

The Impact of Rapid Re-Housing in New York City

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New York City is required by law to provide shelter (temporary housing) to all eligible families that are homeless and request it, also known as a “right to shelter” policy. Between fiscal years (FY) 2005 and 2011, it implemented a number of different rapid re-housing programs to reduce the number of families in shelter. This brief examines what happened to the number of homeless families, the duration of their homelessness, and the rate of their return to shelter during the period when rapid re-housing was implemented.

The first rapid re-housing program, Housing Stability Plus, was in effect between FY 2005 and 2006. It was followed by Advantage, which began in FY2007 and remained in effect until FY 2011 when State funding was fully eliminated. In the peak year of the Advantage rapid re-housing program, 7,000 families left shelter with a rapid re-housing subsidy.ⁱ

The following trends were observed during the rapid re-housing period:

- the number of homeless families remained **relatively steady** despite other factors, such as the recession,
- families experienced homelessness for **shorter** periods of time, and
- the rate of return to shelter for families that had been rapidly rehoused was **low**.ⁱⁱ

Since funding for the Advantage program was eliminated in 2011, the number of families in shelter and the average length of stay in the shelter system increased significantly.

While less than 25 percent of families in the shelter system exited with a rapid re-housing subsidy, and while it is not possible to isolate the impacts of rapid re-housing without comparing families that received it to families that did not receive it, it is possible to examine trends both before and after the rapid re-housing period. Below is an examination of some of these trends.

Length of Stay Trends: The average length of stay in New York City went down by 20 percent during the rapid re-housing period from 341 days before rapid re-housing to 272 days at the end of the rapid re-housing period. In the first two years after rapid re-housing policy ended in New York City, the average length of stay increased 43 percent. See Table 1.

Table 1. Average Length of Stay in NYC Shelter

Year	Average Length of Stay (days)	Percent Change from Previous Year
FY2002	315	n/a
FY 2003	303	-3.8%
FY 2004	341	+12.5%
FY 2005	344	+0.9%
FY 2006	344	No Change
FY 2007	325	-5.5%
FY 2008	350	-1.5%
FY 2009	292	-16.5%
FY 2010	254	-13.0%
FY 2011	272	+7.0%
FY 2012	352	+35.3%
FY 2013	389	+10%

Gray Shaded Period = Rapid Re-housing Period

Average Daily Family Shelter Census Trends: During the rapid re-housing period, the average daily shelter census for families increased only 1 percent overall and decreased 3 out of 7 years, despite the onset of the Great Recession See Table 2.

Table 2. Change in Average Number of Homeless Families Daily

Year	Average Number of Homeless Families Daily	Change in Average Number of Families Daily from Previous Year
FY2002	7,111	n/a
FY2003	9,165	+2,054
FY2004	9,347	+182
FY2005	8,778	-569
FY2006	7,989	-789
FY2007	9,020	+1031
FY2008	9,100	+80
FY2009	9,224	+124
FY2010	9,938	+714
FY2011	9,480	-458
FY2012	9,895	+415
FY2013	11,563	+1, 668

Grey shaded time period = Rapid Re-Housing Period

Trends in Returns to Homelessness: The overwhelming majority of families who exit shelter on the Advantage rapid re-housing subsidy did not return to shelter. Of those families who exited with an Advantage subsidy, 80 percent remained out of shelter three years later.ⁱⁱⁱ

Costs of Shelter versus Rapid Re-Housing: The average cost of a rapid re-housing subsidy in New York City was under \$10,000 a year, compared to an average cost of shelter of \$36,000 a year.^{iv}

ⁱ Critical Activities Report Fiscal Year 2010. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dhs/downloads/pdf/familyfy10.pdf>

ⁱⁱ City Council Preliminary Budget Hearing Testimony. March 24, 2011.

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dhs/downloads/pdf/testimony/ty032411.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Mayor's Management Report, September 2012.

http://www.nyc.gov/html/ops/downloads/pdf/mmr0912/0912_mmr.pdf