



Homelessness Diversion Team at PATH Provides Good Counsel to Families



In May 2007, as an important step in achieving Mayor Bloomberg's goal of reducing chronic homelessness in New York City by two-thirds by 2009, HRA expanded its homelessness diversion staff assigned to the DHS family shelter intake center, Preventive Assistance Temporary Housing, known as PATH.

HRA and DHS collaborated to convert an annex structure into an attractive and functional program office for the incoming unit. Within a month, the new office was up and running and HRA's workers ready to receive 6,974 families who have presented themselves at PATH since May 2007.

The homelessness diversion staff at PATH, who have worked on housing issues (rent arrears, evictions, etc.) in model offices/job centers, are experienced in dealing with people confronting the trauma of homelessness and in recognizing housing situations that may be remedied without shelter placement. Whether or not placement can be averted, the diversion team provides full information on the options available.

"It is very important to have us onsite," manager Nancy Woolard said. "Many applicants have options they don't have information about." The diversion team is present with DHS Intake staff at PATH 24/7 on three shifts.

By far the greatest number of applicants at the intake center are young single mothers and their children. The diversion team will mediate if there is an issue with a parent or other relative with whom applicants were residing that can be resolved. Where diversion workers show their greatest skills is in getting young mothers to realize there are resources that they did not know about which will enable them to become independent and secure their own housing. "When clients see we relate to their circumstances, they open up and trust us, and they begin to see the ways in which they can be stronger and do better," diversion worker Roseline Oyejide said.

On the walls are 'thank you' letters from people who have gotten housing and moved on, reminding those who arrive at the diversion unit at PATH that it can be done.

Work Advantage + Sector Job Prep—a Great Way to Move Up

In July, as part of HRA's mobile outreach to the shelters, HRA Employment Services Team and Arbor Employment & Training began visiting selected shelter sites to introduce employment services to residents and staff. The goal has been for shelter clients to maintain or achieve compliance with the work requirements so that their cases or single issue will be active and to gain employment to qualify for the Work Advantage programs.

Now, Employment Services (ES) has implemented a new program design for the shelter initiative that integrates pre-employment programs for industry-specific jobs. HRA has identified four high-growth industries in which participants/shelter residents have traditionally performed well. They are health care, transportation, food industry and security. Enlisting employers as partners, HRA has coordinated pre-employment programs that lead to immediate job placement and career advancement tracks in each industry.

HRA employment counselors report that many clients have been motivated to develop skills within the new program and find that when clients are given the opportunity to train for jobs and earn credentials and licenses in high-growth industries, they have been more successful in securing employment.

Sectoral management has been developed alongside HRA's traditional job preparation and placement structure, which includes job skills matching and job fairs, Business Link's employer incentive programs and City Hiring Initiative, and BEGIN's Educational Services.

HRA Program Updates

Commissioner's Forum 2007 Q. & A.

The questions you asked at the Forum or sent to the Commissioner's Forum mailbox have been answered. You will find your answers and a message from Commissioner Doar posted on HRA's Intranet homepage.

HRA Collaboration Receives 2007 Hunger Champions Award

HRA's Food Stamp and Nutrition Outreach Program, in a collaboration with the St. Nicholas and Bushwick Food Stamp Centers, was awarded a 2007 U.S. Department of Agriculture Hunger Champions Award for its pilot program helping clients at two food pantries with food stamp applications and access to our programs. Read the article on HRA's Intranet homepage.

2nd Work Advantage Job Fair Ready for Nov. 15th

HRA will hold its second Work Advantage Job Fair bringing job opportunities to shelter residents at the Jacob K. Javits Center on November 15th. Throughout October, FIA's Employment Services has been holding professional workshops at 109 E. 16th Street to help job seekers prepare for the fair. Shelter residents have had a very positive response to the overall orientation and individualized assistance they have been receiving.



HRA HEAP on Call for Winter Emergencies

The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) serves all low-income New Yorkers, including the working poor. The HEAP season opened on November 1st. Once again, HRA's HEAP central staff are ready to respond to on-average 100 emergency calls daily. These emergencies include providing assistance with gas and utility shut-offs, obtaining service extensions, as well as emergency oil deliveries and furnace repairs. HRA must respond by alleviating emergencies within 18 hours.

HRA Perspective Monthly Bulletin

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Event Calendar

HRA Blood Drives

Donate blood at the following HRA location in November:

Friday, November 30, 2007, Investigation Revenue & Enforcement Administration/Bureau of Eligibility Verification Busmobile, 320

Schermerhorn Street, Brooklyn, from 10:00 AM 3:30 PM. To make an appointment, call Tracey Bruno at (718) 473-8234.

PAI Lunch and Learn Workshops

Thursday, November 29, 2007, HRA headquarters, 180 Water Street, 16th floor conference room, 1:00 PM. Dr.

Anthony P. Geraci, an attending neurologist at St. Vincent's Medical Center, and Clinical Assistant Professor of Neurology at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, will speak about migraine headaches.

Waverly Model Office's First Job Fair is State of the Art

Waverly was one of the City's oldest job centers, and its conversion to a model office was greeted enthusiastically by clients and staff. In organizing the



office's first job fair, held on October 30th, center and employment services staff worked together to make it a model of professionalism and productivity. Dressed in interview attire with resumes in hand, clients were hopeful of positive outcomes. The focus was on one-on-one interaction between job seekers and employers.

New business models in high-growth industries hire applicants in full-time positions and provide full benefits after ninety days and career advancement paths. One such example was Forrest Solutions, which contracts businesses' clerical, reproduction, mailing and data entry needs. "Of our 1300 employees, more than 250 are former HRA participants who are coming up through the ranks," said Alison Norris HR manager.

Latino Heritage 2007: Bridging the Past and the Future



OSR Executive Deputy Commissioner Frank Donno, born in Italy, spoke of the value of maintaining language and culture. "How important it is to be able to bring HRA to clients in their native language," he said.

Newly appointed General Counsel Roy Esnard, served as Latino Heritage Committee Chair. Luis Mojica, Vice-Chair, recalled the history of Latino Heritage Celebration from its establishment through congressional act as a one-day commemoration to the month-long celebration we know today, in which government, business and the arts all play a role.

HRA held its 17th celebration of Latino Heritage on October 10th at DC 37 union headquarters. This year, many themes came together as staff reflected on the Latino American experience and the contribution of Latino culture to American life.

Commissioner Doar, who welcomed staff at the morning session, spoke about the common core of the immigrant experience as he described learning about his heritage from his Irish grandparents on a farm in Wisconsin. "Your story is the same as my ancestors. You have a friend in me," he said.



No one has shown greater commitment and pride in his Latino heritage than former Latino Committee Chair Eddie Aguilar, who passed away last August. This year's celebration was dedicated to Eddie and a presentation shown at the afternoon session preserved memories of the occasions we shared with him.

The Latino Heritage Committee funded two scholarships for outstanding academic achievement. The recipients for 2007 are Francesca Diaz and Myra Elizabeth Bon. Ms. Diaz, whose field is finance, is the daughter of HASA case-worker, Rosa Beras. Ms. Bon, a GSS supervisor and a 19-year HRA employee, is pursuing a Masters' Degree in Social Work. The Committee honored two Committee members Lucy Pena, Employee Disciplinary Action Unit secretary, and Marisa Sanchez, deputy director of the Medicaid Centralized Eligibility Reassessment Program, with professional service awards.



The Heritage committee invites staff to become members and join them in planning future activities and celebrations.