

THE NETWORK'S NYC POLICY PRIORITIES

DEVELOP & PRESERVE 2K UNITS of SUPPORTIVE HOUSING EACH YEAR

NYC currently creates 1,000 units of supportive housing a year. With need growing and old buildings deteriorating, the City should double its annual commitment to 2,000 units, including the preservation of existing residences. The City should provide additional supportive housing units to those who do not qualify due to the chronic homelessness requirement, including people leaving jails, prisons and hospitals. The new commitment should prioritize ground up development by mission-driven nonprofits.

STREAMLINE DEVELOPMENT AND PLACEMENT

The City should invest in our Coordinated Assessment and Placement System (CAPS), ensure all agencies identify underutilized sites, tighten review timelines, utilize hotels as feasible, coordinate approvals centrally, and modify the zoning resolution.

#JUSTPAY OUR STAFF

The supportive housing workforce – which is mostly Black, people of color, and women-led -- was woefully underpaid before COVID-19. Providers are currently facing staff vacancy rates around 20%. Their pay is directly tied to City contracts. We urge the City to increase contract funding and implement a \$21/hr minimum wage for human service workers.

VALUE NONPROFITS

Nonprofit organizations provide life-saving services yet have to wait years for contracts to be registered and paid. The City must pay on time. Additionally, City agencies should engage nonprofits in the design and implementation of programs and policies that impact their work.

PROTECT OUR PEOPLE

Supportive housing tenants are the subject of 911 mental health crisis calls handled by NYPD, sometimes resulting in injury or death, and predominantly impacting people of color. The Network joins Correct Crisis Intervention Today (CCIT-NYC) in calling on the City to remove police officers as first responders from mental health crisis response and instead create a “health only” response.



DEVELOP & PRESERVE 2K UNITS OF SUPPORTIVE HOUSING EACH YEAR

IMPROVE NYC 15/15 INITIATIVE

NYC 15/15 is creating 15,000 units of supportive housing in 15 years. Launched in 2016, the commitment is split between single site residences and “scattered site” supportive housing (private apartments in which mobile services are delivered). While highly successful, the following adjustments are needed:

- Reallocate the 50/50 split between congregate and scattered site to a 75/25 split, respectively.
- Increase scattered site rates to align with Fair Market Rents (FMR) and increase service dollars to match those of congregate housing.
- Continue to prioritize nonprofit development and lifetime ownership of supportive housing.

PRESERVE AND CREATE 1,000 ADDITIONAL UNITS EACH YEAR

PRESERVE EXISTING HOUSING

- 40% of congregate residences in NYC are more than twenty years old. Many were moderate rehabs of SROs that need capital work and sustainability upgrades. Services and operating funding in these buildings –which have remained stagnant– must also be increased.
- Increase rates for existing scattered site contracts to allow for Fair Market Rent and adequate services.

HOUSE EXCLUDED POPULATIONS

- NYC 15/15 is reserved for individuals and families with certain disabilities who have been living in shelter or on the street for a year or more. People leaving jail, prison, or long-term hospital stays are excluded because they do not meet this “chronic homelessness” definition. Create new supportive housing units to meet these needs.



VALUE NONPROFITS

FULLY FUND CONTRACTS

Government contracts dominate provider budgets but pay only 80 cents on the dollar of true program costs. Underfunded contract rates drive low staff salary rates (see #JustPay) and endanger nonprofit fiscal health and service quality.

PAY CONTRACTS ON TIME

- Nonprofits wait longer than any other city vendors for their contracts to be registered.
- In 2020, 70% of organizations reported a delayed payment from the City.
- The average value of delayed payments from the City was \$8,025,000.
- Late contract registration and payments force nonprofits to rely on lines of credit, with interest the City will not reimburse.

ENGAGE NONPROFITS IN POLICY, PROGRAM & FUNDING DECISIONS.

Recent examples of lack of engagement include:

- **Local Law 87, Labor Peace Agreements:** Intended to allow unions to organize nonprofit workers, this law and its implementation are both unclear because the process did not involve nonprofits.
- **Indirect Cost Rates (ICR):** The City spent years developing a system to pay nonprofits the true costs of running their programs, some of which had ICR's of 2%. But because nonprofits were not fully consulted, the program resulted in numerous nonprofits losing money.



STREAMLINE DEVELOPMENT & PLACEMENT

REDUCE CURRENT 10% VACANCY RATE IN SUPPORTIVE HOUSING!

- Immediately launch a coordinated effort to reduce vacancy rate to 2%.
- Invest in improving the Coordinated Assessment and Placement System (CAPS) system including adding staff, to ensure accelerated housing placement.

EXPLORE HOTEL CONVERSIONS

- Ensure that policies and budgets address acquisition costs.
- Ensure quality of units and locations proximate to transit and amenities.
- Prioritize conversions that incorporate kitchenettes in studio apartments.

MAXIMIZE USE OF PUBLIC SITES FOR SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

- Mandate that all City agencies identify suitable sites for supportive housing development: [a 2019 analysis of five public agencies' land found 66 sites primed for development.](#)

SPEED AND COORDINATE APPROVALS:

- **REVAMP LAND USE PROCESSES:** Supportive housing development gets delayed by cumbersome land use and environmental review processes. Accelerate these processes, including creating an aggressive timeline for the pre-certification process under ULURP.
- **PRIORITIZE AFFORDABLE AND SUPPORTIVE HOUSING FOR PROJECT APPROVALS:** Create an Ombudsperson to coordinate and fast-track all necessary approvals for construction, connections, and project closeout.

MODIFY THE ZONING RESOLUTION: INCREASE DENSITY FOR ALL AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Amend the Zoning Resolution to right-size density bonuses for all types of affordable and supportive housing. Currently only senior housing has a density bonus.





#JUSTPAY CAMPAIGN

The Network is proud partner in the #JustPay campaign, organized by the Human Services Council (HSC), whose mission is to put an end to government-sanctioned poverty wages for human services workers. Recovery from the pandemic has put us on the cusp of change and human services are critical for New York's recovery from COVID-19.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING STAFF ARE VASTLY UNDER-PAID

The government is the direct funder of human services and thus the main driver of human services salaries. Current New York City and State contracts have resulted in the essential human services workforce being some of the lowest paid workers in New York's economy. It is unacceptable that human services workers are given inadequate pay, benefits and opportunities for career advancements. The majority of direct care staff in supportive housing are women of color and these wages reflect a long history of the devaluation of the work of women in general and women of color, specifically.

LOW STAFF WAGES & SHORTAGES IMPACTS SUPPORTIVE HOUSING TENANTS

The suppressed wages for supportive housing staff creates instability for employees, their families and the communities in which they live. Burnout and turnover are common, with some providers reporting 50% turnover pre-pandemic. COVID exacerbated these issues: a recent study showed a 20% staff vacancy rate at supportive housing agencies. The success of supportive housing lies in the relationships between tenants and staff; when staff turnover is high, tenants cannot rely on these relationships and their ability to rebuild their lives is impeded.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish, fund, and enforce an automatic annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) on all human services contracts of at least 3%.
- Set a living wage floor of no less than \$21/ hour for all City and State-funded human services workers.
- Create, fund, and incorporate a comprehensive wage and benefit schedule for government contracted human services workers comparable to the salaries made by City employees in the same field.

Correct Crisis Intervention Today -- New York City (CCIT-NYC) ccitnyc.org is a broad-based coalition of civil rights and human service organizations, people with lived experience with mental health crises, family members, and other advocates, all of whom work together with a mission to reform the City's response to mental health crises, in order to reduce the incidents of violence and trauma experienced by those who turn to emergency services for assistance.

Mental health crises are a public health issue, not a law enforcement or criminal justice problem.

Traumatic encounters between the police and people in crisis are the consequence of a failing social support and public health system. The City must provide assistance to people before a 911 or other crisis call is made, shift the response to the over 200,000 911 calls per year away from the police toward a peer-driven crisis response system, and provide adequate support after an encounter with emergency services, no matter the location.

The alarming number of mental health related calls must be reduced by creating community based prevention strategies including *expanding* services such as crisis respite centers, ACT and IMT teams, Safe Havens and *developing* Mental Health Urgent Care Centers and Drop-in Centers.

The City's mental health crisis response must be guided by peer input.

Peers – those with lived mental health experience – must be prominently involved in all aspects of reforming the City's response to mental health crises. User feedback is essential, and the creation of an independent planning body to oversee a comprehensive, long-term reform effort is critical to ensure evaluation, appropriate outcome measurement, and regular feedback.

The City's mental health crisis response system must be peer-led.

The City must embrace tried and tested approaches, such as the [CAHOOTS](#) model in Eugene, Oregon, with well over 30 years of experience with publicly-funded mental health response teams comprised of an experienced and trained peer specialist and an independent emergency medical technician (EMT).

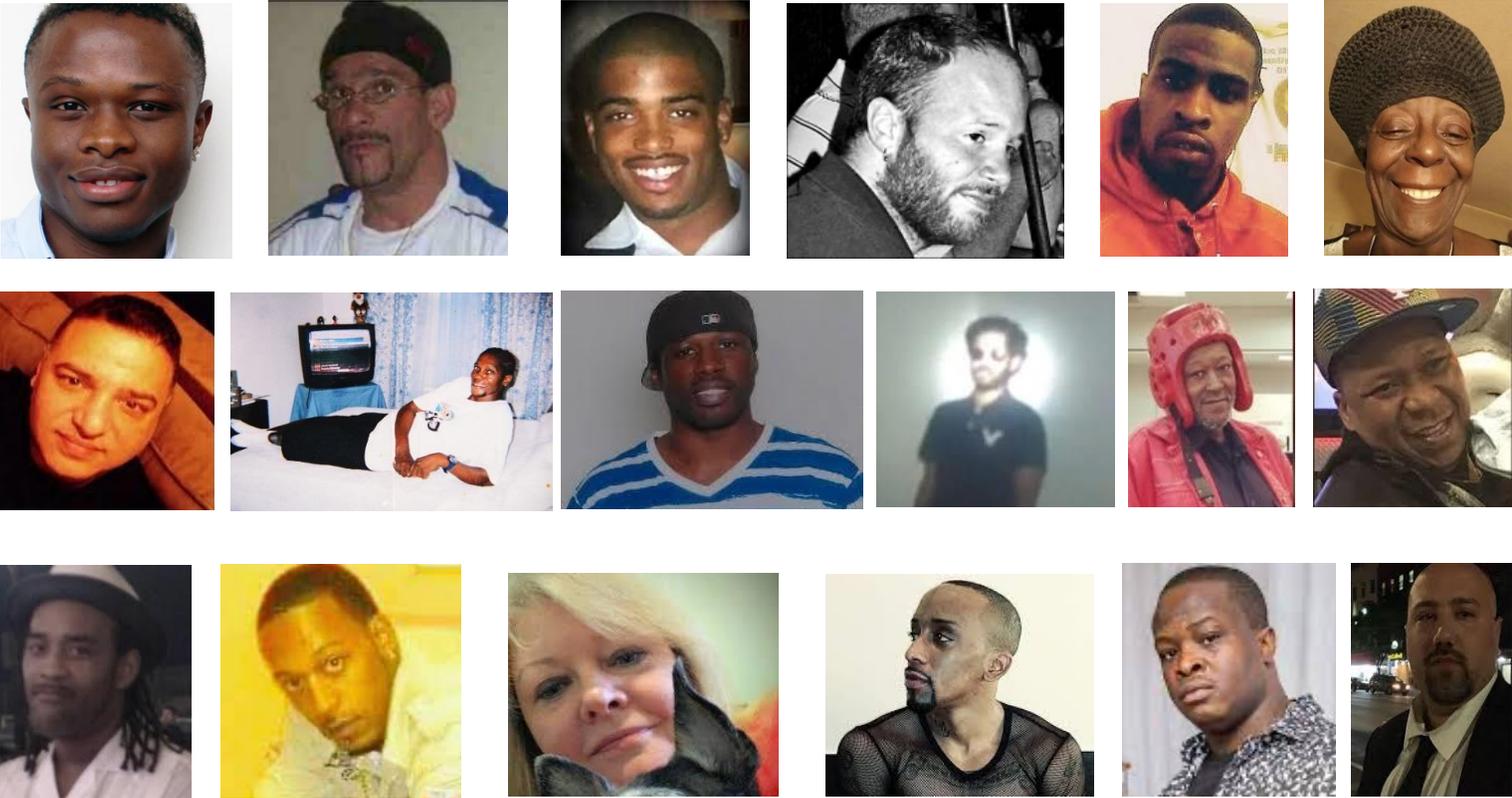
Lives are at stake.

Eighteen New Yorkers experiencing mental health crises were killed in police encounters in the five-year period spanning 2015-2020, the vast majority of whom were BIPOC.

Current CCIT-NYC Advocacy Priorities

The FY22 executive budget allocated \$112 million to fund a new, city-wide Mental Health Crisis Response system. While this is a step in the right direction, there are many aspects of the current B-HEARD pilot In East Harlem that need to be altered if the response is to be truly transformational. The city must invest in a crisis response system that:

- Eliminates police involvement, and establishes a new non-police emergency number like 988;
- Dispatches *independent* EMTs and peers (people with lived mental health experience);
- Responds to Mental Health Crises 24 hours a day, and just as quickly as other crises in New York City
- Incorporates transparent planning and oversight processes that include all stakeholders: members of impacted communities, the peer community, providers, advocates, policy experts.



Shown above in order from left to right:

David Felix (April 2015), Mario Ocasio (June 2015), Anthony Paul (July 2015), Garry Conrad (May 2016), Rashaun Lloyd (June 2016), Deborah Danner (October 2016), Ariel Galarza (November 2016), James Owens (January 2017), Dwayne Jeune (July 2017), Miguel Richards (September 2017), Cornell Lockhart (November 2017), Dwayne Pritchett (January 2018), Michael Hansford (January 2018), Saheed Vassell (April 2018), Susan Muller (September 2018), Kawaski Trawick (April 2019), Kwesi Ashun (October 2019), George Zapantis (June 2020)

In Memoriam