



### HRA Crisis and Disaster Unit Participate in NYC Resilience Exercise

On Sunday, October 24, HRA staff from the Crisis and Disaster Task Force, supervised by the Office of Domestic Violence and Emergency Intervention Services (ODVEIS) assembled at the Crowne Plaza LaGuardia for an exercise simulating a Family Assistance Center, organized as part of the Office of Emergency Management (OEM)'s NYC Resilience Program. A Family Assistance Center (FAC) provides families of the victims of a mass-casualty incident such as a bombing or natural disaster with the latest news, counseling and other services, and helps them reconnect with survivors and identify the deceased.



All agencies and volunteers involved in the exercise took part in a 'Just in Time' training session on emergency response administered by Millie Rosas, HRA's Director of Emergency Intervention Services. Volunteers from the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) played families of the victims of a simulated terrorist bombing drill OEM had conducted earlier. HRA staff spoke with family members as they arrived, offering them compassionate support and ensuring that they received any necessary services. American Red Cross staff members acted as Family Representatives,

escorting family members to where they needed to go and helping them navigate the FAC. HRA staff briefed the family members on the situation and interviewed them to determine who they were looking for. Some families were escorted upstairs to speak with staff from the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) to assist in identifying remains. Red Cross psychological health professionals and chaplains of multiple faiths were on hand to assist with the grieving process and psychological first aid. Staff from the Mayor's Community Affairs Unit (CAU) and Department of Information Technology and Telecom (DoITT) also took part. Evaluators from all participating agencies gauged the effectiveness of the response.

The Family Assistance Center exercise was part of NYC Resilience, a series of six drills and workshops designed to test the City's response to a mass casualty incident. The drills involve staff from a large number of City agencies and other emergency response workers. The previous exercise simulated a car bomb exploding next to a city bus in Long Island City, Queens. There was no actual explosion, and injured victims were played by volunteers in make-up, while mannequins represented the deceased. Had this been an actual emergency, the Family Assistance Center would be set up at least 24 hours after the event to assist family members.

“HRA is very committed to ensuring that staff responding to emergencies continue to be prepared to assist New Yorkers,” said Commissioner Robert Doar in a press conference for the Long Island City exercise. “These exercises are crucial to ensure the City is prepared to respond efficiently to mass causality incidents. In the event of such an incident, HRA’s Office of Emergency Intervention Services would provide necessary services through the Family Assistance Center. I congratulate OEM Commissioner Joe Bruno and his staff for the extraordinary efforts in coordinating NYC Resilience 2010.”

