



HRA's Homelessness Diversion Program Celebrates its Twentieth Anniversary

On December 19, 1992, in the midst of a homelessness crisis, Deputy Commissioner Burt Blaustein authorized Mark Glickson to plan, build, and operate an HRA citywide homelessness diversion program. Homelessness Diversion was an innovative program designed to help New Yorkers at risk of eviction maintain stable housing in their communities. HRA placed Homelessness Diversion Teams in Job Centers (then called Income Support Centers) and at the Department of Homeless Services Emergency Assistance Units. These Homelessness Diversion Teams had specific training and expertise in helping clients avoid eviction and homelessness.

Mr. Glickson, as Assistant Deputy Commissioner for HRA's Office of Housing & Homeless Services/Initiatives (HHSI), led the Homelessness Diversion Program to include specialized staff in teams located in all HRA Job Centers citywide and in the DHS shelter intake facilities for homeless families and individuals in the Bronx and Manhattan. The Diversion Program, now led by Assistant Deputy Commissioner Bruce Jordan and Director Pamela Ross, operates in conjunction with HHSI's centralized Rental Assistance Unit (RAU) that resolves almost 50,000 emergency rental assistance requests a year out of a central office and locations in each of the seven Housing Courts in all five boroughs, a Landlord Ombudsman Services Unit (LOSU) that provides supportive services for both Diversion and RAU, and a Call Center that responds to inquiries from Diversion staff, clients and landlords.

"The Homelessness Diversion Program was created with the goal of eviction prevention in order to preserve affordable housing and to assist homeless families and individuals in securing permanent housing and identify alternative housing options," said Assistant Deputy Commissioner Bruce Jordan. "The extremely dedicated, compassionate, and talented HDU staff, with the support of their sister homelessness prevention programs, have done an unbelievable job of providing homelessness prevention services to tens of thousands of at risk New Yorkers despite increasing barriers created by a faltering economy and tight housing market."

Over the last 20 years, the Homelessness Diversion Program, which does not exist on a comparable scale anywhere else in the country, has helped hundreds of thousands of low-income New Yorkers maintain their housing in an increasingly challenging economy and rent environment. This year, the program is on pace to help almost 120,000 New Yorkers avoid entering a homeless shelter. With a staff dedicated to the mission of preventing homelessness and maintaining housing stability, HHSI plays a critical role in HRA's mission to support low-income New Yorkers in need and their efforts to achieve self-sufficiency and economic stability.

HRA congratulates Homelessness Diversion/HHSI, and all of its staff, on the program's 20th anniversary and for its continuing contributions to our work and to the people and fabric of our City.