



A Message From Commissioner Eggleston

It has been a long time since our last release. However, a lot was happening. We are at our lowest welfare case numbers since 1964. Great work! It took the work of us all to get here. There has been a lot of talk lately about food stamps and enrollment.

From the start of our administration, we have recognized the vital role that nutrition plays in the lives of New Yorkers. Over the past four years HRA/DSS has made substantial efforts to increase the effectiveness of New York City's food programs, to simplify the application process and to expand outreach to all New Yorkers who qualify.

As 2006 begins, we are finalizing our

partnership with Food Change and the New York City Coalition Against Hunger to implement a grant awarded to HRA/DSS by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The grant will fund the completion of an online application process for the Food Stamp Program that will enable our partners to take food stamp applications on-site at emergency food assistance locations. This will accelerate eligibility determination while making the application process more convenient for consumers.

Because we have made so much progress over the past four years, I believe this is an opportune time to bring all the stakeholders together to identify what still needs to be done to address food and

nutrition and how we can all participate in making it happen.

In January, as I took office for a second term, I convened a task force chaired by the Executive Deputy of Policy and Program Development to prepare a report surveying the Food Stamp Program and all other food and nutrition programs in New York City. The programs that HRA/DSS administers or funds are only a part of the overall picture. That report and the task force's recommendations have been completed.

Our next step is to convene a citywide meeting on food and nutrition issues. I encourage all of those who are involved to join forces on assessing where the pockets of hunger still exist and how we can best focus our resources on them. As we joined together to restructure AIDS/HIV services to meet the needs of New Yorkers living with AIDS today, we must now collaborate to develop a plan to further New York City's progress in providing uninterrupted access to food and proper nutrition. HRA/DSS is committed to one city, one client, one plan. ■

2006-2010 TANF Reauthorization Incorporates HRA/DSS's Recommendations

On February 8, 2006 President Bush signed legislation reauthorizing the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program that will shape the course of welfare reform through 2010. The reauthorization debate had been a long process through which HRA/DSS advocated for provisions that would best serve needy New Yorkers, and the resulting new law includes a number of provisions that reflect the Agency's efforts.

When the legislation authorizing the TANF program expired in 2002, HRA/DSS, on behalf of New York City, proposed policy goals for the second phase of welfare reform to ensure the continuation of gains made under the first stage of welfare reform.

These included:

- Creating the necessary programs and services to help those remaining on public assistance achieve the same progress towards self-sufficiency as those who left, knowing that an increasing proportion of the remaining public assistance caseload consists of clients with physical and mental health challenges that are barriers to employment.

- Helping those who have left welfare retain their status in the workforce by investing in the transitional supports of housing, child care and transportation.

- Preventing future welfare dependence by developing new programs focusing on youth and programs that support family strengthening and non-custodial parent responsibility.

HRA/DSS developed model initiatives such as the Wellness, Comprehensive Assessment, Rehabilitation and Employment (WeCARE) program, designed to help clients with medical and/or mental health barriers to employment reach their highest attainable level of health and self-sufficiency, to accomplish the goals set forth for the second phase of welfare reform.

During Congressional debate on new TANF law, which continued for over three years, New York City advocated for key provisions in the legislative framework under which the proposed goals and initiatives could be implemented. The broad range and effectiveness of the Agency's initiatives gained support nationally for HRA/DSS's model for the continuation of welfare reform. A number of provisions in the new law reflect HRA/DSS's recommendations.

HERE ARE HIGHLIGHTS:

Funding
In the difficult budgetary climate, HRA/DSS advocated to maintain the full funding of the TANF block grant.

TANF will remain fully funded through 2010.

Work Participation Rate

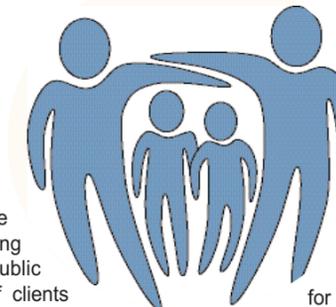
While both houses of Congress initially considered legislation raising the required work participation rate to 70% for TANF families with single parents, HRA/DSS recommended maintaining a 50% rate for all TANF families.

TANF will maintain a 50% work participation rate for single-parent families.

Work Activity

HRA/DSS recommended maintaining the 30-hour work week and greater flexibility in meeting clients' work-related needs.

TANF maintains the 30-hour work week and gives discretion to the Federal Department of Health and Human Services to define allowable work activities by October, 2006.



Child Support

HRA/DSS recommended that child support collected for a period before and after a custodial parent received public assistance be passed directly to the families and not assigned to cover collection costs.

TANF discontinues the federal assignment of pre- and post-public assistance arrears and provides state with the same options.

To promote self-sufficiency and as an incentive for non-custodial parents to pay child support, HRA/DSS recommended that 100% of the child support collected on behalf of families receiving public assistance should pass directly to the families who comply with program requirements. Child support would count in the determination of eligibility, but not in calculating the amount of assistance.

TANF provides that in Federal Fiscal Year 2008, states will have the option to increase the child support pass-through amount to a maximum of \$200 depending on family size, if the support is disregarded in determining the amount and type of assistance.

HRA/DSS recommended authorizing the use of the Federal income tax intercept program for collection of child support arrears for children who are no longer minors.

TANF authorizes the use of the Federal income tax intercept program for collection of child support arrears for children who are no longer minors.

The City advocated reducing the child support arrears threshold from \$5,000 to \$2,500 for denying, restricting, and revoking passports for non-custodial parents who do not comply with child support orders.

TANF reduces the arrears threshold for denying, restricting and revoking passports for non-custodial parents who do not pay child support from \$5,000 to \$2,500.

The Federal Department of Health and Human Services will determine which activities can count toward meeting the TANF work participation requirement by July 2006. HRA/DSS has advocated for greater flexibility in the definition of activities contributing to TANF goals to include barrier removal activities. The provision of a definition that includes education, training and rehabilitation services offered through programs like WeCARE would provide crucial support to the Agency in helping clients with physical and mental health barriers move toward their highest levels of self-sufficiency. ■

NYC Welfare Caseload Achieves a 42-year Low

The current statistics on New York City's welfare caseload give all of us at HRA/DSS the chance to document the effectiveness of our programs. In March 2006, New York City's welfare rolls dropped to 402,281 persons, the lowest since 1964. This is a drop of two-thirds from the welfare caseload high of 1995 when more than 1.1 New Yorkers were receiving public assistance.

The decline in public assistance cases reflects the many new initiatives that HRA/DSS has developed to meet the individualized needs of its consumers and to advance job retention and welfare prevention.

Job retention: Currently, of those public assistance recipients who move from welfare to work, 88% have retained their jobs after three months, and 75% percent have stayed employed after six months.

Welfare prevention: At the same time as welfare rolls have declined, the number of families who are not on welfare and are helped by receiving food stamps has increased by 110%. Non-public assistance public health insurance enrollment has increased by 82%. Child support collection has increased steadily. Read more about the progress in advancing self-sufficiency in the Preliminary Fiscal 2006 Mayor's Management Report (PDF) at nyc.gov/hra.

Meeting clients where they are: The changing demographics of the welfare caseload required HRA/DSS to develop innovative programs to meet the challenges of moving clients with complex, long-term barriers to self-sufficiency forward. Since the beginning of the Bloomberg administration, the welfare caseload has continued to decline by 13 percent. ■

OPIC's New Direction Takes A Creative Turn

By Barbara Brancaccio

In February 2006 I joined the HRA community as Deputy Commissioner and Director of Communications in the Office of Public Information and Communications (OPIC). I bring to this position a synthesis of skills derived from my experience in nonprofit management, New York City politics, and even film production. I am excited to join HRA/DSS's diverse and talented staff in assisting millions of New Yorkers in the effort to reach their goals towards self-sufficiency.

In my first month, I was introduced to the extraordinary network of HRADSS departments, programs and services. Because of the work you are doing, HRA/DSS is breaking records every day and emerging as a national model for welfare reform. As we enter into the next phase of the Bloomberg/Eggleston administration, my charge will be to strengthen public recognition and information about HRA/DSS's outstanding programs and achievements.

One of Commissioner Eggleston's highest priorities to has been to improve internal communications in our very large agency. Our department will amplify its projects to fulfill this objective.

OPIC's mission is to create a unified message about all the work that is ongoing at HRA/DSS. By working with each program and department to develop content for newsletters, the internet, training and promotional videos, brochures and other informational program materials, we can accomplish this goal. I look forward to your contributions and to working together with you. ■



LETTERS TO THE AGENCY

Very often we comment when things go wrong, but are silent when things are done well.

In light of this, I would like to bring your attention to the outstanding work being done by Ms. Gale Byrd, supervisor at HASA's DAS program. And by her support staff; specifically, Mr. Taiwo Idowo and Ms. Stella D'Haiti, who have been very responsive and efficient during my recent illness.

Again, I'd like to express my gratitude and appreciation for their concern and service.

Thank you
A grateful client

I am writing to thank you and the members of your staff for your assistance in responding to a recent inquiry from a constituent.

My constituent in upstate New York has been trying to locate an elderly aunt who formerly lived in Queens. She was very happy to hear last week that her aunt had been located and

is being cared for at a skilled nursing facility in Queens. Please accept and extend my appreciation to all who were involved in helping my constituent reconnect with her aunt.

Sincerely yours,
James L. Seward
State Senator, 51st District

I am writing to commend two HRA employees: Mrs. Dolores Clarke of the Office of Community & Constituent Affairs and Ms. Georgina Gibbs of the Rental Assistance Unit.

I now have custody of my great-nephew. In trying to establish a case in Westchester County, I learned that there was an active PA case in New York, which was opened fraudulently. For more than a month, I was unable to find out what needed to be done to take action. Mrs. Clarke and Ms. Gibbs took the time to listen and understand my situation. They went above and beyond their duty in their effort to see that the case was closed in order for my nephew to finally get the care he needed.

I am requesting that Mrs. Clark and Ms. Gibbs be recognized for their professionalism and courtesy. Respectfully,
A grateful client

I was invited to visit with your staff at the Bay Ridge Job Center. My purpose was to personally thank your employees for their hard work and dedication to the people of Brooklyn. I also wanted to gain knowledge and information about specific programs and services available at the Bay Ridge Job Center.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your staff for a very impressive visit. Their presentation of Human Resources Administration programs and services was excellent. I am truly honored to have Bay Ridge Job Center working for my constituents.

Keep up the good work!

Sincerely,
Martin J. Golden
State Senator, 22nd District



InHouse

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

THANK YOU FOR STAYING THE COURSE

On January 1, 2006 Commissioner Verna Eggleston was reappointed as Commissioner/Administrator of the Human Resources Administration/Department of Social Services, making her the first HRA/DSS commissioner to serve for two consecutive terms.

"I am honored to lead HRA/DSS as your commissioner for a second term," Commissioner Eggleston said. The Commissioner's announcement of her acceptance of Mayor Bloomberg's appointment, made at an Agency service awards ceremony on December 1, 2005, was received with an ovation of overwhelming support from staff.

Commissioner Eggleston began her tenure in 2002 by opening the lines of communication with staff and with the community as the means of making critical change. She established the HRA/DSS annual forums at which staff are invited to offer policy feedback and recommendations, and she reconstituted the Citizen's Advisory Committee, a 34-member board drawn from advocate, business and client communities.

Despite the increased proportion of public assistance recipients with complex physical and mental health barriers to self-sufficiency, New York City's welfare caseload has decreased from 462,595 to 402,281 since the beginning of this administration. In order to sustain the gains of the first stage of welfare reform and to fulfill the goal of providing optimal customer service, Commissioner Eggleston led HRA/DSS in a comprehensive transformation of service delivery. Under the present administration:

- Nineteen new public insurance offices were created in all public hospitals and several private hospitals according to the model office plan developed by the Medical Insurance and Community Service Administration (MICSAs). The model offices and the streamlining of the insurance application process have supported enrollment increases and greatly improved the health insurance retention. As of January 2006, more than 2.6 million New Yorkers are enrolled in public health insurance, an increase of 900,000 people since the beginning of this administration. The number of non-public assistance individuals enrolled in public health insurance has increased by nearly 1,000,000 people.

- New York City's job centers are being renovated according to a model office plan developed by the Family Independence Administration (FIA) that enhances customer service and brings on-site more services to assist clients in the process of becoming self-sufficient. Eight job centers throughout the city have been converted so far.

- The HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) reorganized its services to meet the evolving needs of HIV/AIDS clients today. Five of HASA's twelve service centers have been converted to model offices thus far. The reorganization plan is the outcome of

Commissioner Eggleston Accepts 2nd Term Appointment

an AIDS Summit convened by Mayor Bloomberg with Commissioner Eggleston calling on stakeholders to seek solutions and build more effective policy together.

Under the leadership of Commissioner Eggleston, HRA/DSS underwent a restructuring to strengthen its services. Program areas that supported one another and drew on the same resources moved under the same administrative area. The combined expertise of the agency's restructured program areas and cost savings have helped HRA/DSS to provide more flexible services and to implement initiatives to address the barriers to self-sufficiency of long-term public assistance recipients.

- In February 2005 HRA/DSS introduced its WeCARE program, the first in the nation to take a comprehensive approach to identifying and providing clients with complex physical and mental health conditions with the tools to overcome their individual barriers to self-sufficiency.

- In May 2005 The Family Independence Administration (FIA) established the Intensive Services Center to focus on the needs of those welfare recipients on multi-person cases who have been sanctioned for non-compliance with the agency's work rules. Staff from the Bureau of Eligibility Verification, Employment Services and an employment contractor are on-site to work collaboratively with job center staff.

- FIA restructured its employment services to provide greater continuity to its employed and employable clients by having the same employment contractor serve an individual from application through career advancement. The new employment services program, named "Back to Work", is expected to begin operation on July 1, 2006.

Concurrent with the development of new initiatives, Commissioner Eggleston accelerated advocacy and litigation activity through HRA/DSS's Offices of Legislative and Legal Affairs to amend social services law governing policy to enable the Agency to put forward key initiatives to improve its services. HRA/DSS's Offices of Legislative Affairs and of Legal Affairs accomplished landmark victories in making changes to the law conducive to providing service. These include:

- The amendment of New York state law to entitle Safety Net clients to training and educational benefits identical to those granted to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) under federal law. The expansion of education and training opportunities for Safety Net singles based on individual employment plans should increase the number of singles moving to self-sufficiency.

- The incorporation in the new legislation authorizing the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program that will shape the course of welfare reform through 2010 of provisions that reflect recommendations for which HRA and New York City advocated.

Today HRA/DSS has become a far more effective and efficient organization, prepared through its internal efforts and collaborative relationships to meet the challenges of the next phase of welfare reform: increasing the availability of food and nutrition resources and health care; providing a continuum of care for the City's partially unengageable and fully unengageable clients; supporting the job retention of those who have left welfare and preventing the perpetuation of a culture of dependence.

As we preserve present gains and prepare for the future, the continued dedication of staff and continued leadership of Commissioner Eggleston are invaluable. ■

4 FIA Job Fairs Set for Spring 2006

Employment seekers and employers are finding a fast track to their goals as The Family Independence Administration (FIA) organizes spring 2006 job fairs. The Hamilton Job Center, which was converted to a model center in December 2005, held its first job fair on April 6, 2006. The Rockaway Job Center, which just completed its conversion in February, held its first job fair on March 22. This job fair was co-sponsored with the New York City Housing Authority to serve the residents of the Rockaway Ocean Bay Houses. The two job fairs were very successful in attracting employers and in resulting in follow-up job interviews. A third job fair is scheduled for April 28 at the Riverview Job Center. A citywide job fair is scheduled for June 21 at the Lexington Avenue Armory in Manhattan.

HRA/DSS gained expertise in organizing job fairs immediately following the 9/11 terrorist attacks when the Agency held four Job Expos serving over 40,000 job seekers.

In 2004, FIA began implementing its Model Office Initiative to provide clients with optimal customer service focusing on achieving self-sufficiency through the redesign of service delivery and facilities.



Now, as one by one New York City's job centers are converted, HRA/DSS can bring job fairs directly into the fully professional, attractive environment of the centers and involve community employers more effectively.

"Instead of having to go out to search for employment, we are able to bring the employers to the clients at their job centers. Clients appreciate this access to employers and a supportive environment in which to make their job search easier." Charlotte Lightner-Lewis, director of Welfare to Work said. "They are ener-

gized by having concrete opportunities to present themselves and by preparing for the event."

Soon after a model job center opens, it hosts its first job fair to orient the community to the center's work and purpose. "The community is a rich source of employment opportunities. We want businesses to realize they can fill their job openings through our employment services and provide work opportunities to local residents," Assistant Deputy Commissioner Ellen Howard Cooper, who formerly headed the Family Independence Administration, Employment Services Division explained.

Five thousand job seekers are invited to attend the citywide job fair and between 50 - 60 employers in the health care, retail, food service security and governmental sectors will be screening candidates for immediate job openings.

Employers interested in participating in job fairs may contact Charlotte Lightner-Lewis at 212-835-7152. ■

HRA/DSS Pilots First Phase of Integrated Human Services Project

In December of 2002, Mayor Bloomberg established a Task Force to explore the use of technology to provide a more efficient, client-centric approach to human services delivery in the City of New York. HRA/DSS was chosen as the primary partner in this mayoral initiative. HRA/DSS, in collaboration with the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT), has established the Integrated Human Services System (IHSS), a multi-agency initiative to standardize services and data across the City's thirteen human service agencies and the community-based organizations with which they contract.

The IHSS project launched the first phase on April 10, 2006, which pilots the on-line NYC Easy Screening tool at two locations in the Bronx before providing the tool for public access. The screening tool enables NYC residents to pre-screen themselves for multiple government programs through one set of questions. The programs available for pre-screening in the pilot are Public Assistance, Food Stamps and six Medicaid-related health insurance programs. In addition, the user can print out a Food Stamp application that is partially completed using the information he or she entered during the pre-screening process.

THE TWO LOCATIONS FOR THE PILOT ARE:

- **HRA Melrose Food Stamp Office**
260 East 161st Street, 4th Floor
Bronx, NY 10451
Pilot hours: Monday through Friday,
9:00am - 5:00pm

- **New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA)**
Melrose Community Center
286 East 156th Street
Bronx, NY 10451
Pilot hours: Monday through Friday,
8:00am - 1:00pm

The current project is the first step in the Integrated Human Services process. In Phase II (expected launch Summer 2006), NYC Easy Screening will be deployed through www.nyc.gov and will offer more programs and applications, including Section 8 Housing, Child Care, Head Start, Universal Pre-Kindergarten, and a variety of tax credit programs.

InHouse will report updates on the IHSS project.

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Office at (212) 331-4990.

For helpful information about other government services and resources:

Please visit www.nyc.gov
Or call 311, the New York City Call Center

Join the HRA Team on
Sunday, May 21, 2006

For more information visit
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