

APRIL 2005

COMMISSIONER'S SPECIAL REPORT



Verna Eggleston
Administrator/Commissioner

A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER

We at the Human Resources Administration/Department of Social Services (HRA/DSS) have been working diligently to realize our vision of social service delivery in New York City—"One City, One Client, One Plan."

This vision requires all of New York City's agencies to share in a common philosophy of collaboration, innovation and customer service. It further requires that the City work together to address the challenges faced by its neediest citizens. We must strive to empower people through streamlined, comprehensive services, while working to conserve fiscal resources.

While in the last year we initiated a variety of structural and programmatic changes, our focus here at HRA/DSS remains constant. Every accomplishment and new initiative works to assist our clients to achieve their highest levels of self-sufficiency. By keeping the needs of the client central, we have been able to cooperate and collaborate in new and innovative ways to achieve great things for our clients, our Agency and our City.

The goal of "One City, One Client, One Plan" inspired us to change the way we do business at HRA/DSS. An ambitious, Agency-wide restructuring promoted operational efficiency and streamlined services. Customer service was improved with the expansion of our Model Office initiative. We have also been building valuable relationships with other government and community-based agencies, cooperating to lay a foundation of support, always with the common goal of helping clients.

We saw a historic decrease in our City's welfare rolls over the course of the past decade. Still, many clients who continue to receive Public Assistance (PA) have complicated medical, social and mental health barriers to full participation in the workforce. A large number of families have already reached, and each month many more reaching their five-year limit for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). With the expiration of TANF benefits, we have seen growth in the New York State Safety Net Assistance (SNA) program. While Safety Net is an important service providing vital support to individuals and families in need, the City and State bear the full cost. In response, and so we may address the needs of clients with multiple barriers to full workforce participation, our Agency has developed the Wellness, Comprehensive Assessment, Rehabilitation, and Employment, or WeCARE, program. WeCARE will provide an array of individually tailored services to clients with medical and mental health barriers, thus expanding the promise of self-sufficiency and good health to many of those clients previously considered to be "unengageable" in productive activities that would benefit them and their families.

The strong foundation built by HRA/DSS over the past few years ensures that we are prepared to meet the challenges of the next phase of nationwide welfare reform. The initiatives and accomplishments described in this report are focused on preventing welfare dependency before it begins, while retaining support for those individuals who have left the rolls and by meeting clients and their families "where they are."

Through flexible service delivery that addresses potential barriers to workforce participation, comprehensive care for the client and the family and a bold new face that reflects our professionalism and integrity, HRA/DSS is setting a new standard for excellence and working daily to improve the lives of New Yorkers, one person at a time.

On behalf of our agency,

Verna Eggleston
Administrator/Commissioner
Human Resources Administration/Department of Social Services
New York City







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PLACING THE CLIENT FIRST:

HRA/DSS SERVICES

First and foremost, HRA/DSS is a human service agency. We exist to provide assistance to those in need. Whether through administering temporary cash assistance, making substance abuse referrals, assisting in obtaining health insurance or any of our many other services, we are helping clients to achieve their highest personal degree of self-sufficiency. This year, we have made tremendous strides in the area of service delivery, truly allowing us to provide our clients with personalized services designed to meet their individual needs.

■ Created a comprehensive treatment model within Customized Assistance Services: WeCARE

As a result of HRA/DSS successes over the course of the past few years, the City's welfare rolls have been dramatically reduced from 1.1 million to approximately 420,000 people. However, many of the clients who remain on Public Assistance have multiple and complex clinical barriers to employment. These are individuals with untreated or unstable medical, mental health and/or substance abuse conditions who may also have social, educational, and vocational obstacles that impair their ability to work.

Through the Agency's new WeCARE program, all clients exhibiting these barriers to employment will receive customized comprehensive services aimed at holistically treating them and their specific situation. The goal of the WeCARE program is to tailor services to meet each individual's and family's unique needs by providing a continuum of assessment, treatment, and rehabilitation services to facilitate health, wellness and self-sufficiency.

For all clients reporting an inability to work due to one or more medical and/or mental health conditions, WeCARE's primary vendors and their subcontractors will:

Conduct a comprehensive **biopsychosocial assessment** (BPS) to determine an individual's health status, functional abilities and limitations, and to identify all barriers to employment, including family problems that must be resolved if the individual is to fully engage in work activity.

For those whose BPS assessment determines that they:

- are **employable with minimal accommodations**, providers will match them to appropriate work activities providing necessary accommodation.
- have unstable or untreated medical conditions, providers will develop a **comprehensive wellness plan**. These individuals will be referred to appropriate treatment and their compliance and progress will be monitored. In addition, they will be provided with tailored health education and individualized support to ensure that their conditions are stabilized and/or resolved.
- are **employable with functional limitations**, vendors will provide an array of vocational rehabilitation services based on individual needs, including appropriate accommodations in work activities to facilitate competitive employment.
- are **unemployable** and potentially eligible for disability benefits, providers will assist clients in completing an application and, if necessary, provide counseling and advocacy throughout the appeals process.



■ Expanded our Model Office initiative

As a part of our ongoing effort to improve customer service and promote efficiency, HRA/DSS first implemented a Model Office initiative in its Medicaid Community offices, then in Job Centers, and HASA offices. The purpose of this initiative is to improve the physical environment of our offices and promote the professionalism we are seeking to develop in our clients, while increasing efficiency in customer service.

- **Medical Insurance and Community Services Administration (MICSA):** All of MICSA's 19 Medicaid Community Offices have been converted into Model Offices. Every workstation has been outfitted for electronic case management, enabling workers to locate and input customer information quickly and access case records throughout the Agency's network. ALERTS, ORI's specialized data match system adapted for MICSA, gives the Agency access to other city databases, such as the Department of Health's birth records. These enhancements substantially reduced the amount of documentation customers are required to present, as well as the amount of time MICSA staff needed to verify client eligibility.
- **Family Independence Administration (FIA):** In January 2004, HRA/DSS opened the first two Model Job Centers; one at the East End Center in East Harlem and the other at the Linden Center in downtown Brooklyn. Here, the emphasis is customer service. Individuals can complete simple transactions such as dropping off documents or replacing a lost identification card quickly, freeing them from previously long lines and reducing wait times. The Model Office also features a kiosk where individuals can independently access Agency information and forms quickly and easily through touch-screen computers.

The Model Offices benefit staff and clients alike. The professional environment of the office allows staff to interview and assess clients with confidence and efficiency and reinforces their status as valued professionals. Clients recognize and appreciate the changes made through the Model Office initiative. Surveys conducted at new Model Office facilities before and after implementation demonstrated increased levels in customer satisfaction. As of early 2005, Model Offices were operating in all five boroughs.

- **HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA):** On August 12, 2004, the first HASA Model Office opened at 400 8th Avenue, Manhattan. Occupying 20,000 square feet of renovated space, the HASA Model Office provides key services and information to individuals living with HIV/AIDS. In addition to housing Service Line, HASA's intake unit, the Model Office provides links to medical services, prevention services and resources, and referrals to Community Based Organizations (CBOs). Additionally, the Model Office features expanded vocational rehabilitation and employment services to allow persons with HIV/AIDS to return to the workforce.

- **Achieving the vision of the Model Office is a cooperative effort among Services and Operations.** Although it is the Model Office staff that interact directly with the clients to provide them with much-needed services, the success of the Model Offices is due, in part, to their many automation innovations and improvements such as:
 - The **Enhanced Main Reception Area**, which assesses, routes, and tracks each client to ensure quick and efficient service. Upon entry, Reception staff engage clients by determining the purpose of their visit. Clients are provided with a color-coded ticket, which serves as their access pass to the Center's services. Center staff then direct clients to the appropriate areas so that clients may have their needs met.



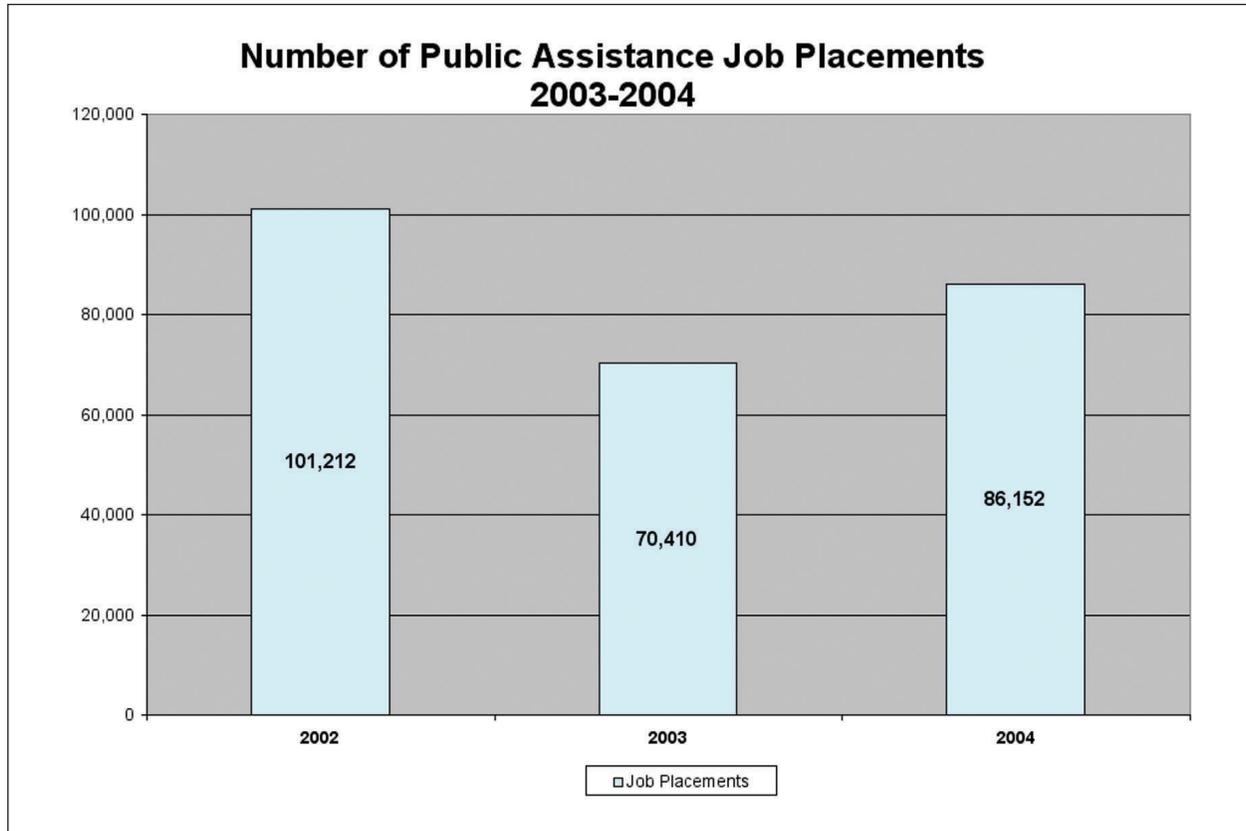


- The **Front Door Reception Information System** allows Reception Staff to quickly and accurately assist arriving clients. The system permits Reception Staff to verify that a client's case is active, confirms the time and location of client appointments, and issues numbered, color-coded tickets that direct clients to appropriate service areas.
- The **Model Office Number Identification Queue (MONIQ)** is the Model Office's new client tracking system. **MONIQ** works in conjunction with the **Front Door Reception Information System** and allows staff to track each client's service status, manage traffic flow, and monitor wait time. **MONIQ** also utilizes LED screens to display the ticket numbers of clients being served as well as those that were previously called but have not yet responded.
- The **Customer Service and Information Center (CSIC)** reflects a major innovation, as it creates a quick service area to help clients with needs that can be rapidly addressed. **CSIC** staff assist clients who are picking up and dropping off certain paperwork. Its goal is to reduce client wait time, decrease the amount of Center traffic, and enhance customer service.
- The **Automated Customer Information Stations** are client-driven information kiosks that provide information concerning Public Assistance, Food Stamp and Medicaid eligibility, employment, child care, frequently asked questions, as well as hard copies of forms. Stations are equipped with easy-to-navigate touch screens.



Continued to move clients from dependence upon Public Assistance to self-sufficiency

From 2002 through 2004, HRA achieved more than 255,000 job placements for Public Assistance clients, and we have continued to focus our efforts on helping those clients retain their jobs. In 2004 alone, 86,152 jobs were secured for HRA clients. As of the end of 2004, 84 percent of these clients retained their jobs for at least three months, and 73 percent retained their employment for at least six months.

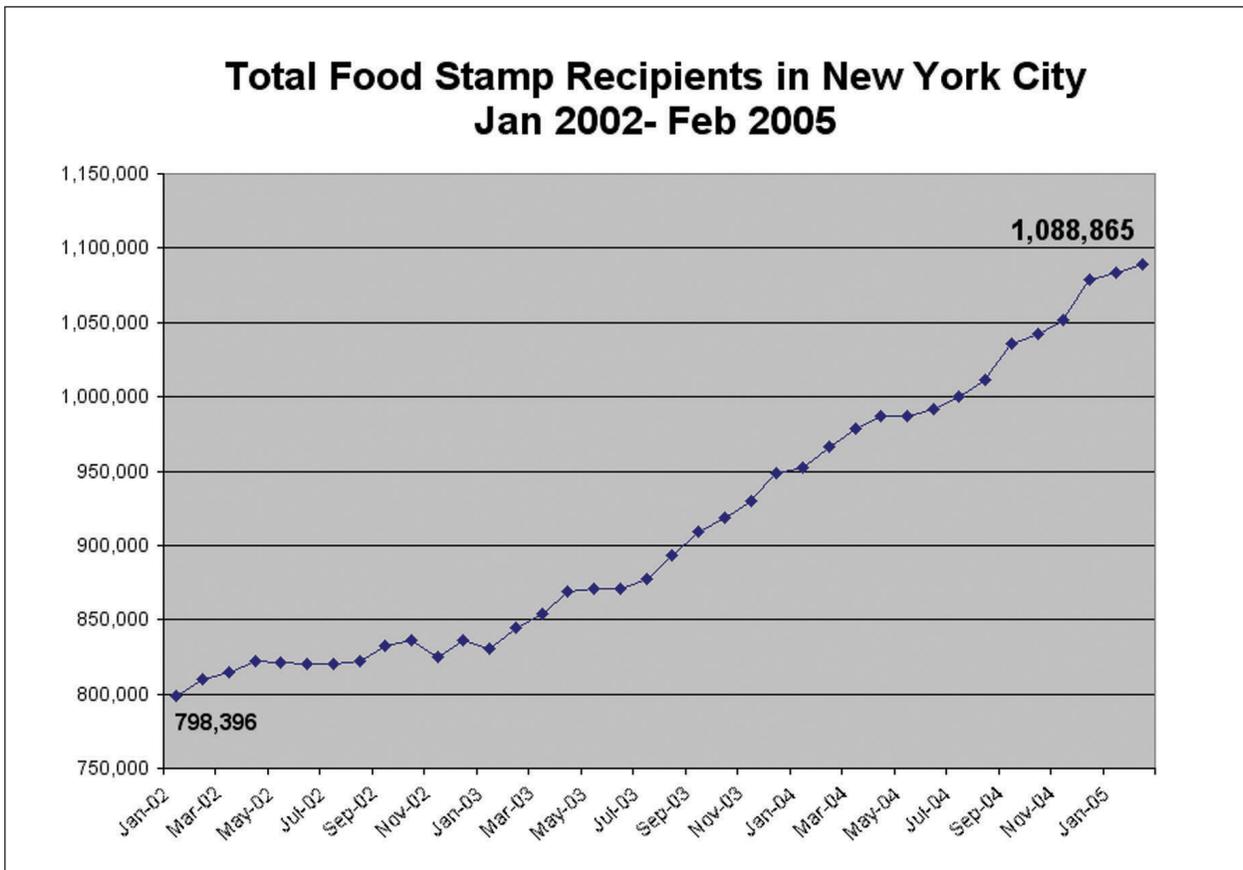


Increased Food Stamp participation rates while achieving the lowest error rate in recorded history

HRA/DSS has made landmark strides toward our goal of ensuring access to Food Stamp benefits to all eligible New Yorkers trying to meet their basic needs. Total Food Stamp enrollment has increased to over one million people. This tremendous growth can be attributed to a simultaneous modernization of the Food Stamp administration and application processes, as well as expanded Agency innovations with the State of New York and community-based organizations. Major innovations to the Food Stamp administration and enrollment process include:

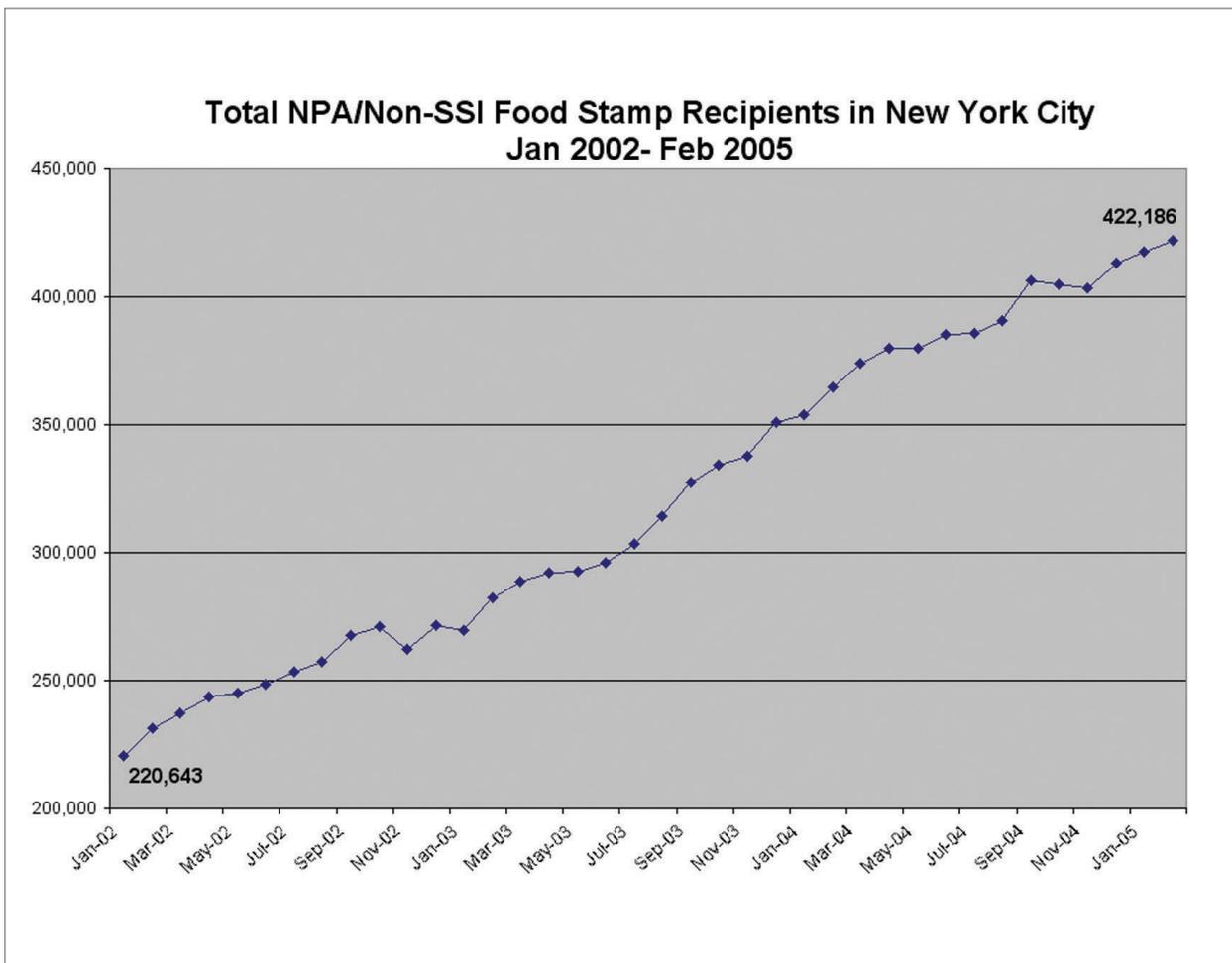


- Simplified recertification process by using electronic storage and retrieval of data and reducing the number of pages in the Food Stamp application form.
- Provision of Food Stamp notices in New York's nine most commonly-used languages and, if needed, additional interpreter services to make Food Stamp services and information available to New Yorkers with Limited English Speaking Ability (LESA).
- Separate eligibility determination to directly reach those New Yorkers who, although ineligible for Public Assistance, may be qualified to receive Food Stamps.
- Cooperative training efforts with community-based organizations to increase information available on eligibility assistance and application assistance to limited English speakers, seniors, and other groups.
- Further food assistance and education through HRA's Office of Food Programs and Policy Coordination.





- In addition to these accomplishments, a recent New York State audit found the HRA/DSS Food Stamp Quality Control Error Rate to be the lowest ever recorded. New York City received an error rate of 4.3 percent, which is far below the national rate of 6.29 percent. HRA/DSS also received a positive report from the USDA on Food Stamp access, which cited the Agency for tremendous improvements.
- Increased enrollment of Non-Public Assistance (NPA) Food Stamp Recipients. These individuals are receiving Food Stamp benefits independent of cash assistance or Supplemental Security Income (SSI).





■ **Expanded health insurance coverage for low-income New Yorkers through Medicaid Mail Renewal Program**

Seizing the opportunity presented by the passage of the Health Care Reform Act (HCRA) of 2002, HRA/DSS launched a successful pilot of the Mail Renewal Program in October 2002, followed by a full roll out in June 2003. Prior to HCRA, Medicaid renewal was administered through a face-to-face process that required clients to complete a nine-page application and adhere to paper-intensive documentation requirements. The HRA/DSS Mail Renewal Program allows clients to renew their Medicaid benefits by mail, using a shorter, simplified preprinted renewal form, reducing the paperwork burden on clients and eliminating their need to physically come to an HRA/DSS office to renew their benefits. In addition to legislative changes, the Mail Renewal Program is supplemented by the availability of better technology, particularly document imaging, and community outreach partnerships. Improved retention rates resulting from the Mail Renewal Program, coupled with improved customer service in Model Offices, has allowed HRA/DSS to expand Medicaid-only (non-Public Assistance) health insurance coverage to over 1.7 million New Yorkers.

■ **Welcomed the Office of Child Support Enforcement to HRA/DSS**

In August 2003, as part of the implementation of the fiscal year 2004 budget, the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) was transferred to HRA/DSS. Recognizing the important role that child support can play in promoting self-sufficiency among families, HRA/DSS welcomed the transition. HRA/DSS is currently handling over 290,000 ordered cases in OCSE, of which the majority, over 80 percent, involve families who do not receive Public Assistance. Since OCSE joined the HRA/DSS team, annual collection of child support funds has increased from \$488 million to approximately \$538 million.

OTHER INITIATIVES

■ **Created a new data match agreement between HRA/DSS and the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS)**

This agreement enables HRA/DSS Customized Assistance Services to provide identification, outreach, and shelter-based psychiatric evaluation services for long-term stay shelter residents with potential mental illness in order to expedite the process of obtaining permanent, supportive housing.

■ **Expanded the pool of mental health professionals available to assess clients**

Mental health professionals providing home-based mental health evaluations and crisis intervention services through Customized Assistance Services (CAS) Visiting Psychiatric Services now include psychiatrists as well as psychiatric nurse practitioners, who handle designated evaluations, thus expanding the program to meet increased demand.

■ **Worked to eliminate abuse through the Medicaid Prescription Drug Fraud Prevention Program**

Since the inception of the program, over 1,000 people have been arrested for prescription drug fraud, over 1,300 cases were closed, and over 2,160 cases have been placed in restricted recipient status. Pre-approvals are now required for certain expensive drugs highly prone to being obtained through dubious prescriptions. The total savings of the initiative stands at more than \$108 million.

■ **Provided crucial programs and services to individuals and families living with HIV/AIDS through the Agency's HIV/AIDS Services Administration**

HASA provides services to over 31,000 New Yorkers living with HIV/AIDS and to over 13,000 associated family members. HASA has successfully:

- **Reduced turnaround time for issuance of Immediate Needs Grants.** In July of 2003, 79.6 percent of Immediate Needs Grants were issued within one day. As a result of restructuring, by May of 2004, 96 percent of Immediate Needs Grants were issued within one day.
- **Accelerated the issuance of Expedited Food Stamps.** In July of 2003, 71.7 percent of Expedited Food Stamps were issued within five days. Since May of 2004, on average, nearly 100 percent of Expedited Food Stamps were issued within five days.
- **Launched HASA Visit Face-To-Face Renewal application for family benefits and implemented two-year Mail-in Recertification for those receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and enhanced rental assistance through Public Assistance.** These programs enable the recertification process to take place in the clients' homes, relieving families of the need to travel to and from the centers. Additionally, these programs result in 8,400 fewer visits to HASA offices per year, thus reducing client wait time and increasing the quality of service delivery.

A CULTURE OF ACHIEVEMENT: AGENCY-WIDE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Commissioner presented an umbrella plan of service delivery, under which our clients would be supported, assisted and closely monitored as they follow their individual path toward self-sufficiency. In the past two years, that plan has become a reality. Through an ambitious Agency-wide restructuring plan, the development of Customized Assistance Services, and the reconceptualization of our Medical Assistance Programs, we have succeeded in realizing the goal of seamlessly treating and transitioning our clients out of a world of dependence and into one of dignity and self-reliance.

STRENGTHENED SERVICE THROUGH AGENCY-WIDE RESTRUCTURING

To meet the Mayor's challenge of doing more with less, enhancing services through efficiency, and fulfilling the Commissioner's goal of an "umbrella" model of seamless client services, HRA/DDS embarked upon an ambitious Agency-wide restructuring. Integrating related programs and services under the same umbrella has resulted in improved coordination and accountability, clearer, more effective leadership, and cost and resource conservation. Under the new organizational structure, the Agency is divided into two distinct areas of management: Services and Operations.

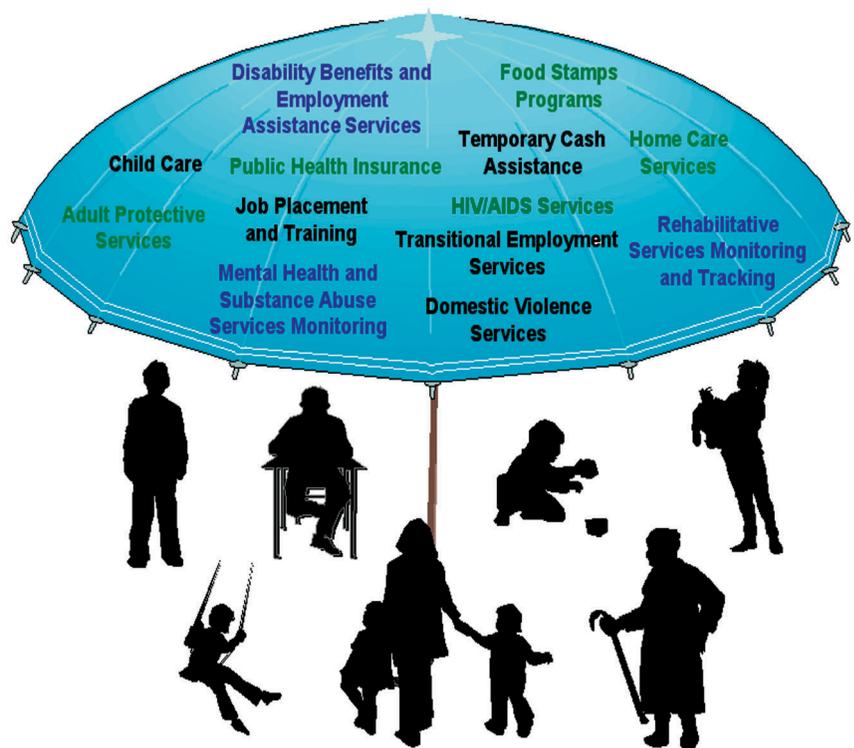
SERVICES: UMBRELLA PLAN

■ **Family Independence Administration (FIA)**

■ **Customized Assistance Services (CAS)**

■ **Medical Insurance and Community Services Administration (MICSA)**

- HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA)
- Medical Assistance Program (MAP)
- Adult Protective Services (APS)
- Home Care Services Program (HCSP)
- Non-Public Assistance Food Stamp (NPA/FS) Program





■ Office of Revenue and Investigation (ORI)

- Bureau of Fraud and Investigation (BFI)
- Bureau of Eligibility Verification (BEV)
- Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE)
- Office of Revenue

■ Office of Policy and Program Development (OPPD)

- Office of Domestic Violence and Emergency Intervention Services (ODVEIS)
- Office of Constituent and Community Affairs (OCCA)
- Office of Refugee and Immigrant Affairs (ORIA)

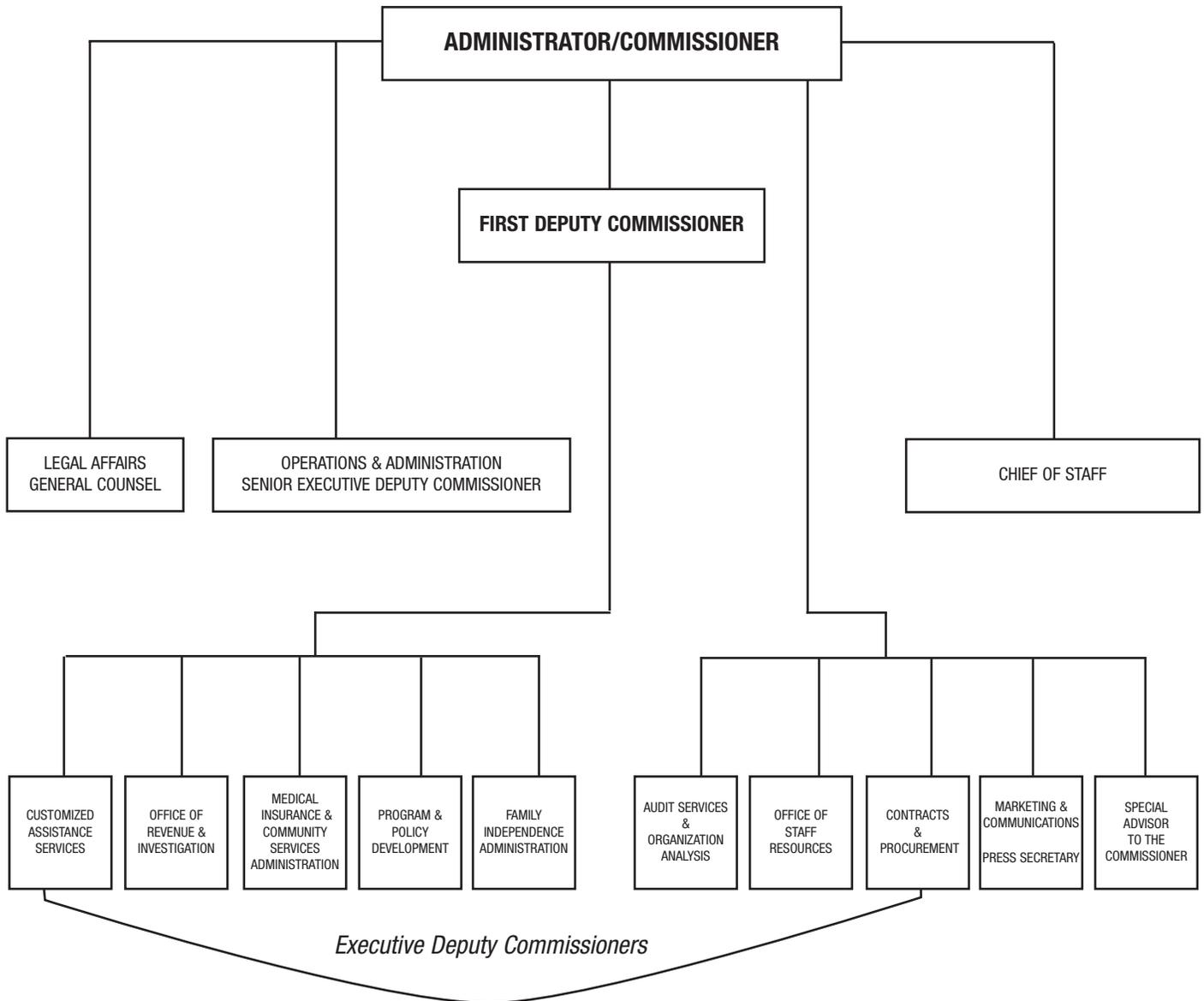
OPERATIONS:

■ The Operations department focuses on managing the various financial, facility, equipment and infrastructure supports that HRA/DSS needs to successfully serve its clients. Operations is comprised of:

- Management Information Systems (MIS)
- Finance Office (FO)
- General Support Services (GSS)



THE CITY OF NEW YORK HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION/DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES ORGANIZATION CHART



Guide by Commissioner Eggleston's "umbrella plan" (see page 10), HRA/DSS has restructured its organization to promote seamless service provision and clear lines of accountability.

■ **Medical Insurance and Community Services Administration (MICSA): Improving Access, Streamlining Services, and Promoting Efficiency**

Reflecting its far-reaching vision, broad scope of health-related services and commitment to customer service, HRA/DSS has successfully restructured and renamed what was previously known as the Medical Assistance Program to create MICSA. Under the restructuring, MICSA now helps link New Yorkers to health insurance programs while administering the Agency's medically-related social services programs, including Adult Protective Services, Home Care Services Program, HIV/AIDS Services Administration and Non-Public Assistance Food Stamp Program serving the elderly and disabled.

The redesign of MICSA embodies a spirit of change that is driven by inclusiveness and thoroughness. By combining the expertise and resources of health care and medically-related social services within one organizational structure, HRA/DSS clients and household members now enjoy enhanced access to benefits, services, and vitally important health care.

The framework for MICSA was laid through numerous discussions and roundtables with multi level staff, providers, advocacy groups, community members and government agencies, which collaborated for the benefit of our clients. As a result, both the infrastructure and the manner in which medical programs operate underwent dramatic and beneficial changes, all of which were aimed at improving the experience of the customer and enriching the function and morale of employees.

■ **Customized Assistance Services (CAS): Aligning programs and services to “meet clients where they are”**

The City of New York has achieved unprecedented success over the past several years in moving individuals from welfare to work. However, a significant number of those remaining on welfare have extremely complex clinical barriers to employability, including medical, mental health, and substance abuse conditions. HRA/DSS has created a division, Customized Assistance Services, to develop programs that provide comprehensive, individualized, and clinically focused services for these groups so that they receive the services they need to achieve their maximum degree of self-reliance.

HELPING TO KEEP NEW YORK CITY SAFE

The aftermath of September 11, 2001, brought with it a somber time of reflection for Americans everywhere. Agencies such as HRA/DSS, which employ and serve the citizens of our great City, began to evaluate the roles they play in preventing disaster and coming to the aid of those in need during an emergency.

■ Developed an extensive Emergency Response Plan to ensure the Agency can continue to serve New Yorkers in the event of a citywide emergency

New York City agencies are a second home to thousands of employees and a key element in the lives of millions of clients. After 9/11, organizations that operate within the New York metropolitan area were faced with questions of paramount and previously unimagined importance. We needed to prepare ourselves for future emergencies to preserve employee safety while providing a continuity of services to our clients. To better serve in times of crisis, HRA/DSS has devised an Emergency Response Plan (ERP) to ensure the safety and well-being of its employees and clients, while providing support and assistance to New Yorkers who may find themselves in need. In addition, the Agency has revamped the Emergency Response Unit, which works in conjunction with the New York City Office of Emergency Management (OEM) Emergency Operations Center, to protect and assist New Yorkers in times of crisis.



■ **Provided crucial support to New Yorkers during the August 14, 2003, blackout**

Working from the Commissioner's Emergency Response Plan, HRA/DSS staff collaborated with the Office of Emergency Management and other City agencies to convey crucial information, distribute needed supplies, evacuate Agency buildings, and secure all 70 HRA/DSS locations throughout the City. Within the Agency, a tremendous spirit of cooperation and commitment to the welfare of New Yorkers in need shone brightly through the darkness of the blackout. Through telephone calls and home visits, APS and HCSP staff worked tirelessly to ensure the wellness of their frail, homebound, elderly and/or disabled clients. In the hours and days following the blackout, FIA successfully issued replacement Food Stamps to more than 105,000 New Yorkers; HASA staff continued to provide Emergency Housing Services; and MIS staff slept in their offices so they would be on site the moment that power was restored. Additionally, our Office of Staff Resources (OSR) employees trudged up dark stairwells to ensure that payroll services were not interrupted and that all of the hardworking employees of HRA/DSS would receive their pay in an accurate and timely fashion.

■ **Maintained Agency services and security in offices directly affected by the Republican National Convention**

In preparation for the August 2004 Republican National Convention at Madison Square Garden, HRA/DSS developed contingency plans to ensure continuity of services to clients visiting facilities within the areas affected by convention traffic and security. We worked closely with the NYPD and had intensive discussion with them beforehand. In one facility, we hosted the NYPD so that they could maintain an official command post. One location with proximity to the main demonstration staging area served clients without disruption. Our location near Union Square found itself in close relation to the protesters' primary gathering point. On one occasion during the week, demonstration activity expanded to the facility's entrance. HRA/DSS staff and security immediately responded to the volatile situation, establishing and maintaining a tight perimeter until the protest activity subsided.



COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES

for COMPLEX NEEDS: HRA/DSS Service Areas

Family Independence Administration

HRA/DSS Job Center staff brings together resources to help people move toward self-sufficiency. Through a detailed assessment process, clients are enrolled in comprehensive employment programs, which include work experience, job search and placement services, as well as vocational, job skills training, and educational programs. Job Center staff also determine and monitor client eligibility for Public Assistance, Food Stamp, and Medicaid. As clients work to achieve their personal self-sufficiency goals, FIA's Food Stamp centers provide these able-bodied New Yorkers and their families with the nutritional support necessary for good health.

Medical Insurance and Community Services Administration

MICSA provides a broad scope of health-related services. In addition to connecting New Yorkers to public health insurance, including Medicaid, Child Health Plus Part A and Family Health Plus, Prenatal Care Assistance Program, and the Family Planning Benefit Program. MICSA also administers the Agency's medically related social service programs, including:

- **Home Care Services Program:** HCSP arranges for home attendants, housekeepers, home health aides and long-term home health care for medically needy customers.
- **Adult Protective Service:** APS provides help to adults 18 and older, without regard to income, who, because of mental or physical impairment, are unable to manage their own resources, carry out the activities of daily living, protect themselves from neglect or hazardous situations without assistance from others, and/or have no one available who is willing and able to responsibly assist them. Services include heavy-duty cleaning, financial management, help in accessing medical and home care services and assistance in obtaining governmental entitlements.
- **HIV/AIDS Services Administration:** HASA's mission is to expedite access to essential benefits and social services needed by persons living with AIDS or advanced HIV illness and their families. HASA's work with its clients is based on the responsibility of all sectors of the community to work together to ensure that all persons with HIV/AIDS have adequate housing, financial security, medical care, and other services necessary to allow them to manage their illness and to live their lives with the highest level of self-reliance and the fullest dignity.

Customized Assistance Services

CAS' objective is to work with individuals to help them overcome medical and mental health barriers so they may achieve their highest degree of self-sufficiency. Working in conjunction with FIA, MICSA and OPPD, CAS can provide a seamless continuum of care to clients with complicated barriers to employment, promoting and monitoring physical and mental well-being and providing vocational rehabilitation services so that previously unengageable clients may enter the world of work and independence.

OFFICE OF POLICY AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

OPPD oversees a wide range of HRA/DSS services and programs including:

■ Office of Domestic Violence and Emergency Intervention Services

The Office of Domestic Violence and Emergency Intervention Services (ODVEIS) is comprised of two components through which it provides emergency shelter and social services to victims of domestic violence (ODV) and to individuals in crisis through emergency intervention or food assistance (OEIS).

ODV directly operates one emergency domestic violence shelter, monitors 38 state-licensed emergency residential programs and four transitional housing programs for victims of domestic violence. Additional services include the Alternative to Shelter program, the teen Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (RAPP), non residential legal, counseling and advocacy services, specialized services through the domestic violence liaisons at the Job Centers and counseling and referral within the Department of Homeless Services shelter system through Project NoVA.

OEIS includes Crisis and Disaster Services, which responds to citywide emergencies such as hurricanes and snowstorms; the Heatline, the Utility Assistance Program, the federally-funded Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), which provides energy-related services to low-income households; and the Office of Food Program and Policy Coordination that administers the Emergency Food Assistance Program, which supplements food supplies in more than 600 food pantries and soup kitchens citywide and food stamp outreach and education programs.

■ Office of Refugee and Immigrant Affairs

ORIA provides language services to those individuals with little or no English-speaking ability so the HRA/DSS services and programs may be better accessible to all New Yorkers, regardless of their language. Limited English Speaking Ability (LESA) liaisons help workers connect with on-site and telephone interpreters. ORIA also trains HRA/DSS staff on how to access interpreters.

■ Office of Constituent and Community Affairs

OCCA addresses service-related and policy issues presented to the Agency by elected officials, community boards, advocates, clients, and the general public. Working closely with other HRA/DSS program and service areas, Constituent Affairs is responsible for processing and addressing consumer concerns and complaints. Community Affairs, coordinates the agency's role in the Budget Consultation Process, prepares our report for the Mayor's Town Hall Meetings, provides Borough Liaisons to social service agencies/organizations, elected officials and to all 59 Community Boards. Burial Claims assists with funeral expenses when resources are otherwise insufficient, whether or not the deceased person was a public assistance recipient. OCCA also manages the Infoline Call Center, a crucial telephone "help line" available to the general public seeking information on all HRA programs. Through Infoline, clients can input and receive benefit information, report fraud and access information in languages other than English. Infoline is linked to New Yorks City's 311 line, which routes calls to HRA.



OFFICE OF REVENUE AND INVESTIGATION

ORI supports HRA/DSS program integrity efforts to detect, deter, and prevent fraud and abuse in its social services programs and enforces the collection of child support for public assistance and non-public assistance custodial parents.

■ Bureau of Fraud and Investigation

BFI conducts criminal investigations of individuals and organized groups alleged to be attempting or committing fraudulent acts against the social service programs administered by HRA/DSS. BFI works closely with local, state and federal law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies and recommends preventive and deterrent programmatic systems and procedures to enhance controls concerning client fraud.

■ Bureau of Eligibility Verification

BEV contributes to the integrity of the public assistance eligibility process through eligibility reviews of applicants and recipients of assistance. Activities include interviews, computer matches, collateral contacts, and document verification.

■ Office of Child Support Enforcement

OCSE assists custodial parents, regardless of income, in obtaining the financial support that their children deserve from non-custodial parents by enforcing collections of child support for public assistance and non-public assistance clients from the non-custodial parent. These services are available until the child reaches age 21 or becomes self-supporting. Clients applying for or receiving public assistance are automatically referred to OCSE for child support services. Parents not receiving public assistance may apply for services by visiting the family court in their borough.

■ Office of Revenue

ORI's Office of Revenue is responsible for the recovery of overpayments and monies due HRA/DSS. The Claims and Collections Division collects overpayments; the Liens and Recovery Division files liens and asserts claims; the Division of Financial Review and Processing conducts computer matches for State Wage Reporting; the Assistance Reimbursement Unit is responsible for seeking reimbursement of interim public assistance paid to safety net participants who then receive SSI payments covering the same time period. Total revenue for the year approximates \$200 million.

PROVIDING CRITICAL SUPPORT: TECHNOLOGY, INFRASTRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS

Much of the cost savings and process streamlining the Agency has achieved is directly related to technological innovations, infrastructure improvements, and operational changes implemented this year. The Agency-wide restructuring has allowed Management Information Systems (MIS) and General Support Services (GSS) to work in new and exciting ways, producing impressive results for HRA/DSS, its staff and its clients.

■ Improved customer service, Agency efficiency and data integrity through new technologies

- Initiated a magnetic storage solution that will reduce the cost of imaging and will support our **Paperless Office System (POS)**.
- Improved the answering system at Infoline which allowed 1,250,210 calls to be answered and reduced wait time for operator assistance to 2.3 seconds in May 2004.
- Provided enhanced technical capability for the HRA/DSS Medicaid Helpline that enabled answering more than an additional half-million calls from consumers seeking information on public health insurance and its renewal.
- Added **Imaging** to our operations' capabilities, through which external documents, such as client identification, can be scanned into the system and stored in a case record. To date, more than 45 million pages of Agency documents have been imaged.
- Continued utilization of the **Enterprise Data Warehouse (EDW)**, expanding the Agency's ad hoc reporting, querying, and analysis capabilities. EDW is used to extensively analyze caseload dynamics, do mandated reporting, contain costs, increase revenues, manage budgets, place liens and claims, detect fraud and abuse, respond to auditors and provide data to other City agencies. Approximately 250 users run over 10,000 reports and ad hoc queries monthly. Since January 2002, EDW usage helped HRA/DSS avoid over \$140,634,010 in costs.
- Put into service **Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP)**, with over 900 staff members currently using our network to more efficiently make telephone calls. VOIP upgrades analog telephone services to digital, allowing HRA/DSS to run voice traffic over the Agency's data network, eliminating Verizon charges for local calls and substantially reducing cabling costs.
- Piloted a state-of-the-art **Print-To-Mail System** that improves productivity and reduces postal costs. By allowing staff to send files for mailing from their computers directly to the print-to-mail system, the system reduces administrative costs associated with preparing outgoing mail. By consolidating and bundling outgoing mail within the same location, HRA/DSS will receive the lowest postal rate available.
- Initiated a **dark fiber connection** among three of the Agency's core sites. Dark fiber will vastly increase bandwidth within the connected core sites of the Agency's **Wide Area Network (WAN)** thereby improving network performance and access to server applications as well as producing a dramatic savings in telecommunications costs.



■ **Completed the roll out of the Substance Abuse Tracking and Reporting System (STARS) to all New York City based treatment programs**

The STARS program is currently being used at approximately 400 New York City treatment sites. HRA/DSS is also working with the New York City Department of Probation and the New York State Division of Parole so these agencies can use STARS to monitor treatment compliance and progress for the clients that have been mandated into substance abuse treatment. HRA/DSS has already designed and developed STARS functionality for Treatment Alternatives to Street Crime (TASC), an agency providing case management services for individuals mandated into substance abuse treatment by the drug treatment courts.

By utilizing STARS as an integrated reporting system for all these agencies, the City realizes numerous gains. STARS promotes the Mayor's "One City" vision, as the system allows for uniformity in data collection and information sharing across City agencies. This, in turn, minimizes duplication and enables substance abuse treatment programs to spend less time on administrative activities associated with reporting and more time on clinical issues to improve their individual clients' recovery and self-sufficiency outcomes.

■ **Developed STARS compliance reports**

Compliance reports not only improve the timeliness and quality of data submission, but also allow HRA/DSS to determine which vendors and programs are producing the best outcomes for clients.

■ **Consolidated HASA client data through the comprehensive data management system, HASAWeb**

The HASAWeb system is a web-based repository that bundles all the client-specific data for an individual into a single, easy to use system. Information regarding a client's housing history, demographics, assessment, service plans, case notes, food stamp and public assistance budgets, and community-based resources can now be located within the same system. To the highest degree possible, HASAWeb allows case managers to have an inclusive view of their clients' cases.

■ **Completed the move of our data center to a new state-of-the-art facility at 15 MetroTech Center (MTC) in Brooklyn**

This year, HRA/DSS occupied 200,000 square feet of space in downtown Brooklyn for our Management Information Systems (MIS) Data Center. The new Agency Data Center continues to provide highly reliable computer services. Housing a state-of-the-art training facility, the Center provides Agency staff with computer training throughout the year. The new Network Operations Center (NOC) enables MIS to actively monitor performance of the Agency's 91 networked sites, thereby improving services to staff, reducing network outages, and minimizing repair times.

■ Improved Agency infrastructure

Supporting our restructuring plan, the Model Office initiative and programmatic functions are the activities of the Agency's General Support Services (GSS). Over the past year GSS staff have worked tirelessly procuring, improving, and furnishing the many spaces in which the Agency works to assist its clients.

- Relocated the Manhattan Home Care office from 11 Park Place to the existing space at 250 Church Street, Manhattan, thereby reducing our space portfolio by 10,000 square feet .
- Renovated over 40,000 square feet of FIA office space.
- Renovated over 50,000 square feet of MICSA office space.
- Acquired, renovated and furnished 200,000 square feet of office space for the new MIS MetroTech Data Center.

■ Reduced Agency reliance on temporary workers while improving staff development and training

As we strive to move our clients into permanent, meaningful work, providing vital training and professional development opportunities to make that goal achievable, so, too must we provide for our staff. The agency has provided tailored professional development opportunities to increase the skills and competencies of the people who are the heart of HRA/DSS.

■ In addition to computer-based training, trained over 3,620 staff members through the Staff Development and Organizational Improvement (SDOI) unit of the Office of Staff Resources (OSR)

Innovative and informative training programs include interactive classrooms, the Professional Development, Supervisory Development and Customer Service Institutes, as well as Open Enrollment classes at Hunter Brookdale and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS).



■ Received three Staff Development and Organizational Improvement training awards from DCAS—more than any other City agency

AWARDS RECEIVED INCLUDE:

- “*Tip Top Tailoring*” award, presented to HRA/DSS for requesting and working with Citywide training staff to tailor the greatest number of agency-specific courses.
- “*But Who’s Counting?*” award, for scheduling the greatest variety of courses through the Citywide Training Center in 2003.
- “*Phone Tone*” award, presented to Staff Development and Organizational Improvement staff member for her pleasant demeanor and exceptional telephone etiquette.

■ Recognized 10 departmental teams and 10 individuals with 2004 Professionalism, Accountability, and Integrity awards (PAI awards) for outstanding accomplishment

Winning teams and individuals demonstrated diligence, innovation, and an overall commitment to the Agency, its mission, and its clients.

- PAI award winning teams: MIS, Voice Communications Division; GSS: Office of Security Services; MICSA: APS Financial Management Unit; MICSA: CED: Unit 500, Team I; MICSA: Greenwood Food Stamp, F24; FIA: Boro Hall Food Stamp, F23; Rider: Food Stamp Recertification, F48; FIA: Office of Training Operations; FIA: Division of Fair Hearing: Special Projects Team.
- Individual PAI award winners representing the following offices: ACCO: Office of Contracts; Finance; MIS; FIA: Concourse Job Center; East End Job Center, Richmond Job Center, Union Square Job Center, Waverly Job Center; MICSA: Deputy Commissioner’s Office, Food Stamp Office, F43, Quality Assurance.

BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION: ACCOUNTABILITY AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

No organization can achieve success without a strong foundation of accountability and a strategic plan by which to realize goals. HRA/DSS continues to remain accountable to its staff, clients, and City by promoting transparency in its program and administrative areas, and internal oversight through its committees and review boards. The Agency also continues to apply the lessons of the past and the present toward a strategic plan for the future.

■ **Convened third annual Agency-wide forum: “Gateway to Services Summit”**

In June of 2004, for the third consecutive year, Commissioner Eggleston invited her 14,000-plus employees to meet with her and the Executive Team for an open forum. Addressed at the Summit were the Agency’s restructuring plan and new initiatives. Staff were given the opportunity to pose questions to current Model Office employees and give feedback to the Executive Team after the event via e-mail.

■ **Continued utilization of performance measurement and management tools to improve agency efficiency and accountability while expanding the application of these tools**

Much of the programmatic success experienced by HRA/DSS can be attributed to its careful use of outcome-based performance measurement tools. These tools allow key Agency staff to review data in a timely fashion, share data with appropriate parties, and utilize data to drive service improvement. This year, HRA/DSS:

- Launched **JobStat 4.5**, a dynamic process by which HRA/DSS continues to monitor client job placement and retention. The process focuses on accountability measures for Job Centers, reflecting regulatory and programmatic requirements.
- Added new indicators to **VendorStat** to gauge the market-appropriateness of vendor employment and training programs. This will allow the Agency to contract with those vendors who demonstrate the best outcomes for clients.
- Completed **Home Care VendorStat** and, through program and vendor feedback, are in the process of developing a second version.
- Began development of **AdminStat**, a performance measurement tool designed to examine and improve the accountability, performance and efficiency of the Agency’s internal functions.
- Started **HASASat 3.0** which continues to monitor center and staff performance with emphasis on accountability and continuous service improvement at all levels of center operations.
- Initiated **MAPModel Stat** to provide MAP Model Office—specific data on key performance indicators encompassing several aspects of site operations. MAPModelStat Report is a useful tool to track Model Office performance and progress to achieve Agency goals.



■ **Continued utilization of Agency review boards and committees to ensure integrity of HRA/DSS administrative practices**

Absent internal integrity, any organization is destined to fail. So that our most integral administrative processes are absolutely accountable to the Agency, City and people they serve, HRA/DSS guides its contracts, personnel actions, and policy development with advisory boards and committees. These bodies bring to key Agency processes a variety of perspectives, backgrounds, and analyses, ensuring that Agency resources are spent and distributed in the most effective and efficient manner possible.

- **Through the efforts of the Offices of Contracts and the Contract Review Board (CRB), achieved recognition for high standards of contract oversight.** HRA/DSS is able to provide the wide spectrum of services needed by its clients by procuring specialized human services through the Agency's Office of Contracts. A critical completion date in the contracting process is July 1, when Mayor Bloomberg submits the proposed city budget for the upcoming fiscal year to New York State. The bulk of the Agency's contracts for the upcoming fiscal year are on track to have completed the registration process in time to meet this deadline. Given that the task of registering hundreds of millions of dollars worth of contracts is tremendous, in the past HRA/DSS experienced some difficulty in meeting the deadline. However, in 2004, HRA/DSS worked together to overcome many obstacles and achieve a contract completion rate of 91 percent, raising the Agency's status to a level three delegation of procurement, expanding the Agency Chief Contracting Officer (ACCO) authority to directly approve certain existing contracts.
- **Filled critical Agency vacancies through the oversight of the Personnel Review Committee (PeRC).** The PeRC assesses all hires and promotions in order to ensure the fairness and equity of all Agency personnel actions. Between July 2003 and September 2004, the PeRC recommended 1,959 items, including 1,075 new hires, 839 promotions, and 45 other personnel actions.
- **Implemented a Research Advisory Board to guide Agency policy making.** The business of government and social service delivery is an arena that is constantly being analyzed, evaluated, and improved upon through academic inquiry and research. So that HRA/DSS may continue to remain at the forefront of policy research and development, the Agency has established a Research Advisory Board, collaborating with local universities and preeminent scholars from a variety of academic fields.

REALIZED LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE GAINS ON ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

From the Municipality of New York City, to the State of New York, to the federal government of the United States, HRA/DSS receives funds from and interacts with all levels of government on a routine basis. The Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) and the Office of Legislative Affairs both play a very important role in all aspects of the Agency's functions with regard to the various levels of governance. This year, both offices realized tremendous gains for HRA/DSS and its clients.

■ **The Office of Legal Affairs (OLA)** provides legal counsel, litigation, contract and employment law services to all of the Agency's administration and program areas to ensure the delivery of social services that are consistent with the law. Major achievements within OLA this year include:

- **Initiated restructuring the Office of Legal Affairs.** In May 2004, OLA held a retreat for its managers and supervisors to examine new Agency initiatives and to identify model practices of the way it delivers services to Agency programs. Attorney and paralegal staff worked in teams to identify barriers to the effective delivery of legal services within the Agency and to recommend actions designed to strengthen the Office of Legal Affairs. Following the retreat, the Commissioner issued Executive Order 696, establishing the OLA Restructuring Work Group and charging them with the task of designing and recommending a Restructuring Plan for the Office.
- **Successfully appealed Sanchez v. Turner.** On August 4, 2004, the United States Second Circuit Court of Appeals handed down a 35-page decision that unanimously upheld the HRA/DSS policy of excluding from Job Center waiting rooms any third parties without a legitimate business purpose. This decision supports the Agency's position that all HRA/DSS Job Centers and offices must be free of any unwarranted distractions as staff work to provide temporary assistance and employment services to needy New Yorkers.
- **Worked diligently to fight for needy New Yorkers.** This year, OLA filed approximately 1,350 legal actions to stop evictions and prevent other forms of abuse and neglect, 6,768 new orders of support and 2,257 new orders of paternity.
- **Resolved a longstanding dispute with the landlord at a Manhattan location** to ensure a safe and healthy workplace for the Agency's Home Care Services Program operations and thereby provide timely and efficient services to clients.
- **Assisted the City's Law Department in an action** that challenged the City Council's enactment of Local Law 23 of 2003, which required HRA/DSS to count a wide range of educational activities toward the work requirements for Public Assistance and Food Stamp recipients. On November 18, 2004, a Manhattan Supreme Court Justice affirmed the authority of the Administrator of the local social services district to administer State Social Services Law, which preempts Local Law 23.



■ **The Office of Legislative Affairs** staff serve as the Agency's liaison to elected officials' offices and the Mayor's Offices of City, State, and Federal Legislative Affairs. In 2004, the office, in collaboration with the program areas, analyzed, prepared comments and made recommendations on more than 60 proposed federal, state and city bills that would impact HRA's delivery of services and its client population. The office drafts HRA's annual Legislative Agenda reflecting the Agency's priorities and initiatives and works with the Mayor's Office to advocate the proposals at all levels of government. Among other responsibilities, the office also prepares testimony for presentation at City Council, State Assembly and Senate, and Congressional hearings. Some of the office's major accomplishments this year include:

- **Continued advocacy on TANF Reauthorization.** HRA/DSS has been very actively involved in advocacy and debate surrounding the reauthorization of federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) legislation, and has released a series of TANF Reauthorization recommendations. In addition to our ongoing goal to move people toward self-sufficiency, the recommendations focus on three key issues for the second stage of welfare reform: employment retention for those that have left public assistance and joined the workforce, welfare prevention to keep future generations from relying on Public Assistance, and flexibility to meet the needs of a changing Public Assistance caseload. Most notable among HRA/DSS recommendations are:
 - ◆ Increased child care funding, so that parents may be able to fully participate in work and training activities.
 - ◆ Increased flexibility in work activity options so that states and localities can better address the increasing proportion of the TANF caseload that consists of individuals unengageable in traditional work activities.
 - ◆ Improved transitional and retention support to increase and stabilize successes in moving clients from welfare to work.

- **Together with FIA, drafted legislation that was enacted into New York State law, to expand work participation options available to Safety Net Assistance clients, affording all clients equal access to tools that will help move them toward self-sufficiency.** The Office of Legislative Affairs together with the Mayor's Office successfully advocated to the New York State Legislature and the Governor to enact HRA's legislation to afford Safety Net Assistance clients equal access to opportunities afforded to TANF clients to help move them toward self-sufficiency. The Agency's goals were realized through the passage of **Chapter 380 of the Laws of New York, 2004**. Based on HRA's success in moving TANF clients off of public assistance through a combination of work experience and education and training, the Office of Legislative Affairs together with FIA drafted a proposal to expand work participation options, particularly education and training opportunities, for single individuals and families without dependent children. This newly enacted law represents a tremendous milestone for HRA/DSS, as it helps the Agency ensure that all clients will be afforded equal access, based on individual needs, to tools that will assist them in moving toward self-sufficiency.
- **Worked with the Office of Policy and Program Development's (OPPD) Office of Refugee and Immigrant Affairs (ORIA) to negotiate Local Law 73 with the New York City Council. Local Law 73 codifies HRA's ongoing commitment to the provision of language access services for limited English-speaking ability clients.** The law, among other provisions, requires HRA/DSS and its contractors, as well as other city agencies to provide oral interpretation services and written translation of documents in six languages: Arabic, Chinese, Haitian-Creole, Korean, Russian, and Spanish, over a five-year implementation period. Early versions of this legislation drafted by the City Council would have been extremely onerous, but together with ORIA and the Mayor's Office, we negotiated alternative legislation that was consistent with the Agency's efforts already in progress.



FACING THE FUTURE: 2005 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

At the inception of this administration, HRA/DSS embarked on an intensive self-evaluation of its programmatic and administrative activities with the intention of creating better client services and reducing costs. Many results of plans made during this self-reflective period have been discussed in the preceding pages of this report: an Agency-wide restructuring to create service enhancements and cost savings; a new Customized Assistance Services (CAS) division to provide the individualized services necessary to raise each client to their highest level of self-sufficiency; a program aimed at treating the complicated mental and physical health issues that stand between many of our clients and a rewarding life of independence and work (WeCARE), among others. While they span a variety of programs and operations, all of our accomplishments have one very important similarity: none are coincidental. Each one of our Agency's hard-won achievements was born of careful planning and goal setting. So that we may continue to reap the rewards of excellence, HRA/DSS has set a series of key goals to guide us into the future by building upon the successes of the past.

■ **Build upon the structural changes created through this year's restructuring to create culture changes throughout the organization**

HRA/DSS is striving for change to strengthen the culture of our Agency and improve customer service. By investing in a strong culture, we hope to foster job satisfaction, commitment, proficiency, long tenure and, simultaneously, increased and improved services to our clients. However, cultural change is much harder to accomplish than physical change. Physical change can be realized through something as simple as a fresh coat of paint on an office wall.

Unfortunately, there is no such thing as a "simple" cultural change. A change in culture requires that each staff member internalize a set of core values and principles and utilize these values and principles to guide both basic day-to-day decisions as well as complex interactions with clients and coworkers. While we have extensive performance measurement tools to gauge indicators such as job retention, Food Stamp enrollment, vendor performance, and other tangible variables that affect our success, we have no tools for measuring our most basic organizational value: respect for another person's dignity. This value is what fuels our desire for the highest levels of customer service; it is what motivates and justifies our Agency's very existence. While we cannot necessarily track this ideal directly, we can and will promote it as a uniform practice and fundamental prerequisite for customer service by infusing it into comprehensive and ongoing training. Through an intensive focus on employee training and development, HRA/DSS intends to continue to restore humanity to social services by constantly striving toward the highest possible levels of customer service.

■ **Ensure the consistent and timely dissemination of organizational policies and practices to new hires as well as HRA/DSS veterans by instituting a new Training Institute as an integral part of the Agency's operations**

In addition to promoting a culture of respect, the Training Institute will instruct our staff on new technologies and procedures as well as new policies that affect the ways in which our employees do their jobs. Often, organizations assume that if individuals “got the memo” that they got the message. If this were the case, each employee of every organization would be a living encyclopedia of organizational policies, practices, and core values. So that HRA/DSS may remedy the disconnect that can occur through the “memo” method of information dissemination, we are placing a strong emphasis on standardized employee training. By investing time and resources in the development and delivery of comprehensive, informative training programs and materials, HRA/DSS explicitly communicates both the substance as well as the importance of the information being shared.

■ **Roll out the WeCARE program so that all needy New Yorkers with physical and mental health barriers to self-reliance receive the customized services they need to live fruitful lives of independence**

HRA/DSS recognizes that many of our clients have serious and legitimate medical and mental health barriers to employment. No one can know what it is like to walk in another's shoes, particularly those of an individual who is suffering through a medical or psychological illness. However, if we are willing to listen to the issues a client is reporting and provide individualized services based on that report, we have a much greater chance of providing the most appropriate services and helping the client take an active role in his or her own wellness.

In February 2005, the WeCARE program began operations with the goal of providing comprehensive medical and psychological assessment and treatment to those clients reporting an inability to work. WeCARE is meeting clients where they are and helping them achieve their highest level of personal independence. As is the case with most of our programs, we will be tracking success of the clients as they participate in the treatment plans arranged by WeCARE. So that we may design and deliver the most comprehensive, efficient, and effective program possible, HRA/DSS will be carefully analyzing the data we collect and using it to improve upon the program, with the ultimate goal of rolling out additional segments.



■ **Rebuild employment contracts by developing and publishing new and better proposals**

Commissioner Eggleston has often said that the integrity of HRA/DSS lies in its contracts. Due to our overwhelming success this year in completing our contracts, we currently have the highest rating for contracts in the City, as well as the highest purchasing power. With this status comes tremendous responsibility and tremendous opportunity. We have a huge responsibility to the City and the taxpayers to spend their money wisely on results-driven programs that produce achievements for our clients and our Agency. And with that responsibility comes the opportunity to build and grow our relationships with outside agencies and businesses. The greater our fiscal responsibility and achievements, the more these parties will wish to do business with us and share in our successes.

Given our hard-earned position, HRA/DSS has made it a goal to realize stronger employment contracts. JobStat and VendorStat have allowed us to collect and analyze data on employment services and related client outcomes. This results-oriented approach to data collection and analysis has helped to determine which approaches produce better outcomes, thereby allowing us to identify the best approaches in vendor proposals for future contracts.

■ **Continue to pursue a practice of inter- and intra-Agency cooperation and collaboration that reflects the Agency's vision of "One City, One Client, One Plan"**

This administration has articulated and pursued a vision of social services that requires all of the City's agencies to work collaboratively to serve their common clients. Within the context of pursuing culture change, HRA/DSS has adopted this vision and has been working cooperatively with other agencies.

In order to realize the vision of "One City, One Client, One Plan," advocacy groups and agencies serving the same clients need to be seen as allies in customer service. While a certain level of competition is a healthy catalyst for improvement, it is only through communication and information sharing that any industry realizes best practices and develops benchmarks for customer service. This is especially true in the case of the not-for-profit industry of social services, where cost-savings and service enhancements must be realized concurrently. Consistent with the City's plan, HRA/DSS will continue to reach out to all relevant parties who have a role in the lives of the clients we serve. Toward the well-being of our clients, we will continue to engage in dialogue with community groups, advocates, experts and academics alike, recognizing that all of these parties have a role and a stake in the success of our clients in achieving their highest possible degree of self-reliance.

■ **Remain responsive to public outcry and public opinion, recognizing the power of people as a catalyst for policy change**

Policy change does not occur in a vacuum or absent the influential voices of the individuals and interests it serves. Some of the most successful attempts at policy change have been the result of vociferous outcry on the part of individuals and citizen groups that have been under served or ignored by the governments that exist to represent them. This outcry has often shaped the tide of public opinion, which, as it should in a healthy democracy, has then translated into a change in the policies that govern the people.

At HRA/DSS we recognize the powerful role of the people in advocating for themselves and changing the public's perception on key issues. We have witnessed its power in changing policies on the local, regional and national levels and we recognize it as mainstay of an active democracy. As such, we are committed to a policy of responsiveness with regard to public outcry, seeking to build consensus whenever possible and to resolve differences through diplomatic means. We plan to continue to work with the people of our City to improve upon existing policies so that we may deliver services to needy New Yorkers in the most appropriate, effective, and efficient manner possible.





Michael R. Bloomberg
Mayor

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