

Domestic violence survivors facing eviction miss out on NYC housing vouchers

By Leah Clark

08/25/2026 02:56 PM EDT

NEW YORK — When cuts to federal rental assistance put thousands of New Yorkers at risk of eviction earlier this year, advocates believed a city voucher program would serve as a crucial backstop.

But changes to the program under Mayor Zohran Mamdani have left many of them — including hundreds of domestic abuse survivors — ineligible for the vouchers and facing an uncertain future.

As part of a deal to balance the city's \$126 billion budget in June, Mamdani and the City Council agreed to restructure the city's housing voucher program, which has seen costs explode. That included creating an entirely new voucher program, but with eligibility rules that exclude New Yorkers living in over 300,000 apartment units, leaving out tenants in most income-capped, subsidized buildings.

Those changes are having consequences that weren't understood at the time the deal was cut. And advocates are now saying they're struggling to find housing for around 1,000 clients facing the end of federal rental assistance — and who aren't eligible for the new version of the city's program.

“The federal government put us in this mess,” said Nicole Branca, CEO of New Destiny, which provides supportive housing for domestic violence survivors and their children. “So the city needs to step up and make sure that these families don't become homeless.”

They're not the only ones falling through the emerging gaps in the safety net: Advocates say thousands of other vulnerable New Yorkers like formerly homeless youth are also missing out on the new version of the city's program.

These revelations present yet another twist in a longrunning battle over the fate of the city's pre-existing housing voucher program, known as CityFHEPs. Mamdani pledged to support an expansion of the program passed into law by the City Council while he campaigned for mayor. But upon taking office and discovering the city was billions of dollars in the red, he began to push for curtailing the program that was otherwise expected to increase in cost by billions of dollars.

By excluding certain households at risk of eviction, the mayor helped balance the city's budget. But the cost to domestic violence survivors and other at-risk renters is now coming into focus, further highlighting the precarious state of many New York City households and the real-world fallout of making tough budgetary decisions to protect the municipal purse.

Some New Yorkers slated to lose their federal rental assistance have already found other solutions. The New York City Housing Authority, which distributes the federal emergency housing vouchers to nearly 5,000 vulnerable New Yorkers, [announced](#) nearly 700 affected households might be able to transfer to other apartments in its portfolio. Roughly 1,700 households were transferred to another federally funded rental assistance program run by the Department of Housing Preservation & Development.

The new voucher program — known as the City Housing Assistance Program, or CHAP — does have provisions for domestic violence survivors, such as being able to use the vouchers to move to a different apartment, allowing them to leave their abusers. But households living in units subject to regulatory agreements, which are contracts between property owners and government agencies, were explicitly left ineligible for the program, excluding survivors who live in certain income-capped subsidized housing. Nonprofits and developers often enter into regulatory agreements, in order to tap city or state funds to build affordable housing, such as Cadman Towers in Brooklyn Heights and the Kira in Jamaica. Eligibility for the new voucher program can be changed each year as part of the budget adoption process in June.

That leaves more than 1,100 domestic violence survivors and 600 formerly homeless youth at risk of homelessness when their federal rental assistance ends because they live in the type of subsidized housing excluded from CHAP.

The National Network to End Domestic Violence reports domestic violence as one of the leading causes for homelessness among women and their children. During the pandemic in particular, many domestic violence survivors used the federal emergency housing vouchers to escape sheltering in place with their abusers.

Losing federal rental assistance later this year could mean entering a shelter or living on the streets. That could put some survivors in the dangerous situation of considering whether to move back in with their abuser.

According to New Destiny, some eviction proceedings are already underway for federal emergency voucherholders, even though the federal funding doesn't run out until December. Branca said if City Hall signaled more funding pledged for impacted households, many landlords would refrain from evicting them.

But the terms of the city's new housing voucher program only allow the mayor and the City Council to expand CHAP eligibility as part of the budget process, which Branca said is too late to help people who will likely lose federal rental assistance in December.

The saga over the city's housing voucher program began in 2023, when the Council passed a legislative package expanding CityFHEPS eligibility. When former Mayor Eric Adams refused to implement the laws, that kicked off a legal battle between his administration and the Council. Mamdani — despite promising to drop the litigation on the campaign trail — [filed](#) to continue it in March, citing the budget crisis. After negotiating, the mayor and Council agreed on the municipal budget and reached a [settlement](#) at the end of June.

Council member Pierina Sanchez authored one of the 2023 bills that expanded CityFHEPS eligibility and this year's version. The explicit exclusion of those subject to regulatory agreements only appears in the [2026 version](#) of the legislation following the settlement. Sanchez told POLITICO any eligibility reductions in the new program, like regulatory agreements, did not come from the Council.

“I meant to include every single category of a New Yorker that was included in the original legislation. If I had had my way, that legislation would stand, and we would be dramatically shifting the New York City budget to really prioritize housing New Yorkers above essentially most other things,” Sanchez said. “However, it was a negotiation and there had to be concessions in order to get to the finish line.”

What resulted was CHAP, the new \$175 million rental assistance voucher program that subsidizes rent for low-income city residents. And while the new program got rid of work requirements and expanded income eligibility for tenants facing eviction in rent stabilized housing, it excludes those in the city's affordable housing stock.

New York University's Furman Center reports that 36 percent of eviction filings in 2024 were in subsidized affordable housing. Of those, 38,133 or 32 percent were for non-payment cases.

The new program's high cost is most likely the reason why tenants subject to regulatory agreements — many of them domestic violence survivors — got the short end of the deal. Limiting the program to rent-stabilized units saves the city money by not committing rental assistance to hundreds of thousands more apartments in subsidized housing.

A Mamdani spokesperson told POLITICO the new version of the program was agreed to by both the mayor and the Council as part of the legal settlement.

Branca said excluding tenants in buildings subject to regulatory agreements puts New Destiny in a difficult situation as a small landlord and a resource for finding housing.

“We've gotten hundreds and hundreds of phone calls from survivors who are sharing every possible terrible story where their leases aren't getting renewed, their landlords ghosting them,” Branca said.

Win NYC, the city's largest provider of shelter and supportive housing for families, worked closely with the Council on housing voucher negotiations. Win President and CEO Christine Quinn said domestic violence survivors were not purposefully excluded from CHAP and argued that getting rid of work requirements helps them.

“Certainly since domestic violence doesn't economically discriminate, I think that's helpful,” Quinn said. “It's not infrequent that someone who is in a domestic violence situation may have been either unable to work or been prevented from working by their abuser.”

Another key part of CHAP is getting rid of the length of shelter stay requirements and opening eligibility to stays in shelters operated by agencies other than the Department of Homeless Services. But homeless youth staying in the city's drop-in centers also won't be eligible for the new program since they are not legally considered shelters. Sanchez said there was a "shaving of eligibility" during the negotiations for drop-in centers and those in-community, which means those at risk of homelessness.

As chair of the Committee on Housing and Building, the Bronx council member called it "the hardest political fight" of her tenure.

Win NYC suggested the city could use other tools to help households that are left out and quickly approaching the end of their federal rental assistance.

Mamdani's [Block by Block housing initiative](#) aims to increase access to legal representation for New Yorkers at risk of eviction and addresses drop-in centers. The initiative proposes increased funding for the city's right-to-counsel legal services by an additional \$55.6 million starting in 2028 — a policy intended to help tenants facing eviction in housing court or NYCHA administrative proceedings — but one that would be triggered only after people with federal emergency vouchers have already lost assistance.

The city's Department of Youth and Community Development is set to fund around \$3.2 million in 2027 for Peer and Housing Navigator services in the city's drop-in centers. Young adults who previously experienced homelessness will mentor and support homeless and runaway youth through navigating the city's various housing systems. The Mamdani administration also launched a Housing and Homelessness Task Force to partner City Hall with agencies, advocacy groups and affected New Yorkers.

But Branca believes it makes more financial sense for the city to step in sooner, arguing that not doing so will ultimately cost the city more to deal with a spike in homelessness due to people losing rental assistance.

"It would cost infinitely more for the city to do nothing than it would be for them to pay for the families that need it and without all the trauma," Branca said.