



**Human Resources  
Administration**  
Department of  
Social Services

## **TESTIMONY**

Matthew Brune, Executive Deputy Commissioner  
Human Resources Administration's Family Independence  
Administration

"Oversight: Barriers that Youth and Young Adults Face In Accessing Public  
Assistance."

*New York City Council General Welfare Committee*

June 22, 2011

Good afternoon Chairwoman Palma and members of the General Welfare Committee. My name is Matthew Brune and I am the Executive Deputy Commissioner of the Human Resources Administration's (HRA) Family Independence Administration (FIA). With me today is Marjorie Cadogan, Executive Deputy Commissioner of the HRA Office of Citywide Health Insurance Access and Lisa Fitzpatrick, Deputy Commissioner of FIA Operations. We are here to discuss the Public Assistance benefits and other services that are available to youth and young adults in New York City through HRA and the policies and procedures that govern our programs.

As a matter of policy, anyone, as an applicant, or as an adult member on behalf of an applicant can file an application for Cash Assistance (CA), Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), (formerly known as Food Stamps), and/or Medicaid (MA). Presently we provide assistance to many children who are part of our various program caseloads although the majority of case heads in these programs are adults. However, there are also instances where youth are considered the head of the household and hence, have their own case. Today, I hope to clarify how youth are defined for the various programs and provide information on the policies as they relate to youth served through HRA services.

#### ***YOUTH AND THE CASH ASSISTANCE CASELOAD***

There are presently 190,000 households in New York City receiving Cash Assistance (CA) with 1,700 youth under the age of 21 as the head of the household. Federal and state statute and regulations for youth applying for or in receipt of Cash Assistance have various eligibility, and employment requirements.

#### ***Cash Assistance Eligibility***

Youth between the ages of 18 and 21 are not required to be under adult supervision, but since parents are responsible to support children up to the age of 21 in New York State, the income and resources of legally responsible relatives in the household are included in the eligibility determination process. These youth are held to the same eligibility requirements as an adult. For instance, they must comply with work rules, finger imaging, the eligibility verification process, and the requirement to seek child support from noncustodial parents, both theirs and those of their minor child(ren), if any, unless otherwise exempt (e.g., assessed to be at risk for domestic violence as a result of cooperation).

Federal statute and state regulations require that as a condition of Cash Assistance eligibility, an unmarried, pregnant and/or parenting minor under 18 years of age must reside with a parent, legal guardian, or adult relative unless the minor meets a living arrangement exemption criteria. HRA works with the Administration for Children Services (ACS) to determine if an unmarried pregnant or parenting minor under the age of 18 meets the living arrangement exemption criteria. The minor must also be enrolled in an educational program that will assist him/her in obtaining a High School Diploma or GED, unless there is indication that the minor lacks the requisite capacity (medical, mental health-related or other) to successfully complete the course of study.

### Cash Assistance Work Requirements

Individuals under the age of 21 who are not otherwise exempt from the work requirements are required during the application period and if accepted for recurring CA, to participate in an approved work activity. If they have not completed high school or received their GED, HRA offers enrollment in the BEGIN program and their high school attendance or GED classes may be an approved full-time activity up to the age of 20. Individuals 18 years of age or older can also choose to go to an employment vendor if they would prefer to focus on finding a job rather than participating in an educational activity. During the employment assessment they are able to raise any barriers to employment which may prevent them from participating in an HRA approved activity.

### ***CONNECTING CASH ASSISTANCE APPLICANTS/PARTICIPANTS TO CHILD CARE***

In order to support all applicants/participants who are engaged in employment and educational activities, HRA works with them to secure child care, if needed. Applicants/participants are provided with an overview of the child care assistance that is available and all clients receive the New York State booklet titled “What You Should Know About Your Rights and Responsibilities” which outlines child care assistance. We also assist parents with locating a child care provider by making at least two referrals to regulated/licensed child care providers that are appropriate, accessible, and affordable. Parents also have the option of securing an approved informal child care provider.

### ***DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES AVAILABLE TO YOUTH***

Any individual who is seeking his or her own Cash Assistance case because of a domestic violence situation at home can be served by HRA’s domestic violence program. Every applicant for Cash Assistance is screened for domestic violence. If there is an indication of domestic violence, or if an applicant/participant reports an issue of domestic violence at any point, he/she can be referred to a domestic violence liaison. The domestic violence liaison will assess the needs of the individual and ensure he/she is residing in a safe environment and can safely participate in work or work related activities. Young adults can also be served through HRA’s Anti-Domestic Violence Eligibility Needs Team (ADVENT) which assists victims of domestic violence who reside in shelter with accessing services and meeting Cash Assistance requirements. Counseling and support services are also available through our non-residential domestic violence service providers. Individuals who are deemed to be vulnerable to domestic violence may obtain waivers from the requirement to cooperate with child support enforcement and work requirements.

### ***YOUTH AND SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)***

There are 1.8 million participants in New York City receiving SNAP with approximately 750,000 minors under the age of 21 participating in the program of which approximately 17,000 are the head of a household. A young adult can apply for SNAP without his/her parents, but Federal rules require parents of youth under age 22 residing in the same household to be part of the SNAP benefits household. These youth may also be asked to verify their income as it could affect the family’s SNAP benefit level. Individuals under the age of 16 are exempt from SNAP work rules requirements and 16 – 17 year olds who are attending high school or attending a

training program on an at least half time basis are also exempt from work rules requirements. Individuals under the age of 18 are exempt from finger imaging.

### ***CONNECTING YOUTH TO HEALTH INSURANCE OPTIONS***

A recent U. S. Census survey showed that New York City ranked first among the nation's eight largest cities in having the lowest rate of uninsured children under the age of 18 - 4.5 percent. Young people in New York City have access to and may be eligible for several public health insurance programs. These include HRA-administered Medicaid, which is available for all ages, and Family Health Plus, which is available for youth and adults ages 19 to 64 who meet income and other eligibility requirements. Youth under the age of 19 who meet income and eligibility requirements may be eligible for Child Health Plus, which is administered by the New York State Department of Health.

HRA also works in a number of ways with other city agencies, schools and programs to connect youth and their families to public health insurance.

### ***In-School Connection to Health Insurance***

Through our collaboration with the Office of School Health, jointly administered by the NYC Departments of Education and Health and Mental Hygiene, we provide many ways for uninsured youth to get coverage. As part of the HealthStat initiative that we coordinate, each New York City public school serving youth 4-20 years old is partnered with a facilitated enroller organization. These schools work to have enrollers on-site during school registration days and at other events to assist parents with health insurance applications. The facilitated enroller organizations also accept referrals from school-based health centers, parent coordinators and through the electronic school lunch application available on ACCESS NYC to follow up with uninsured youth and their families who request help with public health insurance enrollment.

We also regularly provide trainings and educational information on public and private health insurance options to school staff, including parent coordinators, school nurses and school-based health center staff. Similarly, we work with City University of New York (CUNY) to make information about health insurance available to older youth through online materials and trainings for health center directors on its 18 campuses.

### ***Health Insurance Support in the Community***

We also work to connect youth with health insurance outside the school setting through our partnership with the City's Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) and their Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). Youth who participate in DYCD programs are asked whether they have health insurance and those who are uninsured are offered assistance in getting public health insurance coverage. In addition, for the past eight years, youth are provided an opportunity to seek coverage if uninsured through the SYEP application.

Finally, we provide information on our online health insurance resource, NYC Health Insurance Link, about private health insurance options for families not eligible for public health insurance, including information on new dependent coverage expansion rules. These new federal and state rules permit young adults to stay on a parent's health plan through age 25 and allow some

young adults to obtain coverage through a parent's plan through age 29, respectively. NYC Health Insurance Link can be found by visiting [www.nyc.gov/hilink](http://www.nyc.gov/hilink).

***PREGNANCY PREVENTION, PREGNANCY AND PARENTING, AND OTHER SUPPORTS FOR YOUTH***

HRA administers a number of programs that assist youth with their reproductive health needs that range from focusing on pregnancy prevention to providing support throughout a pregnancy.

***Perfect Opportunity for Individual Skill and Educational Development (POISED)***

For women on Cash Assistance who are pregnant and /or have a child under the age of three, the Perfect Opportunity for Individual Skill and Educational Development (POISED) program offers special education and employment services, such as health and parenting classes, career planning, job placement, academic and computer training. This program also offers home services for women who are exempt from work activities due to a high-risk pregnancy and those who have a child less than 13 weeks of age.

***Teenage Services Act Program (TASA)***

Teens receiving Cash Assistance and /or Medicaid who are pregnant are also connected to the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) through the Teenage Services Act (TASA) Program. TASA is a state-mandated case management program serving over 1,400 young persons under 21 years of age. Some of the referrals provided by TASA are for child care, parenting skill classes, health services (before and after birth of the child), Women, Infants and Children (WIC), and others. HRA refers participants of POISED to TASA.

***Public Health Insurance Programs for Pregnant and Parenting Youth***

Public health insurance, including Medicaid, Family Health Plus and Child Health Plus, provides family planning services, prenatal care and pregnancy-related services for youth. In term of prevention, HRA also administers the Family Planning Benefit Program (FPBP), a Medicaid expansion program that provides confidential coverage for reproductive health services, including contraceptives and counseling for sexually transmitted infections for teens. FBBP is available to men as well as women of childbearing age, including youth. Working with student interns we have conducted pilot projects in several school-based health centers located in high schools in the Bronx to help students learn about and enroll in FPBP. We are also working with 14 Public Allies volunteers to gauge high school students' perspective regarding teen pregnancy prevention messaging through surveys and focus groups to develop materials that communicate effectively with teens and help them to take action to protect themselves.

***No Kidding***

No Kidding is a teen pregnancy prevention program operated through HRA's Office of Child Support Enforcement where young parents act as peer educators for high school students. During sessions, peer educators share their experiences, facilitate interactive exercises, and educate participants on establishing paternity for a child and obtaining a formal child support order. The program was piloted in spring 2009 with nearly 200 students and has expanded to

11 schools in 2010 serving more than 500 students. No Kidding will continue to expand by including 10 more schools with school based health centers for the next school year.

The No Kidding program has also formed partnerships with other city agencies that serve youth and young adults. In January 2010, we partnered with the Department of Correction to create a pilot program for incarcerated youth that has served approximately 50 male inmates and recently expanded to include female inmates. Also, our partnership with the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) has also allowed us to serve approximately 350 Summer Youth Employment Program participants.

***Other Resources***

HRA also provides information on pregnancy prevention and health services online, making this information more readily accessible to teens through its webpage at:

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/hra/teenlink/html/home/home.shtml>.

Thank you. At this time, Ms. Cadogan, Ms. Fitzpatrick and I would be happy to answer your questions.