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MAYOR BLOOMBERG AND NEW YORK CITY TASK FORCE ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND PERMANENT HOUSING ANNOUNCE FIRST-EVER HOUSING SUBSIDY PROGRAM TARGETED TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS

City and Advocates Unveil Six New Programs and Policies to Address Critical Housing Needs of Victims of Domestic Violence

New Options Available for Safe and Secure Permanent Housing

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg today announced the start of the first-ever housing subsidy program targeted to victims of domestic violence exiting the Human Resources Administration's (HRA) domestic violence shelters. The Domestic Violence Work Advantage program will provide a rental subsidy for these families and for the first time will grant an extension for a period of six months after they obtain housing to secure employment while they recover from the trauma of abuse. Additionally, and for the first time as well, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) has made a number of its "set aside" units available to these families. These are among the six new policies and programs being created to address the needs of victims of domestic violence. This marks the first collaboration between the City and the Task Force on Domestic Violence and Permanent Housing. Joining the Mayor at the United Way of New York City were Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Linda Gibbs; Deputy Mayor for Legal Affairs and Counsel to the Mayor Carol A. Robles-Roman; NYCHA Chairman Tino Hernandez; Office to Combat Domestic Violence Commissioner (OCDV) Yolanda B. Jimenez; Human Resources Administration Commissioner Robert Doar; Chief Executive Officer of United Way of New York City Gordon Campbell; and Rafael Cestero, Senior Vice President of Community Investment for Enterprise Community Partners, which provided Task Force leadership.

"Being a victim of domestic violence is a horrific experience for anyone; it has a lasting and traumatic effect on those who live through it," said Mayor Bloomberg. "Families moving to safe and permanent housing will now have a chance to recover from their abuse trauma while taking advantage of a six-month extension to find employment. Through the collaborative efforts of the City and the Task Force, victims and their children will now have permanent, safe housing."

Each year more than 3,000 victims of domestic violence leave their homes, and sometimes their jobs, to enter the HRA domestic violence shelters, seeking safe haven and temporary shelter from abusers. At the end of their stay, many are without stable and permanent housing because they cannot return to their previous homes, and may be unemployed. These new housing initiatives will ensure that domestic violence shelter victims that meet basic eligibility requirements for subsidized housing programs are able to find and afford permanent housing, and to access resources and supports, including employment services, that will help keep them from returning to unsafe environments.

"These initiatives represent the power of collaboration across agencies and in partnership with various stakeholders to achieve the best outcomes for families in need," said Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs.

"Breaking the cycle of domestic violence includes giving victims of domestic violence real housing options," said Deputy Mayor Carol Robles-Roman. "The work of the City and the Task Force will go a long way in giving them these options."

"Domestic violence victims all too often are forced to leave their homes because it is not a safe place," said OCDV Commissioner Yolanda B. Jimenez. "These initiatives will greatly assist victims and their children through this difficult event to gain a new start."

Additional New Housing Initiatives

In the last year, the City has worked in partnership with the Task Force on Domestic Violence and Permanent Housing to identify innovative housing initiatives that will enhance permanent housing resources offered to domestic violence victims throughout the City. These new efforts will build on the City's development of a more comprehensive and innovative approach to combating domestic violence. In July 2005, Mayor Bloomberg opened the City's first Family Justice Center in downtown Brooklyn; plans for additional Centers in Queens and the Bronx are underway. Since 2002, domestic violence 911 calls have been digitized so that they can be produced more quickly as criminal evidence against batterers. In 2005, the Language Line Program, which was started in Queens, became a citywide initiative that equips police officers with special telephones that allow direct access to interpreters in more than 150 languages. Through these efforts, major domestic violence felony crime has decreased 20% citywide and family-related homicides have decreased 7% over the last five years.

The DV Work Advantage program and the HPD "set asides" are two of six new initiatives that grew out of the efforts of the Task Force on Domestic Violence and Permanent Housing, in collaboration with the City. The four additional initiatives are:

- Reducing the time required to process the Section 8 and NYCHA Domestic Violence Priority public housing applications of HRA shelter residents enhancing access to this valuable resource.
- Partnership with the United Way of New York City to support the development of enhanced after-care programs for domestic violence victims, which will promote the long-term independence and success of families.
- Training domestic violence service providers on the application process for the City's main supportive housing program, New York/New York III, to facilitate access for eligible families.
- Enhanced data sharing between the HRA and the DHS shelter systems on families known to both systems in order to understand how each agency can better help to support their needs.

"NYCHA has historically provided housing to victims of domestic violence on a priority basis. These changes will speed up this process making critical resources even more accessible so that we can continue to assist families in need," said NYCHA Chairman Tino Hernandez.

"Far too many people are subject to abuse by those on whom they most depend and, as such, leaving the abusive relationship can be unusually difficult," said HPD Commissioner Shaun Donovan. "For this reason, HPD is proud to partner with our sister agencies and set aside HPD resources to help ensure that victims of domestic violence have access to safe, affordable housing in which they can start to rebuild their lives."

"When victims of domestic violence transition from the DV shelters, they need the security of a safe place to live and time to rebuild their lives while seeking employment," said Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) Commissioner David Hansell.

"The initiatives announced today represent a significant step forward for domestic violence victims and their families," said United Way CEO Gordon Campbell. "The Mayor and his team are to be congratulated for having worked so diligently and collaboratively with service providers and advocates to identify ways for us all to be more responsive to victims of domestic violence, for whom safe and decent housing is vital."

"Permanent housing is one the most pressing needs for all domestic violence victims, yet many victims of abuse often end up back with their batterers because they simply have no place to go once their stay in the shelter is over," said Kirk Goodrich, vice president of Enterprise Community Partners and co-chair of the Task Force. "The Task Force has made a tremendous effort to provide concrete solutions in addressing this issue, and we are grateful to the City for working with us to support these families."

Task Force on Domestic Violence and Permanent Housing

In June 2006, the Task Force on Domestic Violence and Permanent Housing was created to take an in-depth look at the housing issues faced by domestic violence victims and their children when they are forced to leave their homes. It is comprised of 49 government, private, philanthropic, and academic stakeholders from the interrelated fields of homelessness, housing, and domestic violence. The Task Force was chaired by Kirk Goodrich, in partnership with United Way of New York City and New Destiny Housing Corporation.

Help is available 24-hours-a-day in all languages by calling 311 or the New York City Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-621-HOPE (4673).

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