



The District's Dime

Going Beyond the Budget Book

The DC Fiscal Policy Institute blog
www.dcfpi.org

February 3, 2014

DC Should Take Immediate Action To Solve the Family Homeless Crisis

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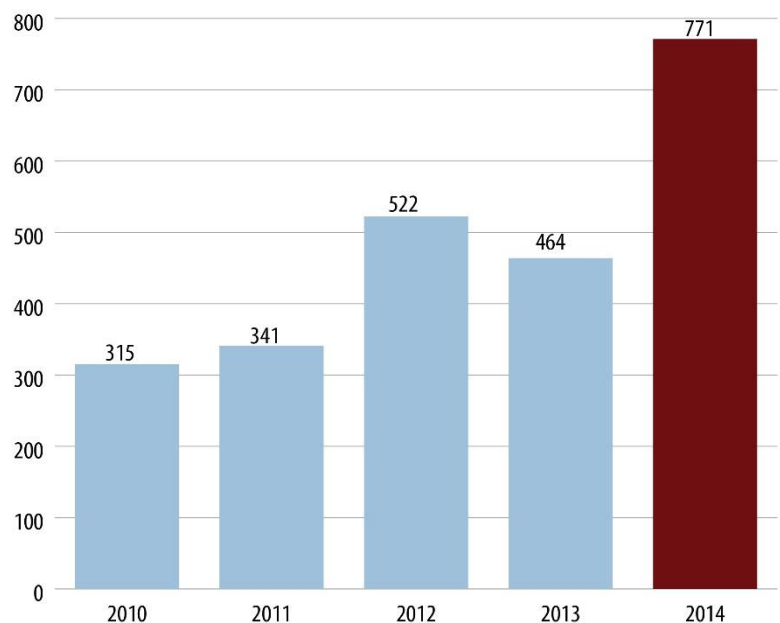
More than 750 District families, including 1,400 children, now live in emergency shelter. DC's system is so overwhelmed that it will now have to place families in recreation centers when they need a safe place to stay, as the Washington Post [reported](#) Saturday. This is not a good solution for our families or our city, and the Gray administration should act quickly to put parents and kids in more stable housing.

A group of family housing providers and advocates, including DCFPI, has developed a plan of action to address the family homelessness crisis, with input from the Department of Human Services (DHS) and The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness (TCP). DCFPI will testify at a DC Council roundtable today to highlight the needed steps.

The Gray administration, with support from the DC Council, needs to adopt this plan, or develop its own plan and then move assertively and quickly to implement it. The best developed plan will not succeed without leadership, focus, and a sense of urgency. Here are the steps:

- **Speed up housing placements.** DCFPI and our partners suggest that the District increase its capacity and resources to be able make at least 100 housing placements per month, an increase from the current rate of 60 per month. This requires better landlord

The Number of Families in Emergency Shelter and Motels is at the Highest Level in Years and Is Expected to Reach 1,000 by April 1st



Sources: 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 Point in Time Enumerations, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. Emergency Shelter Nightly Census 1/29/2014

outreach and offering one-time incentives for landlords. The District also needs to expand its capacity to inspect housing units and bring them on-line.

- **Build staff capacity, particularly around the rapid re-housing program.** The Gray administration needs to immediately dedicate staff to rapid-rehousing. The District aims to serve 80 percent of homeless families with this program, but there are no dedicated staff at either TCP or DHS to run it.
- **Make sure funding is available immediately to help move families out of shelter.** Funding likely is inadequate for the three primary homeless services programs: Emergency Rental Assistance (ERAP), Rapid Re-housing, and Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH).
- **Create a Family Crisis Response Committee.** Representatives from DHS, TCP, family providers, and advocates will need to come together to monitor progress and troubleshoot delays in implementation. This committee should report back to the community on progress at least monthly.

It is also critical that both the Mayor and the DC Council ensure that DHS has sufficient resources to implement this plan and help the families in crisis. Given the large surplus the District just announced, DHS should not be forced to cut funds from other critical programs within its budget such as shelter and services for homeless individuals.

In addition to the immediate steps, the plan also lays out medium-term steps for the next six to nine months to prepare for next year's hypothermia season. These include improving prevention and diversion programs, improving services for youth headed households, and ensuring that the range of resources are available year-round to families to address homelessness when it happens. And in the long-term, the District must continue to invest in affordable housing throughout the city to help families avoid becoming homeless.

The Gray administration did not create the homeless crisis, but it alone has the tools to resolve the crisis. The District needs to take immediate action to solve this crisis that is costly to the District and devastating to parents and children who are without a place to call home.

Read policy analyst Kate Coventry's testimony [here](#).