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**NEW YORK CITY HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES
NEW TEXTING SERVICE TO HELP NEW YORKERS RECEIVING
WELFARE, FOOD STAMPS OR TEMPORARY HOUSING QUICKLY
AND EFFICIENTLY CONNECT TO JOB OPPORTUNITIES**

Human Resources Administration Commissioner Robert Doar today announced a new texting service, *TXT-2-Work*, which delivers job opportunities directly to the phones of public and housing assistance recipients and other low-income New Yorkers. Through an opt-in feature, the service texts subscribers job opportunities, job-seeking tips, and other alerts on a regular basis. Previously, clients received notice of available job opportunities by mail, a process that can take up to 13 days from the moment the job becomes available to the moment the client opens the envelope. Now with *TXT-2-Work* clients can learn about and apply for a job within 24 hours of the opportunity opening. HRA is able to track every text sent out, and use the data to better understand clients' needs and refine the information they want to receive. HRA also announced an improved version of the agency's successful *NYC Business Link* program, which connects NYC employers with New Yorkers on public assistance. *NYC Business Link* helps employers fill their staffing needs with qualified employees and connects them to programs like wage subsidies and tax credits.

TXT-2-Work was developed by HRA in partnership with Mobile Commons, a Brooklyn-based company that creates easy-to-use technology for scalable mobile marketing campaign management and has built texting services for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the Department of Education. The service's web-based inbox makes running a text message campaign as simple as composing an email that contains all the necessary details recipients need to submit a job application.

"*TXT-2-Work* is part of HRA and Mayor Bloomberg's commitment to using highly accessible, on-the-go technology to help New Yorkers in need find employment," said HRA Commissioner Robert Doar. "NYC has had great success in moving people on cash assistance into employment even in a struggling economy and we hope this service will help keep up the good work. Texting has changed the way we communicate *TXT-2-Work* will transform the way HRA clients connect to work opportunities."

“Delivering information on available job opportunities in a fast and efficient way to the thousands of New Yorkers receiving government assistance can be challenging,” said HRA Deputy Commissioner for Employment Services and Contracts Katy Gaul. “With *Text-2-Work* HRA is leading the movement of social services agencies nationwide using everyday technology to communicate more effectively with our audience in hopes it will increase their connections to jobs.”

“We're proud to partner with HRA on this innovative approach to the problem of connecting New Yorkers with jobs quickly and cost effectively,” said Mobile Commons Co-founder and CEO Jed Alpert. “New York City is becoming a leader in using this technology to provide services to its residents, and this is another example of how the ease and ubiquity of text messaging makes it the most effective way to reach people.”

“Valucare, Inc is a licensed home care agency that provides quality and compassionate services for all who need it and dedicated to the development of workforce employment, so when I was told that our jobs were going to be sent straight to people's phones, I was thrilled,” said Margarita Muley Program Coordinator at Valucare, Inc. a featured *TXT-2-Work* employer. “The first text that went out looking for certified home health aides brought in about 30 candidates in one day. I was overwhelmed at the response only because of the immediacy and the call-to-action nature of the service. Valucare is highly concerned with hiring the best and providing opportunities for the community and so far, four candidates were hired and can't wait for the next text to go out.”

“I'm a single mother of two and I'm looking for a job,” said *TXT-2-Work* subscriber Crystal Sampson. “I like how this service sends information straight to my phone while I am on the go and unable to gain access to a computer. The texts have all the details you need so you don't need to make a phone call to learn more. I've had a few interactions with employers thanks to this service and that type of exposure is great for me. I remain hopeful I will soon get a job offer.”

Texting is a fast, effective and low-cost way of getting information to a large number of people. *TXT-2-Work* was created to meet the needs of clients, using tools and technology that according to them would be the most useful. In 2011, HRA completed a survey to better understand how low-income New Yorkers use computers, cell phones, the Internet and social media. The survey confirmed that mobile usage was the most common. Of 2,000 cash assistance and food stamp clients, 88 percent of respondents said they use a cell phone daily, surpassing Internet (61 percent) and computer usage (60 percent) and 73 percent said they preferred text or email to get updates on available job opportunities.

In an effort to streamline the recruitment process for candidates and employers, the new *NYC Business Link* features a [redesigned micro-site](#) and a revamped system to handle employers' needs through only one point of contact within the Agency. This will simplify inquiries into available jobs and allow for more rapid response to employers' customer service, ensuring that the candidates who are referred to them have the experience needed to perform their duties. This simplification will strengthen HRA's partnership with employers who seek out highly motivated job applicants. Additionally, *TXT-2-Work* will aid HRA's contracted employment vendors in connecting clients to employment and helping clients who get jobs retain employment through connections to work supports such as food stamps and more effective interactions with the employment vendor.

NYC Business Link is also expanding its base of partnerships with employers in industries where job penetration in the system was previously low, such as banks and hotels. Collaborating with businesses like these will expand the variety of jobs available to candidates.

In 1995, the welfare caseload peaked at over 1.1 million – the highest ever in New York City. Currently about 362,454 New Yorkers receive cash assistance, the lowest since the 1960's, and a decrease of nearly 24 percent since Mayor Bloomberg took office.

Since Mayor Bloomberg took office, there have been 914,043 cash assistance job placements. Seventy-three percent have retained employment for one year. In 2011, HRA reached a record of helping to place 89,577 people in jobs, exceeding its already ambitious goal set for that year of helping 85,000 New Yorkers in need find or keep jobs. In 2012, HRA helped place a total of 86,947, and in 2013, HRA is on pace to achieve its goal of 88,000.

HRA is a work-first agency and clients are required to engage in work activities. Helping New Yorkers with employment so they can remain out of poverty and on the road to financial independence is at the core of HRA's mission.

HRA's other programs to assist New Yorkers with employment include:

- **Back 2 Work (B2W)** clients work with contracted, community-based vendors that provide them with job-hunting assistance, resume writing and interviewing skills; and job placement. The program's vendors work with clients from the time they apply for cash assistance to their placement in a permanent job and support them for six months after employment. Employment activities are shaped according to the background and skills of each individual, and can include short-term job search, vocational training, work experience or basic education.
- **The Wellness, Comprehensive Assessment Rehabilitation and Employment (WeCARE)** program is a unique initiative that addresses the needs of cash assistance clients with medical and/or mental health barriers to employment by providing customized assistance and services to help clients achieve their highest levels of self-sufficiency.
- **The Work Experience Program (WEP)** is a concurrent program with B2W. Cash Assistance clients work at City government agencies or private non-profits throughout the five boroughs, gaining work experience and receiving on-the-job training and help with job search and employment skills for up to 3 days a week.

To learn more about *TXT-2-Work* and the new *Business Link* please visit www.nyc.gov and follow us on Twitter at @NYCHRA.