



Mayor Bloomberg opens city's 75,000 s/f PATH center - \$65.5 million project; Joined by deputy mayor Gibbs and commissioner Diamond

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Mayor Michael Bloomberg, deputy mayor Linda Gibbs, and Dept. of Homeless Services commissioner Seth Diamond opened the city's new intake center for homeless families seeking shelter. With 75,000 s/f, the new Prevention Assistance and Temporary Housing (PATH) facility has 213% more space than the original intake site, and houses more than 200 specialists from the Dept. of Homeless Services, Administration for Children's Services and Human Resources Administration. The new facility replaces the Emergency Assistance Unit (EAU). The PATH center began serving clients on May 3rd, and is open 24/7 to single pregnant women and families with children in need of emergency shelter. PATH is also a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified building with an eco-conscious design that supports a comfortable atmosphere for children. The mayor was also joined by Human Resources Administration commissioner Robert Doar, council member Maria del Carmen Arroyo, council member and chair of the General Welfare Committee Annabel Palma, Gail Nayowith and John Feerick, former members of the Special Master Panel which helped the city study and propose improvements to the family shelter system, and Community Board 4 chair Wenzell Jackson and district manager Jose Rodriguez.

"The new PATH facility was designed to provide compassionate and efficient services that had not previously been offered by the city," said Bloomberg. "When I first saw the Emergency Assistance Unit in 2003, I was appalled, and I said we would make changes. The center we are standing in today reflects our commitment to tearing down an old system that was fragmented and slow, and developing a better way to assist New Yorkers who need help getting back on their feet."

"This is a landmark day for our department of Homeless Services and the families it serves," said Gibbs. "The dysfunctional system of the past was literally torn down the day old Emergency Assistance Unit was demolished. And today, on those same grounds, we have rebuilt a facility that enables us to help the homeless with dignity and respect."

"The new intake facility will instill efficiency and collaboration as families move through the application process, ensuring families are assisted courteously and professionally when they seek shelter," said Diamond. "We will continue the transformation of the families system through this new building."

The opening of this center is another milestone in the city's efforts to completely transform its family shelter system. In 2003, intake process time was roughly 20 hours per family and could last several days. Today, the application process takes six to eight hours and families receive placement the same day. Intensive support and services are available to clients throughout the application process, and there are multiple safeguards, including fair hearings, in place to ensure that a client's application for shelter is reviewed thoroughly and fairly.

The key mission of Homeless Services is to keep families in their homes and in their communities, and since 2004, the Department of Homeless Services has offered services aimed at preventing homelessness in select locations. Today, 13 store-front community-based prevention Homebase sites exist in all five boroughs, serving at-risk families by giving them customized assistance where they need it most. Since its inception, Homebase has served more than 20,750 families with children.

"I am happy to join the mayor, deputy mayor and commissioner Diamond for the opening of this state-of-the-art facility," said Doar. "Our goal is to help families avoid shelter by finding opportunities and resources that will allow them to make their own housing arrangements. The Human Resources Administration also ensures families who are victims of domestic violence and cannot return to their homes, find appropriate services and safe shelter."

"Ensuring families have access to essential services is one of the most critical roles of government," said school chancellor Dennis Walcott. "In coordination with the Department of Homeless Services personnel, Department of Education staff will work to assist families with their educational needs, from school placement to transportation or any other school related concern. We are there to help parents so our students get to school every day and have the supports they need to thrive."

"The new PATH center will go a long way to ensuring that the Administration for Children's Services can work better with families coming into shelter to address any child safety issues that may exist," said Administration for Children's Services commissioner John Mattingly. "The child-friendly design provides a comforting environment for children who come through these doors. As part of the multi-agency team, our child protection and social work staff are prepared to help children and advocate for families as they work through a traumatic period in their lives."

In city shelters, each family is required to develop an Independent Living Plan (ILP) upon arrival. Each plan outlines how families will participate in employment training, job search programs, rehabilitative services and apartment search activities, so they may quickly return to independent living in the community and achieve long-term self-sufficiency. Eligible families are linked to cash assistance and work supports, including, public health insurance, food stamps, child care, and child support enforcement. Since 2009, 18,490 job placements have been reported by the Human Resources Administration's East River Job Center, which works with homeless families and individuals - demonstrating the strong desire of homeless families to go to work - and more than 64,000 families have been moved into permanent housing.

In January 2003, a court-appointed Family Homelessness Special Master Panel was formed to study and propose improvements to the City's family shelter system. The panel spent two years undertaking an intensive review of the City's homeless intake and eligibility process. Homeless Services reviewed the panel's recommendations, and today, has successfully implemented a number of recommendations including, developing a process for families when alternative housing options are available; offering assistance to ease the transition back to the community through an expanded Diversion Unit; a Resource Room at the intake center staffed with licensed social workers and Homebase prevention services; and a more fluid application process.

"The new building stands as evidence of the City's ongoing commitment to homeless families," said Nayowith, executive director of SCO Family of Services and a former member of the Special Master Panel. "We finally have a space that was built to handle and process the near-constant flow of families seeking shelter. It is notable that the building was completed despite a recession, under the direction of three different Commissioners and without a court order."

"Among the things we plan for in life, homelessness is never one of them," said Arroyo. "The opening of the new Intake Center gives those who find themselves dealing with homelessness a place that will provide a supportive environment, with all the necessary components to help families begin the transition back to permanent housing. We look forward to working with the Department of Homeless Services to ensure the re-opening of the Intake Center does not have a negative impact on the host community."

"After years of planning, the opening of the new Prevention Assistance and Temporary Housing intake center will give Department of Homeless Services the tools needed to better address the flow of homeless families," said Palma. "It is my hope that the momentum created by the opening of this facility will translate into more progress in the fight against homelessness, as well as creating a foundation for more comprehensive reform."

Construction on the new PATH family intake center began in October 2007. The building was designed by Ennead Architects, and the design project was managed by the City's Department of Design and Construction. The Construction Manager was LiRo. While total cost for the facility was budgeted at \$75 million, it was completed for \$65.5 million.

"From the start of the design process, we wanted to deliver a facility that enables Department of Homeless Services staff to provide sensitive service in a dignified setting to people at a difficult time in their lives," said Commissioner Burney. "At the same time we wanted people to work in a bright and comfortable setting as well as employ sustainable design and energy efficient features throughout the building. We have met those goals."

The new building features a ticked queue management system and a bi-lingual announcement system to assist families with navigating the application process. The PATH facility will also use the Client Assistance and Rehousing Enterprise System (CARES) and Worker Connect, two web-based case management systems that provide access to client information from other social services databases. These systems will replace the use of multiple standalone databases and unify operating systems and communication with other social service agencies in the City.

For more information on the new family intake site, visit www.nyc.gov or call 311.

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