

HRA/DSS PERSPECTIVE



COMMITTED TO ASSISTING PEOPLE IN REACHING THEIR MAXIMUM LEVEL OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY



Commissioner's Forum 2006

HRA: 16,000 STRONG FACILITATING ONE MISSION

A hush fell over the audience as the HRA police force, escorted down the aisles by the traditional piper, presented colors opening the 5th Annual Commissioner's Open Forum held at the Jacob K. Javits Center on July 19, 20 and 21. HRA's highly trained, fully certified police force is but one symbol of our model offices and all the change that has been accomplished in the way we operate and are able to respond to situations.



HRA/DSS Police Officers

"I asked you to go with me on this journey, to join me in partnership, and you did," Commissioner Eggleston said on July 19. "You did not ask for much. I had to prioritize, and meanwhile you did the work in spite of the difficulty."

The 2006 Forum finds HRA at an important crossroads. HRA staff has reduced the welfare rolls below 392,000 and at the same time has

had increased responsibility to help low-income New Yorkers gain access to public health insurance, food stamps and transitional benefits so that they can stay off welfare and in the workforce. Our approaches to self-sufficiency have become models studied nationally and globally.

Now, a new challenge is before us as the reauthorization of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) goes into effect in October 2006. The new law tightens work participation requirements. States that fail to meet these requirements forfeit significant funding. "New York State's potential penalty is set at \$250 million, and New York City could suffer the largest share of that penalty," said Frank Donno, Executive Deputy Commissioner of HRA's Finance Office.

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HRA Brings Assistance to Queens Residents During Power Outage

In the humid Thursday July 20th night, fraud investigators were awakened after midnight by a call from their Bureau of Eligibility Verification (BEV) site manager Chidinma Mahama directing them to report to 45-22 32nd Place where HRA was mobilizing its fleet of vehicles and setting up a special services center to assist Queens residents caught in the power failure.



Photo credits on back page

HRA's emergency intervention was the result of a well organized effort of our program areas who work together regularly in the development of emergency preparedness. The Office of Domestic Violence and Emergency Intervention Services (ODVEIS) mobilized HRA's emergency resources and stood as the hub of communications. Its Crisis and Disaster Unit coordinated the activities of HRA's program areas as directed by Commissioner Eggleston and First Deputy Pat Smith. At HRA's Command Post, the Investigation Revenue Enforcement Administration (IREA) assisted in the selection of a service site and opened the center that served residents 24 hours for 5 days. ODVEIS and IREA worked with precision through long hours to set up the Special Services Center to meet the needs of

Assistance to Queens cont'd back page

HRA Program Updates

Rider Job Center: #1 on Citywide JobStat

The Rider Job Center earned the highest overall index score on the Citywide JobStat report for eight consecutive months, August 2005 through March 2006, and still ranks #1 year-to-date for 2006. The report evaluates center performance based on 31 indicators encompassing the many aspects of operation. Rider serves the Bronx region's caseload of Safety Net singles and childless couples. Despite understaffing, staff developed proficiency in working with this challenging population that has led to high quality case management overall. Effective strategy and the good communication and commitment to excellence instilled by center director Elaine Darby are the key to Rider's success, Regional Manager Jean Ferrer-Coyle said. FIA celebrated Rider's achievement with a luncheon for staff on August 8, 2006.

Crisis & Disaster Unit Outreach

Are you willing to lend a hand in the case of an emergency? HRA's Crisis & Disaster Unit is now seeking to expand its task force of HRA staff-volunteers. In the past, the task force has provided assistance during such emergencies as 9/11, the Blackout and the Transit Strike. All volunteers are successfully trained in CPR and First Aid as well as shelter management, so that they are well-prepared for whatever may come their way.

If the Crisis and Disaster Unit volunteer task force interests you, download an application from the Domestic Violence Intranet home page or contact the Crisis and Disaster Unit directly at 212-331-4521.

HRA Perspective Monthly Bulletin

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Event Calendar

PLAY BALL!

For 9 years, HRA's three co-ed softball teams played in a league of their own. For their 10th season, the HRA teams decided to join the NYC EMS softball league to have the increased competition of playing teams from other City agencies and the private sector.

Congratulations to the 180 Water Street Buccaneers and the Yorkville Renegades who have qualified for the EMS play-offs. The play-offs started on the week of August 7 and are held at the Colonel Charles Young Playground at 143rd St. and Lenox Ave. in Manhattan. For more information, contact Larry Ruiz at (212)331-4108.

PAI

PAI Lunch and Learn Workshops: Identity Theft with guest speaker Carla Latty, supervisor of DC37's consumer law unit - August 16 from 1 PM to 2 PM at 180 Water Street. Contact PAI Coordinator Karin Feldhamer at (212) 331-3325 for further information.

GIVE LIFE, GIVE BLOOD!

Thursday, August 17, 2006, Bureau of Eligibility Verification (BEV), 32-20 Northern Blvd, Long Island City from 8:30 AM to 2:00 PM. For more information, contact Lucette Robinson at (718) 784-6925.

Thursday, August 24, 2006, Medical Insurance & Community Services Administration, (MICSA) 330 West 34th Street, 2nd Floor Training Room, from 9:00 AM to 2:30 PM. For more information, contact Floyd Martin at (212) 630-1089.

Friday, August 25, 2006, Bureau of Eligibility Verification (BEV), Busmobile, 320 Schermerhorn Street, Brooklyn, from 10:00 AM to 3:30 PM. For more information, contact Tracey Bruno at (718) 473-8234.

Front Page Crisis & Disaster Relief Workers Photo: Left, Benita McNair and FS 43 staff members.

Natalias Navas contributed to the research and writing of this article.

Forum 2006 continued

Although the TANF work participation remains at 50%, as New York City had advocated, the following provisions make new demands on the states:

Only 6-weeks of rehabilitation activities may now count toward meeting work participation. An increasing proportion of New York City's current welfare caseload has physical and mental barriers to employment that are being addressed in a structured and supervised way through our WeCARE program.

Both our TANF and our Safety Net family clients must now be counted in the participation rate, and the caseload reduction credit (which helped us to meet the participation rate in the past) has been dramatically reduced.

Commissioner Eggleston and members of HRA's executive team explained the many parts of the challenge and all that has been done to prepare so far. We will focus on the initiatives presented at the forum in upcoming issues. "There is a part for everyone to play and the only way to succeed is if we all

Commissioner Eggleston also announced a plan to centralize staff and client training.

understand what we need to do and collaborate," Commissioner Eggleston said.

HRA responded to the Queens power failure in the course of the Forum. Commissioner Eggleston and executive staff worked late into the night in the field and at the Emergency Command Post and still returned to hold the forum each day. On the morning of July 21, as the Commissioner was delayed at City Hall, First Deputy Pat Smith invited staff to contribute their own suggestions on

meeting work participation. The response at the extended open mike session demonstrated the commitment and creative thinking that resides with us.

Commissioner Eggleston also announced a plan to centralize staff and client training, including ongoing job training on evenings and weekends, enabling staff to pursue higher education, career and civil service advancement. You can look forward to more news about the progress of these plans.

Crisis Relief continued



the community.

HRA staff called upon to help worked tirelessly. Commissioner Eggleston directed the emergency effort while conducting the Forum. "Those of us who worked with her through the night setting up the Special Services Center were motivated by her commitment," said Tracey Connor, site coordinator.

"I was so proud of our workers," Ms. Mahama said. "They were willing to do whatever it took to help people." With flashlight in hand, in pairs they covered the area affected by the blackout to distribute water and flyers to the residents notifying them of HRA's emergency center. By 8:00 AM when the center opened its

doors, clients had assembled and staff was ready to serve.

The Special Services Center closed having filled a great need for people during the blackout. HRA distributed over 22,000 bottles of water and 900 meals ready to eat. We ferried people back and forth. We delivered needed meals to nine senior citizen centers. HRA located the center to be adjacent to a food stamp office. Once food and water was provided, we escorted people who needed further assistance to the food stamp office and other service locations. "People were grateful for the assistance provided by New York City



and HRA," ODVEIS Deputy Commissioner Cecile Noel said. "And we were all touched by their gratitude." Read about the roles played by HRA's diverse program areas in responding to the power outage in the next issue of In-House quarterly.