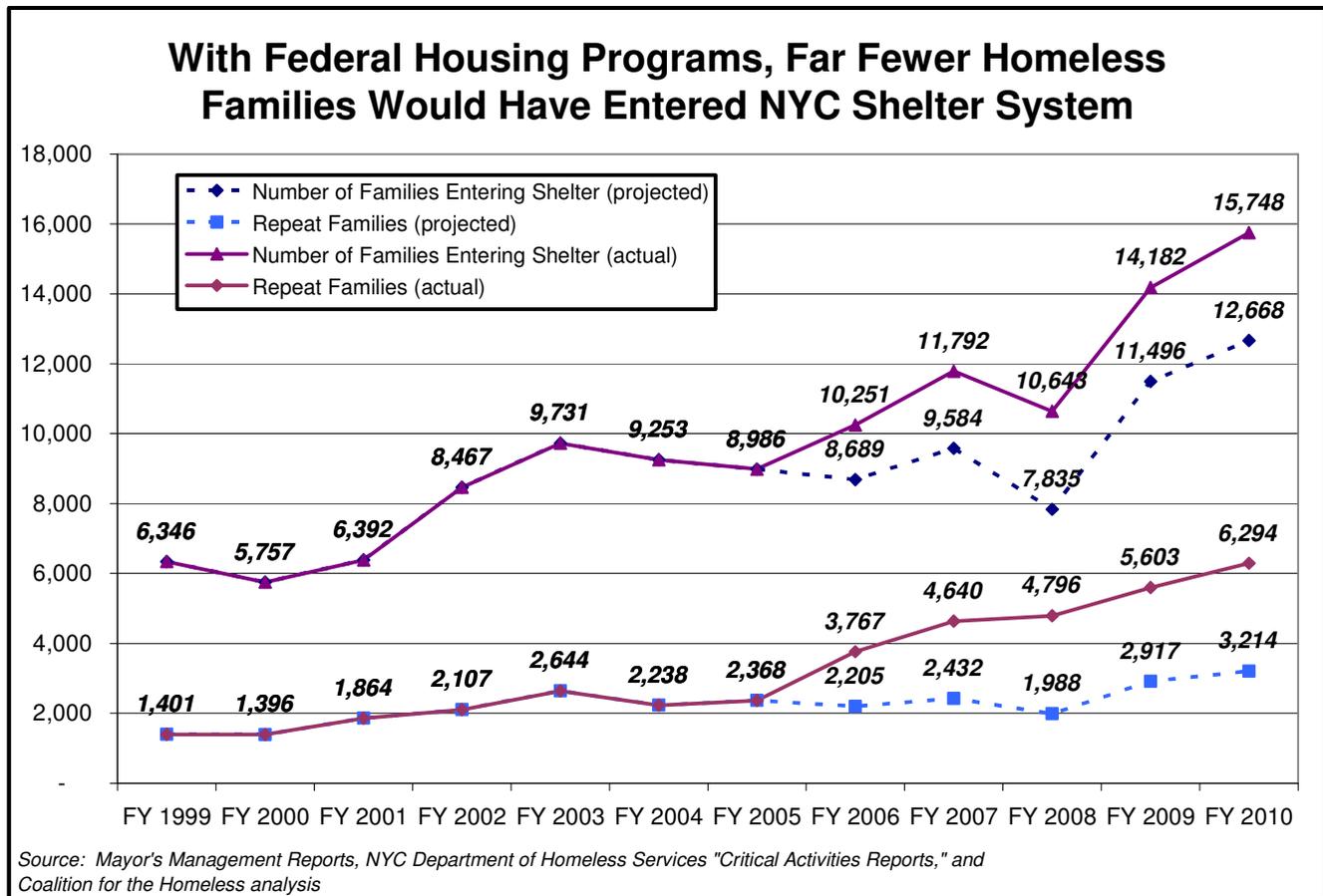
- One of the driving forces behind the rise in the number of homeless families entering the New York City shelter system is the **dramatic rise in the number of formerly-homeless families who had previously resided in the system – what the City calls “repeat families.”**
- In the seven years (FY 1999-FY 2005) before the City began using time-limited subsidies, an **average of 2,003 so-called “repeat families”** entered the shelter system each year.
- In contrast, since the City began using time-limited subsidies to move families from shelters (FY 2006-FY 2010), an **average of 5,020 “repeat families” entered the shelter system each year, an astounding 151 percent increase.**
- In FY 2005, when the Bloomberg administration began only partially using time-limited subsidies, **2,368 so-called “repeat families”** entered the shelter system.
- In contrast, in FY 2010, **an all-time record 6,294 “repeat families” entered the shelter system, an incredible 166 percent increase from FY 2005.**
- In the seven years (FY 1999-FY 2005) before the Bloomberg administration’s time-limited subsidies were implemented – that is, during the period when the City used Federal housing programs to help families move from shelters to permanent housing – an **average of 25 percent of all families entering the municipal shelter system were “repeat families.”**
- In contrast, since the City began using time-limited subsidies (FY 2006-FY 2011), an **average of 41 percent of all families entering the shelter system were “repeat families.”**
- In the first half of the current City fiscal year (FY 2011), **nearly half (47 percent) of all families entering the shelter system were “repeat families.”**



## Higher Costs to Taxpayers from the Bloomberg Administration's Time-Limited Subsidies

The large numbers of so-called “repeat families” entering the shelter system each year has resulted in enormous costs to City and State taxpayers, because the **cost to shelter a homeless family is \$36,000 per year and the average homeless family resides in shelter for more than nine months.**

Coalition for the Homeless calculated the high cost to taxpayers of the increase in “repeat families” during the period the Bloomberg administration has used time-limited rent subsidies. We compared the City’s recent record with a **scenario where so-called “repeat families” entered the shelter system at the same rate as when the City used Federal housing programs to help homeless families secure stable housing.**



- If “repeat families” had entered the shelter system since FY 2005 at the same rate as before the City implemented its time-limited subsidies, the estimated total number of families entering the shelter system would have **declined by an average of 20 percent each year.**
- Under this scenario, in FY 2010 an **estimated 3,214 “repeat families” would have entered the shelter system instead of the all-time record 6,294 “repeat families.”** And during that year, an **estimated total of 12,668 homeless families would have entered the shelter system, 20 percent fewer than the all-time record 15,748 families that entered the system.**
- Under this scenario, from FY 2006 through FY 2010 an **estimated 12,345 fewer “repeat families” cumulatively would have entered the New York City shelter system.**
- Those estimated **12,345 “repeat families” would have avoided shelter under the City’s old policy of using Federal housing programs.** At an average cost of \$30,000 per family for a ten-

month shelter stay, ***the 12,345 “repeat families” have cumulatively cost taxpayers an \$370.4 million*** in additional shelter costs alone from FY 2006-FY 2010, or an ***average of \$74.1 million per year***.

- The additional 12,345 “repeat families” have also led to the ***enormous growth of the number of homeless children and families sleeping in municipal shelters***.
- Coalition for the Homeless estimates that, without the additional 12,345 “repeat families” entering the shelter system under the City’s policy of time-limited subsidies, the ***number of homeless families residing each night in the shelter system would be at least 20 percent smaller***.

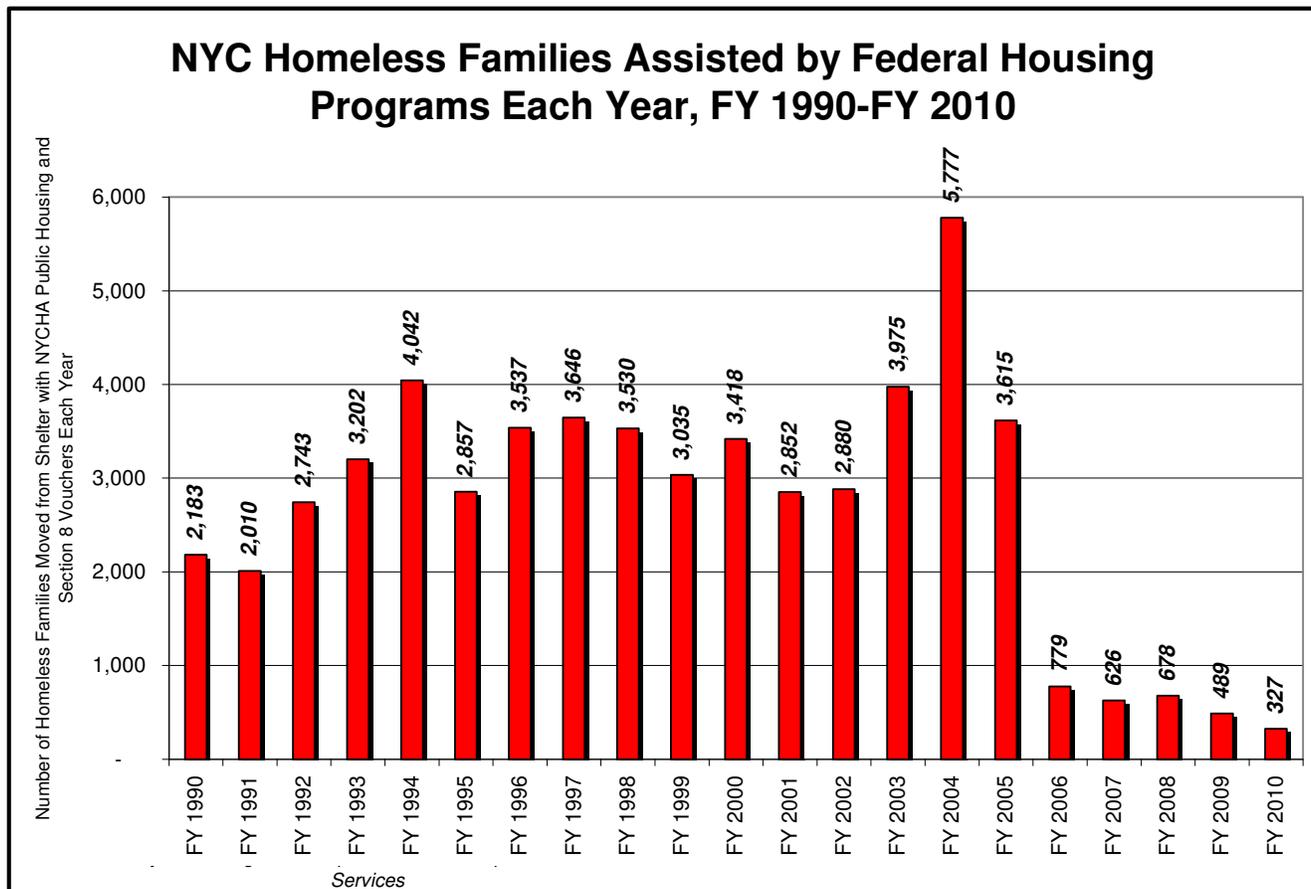
### Part III

#### “One in Three”: How to Move Forward and Address the Crisis

With New York City confronting the worst homelessness crisis since the Great Depression, the time to reverse the failed policies of recent years is long overdue. **Fortunately, the Bloomberg administration’s recent decision to terminate the flawed Advantage program offers an opportunity at last to abandon the failed experiment with time-limited, restrictive subsidies that have forced thousands of formerly-homeless children and families back into homelessness – with thousands more still at risk of the same fate.**

Mayor Bloomberg and his administration should look to the past and learn the lessons of previous mayors who, at various times, had to confront rising homelessness. Indeed, Mayors Koch, Dinkins, and Giuliani may have little in common, but they did agree on one thing: **The smart, cost-effective, and proven way to help homeless children and families move from costly shelters to long-term, stable homes is by using Federal housing programs.**

Coalition for the Homeless calls on Mayor Bloomberg and other City officials to build on the success of the past and enact the following policies:



**1. Immediately begin to use “one in three” available NYCHA public housing apartments and Section 8 vouchers to help homeless families and individuals move from shelters to permanent housing.**

- This can be swiftly accomplished by using the existing priority system for both the NYCHA public housing and voucher waiting lists, which makes households referred by the NYC Department of Homeless Services the highest priority applicants.

- In addition, NYCHA should act to restore the separate “emergency priority” for all homeless households that was reduced in 2005.
- The New York City Council should require the Bloomberg administration to enact the “one in three” policy as part of the final FY 2012 City budget agreement.

***2. In coming years, the City should set aside at least one in ten City-assisted apartments created or preserved by the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development for homeless families and individuals.***

- This policy would build on the success of Mayor Koch’s ten-year “Housing New York” program which allocated 15,000 affordable apartments – 10 percent of all housing units created or preserved under the program – for homeless New Yorkers.
- Currently Mayor Bloomberg’s “New Housing Marketplace” plan allocates only around 4 percent of all City-assisted apartments to homeless people, even at a time of much worse homelessness.

## Notes on Data Sources

- Data for homeless families and children is from DHS’s “Emergency Housing Services for Homeless Families Monthly Report,” which has been published by the City since the early 1980s. This DHS monthly report includes approximately 200 families (with approximately 1,000 people) who reside in homeless shelters administered by the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development.
- Data for homeless single adults in municipal shelters is from three DHS reports: (1) DHS daily census reports for shelters for homeless single men and women, which have been produced daily by the City since 1982; (2) DHS census reports for shelters for homeless veterans; and (3) DHS census reports for “safe haven” shelters, which are restricted to long-term street homeless adults. (Note that the large majority of shelters for veterans and “safe haven” shelters were once included as part of the DHS daily adult shelter census report. These shelters were “converted” to different service models beginning in 2007 and were then excluded, in various stages, from DHS daily adult shelter census report and from DHS’s website.) Data for homeless single adults does not include data for homeless people sleeping in DHS “stabilization beds,” which are also restricted to chronically street homeless adults; DHS has never publicly released this data in comprehensive form, although currently there are several hundred homeless people in DHS-administered “stabilization beds” each night.
- Data about Federal housing programs, the Advantage program, and other housing subsidy programs is from the City of New York, Mayor’s Office of Operations, “Mayor’s Management Report” for various years, available at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/ops/html/home/home.shtml>.
- Data about families entering the shelter system, including formerly-homeless families (so-called “repeat families”), is from the “Mayor’s Management Report” for various years, and from the NYC Department of Homeless Services, Critical Activities Report,” available at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dhs/html/home/home.shtml>.

*For more information, please visit [www.coalitionforthehomeless.org](http://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org).*