

HRA Improves Services, Helps Millions of New Yorkers in 2010

In 2010 HRA continued to serve New Yorkers in need through the difficult economy. The Agency expanded access to programs, improved efficiency and reduced costs all while delivering the same high quality services that help millions of New Yorkers work toward self sufficiency. The efforts of HRA and other City agencies have helped New Yorkers avoid the worst of the recession and recover more quickly than the rest of the country. In a press conference on a study of poverty in the City and the nation, Mayor Michael Bloomberg praised the work of City agencies such as HRA for their efforts. "It couldn't have happened if not for the frontline workers in City agencies who, every day, help many New Yorkers meet their most basic needs. I think they deserve enormous credit."

Finding Opportunity for New Yorkers in Need

HRA's Family Independence Administration (FIA) once again helped nearly 75,000 New Yorkers find jobs. Clients received on-the-job training and assistance with job hunting and job readiness skills to move to permanent positions and break the cycle of poverty. FIA Employment Services worked with local businesses and vendor organizations to find clients work in growth industries that can weather the economic downturn.

Expanding Access to Food Stamps, a Vital Work Support

FIA also oversees the Food Stamp Program in New York City, which has grown by almost 30 percent in the past two years in response to rising need. HRA made food stamps more accessible by streamlining the application process, allowing applications by phone or online, and partnering with community groups to help qualified residents apply for benefits. HRA has vigorously promoted food stamps as a work support, providing a means for working families to afford more nutritious food. Throughout the program's rapid growth, the Agency has been able to maintain an accuracy rating of 93.2 percent without adding additional staff, and has taken steps to make the process even more accurate and efficient through advanced technology and in-depth job training. Commissioner Robert Doar praised the Food Stamp Program in recent testimony to the City Council. "There is no question that the \$280 million in benefits that the program distributes each month has been an important ingredient in New York City's weathering of the recent recession."

Improving Food Stamps' Focus on Nutrition

In 2010, Mayor Bloomberg and Governor Paterson presented a plan to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to take sodas and other drinks with high sugar and low nutritional value off the approved purchase list for food stamps. Sugar-sweetened drinks are the single largest contributor to the nation's obesity and diabetes epidemics, and HRA believes subsidizing their purchase through Food Stamps contradicts the mission of the Food Stamp program: to help low-income families afford healthy and nutritious food. If the program is approved by the USDA, it will take effect for two years, and its effectiveness will be rigorously monitored.

A Health Insurance Leader among America's Largest Cities

HRA's Medical Insurance and Community Services Administration (MICSA) helped millions of New Yorkers with medical or assisted living needs in 2010. While the amount of Americans without health insurance increased dramatically in 2009, the amount of uninsured New Yorkers declined slightly, and the percentage of children without health insurance decreased significantly to 4.5 percent, the lowest rate in the eight largest U.S. cities. The Medical Assistance Program (MAP), a division of MICSA which oversees Medicaid and Family Health Plus in New York City, worked with community groups to help make the application process easier for clients, and adopted high tech solutions like online renewal which reduce costs and improve efficiency and convenience for clients. Over 2.8 million people now receive public health insurance in New York. Adult Protective Services (APS), another MICSA division, provides assistance and protection to New York City's most vulnerable residents. In 2010, APS received 18,727 referrals – the most on record. APS was able to visit 99 percent of those referrals accepted for an in-home assessment within three working days. The HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) provides housing assistance, vocational rehabilitation and access to benefits for New Yorkers living with HIV and AIDS. HASA is exploring new strategies to help clients who are living longer, better lives thanks to medical advances improve their quality of life and reach their maximum level of self sufficiency. The Home Care Services Program (HCP), which oversees a variety of assisted living and other care options for New Yorkers in need of long-term medical assistance, was able to reduce average costs to the lowest levels in years while increasing the quality of care.

The Office of Citywide Health Insurance Access (OCHIA) connected even more New Yorkers with private and public health insurance in 2010. Nearly 50,000 New Yorkers have used NYC Health Insurance Link, OCHIA's online decision-support tool, which allows individuals and small businesses to compare health insurance plans they are eligible for side by side, with clear, unbiased information. This year, OCHIA added a new section on the Affordable Care Act, also known as federal health care reform, and how it will affect individuals and small businesses in New York. OCHIA's HealthStat program, which helps NYC residents learn about and enroll in public health insurance at convenient locations throughout the city, provided over 56,000 public enrollment opportunities in 2010.

Ensuring Both Parents Play a Role in Their Children's Lives

The Office of Child Support Enforcement increased child support payment collection by \$21 million in 2010, a continued trend of increased collections at a time when child support collection across the country has declined. OCSE also increased services for both custodial and noncustodial parents, by offering referrals to mediation to settle family disputes, allowing noncustodial parents to modify their payment orders to reflect their actual income through the Modify Department of Social Services Order (MDO) program, and helping unemployed noncustodial parents find work through the Employment Opportunity Program and Back to Work. OCSE also partnered with radio station HOT 97 FM for an outreach campaign called MAN UP, stressing fathers' emotional and financial obligations to their children.

Helping Victims of Domestic Violence

The Office of Domestic Violence and Emergency Intervention Services (ODVEIS) provided shelter to 4,496 victims of domestic abuse and their families in 2010, and helped another 2,884 victims per month with non-residential programs. OCSE, ODVEIS and OCHIA all run programs aimed at helping teens make responsible choices – on teen pregnancy prevention, teen dating violence prevention, and reproductive

health, respectively. In 2010, HRA created a new website, Teen Link, which provides information on these programs and the issues they deal with aimed at teens.

Reducing Costs and Preventing and Prosecuting Fraud

In 2010, HRA continued to cut costs and vigorously investigate and prosecute fraud. The Investigation, Revenue and Enforcement Administration (IREA), in cooperation with law enforcement and other City, State and federal agencies, saved the City a combined \$174 million in cost avoidance and recoveries last year. HRA's Finance Office has reduced expenses by \$1,063 billion in revenue over the past three years, helping the City reduce expenses without layoffs. The Agency has also decreased their space requirements, relinquishing over 346,962 square feet of space over the past few years and saving taxpayers over \$8.6 million a year. HRA's Multi-Service Centers provided affordable workspace for 45 non-profit organizations offering health, social and economic services in 2010. HRA continued to pursue strong ties with the community and excellent customer service. The Office of Community and Immigrant Affairs (OCAIS) answered more than 2 million phone calls and 6,500 letters, and met with 59 community boards and 100 non-profit organizations throughout the city. OCAIS also worked with HRA's other program areas to find solutions for clients with limited English speaking ability.

In 2011 the Agency will continue its goals of placing at least 75,000 clients in jobs, and continuing to supply clients with necessary work supports like food stamps and Medicaid as they work toward self sufficiency. HRA will continue to promote responsible fatherhood through child support enforcement, and through programs like NYC DADS which encourage fathers to play a greater role in their children's emotional lives. HRA will continue to reduce costs, improve efficiency and service, make good use of the latest technology, and vigorously prosecute fraud and eliminate waste. As the economy improves, HRA will ensure that New Yorkers in need receive help and the opportunity to attain self sufficiency.