



## **City and advocates unveil six new housing programs**

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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.

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. 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.

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, the city opened the 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.â€”

Michael Bloomberg is mayor of New York, N.Y.

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