

For Immediate Release
March 14, 2003

Commissioners Eggleston and Bhojwani Urge Newly Eligible Immigrants to Enroll in Food Stamp Program

Human Resources Administration Commissioner Verna Eggleston and Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs Commissioner Sayu V. Bhojwani are teaming up with 29 community-based organizations throughout the city to ensure that tens of thousands of newly eligible immigrants apply for the Food Stamp Program.

Recent changes in federal law restore access to the Food Stamp Program for three distinct groups of legal immigrants for whom eligibility had been restricted:

- Qualified disabled immigrants who receive a disability benefit regardless of their date of entry into the United States.
- Qualified immigrants who have lived in the United States for at least five years in a qualified status.
- As of October 1, 2003, qualified legal immigrant children regardless of their date of entry into the United States.

Many of the qualified immigrants fall into the following categories: lawful permanent residents (holders of a green card), refugees, asylees and Cuban and Haitian entrants.

In addition, the law lifts the seven-year cap on eligibility for refugees, asylees, Cuban and Haitian entrants and other categories of legal immigrants.

"The purpose of this outreach effort is to do everything possible to let newly eligible immigrants know that if they are in need, food stamps are available," Commissioner Eggleston said. "Through this joint effort with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs and nearly 30 community-based organizations, we will connect as many immigrants as we can to our food assistance programs."

Commissioner Bhojwani said, "New food stamp eligibility requirements restore benefits to legal immigrants that were taken away by the 1996 welfare reform laws. Our unprecedented partnership with HRA and 29 community-based organizations will increase the potential for reaching newly eligible immigrants and ensure that those eligible receive much-needed assistance during periods of transition in their lives."

As of April 1, nearly 10,000 legal immigrants on Public Assistance who were previously found not eligible because of their immigration status were automatically enrolled in the Food Stamp Program. Another 30,000 will receive letters notifying them of their potential eligibility.

As part of the outreach campaign, HRA and the MOIA will make available an informational pamphlet about the new food stamp eligibility rules and enrollment process in Arabic, Chinese, French, Haitian-Creole, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese and Yiddish.

The community-based organizations involved in the efforts will assist potential applicants with connecting to one of the many HRA food stamp centers or job centers located throughout the five boroughs.

Information about food stamps and where to apply is available by calling a toll free number, (866) FOOD-NYC, or the HRA INFOLINE, at (877) 472-8411, where bilingual workers are available to answer calls.

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Attached is a list of the community-based organizations that are participating in this outreach effort.

Organizations

Asociacion Tepeyac
The Welcome Center
Alianza Dominicana
Project Hospitality
Hispanic Federation
Asian Americans for Equality
Brooklyn Chinese-American Association
Asian American Federation
African Services Committee
Haitian Americans United for Progress
Haitian Centers Council
Jewish Community Council of Greater Coney Island
Shorefront YM-YWHA
Agudath Israel of America
Arab American Association of NY
St. Rita's Center for Immigrants and Refugees
Asian American Consulting Services, Inc.
NAKASEC/YKASEC
Korean American Family Services Center
Community Food Resource Center
Jewish Community House of Bensonhurst
Center for Family Life in Sunset Park
Bedford Haitian Community Center
Committee for Hispanic Children and Families
The Nutrition Consortium of New York State
RAICES, Spanish-Speaking Elderly Council
Chinese-American Planning Council
New York Immigration Coalition