

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING NEW YORK'S RECEPTION AND RELOCATION SYSTEM FOR NEW ARRIVALS

Since Spring 2022, more than 225,000 New Arrivals have come to New York City, with nearly 52,000 currently residing in the City's shelter system as of December 2024. While the State has sensibly allocated billions of dollars to address this influx, it is critical that (1) the State continue its investment to meet the needs of New Arrivals in New York City, and going forward, focus on permanent solutions, and (2) those funds are utilized in a way that best helps New Arrivals move out of shelters, stabilize, and integrate. With the pledges of the incoming presidential administration to carry out mass deportations, it is incumbent upon New York to ensure that New Arrivals receive support to expedite exit from shelter into permanent housing and pursue any available immigration relief.

To date, there has been limited coordination and accountability to ensure that New Arrivals are on the path to employment and self-sufficiency. Such lack of a more coordinated and coherent approach towards reception and relocation is underscored by the fact that tens of thousands of New Arrivals have no place to reside other than New York City shelters despite the City spending \$3.8 billion on emergency shelters and some reception services in FY24 - with a significant portion of those costs reimbursed by the State. Many New Arrivals in shelters report that they have received little to no assistance from case managers, beyond questions about their plans to exit. Most people are handed flyers with lists of services for housing assistance, health care, benefits, or legal assistance—yet the groups providing these services are at capacity and often unable to assist. The City's Asylum Application Help Center has served only a fraction of New Arrivals. This haphazard approach fails to make best use of the State funds granted to New York City.

With strategic investments, we can move from an emergency response toward a thoughtful system to stabilize New Arrivals quickly and set them on the path to contributing to the cultural and economic vibrancy of New York, as immigrants have always done. Immigrants help New York's economy thrive by filling unfilled jobs and contributing to the state's tax base. This outcome benefits New Arrivals, New York City, New York State, the economy, and our communities.

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Priority 1: Require the City to earmark funds for quality case management services designed to help New Arrivals over a sufficient amount of time necessary to achieve stability.

- Quality case management is the linchpin to New Arrivals' ability to address their immediate needs, get on the path toward employment, and exit quickly to permanent housing.
- The level of case management needed to help people find stability and exit shelter cannot be accomplished in two or three meetings, as the City currently provides. Intensive case management is needed to help people move quickly out of shelter into permanent housing, and must be available after individuals exit shelter.
- Detailed recommendations for quality case management services start on page four of the [Recommendations For Improving New York's Reception And Relocation System For New Arrivals](#)
- Case management should be culturally appropriate, with reasonable caseload ratios of 1:30 and appropriate supervision staffing. The City's RFP for HERRCs requires only one generalist case worker for every 100 New Arrivals, and has no minimum requirements for on-site social workers or supervision of case managers.
- Quality case management over six months would cost approximately \$5,775 per household. Providers experienced in case management for immigrants have capacity to deliver these enhanced services with the staffing noted above.
- There are approximately 22,000 households in the shelter system (as of the end of September), with approximately 450 households arriving each week (or an estimated 23,400 arriving in the next year) for a total cost of \$262,000,000. This total cost does not reflect what the City is already spending for case management services.
- **Total cost: \$262,000,000 less existing allocations for case management in current contracts.**

Priority 2: Ensure that every New Arrival is screened for available immigration relief and work authorization through rapid-response services, while building the infrastructure of immigration legal services.

- Expand upon the Asylum Application Help Center (AAHC) model and obligate the City to provide appointments for rapid-response services to every New Arrival.
 - As of mid-November 2024, the AAHC had filed 84,000 applications for asylum, TPS, or work authorization.
 - If all eligible New Arrivals were able to apply soon after their arrival, they might receive work authorization months earlier, which puts people on the path toward economic self-sufficiency and contributes to the economy.

- Screen New Arrivals for all forms of relief. For example, the AAHC does not screen for visas for victims of trafficking and other crimes, or Special Immigrant Juvenile Status.
- **Total cost: \$170,000,000**
- Expand upon the AAHC model and obligate the City to provide appointments for rapid-response services to every New Arrival.
 - Invest in immigration legal services, recruitment, retention, training of legal teams, and infrastructure.
 - There are not enough immigration lawyers to meet the need for representation. People who have lawyers or DOJ accredited representatives are far more likely to successfully secure immigration status and work authorization. Many New Arrivals and the communities in which they live will not realize these outcomes if the capacity and infrastructure for legal services is not increased.
 - **Total cost: \$65,000,000**

Priority 3: Create a new Relocation Program that has more flexibility to help families achieve stability and reduces the risks of program participation for landlords, providers, and New Arrivals.

- Create a new, two-year relocation program with more flexibility to relocate families throughout New York State at an average cost of \$91,078 per household for two years, providing higher amounts for relocation in high cost areas. Full details on how to structure a successor relocation program on page 15 of the Recommendations For Improving New York’s Reception And Relocation System For New Arrivals.
 - Relocation Program costs are lower than the cost of shelter per household of \$352 per night¹ or \$256,906 over two years
 - The total cost of the program for 1,000 households would be \$91,078,000.
 - Thus, a relocation program for two years would save approximately \$165,828 per household.
- **Total cost savings over two years: \$165,828,000**

¹ New York City Independent Budget Office. Asylum Seeker Cost Projections for Fiscal Years 2025 & 2026. May 2024. <https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/lbo-asylum-seeker-projections-as-of-the-executive-budget-may2024.html>

Priority 4: Extend the existing Migrant Relocation Assistance Program (MRAP) to a second year so that organizations that need to can provide ongoing support to people currently in the program to achieve economic self-sufficiency and prevent families from returning to shelter.

- Some families currently in MRAP programs in high-cost areas cannot afford rent despite making proactive efforts toward self-sufficiency. An additional year of support, that can be tapered down based on the family's income, will prevent these families from returning to shelter.
- Give providers more flexibility in use of the funds for legal services and additional one-time financial support to help those families currently in the program stably exit the program and avoid returning to shelter.
- **Total cost: \$13,344,074**

CONCLUSION

New Arrivals will continue to come to New York in the hopes of a safe landing, economic opportunity,³⁰ and integration into our communities. It is essential for the City and State to go beyond an ad hoc emergency response and toward a long-term vision of incorporating New Arrivals in New York City and our communities across New York State. This is even more important with the looming threats of mass deportation made by the incoming presidential administration. The Governor's office must play a central leadership role, and the State has a vested financial interest in ensuring that the \$2.4 billion in State funding allocated in the FY 2025 budget is used wisely.³¹ The City's FY 2025 Adopted Budget has \$4.75 billion budgeted for New Arrivals, including the State funding.³² The above recommendations, if followed, will make better use of State and City resources and set our state on a path to reap the economic and cultural benefits that have followed past waves of immigration.