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A Time of Examination,  
A Time of Discovery,  
A Time of Accomplishment

January 2002 - June 2003

Progress Report:

Human Resources Administration,

Department of Social Services, New York City



*“The Human Resources Administration is committed to being a model social service agency that maximizes individual self-sufficiency, familial responsibility and community involvement.”*

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## A Message From the Commissioner...

*At the beginning of 2002, our city and our nation were still reeling from the unprecedented events of September 11, 2001. We at the Human Resources Administration were challenged, on so many levels, as a result of that day; challenged to deliver much-needed emergency services to families of the victims; challenged to provide Disaster Relief Medicaid and food stamps to hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers left jobless or without adequate health insurance; challenged to carry out our mission despite serious damage to some of our key facilities; challenged to use our agency's resources to contribute to the overall response by, and recovery of, the City. This was the environment in which we began the year 2002, but like so many New Yorkers, we approached these challenges with courage, determination and resourcefulness.*

*At the same time, the economic downturn, exacerbated by the attacks, presented all City agencies with difficult budget decisions. Despite fiscal and staffing constraints, we succeeded in preserving the quality of our services and programs, continuing initiatives begun in the wake of the attack, and continuing our mission of assisting New Yorkers and their families to attain their maximum level of self-sufficiency.*

*In addition to difficult choices and challenges, 2002/2003 presented us with new opportunities to build on our past successes and create new solutions for the future. Our nation is entering a new phase of welfare reform, for which HRA has worked diligently to prepare. Through analysis of our own programs and policies, local and national consensus building, and customer assessment, we have helped Mayor Bloomberg develop a plan for this year's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Reauthorization. It focuses on preventing the need for welfare among those at risk, job retention for those currently in the workforce, and legal flexibility to meet all clients and their families "where they are."*

*Towards meeting clients where they are, we have begun to emphasize the need for customized assistance services. This exciting initiative will provide a seamless continuum of care to our customers and their families, so that we may address each individual's unique set of circumstances in order to assist them to achieve their highest level of self-sufficiency. Aiding in this process are many exciting technological, customer service, efficiency and accountability initiatives, encompassing all of our program areas and administrative functions. This report provides an overview of our progress and accomplishments with respect to this and several other key initiatives, while looking forward to our goals and priorities for 2003/2004.*

*I am proud of and energized by the progress HRA has made this year. With more than 14,000 employees, two million recipients of our services, a budget of \$13 billion, and \$644 million in contracts, HRA is the largest local social services agency in the country, if not the world. I have great confidence in our agency's ability to continue to accomplish more for our clients and our City despite increasingly difficult economic conditions. We look forward to the opportunities the rest of 2003 and 2004 affords us as we continue to improve the quality of life for New Yorkers, one family at a time.*

Sincerely,

Verna Eggleston  
Administrator/Commissioner



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## ***Inside:***

Comprehensive Services for Complex Needs:  
HRA's Program Areas p. 5

Human Resources Administration  
Accomplishments p. 6

*Services...*

*Improving customer service through technology...*

*Improving customer service through accountability...*

*Improving service delivery through agencywide  
strategic planning...*

Looking Forward:  
Commissioner's Priorities p. 16

*Charting the Course:*

*TANF Reauthorization and the Next Phase of Welfare Reform*

*Shelter From the Storm:*

*The Commissioner's Umbrella Model of Service Delivery*

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## Comprehensive Services for Complex Needs: HRA's Program Areas

### **Family Independence Administration (FIA)**

Workers at FIA's Job Centers determine and monitor customers' eligibility for public assistance, food stamps, Medicaid and childcare services. They help people get on the road to self-sufficiency by connecting them to job search, job placement, vocational, educational and training services appropriate for their work histories and skills, and provide access to transitional benefits. To help families make the transition from welfare to work, HRA provides transitional food stamps, Medicaid and subsidized childcare for eligible public assistance families.

### **Office of Domestic Violence and Emergency Intervention (ODVEIS)**

The Office of Domestic Violence and Emergency Intervention Services (ODVEIS) provides social services and emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence. ODVEIS directly operates one emergency domestic violence shelter, monitors 38 state-licensed emergency residential programs and oversees private customer referrals for four transitional housing programs. In addition, the Office of Emergency Intervention Services (OEIS) includes Crisis and Disaster Services, which responds to citywide emergencies such as hurricanes and snow storms; the Heatline, Utility Assistance Program and the federally funded Home Energy Assistance Program, which provide energy related services to low income households; and the Emergency Food Assistance Program, which supplements the food supply in more than 600 food pantries and soup kitchens city-wide.

### **Medical Assistance Programs (MAP)**

There are currently four different public health insurance programs available in New York State, which are administered in New York City by HRA's Medical Assistance Programs (MAP). These include Medicaid, Child Health Plus, Family Health Plus and the Family Planning Benefit Program. Also available from MAP are related social service programs:

**Home Care Services (HCS):** HCS provides home attendants, housekeepers, home health aides and long-term home health care for medically needy customers.

**Adult Protective Service (APS):** APS assists adults who, because of mental or physical disabilities, are unable to manage their own resources, carry out the activities of daily living, or protect themselves from neglect or hazardous situations; and have no one available who is willing and able to responsibly assist them.

### **Office of Health and Mental Health Services (OHMHS)**

The Office of Health and Mental Health Services (OHMHS) is a specialized office that provides direct services and clinical expertise in the areas of health, mental health and substance abuse to HRA's other program components. OHMHS has several functional units including the Visiting Psychiatric Service, the Placement Assessment and Client Tracking Unit, and the Special Needs Policy and Planning Unit.

### **HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA)**

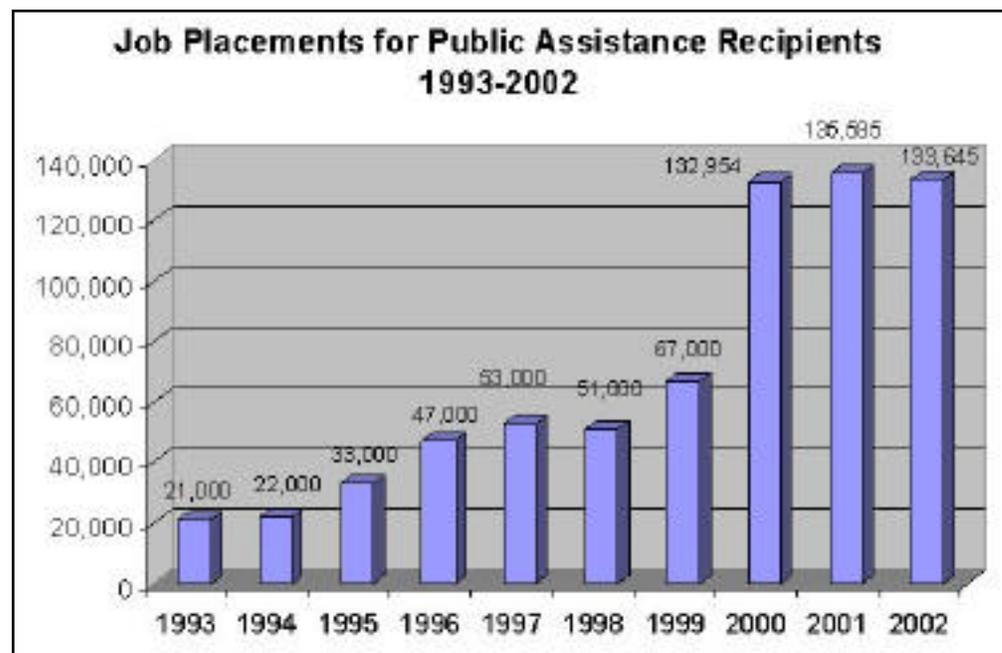
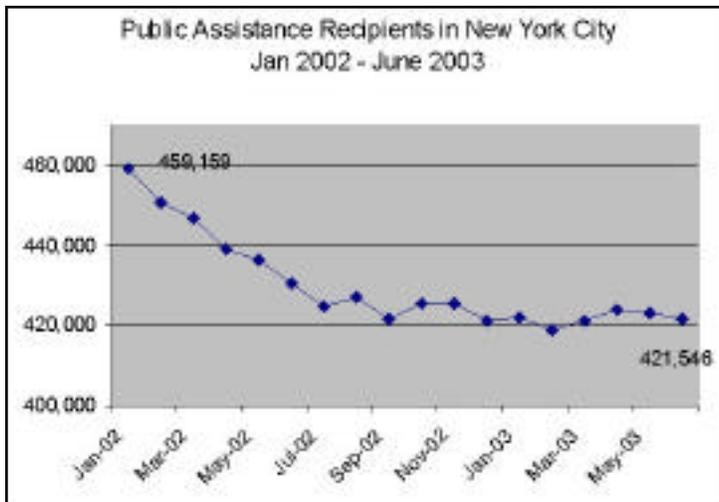
The HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) provides essential services and benefits to individuals with AIDS and symptomatic HIV illness and their families. The goal is to enable customers to manage the illness and live their lives with the fullest independence possible. HASA provides an integrated network of housing services, including securing emergency housing and securing permanent supportive housing. The Housing Unit also facilitates all HASA referrals made to the New York City Housing Authority to ensure priority status and placement.



# Human Resources Administration Accomplishments in 2002/2003

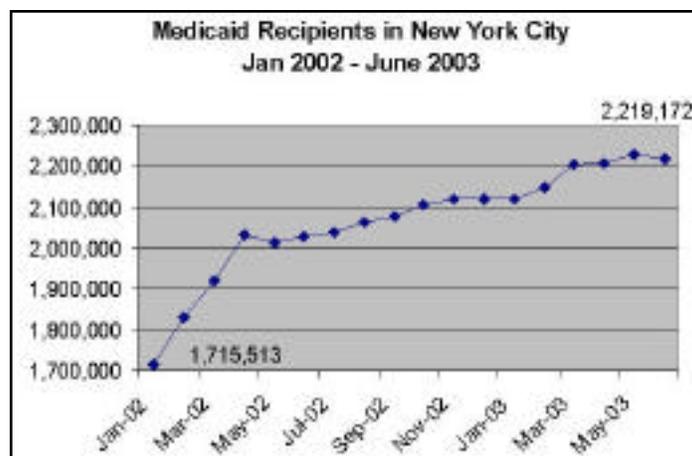
## Services...

- **Moved customers from public assistance to the world of work.** Despite the weakening economy, HRA helped its customers find a reported 133,645 jobs in calendar year 2002. In the first six months of 2003, HRA customers found an additional 30,242 jobs. Of those who found a job, 79% were retained for three months and 69% were retained for at least six months. Since January 2002, the welfare rolls have been reduced by 37,613 people. These successes were fueled by the implementation of several key technology and accountability initiatives that allowed HRA to serve its customers more efficiently and effectively.

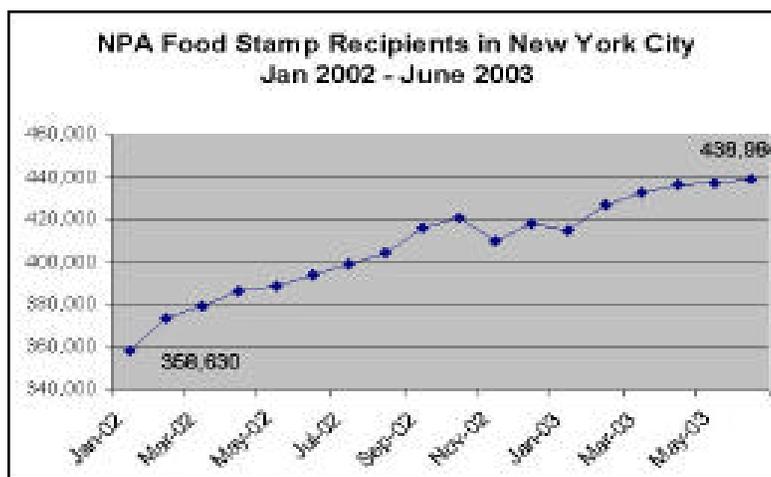




• **Expanded health insurance coverage for low-income New Yorkers.** In 2002, HRA implemented the Family Health Plus program in New York City while simultaneously completing the transition of Disaster Relief Medicaid recipients to ongoing coverage. As of April 2003, 137,000 people had enrolled in Family Health Plus. To assist customers in renewing their health coverage, MAP simplified the process by mailing a short form to customers whose benefits were ending. Rather than coming into Medicaid offices and meeting face-to-face with workers to renew Medicaid/Family Health Plus benefits, customers can now fill out the form at home, resulting in greater efficiency and avoiding work and childcare conflicts. Telephone help lines and community-based organization walk-in centers are available to assist in the process, should the customer need help.



• **Increased food stamp participation for those not receiving cash assistance.** HRA increased the number of non-public assistance (NPA) food stamp recipients by 80,354 since January 2002. New York City provides more than \$850 million dollars a year in food stamp benefits to low income New Yorkers.





- **Provided work-focused services designed to meet individual needs.** HRA opened two specialized job centers, one serving veterans, the other serving refugees and immigrants. HRA also increased the number of training vouchers issued to public assistance and food stamp recipients and increased the number of customers in its education, training and job search programs. In order to emphasize retention, one of Mayor Bloomberg's priorities for welfare reform, the payment milestones for employment contractors were changed. Employment contractors now receive more funding for demonstrating job retention than for initial job placement.



- **Improved customer service by creating and operating consumer-oriented Model Medicaid Offices.** Thirteen model offices have been established in existing MAP Eligibility Offices since the beginning of 2002. The offices occupy renovated space and are supported by modern computer technology. The Model Medicaid Offices were designed to significantly improve customer service through paperwork reduction and workflow redesign, resulting in minimal customer wait time, increased service volume and reduced number of office visits required to complete business. HRA plans to convert all of its Medicaid offices to this format.



- **Improved HRA's ability to provide critical programs and services to individuals and families living with HIV/AIDS.** HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) serves over 31,000 clients with HIV illness and AIDS per month. That number increases to 45,000 when family members and partners are included. Since July 2002, HASA successfully:
  - Decentralized the decision-making process to reduce turnaround from 30 days to within 48 hours when determining emergency financial need.

- Rolled out FACTORS, an automated case management tracking system. FACTORS collects customer data from the point of



assessment, including every customer contact with HASA, promoting better accountability for case management.

- Improved community relations by partnering with advocates and community groups to shape and promote better service delivery.

- **Improved the efficiency of services provided to New York City's homebound population.**

MAP's Home Care Services Program serves over 66,000 customers a month. By improving the efficiency of program delivery, MAP succeeded in meeting the Home Care Savings Target imposed by the state legislature. Careful management of service needs by home care staff, including substantive collaboration with authorized Medicaid providers, resulted in MAP's achievement of the required level of service, saving New York City the full \$32 million in FY 2003.



- **Closely examined the service needs of victims of domestic violence in order to provide the highest quality and most beneficial services and programs.**

In 2002, Mayor Bloomberg set a vision of "One City, One Client, One Plan" to address the need of City agencies to treat clients as a whole. In order to forward this vision, HRA examined data from other agencies on domestic violence victims to provide enhanced programs and services, such as the Alternatives to Shelter Program, Substance Abuse/Domestic Violence Initiative, Adopt a School Program, and Literacy Program, to better serve this population.



- **Provided crucial services to victims of the September 11th attacks.**

Through the spring of 2002, HRA's Family Assistance Center provided crucial services, including Disaster Relief Medicaid and food stamps, to September 11th victims. In addition, HRA utilized federal funds to pay for counseling and support services for more than 1500 public school students near the World Trade Center Site.



## ***Improving customer service through technology...***

• **Continued progress towards modernizing HRA via technological improvements and initiatives.** The effective use of technology is essential to HRA's efforts to improve customer service and ensure the integrity of agency processes. In an agency of over 14,000 employees and serving more than two million clients, any agencywide initiative is an enormous undertaking. However, despite the logistical challenges, several systems aimed at improving customer service through increased data accuracy and program integrity have been successfully implemented.



**Paperless Office System:** POS is a computer system that creates an electronic customer case record, making the old "paper case record" obsolete. POS was developed to support HRA's Job Centers by creating an organized information database of case history, enabling caseworkers to locate customer information quickly and to access records from any POS site. POS has been fully implemented at 24 sites. The benefits of the POS are many, and include:

- Improved worker productivity
- Improved customer service through efficient processing
- Decreased center traffic through the elimination of multiple customer return trips due to misplaced or lost documentation
- Improved overall quality of center operations

**Imaging:** Imaging has significantly reduced the customer's paperwork burden through the electronic management, storage and retrieval of HRA's case records. Imaging supports POS and

case record storage by creating electronic case folders where all customer documents can be stored and retrieved. To date, HRA has imaged over 1.8 million files from job centers, MAP offices, food stamp offices and other programmatic caseloads. Benefits to the agency and its customers include:

- Increased worker efficiency
- On-line data retrieval and access
- Increased program integrity
- Centralized data storage
- Less paperwork and fewer visits for customers

**Automated Childcare Information System:** ACCIS, an automated payment system for childcare providers, has assisted the customers of both HRA and the Administration of Children's Services (ACS) in receiving subsidized day care, by allowing HRA and ACS to share the available pool of day care slots and to transfer cases to each other, as the customer's eligibility status requires. ACCIS allows the City to provide safe and reliable childcare for customers completing training and moving into the workforce.



**Interactive Voice Response Technology:** IVR is the system that supports HRA’s InfoLine, a touch-tone, multilingual, automated telephone service whereby customers and vendors can access information, inquire about the status of applications and learn about the services and programs provided by HRA. InfoLine is available to serve customers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and is connected to the City’s automated “311” line.

**Payment and Claiming System:** PaCs tracks payment requests for customer placement and retention milestones achieved by employment contractors. PaCs processes paperwork electronically, allowing HRA to expeditiously pay contractors who demonstrate success in helping customers retain jobs. The system also allows all parties to track cases at all times on the web, in order to understand customer activities and better serve their needs.

**Substance Abuse Tracking and Reporting System:** STARS facilitates the exchange of information between HRA and its substance abuse treatment vendor providers by allowing vendors to submit program participation information, employment information, graduations and discharges, substance abuse test results and transfer requests. The program allows HRA to monitor the progress of patients as well as their compliance with treatment and rehabilitative plans. HRA currently accepts and tracks invoices electronically from over 100 vendors of substance abuse treatment programs.





## ***Improving customer service through accountability...***

- **Improved HRA's accountability by introducing clear and objective integrity measures into the agency's administrative functions.** In 2002, HRA initiated a Contract Review Board and a Personnel Review Committee to ensure customer service improvements through the continuity, objectivity and integrity of two of the agency's key administrative functions.

**Contract Review Board:** HRA's integrity lies in its contracts. Realizing this, Commissioner Eggleston issued Executive Order Number 675 on February 15, 2002, establishing a Contract Review Board (CRB). The CRB meets weekly to review new and existing contracts for compliance with the City's procurement rules and ensure the integrity of the contracting process. All binding agreements are reviewed by the CRB and forwarded to the Commissioner for her approval.

**Personnel Review Committee:** Commissioner Eggleston established the Personnel Review Committee in April 2002 to ensure the integrity of HRA's personnel actions. The Committee, comprised of representatives from HRA's finance, budget and program areas, meets weekly and considers personnel actions in light of budget constraints. The PeRC advises the Commissioner on personnel decision-making within HRA, allowing for quicker personnel actions.

- **Improved community and stakeholder relations within the City through outreach and consensus building on key issues.** HRA has built working relationships with legal and special populations advocates as well as community members and civic leaders by reinstating the Commissioner's Social Service Advisory Board and establishing a Legal Advisory Committee. These efforts, which seek to improve customer service through community involvement in HRA policy and program decisions, continue to be administered by the agency's Office of Constituent and Community Affairs and the Office of Legal Affairs, respectively.



• **Settled key litigation that addressed customer service.** In an attempt to improve services and realize the mayoral goal of resolving outstanding cases, HRA was involved in the settlement of key cases. The agency focused on partnering with legal advocates and other City agencies to address customer needs. The resolution of these cases represented a commitment on the part of HRA and the City of New York to work with advocacy groups for the benefit of the customers while integrating and improving service delivery across agencies.

• **Continued utilization of performance measurement and management tools to improve agency efficiency and accountability while expanding the applications of these tools.** HRA has continued its success with outcome-based performance measurement in several key areas. The goal is to review data in a timely fashion, share data with the appropriate parties and utilize it to drive service improvement. HRA is in the process of expanding performance measurement tools to examine and improve the performance, accountability and efficiency of all administrative and programmatic areas.



**JobStat** meetings take place weekly and bring together HRA job center staff with HRA executive staff. Two centers are reviewed each week. Individual center performance on indicators such as customer job retention, compliance, error rates and application processing time are reviewed and compared to city averages. This comparison allows center staff to speak to particular challenges and successes they may have had in serving customers and promotes the development of internal best practices at HRA.

**VendorStat** weekly meetings review the employment contractors' performance on indicators such as activity attendance, placement and retention. Vendors are ranked according to their performance on these indicators, promoting competition among contractors. To hold the contractor accountable for individual customers, as well as overall performance, the VendorStat meetings conclude with a review of specific customer circumstances.



## ***Improving service delivery through agencywide strategic planning...***

- **Developed and started implementing agencywide Strategic Plans, aimed at improving service delivery to all of HRA's customers.** In efforts to identify effective strategies and new initiatives to improve customer service throughout the agency, HRA engaged its employees in various employee forums, planning sessions and work groups. These projects helped shape HRA's culture, included employees, and promoted teamwork.

**Executive Staff Strategic Planning Sessions:** Since 2002, the Executive Staff of HRA engaged in two strategic planning sessions towards defining the goals and strategies for the next phase of welfare reform. Building upon the successes of the last seven years, the agency's focus was on improvement, particularly in the service of the hard-to-engage population.

The first session in March 2002 focused on the agency's message and priorities, both internal and external. Methods of communication, within the agency and to the community, were examined and prioritized.

Once overall priorities were set, a second strategic planning session took place at the end of October 2002 concentrating on the improvement of services and their delivery. Five work groups were created and reported their findings and recommendations in April 2003; they were charged with:

- **Assessment Redesign:** Redesigning the assessment and intake process to ensure proper connection to services for all customers: those who are able to work (engageable), those who are work-limited due to physical or mental disability (partially engageable) and those who are unable to work due to a serious medical condition (unengageable).
- **Comprehensive Service Model:** Developing a customized assistance plan to address employment and wellness issues for partially engageable and unengageable customers.
- **Retention:** Developing a recommendation to implement the retention aspect of the Mayor's TANF plan.
- **Prevention:** Developing a recommendation to implement the prevention aspect of the Mayor's TANF plan.
- **Culture/Team-Building/Customer Service:** Developing a plan to drive cultural change and improve customer service throughout the agency.



**Employee Forums:** In an effort to engage all of the employees of HRA in an ongoing dialogue about their roles, needs, ideas and concerns, Commissioner Eggleston extended formal invitations to all staff members to attend a series of employee forums. Held at the Jacob Javits Center throughout June and July of 2002, the Commissioner had the opportunity to personally share her goals and vision for the agency with all of the employees who would help her achieve it.

Attendees were given the opportunity to ask questions and offer feedback and suggestions both at the forums and after the event via a special e-mail address. Commissioner Eggleston responded to every question personally, promoting a climate of trust, cooperation and respect within the agency, all of which lead to improved customer service.



## Looking Forward: Commissioner's Priorities 2003/2004

### ***Charting the Course:***

#### ***TANF Reauthorization and the Next Phase of Welfare Reform***

While there has been a marked reduction in the City's welfare rolls and many former recipients have transitioned into meaningful employment, there remains a growing percentage of customers who are hard to engage, if not completely unengageable. These customers generally face multiple barriers to self-sufficiency, such as mental and physical health issues, housing problems, childcare needs and substance abuse.

The Mayor's TANF Reauthorization Plan, announced in May 2002, addresses the needs of hard-to-serve populations, while focusing on the maintenance and promotion of customer self-sufficiency. To these ends, HRA placed a strong focus on employment retention and welfare prevention. Employment retention requires that HRA provide a continuum of medical and transitional benefits to ensure that those who have recently entered the workforce have the support they need to remain and thrive there. Welfare prevention requires that HRA work with other agencies that predominantly serve youth to provide goal-oriented educational programs. Those programs are intended to foster genuine work skills, and target individuals at-risk of becoming welfare dependent (e.g., children of welfare recipients, youth aging out of foster care or the juvenile justice system, those leaving prison and teenage parents).

Through the summer and fall of 2002, Commissioner Eggleston embarked on a seven-city tour to build consensus on TANF Reauthorization among diverse regions and communities. Her visits and correspondences with social service agencies in Boston, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., and state agencies in Texas and South Carolina, illustrated the similar challenges facing different parts of the country with respect to the next phase of welfare reform. The Commissioner met with the directors of these jurisdictions to build consensus on issues that needed to be addressed with respect to TANF Reauthorization. The tour also brought together ideas and strategies from various administrators, built support for HRA's position on TANF Reauthorization and reaffirmed New York City's status as a proactive, successful leader in the area of welfare reform.



In order to accomplish these goals and increase workforce participation, municipalities such as New York City will need continued TANF funding as well as increased local flexibility to ensure that the right services are reaching the right people. In addition, the City believes that immigrants who are legally residing in the United States need to be extended the same SSI, Medicaid, TANF and food stamp aid as naturalized citizens. All of these needs were addressed in the Mayor's TANF Reauthorization Plan.

***Shelter From the Storm:  
The Commissioner's Umbrella Model of Service Delivery***

Throughout 2002, HRA engaged in a rigorous process of examination and discovery. The agency sought to answer some key questions: *Where has HRA been? Where should HRA be headed? How can HRA get there?* HRA has been incredibly successful during the first phase of welfare reform, reducing the City's rolls from over 1.1 million in 1995 to 421,546 at the end of June 2003. During that time, HRA helped to transition former welfare recipients into meaningful employment, contributing to their continued success by providing them with support services such as childcare and medical insurance.

The Mayoral position on TANF Reauthorization defines HRA's direction by emphasizing the goals of welfare prevention and employment retention for the agency's customers and the City. The agency's focus for 2003 is on achieving these goals and restructuring the agency's program areas to meet clients' needs in an all-inclusive manner. Building upon a foundation of customized assistance, a model of service delivery that assesses and treats the client and the family as a whole has been developed. This seamless model, aptly described as an "umbrella", emphasizes individually tailored customer and family services delivered in a highly integrated fashion across the agency's program areas.

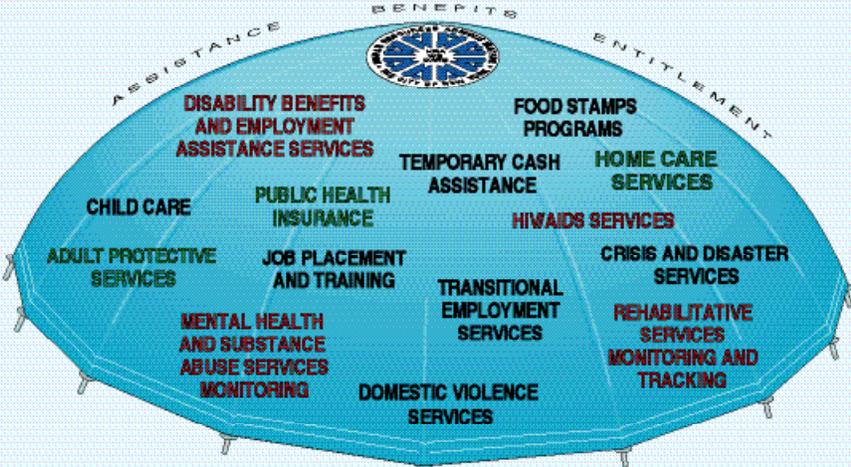


Looking forward, HRA is using this model to build upon the technological, accountability and customer service advancements of 2002 so that the agency's vision of meeting each client where they are may become a reality. Underlying this model are HRA's three major priorities for 2003/2004: **retention, prevention, and customized assistance services.**

- **RETENTION: *It is HRA's priority to help the hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers who have moved off public assistance to continue to succeed.*** The agency will accomplish the goal of retention by continuing to build the capacity of those who are moving and have moved into the world of work. HRA will provide transitional supports such as health insurance, childcare, job skills training and crisis and disaster services not only to keep customers in their jobs, but also to help them climb higher on the ladder of success.
- **PREVENTION: *The best welfare reform is to keep people from needing welfare in the first place.*** To prevent welfare dependence, HRA will direct services towards the young people most at risk of becoming welfare recipients. Towards this end, HRA will continue to expand its collaborations with other city agencies such as the Department of Education, the Administration for Children's Services and the Department of Juvenile Justice. By providing young adults with the tools they will need to succeed in the world of work, HRA and its partners will create future generations of self-sufficient New Yorkers.
- **CUSTOMIZED ASSISTANCE SERVICES: *"One City, One Client, One Plan."*** HRA will keep with its philosophy of serving the whole client and the whole family. In order to coordinate care across HRA and among city agencies, HRA will carefully assess customers, closely monitor their progress and collaborate with city agencies to work aggressively towards removing any and all barriers that might impede customers as they strive for their maximum level of self-reliance.



**CUSTOMIZED ASSISTANCE SERVICES**  
**FAMILY INDEPENDENCE ADMINISTRATION**  
**MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**





**City of New York**  
**Human Resources Administration**  
**Department of Social Services**  
**Verna Eggleston**  
**Administrator/Commissioner**