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**MAYOR MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG ANNOUNCES UPDATE ON \$40 MILLION
OVERHAUL OF SOCIAL SERVICES FACILITIES**

\$40 Million Redesign of Facilities and Modern Technology will Improve Services to Clients

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and Human Resource Administration (HRA) Commissioner Verna Eggleston announced today that HRA will fully renovate its Rockaway Center in Far Rockaway by the end of the year to more effectively serve residents in need of job placements, public health insurance and Food Stamps. The \$1.4 million Rockaway Center overhaul is a component of a \$40 million restructuring project – the Model Office Initiative - to enhance the delivery of services to clients through increased efficiency and modern technology. The cost of the Model Office Initiative includes construction, technology modernization and the purchase of office equipment. The initiative has resulted in the renovation of all 19 of Medicaid Insurance facilities, the opening of six Job Centers in all five boroughs, and the opening of two centers to provide crucial services and critical information to individuals living with HIV/AIDS. In all, HRA has renovated more than 4 million of its 5.5 million square feet of office space. To date, 25 Model Offices are functional in areas across the City and 25 more are slated for renovation. At Model Offices clients can complete transactions quickly, freeing them from long lines and extended wait-times. Mayor Bloomberg and Commissioner Eggleston were joined by Queens Borough President Helen Marshall, State Senator Malcolm Smith and The Fortune Society Executive Director JoAnne Page at the site of the agency’s soon-to-be renovated Rockaway Model Office at 219 Beach 59th Street in Far Rockaway.

“Each day, in communities across our City, an increasing number of New Yorkers continue to beat the odds, overcoming many obstacles to move from a state of dependence to self-sufficiency,” said Mayor Bloomberg. “Our Model Offices serve to ensure that we are effectively utilizing our resources by tailoring services to the specific needs of clients and to help people where they live.”

Since January 2002, the number of New Yorker receiving public assistance has fallen to 413,093 from 459,056 – a near 10% reduction. In that same period of time, HRA helped to find 300,000 jobs for residents on public assistance. Currently, the retention rate after three months for those who have found employment through HRA is 85%. After six months, that retention rate is 75% percent. In addition, HRA serves more than 31,000 New Yorkers who are living with HIV/AIDS and 13,000 of their family members. With Model Offices, the administration has put in place a structural system that better links individuals to the variety of programs administered by HRA and effectively utilizes the technology the agency has developed.

(more)

“To meet the Mayor’s challenge of doing more with less and provide enhanced services through efficiency and fulfill our own mandate of meeting clients where they are, HRA has nearly completed an ambitious agency-wide restructuring,” said HRA Commissioner Eggleston. “As a result, HRA has invested in our staff, in our clients and has renewed its commitment and proficiency. Our Model Office Initiative is an outstanding example of the clear vision HRA has adopted.”

The Model Offices serve to improve the physical environment of local service centers and promote the professionalism HRA seeks to develop in the clients served while increasing efficiency in customer service. The improved physical environment at the Model Offices includes:

- A central main reception, which is each applicant/participant’s first stop within the center. It serves as a central “triage” point to ensure that individuals are directed to the appropriate service area.
- A color-coded ticket system which matches the color of service areas throughout the building.
- A computerized routing and tracking system which records applicant/participant traffic, reasons for visit, and the progress of individuals through the center.
- A customer service and information center, which receives most walk-in traffic and can provide a variety of services. Most participants are assisted within a half-hour of their entering the center.
- Employment services offices which provide job placement assistance for applicants and participants.
- Computer kiosks which provide information such as job listings, childcare provider information, benefit information and various forms and informational fliers.
- A fully staffed Children’s Corner in which children can play while their parent and guardian is in the center.

During the time renovations are being made at 219 Beach St., HRA will accommodate the needs of clients receiving public assistance, food stamps and Medicaid in the area. Applications and emergencies will be handled at the Food Stamp Office at 520 Beach 20th Street in Rockaway. Undercare Services, including recertification and employment services, will be provided at the Euclid Job Center, at 404 Pine Street, in Brooklyn. Medicaid applications will be processed at the Food Stamp Office at 520 Beach 20th Street. Its Undercare cases will be served at Elmhurst Hospital, 79-01 Broadway, Queens, and the Jamaica Medicaid Office, 90-75 Sutphin Boulevard, Queens.

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