

# Supporting New Arrivals Within and Outside of the Homelessness Response System

2024 NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON  
ENDING HOMELESSNESS

★ AND CAPITOL HILL DAY ★

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WASHINGTON D.C.

#NAEH2024

**Amy Fischer**

*Director, Refugee and Migrant Rights, Amnesty International*

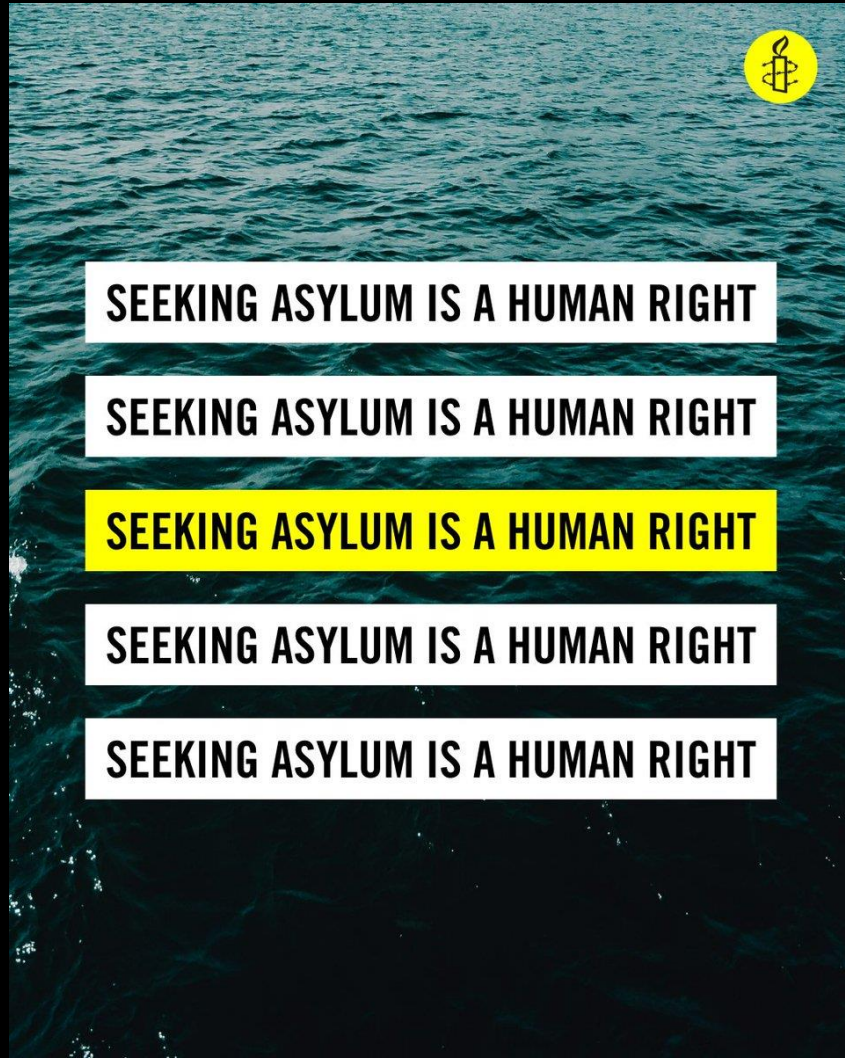
**Jade Vasquez**

*Director of Policy and Research, Women in Need*

*This session will explore innovative strategies to address the complex housing crisis, affecting both people experiencing homelessness and people who have recently arrived in the United States from other countries. Decades of disinvestment in crucial systems has pitted vulnerable groups against one another. However, communities across the nation are leading the way in seeking to meet the needs of all people experiencing housing instability. This session will explore communities' creative approaches to funding, partnership, and services.*



# Welcoming Asylum Seekers: Local and Federal Perspectives and Recommendations for Solutions that Work!



Amy Fischer (she/her)

Director of Refugee and Migrant Rights at Amnesty International USA

Co-founder and core organizer with Migrant Solidarity Mutual Aid in Washington, DC

# What is happening at the border?

**Does it feel like border policies are changing every day? Hear the news and confused as to the real deal?**

- Title 42 in place from the start of the COVID-19 pandemic until May 11, 2023. This was an expulsion policy that resulted in over 2 million expulsions.
- Circumvention of Lawful Pathways Rule aka the Asylum Ban went into effect on May 12, 2023.
  - The asylum ban makes an individual presumptively ineligible for asylum unless they meet three narrow exceptions.
  - The main exception is if you schedule an appointment to present yourself at a port of entry using the CBP One Mobile Application
- Asylum Shutdown Executive Order went into effect on June 5, 2024
  - CBP One App the sole mechanism to seek safety
  - Removed without a real chance to access asylum if you cross without an appointment



# AMNESTY FINDINGS ABOUT THE CBP ONE APP



- technological errors and flaws
- wait times that last months and months
- danger, violence, and extortion in Mexico
- inequitable access due to monetary, literacy, or language proficiency reasons
- violates US obligations under international law

“

Mexico is the worst thing we went through...we were kidnapped for three days and then released. We were blindfolded and they beat us several times. We were taken off the buses several times and were forced to pay. We were sold tickets at double the price. So many things happened to us that make you want to cry. If we don't get the appointment quickly, we'll throw ourselves into the river.

- VENEZUELAN ASYLUM SEEKER

“

We were in Mexico City for two months. We did the CBP One registration and tried daily for the appointment. We decided to cross into the United States because we no longer had the money to keep waiting in Mexico. We didn't have any other option. We knew it was risky, but we couldn't stay on the streets anymore.

- AFGHAN ASYLUM SEEKER (SAN DIEGO, USA)



# What is up with the “chaos” in cities?

## Why now? What’s different?

- People are tapping out their resources in order to survive Mexico
- New arrivals representing populations that don’t already have family or community support systems in place, so are more likely to need those resources from their new communities like transitional housing, case management, cultural orientation
- Busing and flight programs from Governors Abbott, DeSantis, and Ducey exacerbated the issue, *but are not the cause*
- Asylum seekers can only get work permits 6 months after they submit their asylum application; if you enter with CBP One Appt, immediately eligible
- Lack of federal coordination: Biden Admin ceded interior resettlement strategy to Gov Abbott and his buddies.
- Mischaracterization of the issue as one of “reception” rather than “resettlement”

# Case Study: Washington DC



- DC started receiving buses in April 2022, first city in Gov Abbott's busing program
- Within weeks, majority of people arriving had nowhere to go, no sponsors, no existing relationships
- MSMA started shelter, supply, case management programs
- FEMA funding to Spain based organization with no U.S. experience or experience working with asylum seekers
- October 2022 DC Council passed legislation forming the DC Office of Migrant Services focussed largely on transporting migrants out of DC; Legislation also created a separate system for migrants so they can't access "regular" homeless services
- Shrinking of eligibility for family shelters - rising numbers of unhoused families. Families staying in shelters long-term

# Solutions, Solutions, Solutions:

## The need for federal coordination + funding

- For Congress:
  - Increase funding to the Shelter and Services program for short-term reception at the border and the interior
  - Expand the Case Management Pilot Program
  - Establish and fund an Office of Reception Coordination to coordinate inter-and intra- agency efforts to welcome newcomers
  - Pass the forthcoming Destination Reception Assistance Act to provide state, local, and tribal communities federal \$\$ to support medium-term services and programs for asylum seekers
- For Biden Admin
  - Designate a White House and DHS office for reception coordination to have a strategy for asylum seekers without sponsors and meet the local needs of communities



# Personal Story: Karla

Karla arrived to the United States from Venezuela with her husband and two children to seek safety, security, and a new life in October 2022. Karla arrived with no sponsors in the United States who could house her, but had some community already in Washington, DC. When Karla and her family arrived at an under-resourced border town after being released from processing with the Department of Homeland Security, she had little choice but to take a free bus paid for by Governor Abbott to New York City. Upon arriving in New York, Karla and her family were greeted by city officials and nongovernmental organizations who received and fed her family, provided overnight accommodations, and assistance getting tickets to Washington, DC. With a more coordinated reception system, Karla could have gone straight to her destination community.

When Karla and her family arrived in Washington, DC, they were provided shelter in a single hotel room with no kitchen for a year - while Karla and her husband found under-the-table work until they could hire an attorney, file for asylum, and eventually get their work permits. Finally, after saving up more money and receiving rental assistance from Migrant Solidarity Mutual Aid,

# Questions?

Stay in touch! Contact Amy at [afischer@aiusa.org](mailto:afischer@aiusa.org)

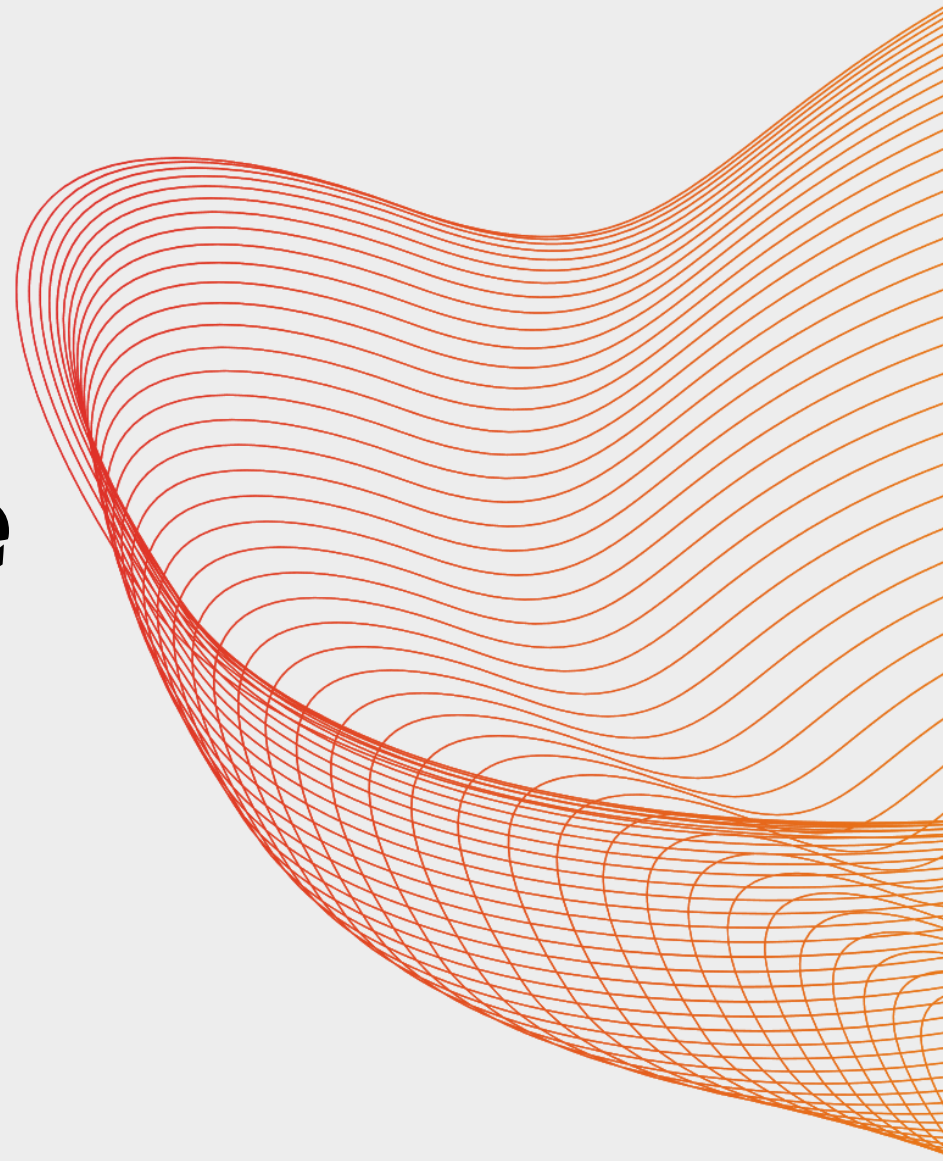


Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness  
for Women and their Children

# Supporting New Arrivals Within and Outside of the Homelessness Response System



Jade Vasquez, Director of Policy and Research

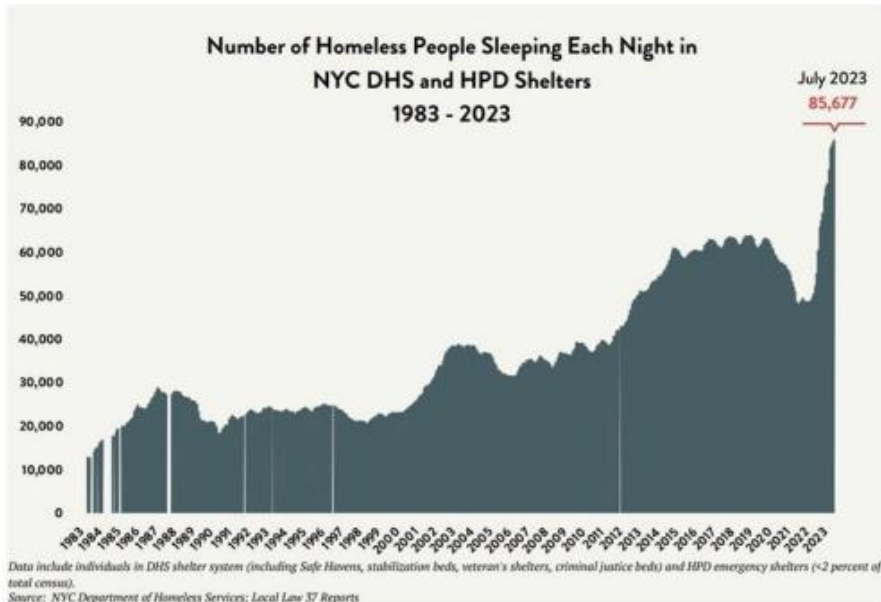


# NYC'S HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

Every night, over 120,000 people go to bed in a homeless shelter in New York City - including over 33,000 children.

Recent data though point to a historic all time high of humanitarian crisis with over **120,000 in shelter at this time**. This crisis has been exacerbated by the influx of thousands of migrants who have come to New York fleeing violence, crime, hunger in their home countries.

NYC is one of three jurisdictions in the U.S. legally required to provide those experiencing homelessness with shelter. However, with the government's failure to provide affordable housing, the **number of homeless people has reached a historic high**.



70%

of New York City's homeless  
are in families with children

80%

of homeless mothers have  
experienced domestic  
violence as adults

15%

of all homeless New Yorkers  
are under the age of 6 years  
old.

1 in 9

students in New York public  
schools are homeless



# Win is the largest provider of transitional shelter and supportive housing for families with children experiencing homelessness in New York City.

## MISSION

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**Breaking the cycle of homelessness for women and their children.**

Win transforms the lives of New York City homeless families by providing holistic solutions of **safe housing**, **critical services**, and **ground-breaking programs** they need to succeed on their own— so these families can regain their independence and their children can look forward to a brighter future.

## APPROACH

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**Win runs 16 shelters and 500 supportive housing units across all five boroughs.**

Win offers transitional shelter housing and permanent supportive housing that's coupled with programs and services to support long-term housing stability.

**We employ more than 700 full and part time staff members and a dedicated roster of over 1,800 volunteers.**





# Converging Crises: Informed Solutions to Homelessness and Immigration in NYC



- New York City and the United States are experiencing dual crises:
  - An affordable housing shortage
  - An influx of new migrants with limited legal pathways to work and permanent residency, due to the lack of comprehensive immigration reform in more than 40 years.
- New York City has long been the home to the country's largest foreign-born population: **37%** of New Yorkers are immigrants.
- However, since Spring 2022, more than **200,000** asylum seekers have arrived in New York City. The majority of them have had no familial ties in New York and have depended on the City for shelter and services.
- Today, more than **65,000** migrants and asylum seekers are living in City-run facilities.
- As the largest provider of shelter and services to families with children experiencing homelessness, Win began providing shelter and services to new arrivals in the early in this crisis.







Humanitarian Emergency Response and Relief Center for single adult migrant men











# Informed Solutions to Homelessness and Immigration in NYC: Legal Aid



Immigration legal services are key to helping asylum seekers begin their new lives in the United States.

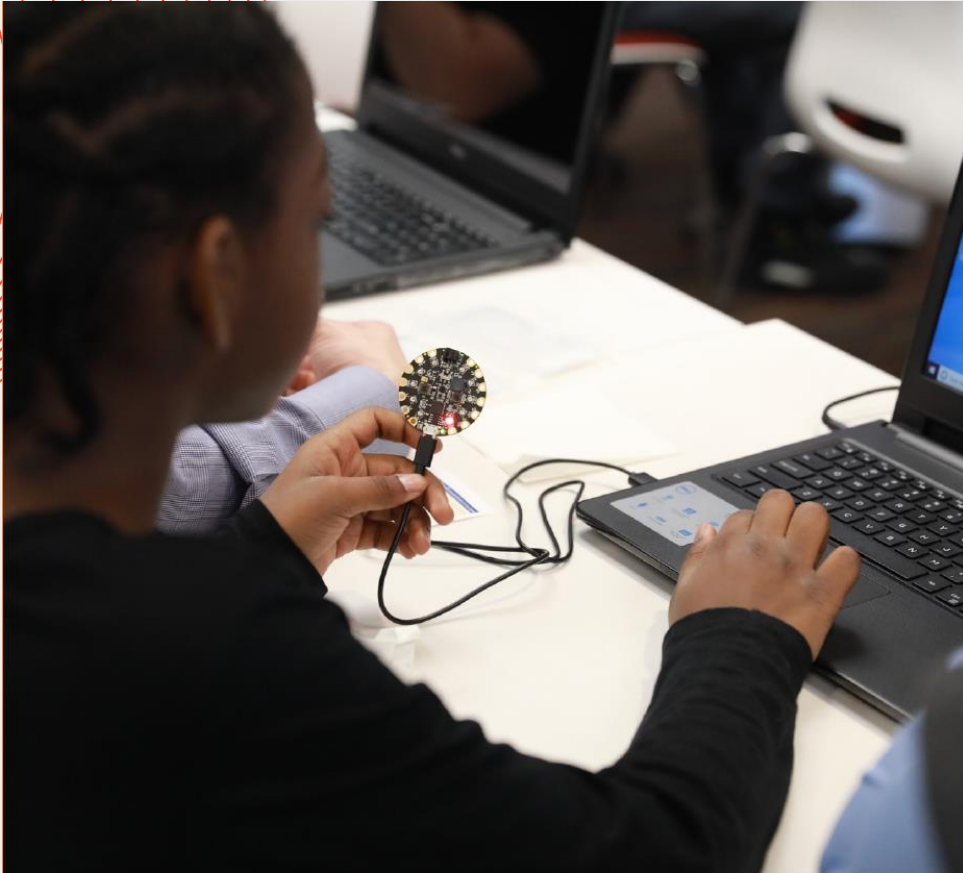
In 2023, Win partnered with the New York Legal Aid Group (NYLAG) to launch our Legal Empowerment for Seeking and Displaced Families program, or LEAD.

LEAD helps unhoused migrants navigate the United States' complex immigration system and apply for work authorization by offering legal clinics and pro se application assistance.





# Informed Solutions to Homelessness and Immigration in NYC: Workforce Development



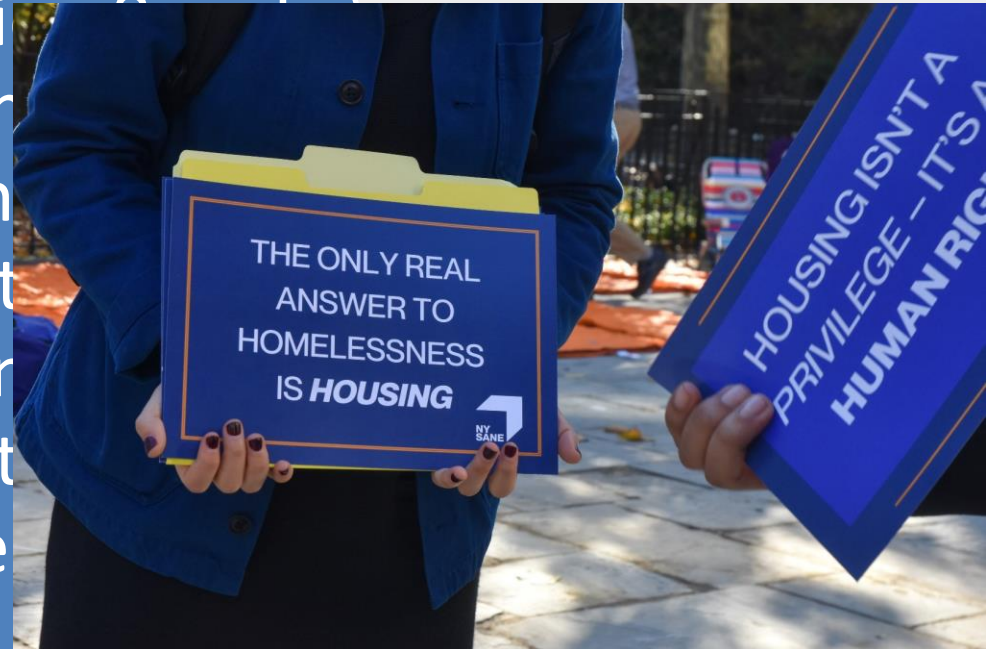
According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, New York State has a 13% job vacancy rate (38% nationally). The decline in net international migration to the United States is a contributing factor to our nation's labor shortages, which can largely be attributed to outdated and restrictive federal immigration policies.

Win's Income Building program helps shelter residents access certification programs for high demand industries, like the home health aide, construction, and childcare sectors; establishes partnerships with local businesses to foster employment opportunities for English Language Learners; offers financial literacy workshops and educational pathways, including high school equivalency or alternative programs in Spanish, ESOL classes in various proficiency levels, and college scholarships.

# Informed Solutions to Homelessness and Immigration in NYC: Housing



Housing vouchers, like Section 8, and NYC's CityFHEPS, are proven to prevent and end homelessness, facilitate moveouts, prevent homelessness recidivism, and are much cheaper than the cost of providing emergency shelter.



Win estimates that NYC can save \$2.6 billion annually by investing in housing.



# NYC, NYS, and Federal Policies and their Implications



## **New York City**

- NYC dismantling Right to Shelter via imposed 30- and 60-day shelters
- Promise NYC: Childcare vouchers for undocumented immigrants

## **New York State**

- Access to Representation: Free legal counsel for low-income immigrants facing deportation
- Legislation to protect Right to Shelter

**NYC & NYS:** Extending housing vouchers to noncitizens, regardless of status

## **Federal**

- Let Asylum Seekers Work Act: Reduce timeline for obtaining work authorization from 150 days to 30 days
  - Expanding Temporary Protected Status
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# Policy & Advocacy

Win has been working with elected representatives and government officials to improve the outcomes of asylum seekers and displaced persons who arrive in New York City. With our coalition partners , including NYSANE (New York Shelter for All in Need Equally), we advocate for informed policy from leaders on the city, state, and federal levels.



# Thank You!

*For questions or inquiries, contact:  
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