

News's blog

[DHS Head Defends Agency Amid Growing Number Of City Homeless](#)

By: Bobby Cuzan [NY1](#)

With the city's homeless population at record levels and shelters stretched to the limit, city Homeless Commissioner Seth Diamond is defending his agency's record.

It comes amid recent statistics that paint a grim picture of homelessness in the city.

Not only is the number of homeless New Yorkers at a record high and growing, but they are staying in city shelters longer.

The average stay for a homeless family with children is now close to a year, up sharply over last year.

[The Current Homelessness Situation, August 2012](#)

For the first time in three decades, New York City does not have a rental assistance subsidy program to help the homeless pave a path to permanent housing. The termination of the Advantage Subsidy Program put more than 8,000 formerly homeless tenants at imminent risk of returning to shelters. Seth Diamond, the Homeless Services Commissioner [tells NY1](#)

that "Most families, the overwhelming number who were on Advantage, will not come back into the shelter system." But here are where the numbers stand:

- There are now a record 44,000 people in homeless shelters.
- This week, 18,200 children will be spending their nights in shelters.
- There have been [9 more homeless shelters opened in the last 2 months](#), with officials rushing to open more without any long term plan or the much needed social services to accompany these shelters.
- According to the [Coalition for the Homeless](#), more than 3,100 former Advantage families have returned to shelters and more than 5,000 have applied to be placed into shelters.

What You Can Do:

Sign our Petition.

[FEPS applications processing centers overwhelmed by families applying](#)

In the aftermath of the termination of the Advantage Rent Subsidy Program, families have resorted to the only assistance available to the working poor who cannot pay their rent: FEPS. [According to Cindy Rodriguez's recent WNYC Article](#), the Family Eviction Prevention Supplement, which only provides rent assistance to families who have eviction hearings in progress, has been overwhelmed with new applications while the organizations processing these applications are facing major budget cuts:

State budget cuts are also impacting the non-profits hired to process FEPS applications. Carolyn McLaughlin, director of Bronxworks, said a 45 percent cut in funding in October forced her to lay off 10 people. "Staff has been working really, really hard but they just can't handle the volume of people that need this type of help," McLaughlin said.

The result of this is that eviction hearings these families face are moving forward faster than their FEPS applications are being processed, which makes their evictions seem "imminent". In light of this development, "Legal Aid is suing the city and state arguing that government agencies are effectively blocking people from receiving help by not processing applications fast enough."

[The strongest case against the Obama administration's economic policy goes something like this](#)

Ezra Klein:

Early on, the Obama administration misunderstood the unusual nature of the crisis. You can see it in its forecasts, which predicted a rapid, "V"-shaped recovery even if Congress didn't pass a stimulus bill. And you can see it in the administration's policies, which focused on supporting the financial system while it kickstarted growth by putting people back to work, handing out tax cuts and stopping state and local governments from laying people off.

The precise nature of the administration's misunderstanding was that the key problem was household debt, and until that problem was solved the economy couldn't recover. But while it had a clear strategy for attacking bad debt in the banking system, and a clear strategy for attacking the fall in consumer spending, it never had a clear strategy for reducing housing debt.

Instead, the administration believed that the best and fairest way to fix the housing system was to fix the economy. If people had jobs and tax cuts and unemployment insurance, they would be able to pay their mortgages and they would be able to buy new homes and that would take care of the housing problem.

That did not take care of the problem? it did not come close to taking care of the problem.

Read more at [Washington Post](#)

[NYCHA board sitting on nearly \\$1B in fed cash](#)

The New York City Housing Authority and its board members have failed to spend nearly \$1 billion that it has been hoarding since 2009 to make life more livable for the 400,000 residents of its 334 developments, the Daily News has learned.

Read more:

<http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/nycha-board-sitting-1b-fed-cash-article-1.1126326#ixzz22JcfoXgT>

- [« first](#)
- [? previous](#)
- [1](#)
- [2](#)
- [3](#)
- [4](#)
- [5](#)
- [6](#)
- [7](#)
- [8](#)
- [9](#)
- [?](#)
- [next ?](#)
- [last »](#)

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