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THE CITY OF NEW YORK OFFICE OF THE MAYOR DAVID N. DINKINS

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For Immediate Release:
Monday, September 21, 1992

MAYOR DINKINS RELEASES PLAN TO IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MAYOR'S COMMISSION OF HOMELESSNESS

Mayor David N. Dinkins today outlined a plan to restructure the City's family shelter system based on recommendations of the Mayor's Commission on Homelessness. As the Commission proposed, the City will close its four Emergency Assistance Units and open two Assessment Centers by January and two Reception Centers by April 1993. Housing readiness and treatment programs will be developed to prepare homeless families for self-sufficiency.

Reception Centers will offer one-time overnight shelter to families in need of immediate shelter. Families will be referred for longer-term assessment and placement to an Assessment Center. Those needing extended emergency placements will be referred to Tier II shelters and, ultimately, permanent housing. The plan will create a total of 700 beds at Reception and Assessment Centers and utilize 2,700 permanent, private sector units.

First Deputy Mayor Norman Steisel and Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Cesar Perales discussed the plan this morning at a meeting with Commission members George McDonald, Jack Rudin, Victor Kovner, Ralph Nunez, Nancy Wackstein, Jane Velez, Verona Middleton-Jeter, Jack Krauskopf and Human Resources Administration Commissioner Barbara Sabol.

Mayor Dinkins said, "Last week, I asked First Deputy Mayor

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Norman Steisel and Deputy Mayor Cesar A. Perales to meet with the members of the Mayor's Commission on Homelessness this morning to provide its members with an update on the progress that we have made in implementing the recommendations of the Mayor's Commission on Homelessness.

"I am thrilled that we are moving forward "full-blast" with the recommendations of the Mayor's Commission on Homelessness.

"Our administration has always been committed to the expansion of permanent housing resources and the creation of opportunities for homeless families and the non-homeless poor to achieve independence.

"The provision of supportive services from the time a family requests shelter through after relocation to the community will improve our ability to prevent homelessness and to break the cycle of dependency into which so many homeless families have fallen.

"However, municipal resources are limited, and the obligation to provide the needed housing and services is not New York City's alone. We will be calling on our partners in the State and federal governments in order to obtain the resources necessary to make this plan a reality."

Deputy Mayor Cesar A. Perales said, "The most important aspect of this plan is that families will be better served. By assisting families during the day at their local Income Support Centers -- which will be staffed by case workers specially trained to deal with housing emergencies -- we can provide more appropriate assistance to families facing homelessness and do it

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in their own communities.

Commission member and Doe Fund President George McDonald said, "This is a giant step toward implementation of the policies and programs recommended by the Mayoral Commission on Homelessness. In my mind it is a further signal and sign that the Mayor and his administration have developed creative measures to redress the failed policies of the past."

In accordance with the Mayor's Commission of Homelessness, the new plan proposes:

-- The elimination of all Emergency Assistance Units.

-- Emphasis on serving families facing housing emergencies during the day at Income Support Centers.

-- After hours access to emergency shelter via and "800" telephone bank.

-- "One-night" overnight shelter provided by Reception Centers.

-- Referral of all families requiring emergency shelter to an Assessment Center (after being served at an Income Support Center.)

-- Performance based contracts established with Tier II providers.

-- Demonstration of readiness for independent living and/or completion of a service plan will replace length of stay in the shelter system as criteria for obtaining permanent housing.

The proposal also includes the expansion of permanent housing resources though the development and allocation of City and federally supported housing units and the matching of private

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sector apartments with the Private Sector Rental Assistance Program (EARP) and the federally funded Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS).

The Family Self-Sufficiency Program offers and opportunity to provide additional permanent housing to homeless families and to employ the support services and incentives that will lead to job training, employment and self-sufficiency.

These efforts will increase the use of private sector housing to approximately 2,700 apartments. In addition, public and not-for-profit housing will total approximately 2,300 units a year.

A copy of the plan is attached.

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REDESIGN OF THE FAMILY SHELTER SYSTEM

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MAYOR'S COMMISSION ON THE HOMELESS

Presented to the Mayor's Commission on the Homeless
September 21, 1992

OVERVIEW

The current system of providing emergency housing was developed to meet the short term needs of families who temporarily were without a permanent home. During the 1980's, the courts endorsed as legal doctrine the "right to emergency shelter" as well as the State administrative requirement of "immediate" referral to temporary housing. Emergency Assistance Units (EAU's), which open in the evening, were created to supplement the services offered during the day at HRA's Income Support Centers (ISC's) to provide 24-hour access to emergency housing. Social Services were introduced in transitional facilities to address the social services needs of the families. In the absence of adequate Federal and State low income housing programs, the City embarked on an unprecedented building program to provide permanent housing to homeless families with City renovated and subsidized permanent housing units.

Changing demographics of the families entering the shelter system point today to a younger population with varied social services needs, an increasing number of whom are leaving doubled up situations or have never had a permanent home of their own. At the same time, the quality of the temporary shelter, social services and permanent housing opportunities offered by the City shelter system have steadily improved.

Originally designed to serve families who became homeless at night or who did not receive a placement from the ISC prior to closing time, the overburdened EAU's today provide over 75% of the placements into the shelter system. Because of the constraints of nighttime operation, the ability of EAU staff to determine eligibility, assess need and pursue interventions to prevent homelessness is nearly nonexistent. The City is effectively forced to presume with respect to the great majority of families seeking shelter that they can only be assisted by providing an emergency housing placement.

Recognizing the shortcomings of this existing system, the Mayor's Commission on the Homeless recommended a greater emphasis on determination of eligibility for temporary housing, assessment of social services needs, and prevention of homelessness. The Commission also proposed certain prerequisites for referral to permanent housing. The following outlines a restructuring of the homeless family system, consistent with the recommendations of the Cuomo Commission, i.e., a three phase system: reception, transitional housing and permanent housing. Discussions by the various work groups formed to operationalize the recommendations of the Commission yielded the structures outlined in the following pages.

The following summarizes the main points of the plan:

- Families facing housing emergencies will be served during the day at Income Support Centers. EAU's will be eliminated, as called for in the Commission report. After hours access to emergency shelter will be provided via an "800" telephone bank. Referral will be made to Reception Centers where overnight shelter will be provided.

- After being served at an ISC, all families requiring an emergency shelter placement will be referred initially to an Assessment Center.

- Performance based contracts will be established with Tier II providers. Tier II's will be service-intensive and participation in service plans by families will be based upon a mutually agreed upon contract.

- Demonstration of readiness for independent living and/or completion of a service plan will replace length of stay in the shelter system as the criteria for obtaining permanent housing.

- Expansion of permanent housing resources.

INTAKE & ELIGIBILITY

This proposal will implement a fundamental policy change in gaining access to the emergency shelter system. To achieve these fundamental policy changes, additional specialized staff and space in Income Support Centers and the development of Reception Centers with a total capacity for sheltering at least 150 families will be necessary.

- All families seeking emergency shelter will be served through the Income Support Centers during regular business hours.
- Income Support Centers will service all families who arrive by 5 P.M. Staff will remain after 5 P.M. to complete the processing of these families.
- Income Support Centers will provide a priority to families seeking emergency housing to determine eligibility for public assistance and need for emergency shelter.
- Existing homeless prevention programs will be enhanced to assist the family resolve conflicts and determine alternatives to the shelter program.

Families in need of emergency shelter after normal working hours will be advised through a well publicized effort to seek direct assistance through a telephone "hotline".

- Trained social service workers will screen each call to ascertain information concerning the emergency and refer the caller to existing emergency systems.
- Fire victims and vacate order displacement will be referred to the American Red Cross.
- Battered women will be referred to the appropriate hotline to discuss their situation with a specialist in domestic violence assistance.
- Families who call the "800" line with no alternative housing resource or those who need to return to their ISC for additional services will be referred to Reception Centers, where shelter will be provided until the next business day.

ASSESSMENT

All families determined eligible for income support and in need of emergency housing will be referred to an Assessment Center. Continued efforts will be undertaken once the family enters the Assessment Center to identify alternatives to emergency shelter through the resolution of landlord-tenant problems or family disputes and identification of alternative housing benefits. Families determined to be in need of social services will be referred to Tier II shelters and provided those services in preparation for their entrance into permanent housing.

- Each family entering the Assessment Center will be evaluated as to whether they are housing-ready. Housing-ready families will be referred to scatter-site transitional units operated by not-for-profit organizations or to Tier II facilities with limited services until such time as permanent housing can be secured.

- Families needing social services will be referred to an appropriate facility and required to participate in a social service plan.

- Tier II facilities will structure their social service programs to meet specific identified needs of the family and assist the family to achieve housing-readiness.

- An Assessment Center capacity of 538 units will be available to meet projected needs.

TRANSITIONAL RESIDENCES

As the Commission recommended, the emergency shelter system must reflect a balance of rights and responsibilities incorporating a social contract and a mutuality of obligation. This plan restructures the Tier II system, creating specialized, service intensive facilities to meet the specific needs of families. Families will be expected to work with the not-for-profit providers towards achieving independence and self-sufficiency.

- Tier II facilities will provide an intensive supportive program based upon an assessment of the families' need.

- Milestones will be established for completion of various aspects of the service plan.

- All families are to be prepared for permanent housing through housing-readiness programs and the resolution of problems which could impede their ability to achieve stability in the community.

- Tier II operators will be monitored as to compliance with established standards and financial sanctions imposed for failing to meet agreed upon standards. An incentive plan would be developed to reward Tier II operators who exceed agreed upon timeframes.

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

PHASE I - JANUARY 1993

- Two Assessment Centers to be opened.
- Diversion services available in all boroughs for families at risk of homelessness.
- Refocussed permanent housing system begun.

PHASE II - APRIL 1993

- EAU's closed and families begin applying for emergency housing services at their local Income Support Center.
- Reception Centers opened for overnight shelter.
- Hotline initiated.
- Remainder of Assessment Centers opened.

REFERRAL TO PERMANENT HOUSING

Currently eligibility for referral to permanent housing is determined by length of stay in the temporary housing system. The proposed program delinks the length of stay criteria and substitutes the concept of housing readiness.

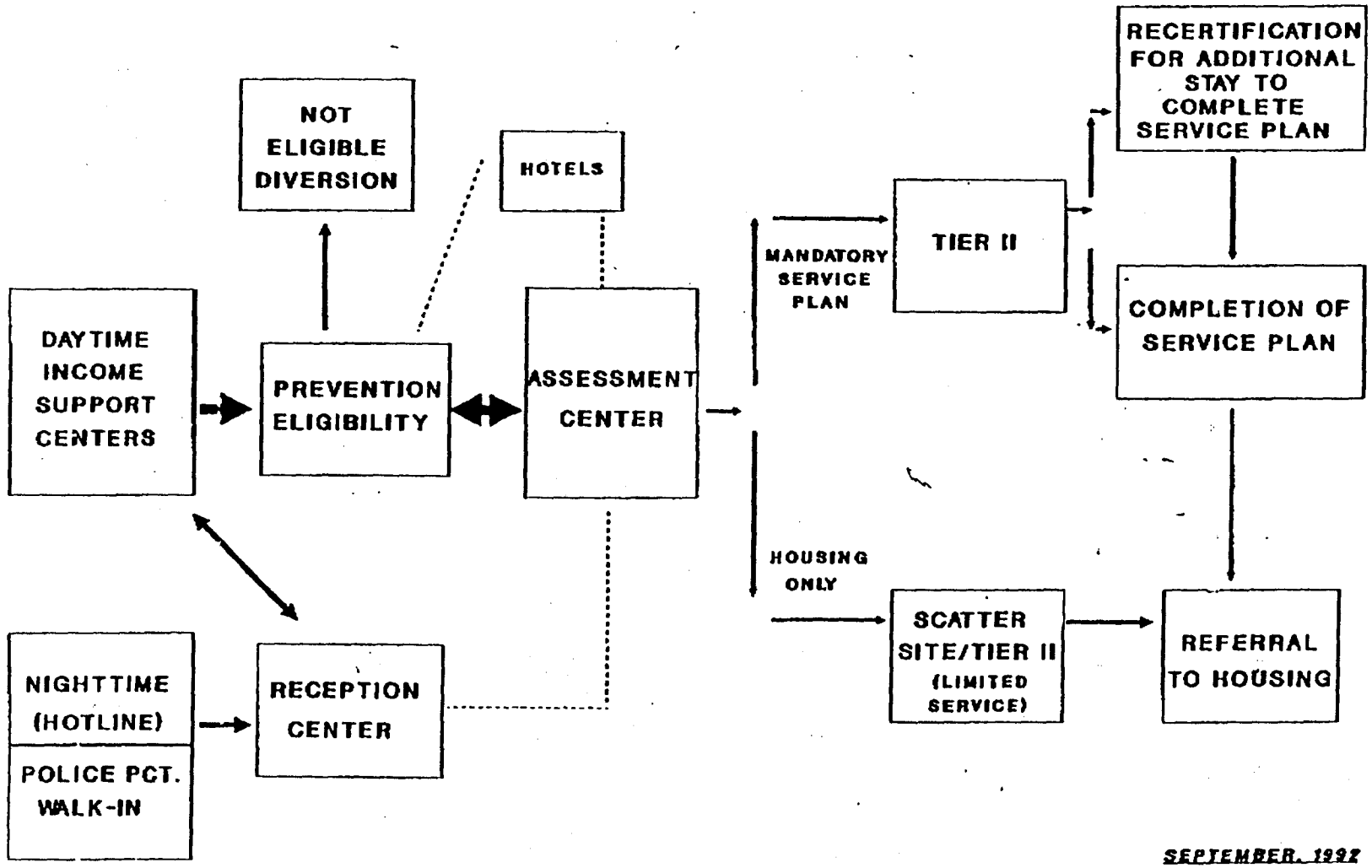
- Families determined to be housing-ready at the completion of the assessment process will be referred to scatter-site programs or facilities with limited social service programs until such time as permanent housing can be identified.

- Families in need of social services and who fulfill the established service plan will be eligible for referrals to permanent housing.

- Families will be referred to available apartments on a first in, first out basis, once determined to be housing ready

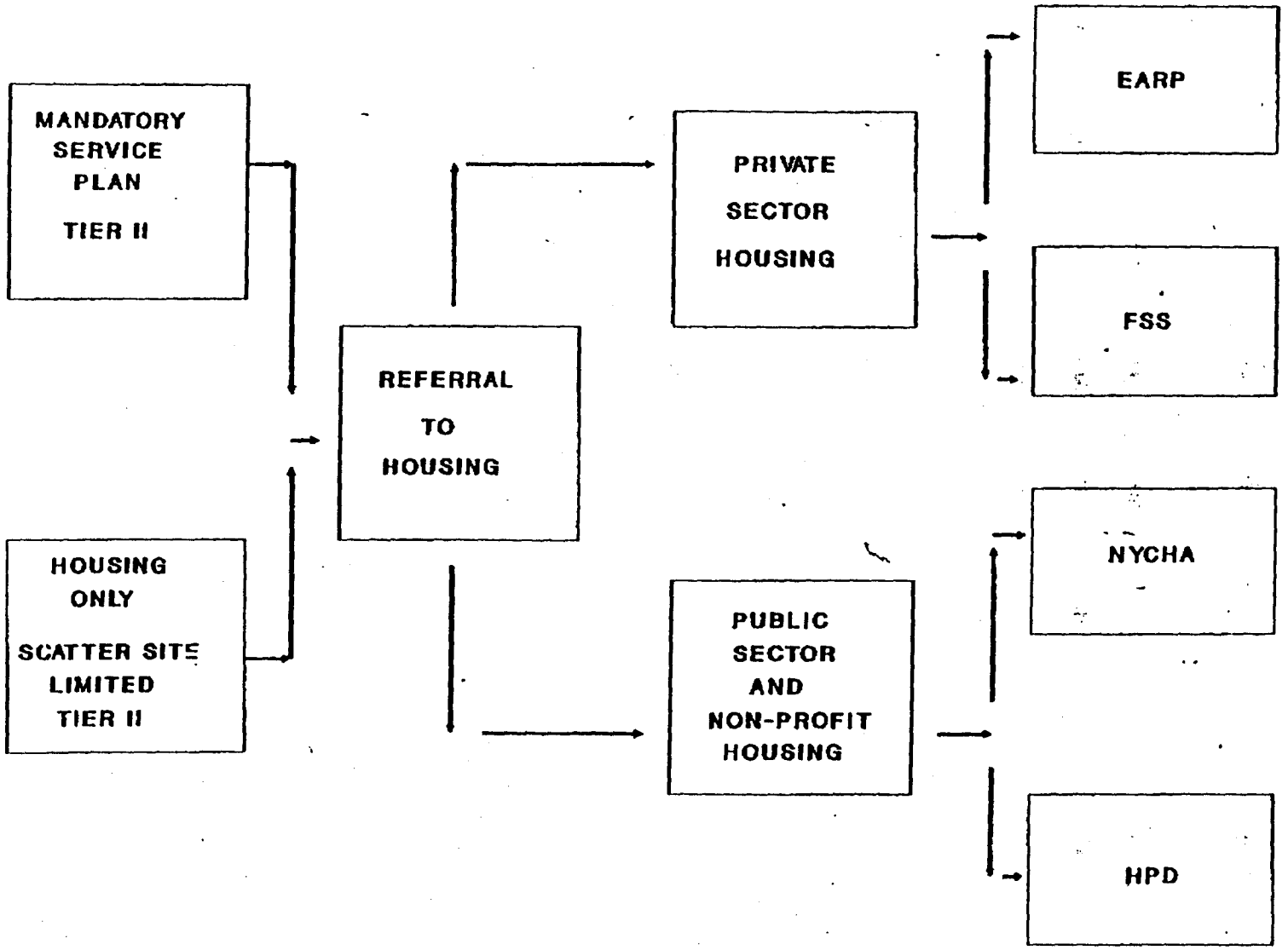
- No family will be relocated to permanent housing based solely on the completion of a specific defined period of time in the emergency shelter system.

THE HOMELESS FAMILY SYSTEM



SEPTEMBER, 1992

PERMANENT HOUSING REFERRAL SYSTEM



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EXPANSION OF PERMANENT HOUSING RESOURCES

The resolve of the City of New York to meet the permanent housing need of low income and homeless families cannot reasonably be questioned. During the 1980's, the City began an unprecedented program that has resulted in the rehabilitation of thousands of vacant City-owned apartment units. Over $5 billion was expended on this effort. New York City has developed more permanent low-income housing over the past nine years than has been developed nationwide by the federal government. These housing programs must now be refocussed in the face of the diminishing availability of City-owned buildings suitable for rehabilitation and declining municipal capital resources.

Today, homeless and low-income families continue to confront a dire shortage of affordable permanent housing. In addition, many believe the problem of homelessness can not be solved with housing alone. Creative new approaches are required both to providing shelter and to meeting the social services needs of families while in the shelter system and after their return to community living.

The Mayor's Commission on Homelessness also recognized this need and emphasized approaches designed to assist families in achieving self-sufficiency and independence. However, municipal resources are limited, and the obligation to provide the needed housing and services is not New York City's alone. State and Federal resources are necessary in order to meet this need.

The Administration is committed to the expansion of permanent housing resources and creation of opportunities for homeless families and the non-homeless poor to achieve independence. An important part of this effort is the federally funded Family Self-Sufficiency program (FSS), which offers an opportunity both to provide additional permanent housing to homeless families and to employ the support services and incentives that will lead to job training, employment, and self-sufficiency. By accessing Federal, State, and private sector resources, the Dinkins Administration will be able to utilize FSS as a major new program providing housing and supportive services to families in the shelter system.

In addition, the Permanent Housing Initiative, chaired by Deputy Mayor Perales, will bring together the resources of municipal housing agencies, HUD and the private sector. The Initiative is designed to coordinate efforts to expand permanent housing resources and to provide necessary case management, education, employment, financial management and family support services. This initiative will coordinate the development and allocation of City and federally supported housing units, and the matching of private sector apartments with the private sector rental assistance program (EARP) and the federally funded Family Self-Sufficiency program.

The new strategies for restructured intake and assessment, enhancement of transitional programs, and the expansion and refocussing of permanent housing will provide an integrated continuum of services to homeless families that responds more effectively to both their housing and social services needs. The provision of supportive services from the time a family requests shelter through after relocation to the community will improve our ability both to prevent homelessness and to break the cycle of dependency into which so many homeless families have fallen.