

Testimony of Scott French, Administrator
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Before the New York City Council, Committee on General Welfare
Food Insecurity Hearing
April 13, 2026

Good morning. My name is Scott French and I serve as Administrator of the Human Resources Administration (HRA) within the Department of Social Services (DSS). I would like to thank Chair Hudson and the members of the Committee on General Welfare for convening today's hearing on food insecurity. I am joined today by HRA Chief Operating Officer Matthew Brune, Department of Homeless Services (DHS) Chief of Shelter Operations Iris Rodriguez, Deputy Commissioner, Street Homeless Solutions Division within DHS, Cassandra White, and Administrative Nutritionist in the DSS Health Service Office Diana Salerno. Food security is an integral part of our work at DSS-HRA-DHS and we appreciate the opportunity to highlight the important programs, benefits, and collaborations underway to make for a more food secure New York City.

I would like to begin by shining a spotlight on critical resources for anyone who is facing food insecurity. Help is available. You can call 311 or visit [FoodHelp.nyc](https://www.foodhelp.nyc) to find nearby food pantries and community kitchens. Access HRA, our mobile app, and our Benefits Access Centers serve as further resources where clients can apply for benefits. For those clients already receiving SNAP, the City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's (DOHMH) food access initiatives serve as additional resources including: Health Bucks, Get the Good Stuff, and Groceries to Go.

In addition to the work of DSS-HRA-DHS, I want to recognize the work of our partners in government, including DOHMH and the Mayor's Office of Food Policy (MOFP), and our partners in serving New Yorkers including food banks, community kitchens, community fridges, and mutual aid groups; from our community-based organizations to our houses of worship, an array of sectors and volunteers is engaged in tackling this significant challenge. In addition, advocates and policymakers across government and across our shared communities

play critical roles in uplifting food security, raising awareness about where to receive assistance, and tackling the challenges food insecure households face with dignity and respect.

Outreach

Meeting New Yorkers where they are, providing culturally competent services, and treating applicants and clients with dignity and respect are all touchstones of DSS-HRA-DHS' outreach strategy to advance food security. The Office of Community Outreach (OCO) conducts targeted outreach campaigns to connect with communities and organizations serving specific populations like older adults, immigrant communities, persons with disabilities, and the LGBTQIA+ community. OCO hosts presentations, attends resources fairs, farmers markets, and other community events to increase SNAP awareness and engagement.

OCO also provides SNAP trainings and presentations, prescreens potentially eligible applicants, and assists with the SNAP application process. As I mentioned at the start of my testimony: New Yorkers in need of assistance should call 311, visit foodhelp.nyc.gov to find nearby food pantries and community kitchens, or reach us through Access HRA or our Benefits Access Centers. New Yorkers can also be connected to a community-based organization (CBO) to get help with SNAP enrollment, as well as other benefits, by calling 311 or visiting the HRA website ("Find a Partner Organization" <https://www.nyc.gov/site/hra/partners/find-a-partner-organization.page>). In addition, DSS participates in monthly SNAP Task Force meetings, chaired by Food Bank for New York City, to provide updates and answer questions from participating CBOs.

In 2025, DSS conducted a total of 76 trainings in using these tools to submit SNAP and other benefit applications and provide benefit case management via Access HRA; 1,902 participants attended these trainings. Attendees include staff from other municipal agencies and community partner organizations. These trainings also served as a forum for questions and concerns from providers and advocates working directly with HRA and DHS clients.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

DSS-HRA serves as the administrator of vital programs to combat food insecurity. As of February 2026, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) served 1.7 million New Yorkers. The US Department of Agriculture's SNAP Program Access Index (PAI) serves as one key metric for assessing SNAP's reach in states and municipalities, and one indicator of the work undertaken to connect communities to SNAP. The 2024 Program Access Index data is the most recent available (this is due to the fact that the 2025 Census data used in the

calculation will not be released until the fall of 2026). The 2024 SNAP Program Access Index for New York City was 95.7% - meaning DSS-HRA administered SNAP benefits to more than 1.79 million New Yorkers out of the 1.87 million New Yorkers below 125% of the Federal Poverty Line (FPL). Thanks to the hard work of DSS-HRA and our community partners, New York City's PAI has historically outpaced those of the State and the US overall – in 2023 the State's 2023 PAI was 85.3% and the US PAI was 80.0% compared to the City's PAI of 94.9%. For New York City, the difference between serving 95.7% and 80% of people below 125% of FPL is more than 250,000 New Yorkers.

What do those numbers and percentages mean? That means fewer heads of households facing sleepless nights worrying about the next meal. That means more of our family, friends, and neighbors having the food security they deserve. Those numbers are also a positive reflection of our past efforts to leverage technology, our outreach efforts, and our connections with sister agencies and community partners. DSS-HRA remains committed to building on that success in connecting eligible New Yorkers to SNAP.

We will continue to bring the same problem-solving mindset to bear as we tackle outstanding challenges, including bringing the program error rate further down and increasing the timeliness rate of SNAP application processing .

A present-day change to SNAP we are tackling is the new, federally imposed able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD) rules. The first month of the new ABAWD work rules was March 2026. Concisely, those rules expanded the work requirements for SNAP clients and mandate sanctions for noncompliant SNAP participants. Prior to the rules going into effect, we mobilized. We worked to notify SNAP clients about what the rules mean for them and connect with community partners about how they help. We are keeping a keen eye on what additional measures we can take to ensure people remain connected to this critical benefit. In terms of notifying clients, that has meant direct client communication, including texts, emails, and push notifications. In terms of connecting clients to resources, that has meant connecting clients to HRA's Pathways for Access to Careers and Employment (PACE) program; hosting community meetings and webinars so community organizations know that qualifying community service, volunteer work, work experience, and jobs skills training programs may be part of meeting a SNAP client's work requirement; and stepping up efforts to ensure that clients who are eligible for exemptions understand what documentation we need to properly register their exemption. Our work managing this federally imposed transition in work requirements is not complete, we will continue to monitor and evaluate the experience of SNAP clients and make the adjustments we can to connect SNAP clients with the information and resources they need to comply with the new rules.

Community Food Connection (CFC)

Community Food Connection (CFC; formerly the Emergency Food Assistance Program) serves as another key tool in our toolbox for combating food insecurity in New York City. CFC funds a network of more than 700 food pantries and community kitchens across the City. Published in January, the Mayor's Office of Food Policy's CFC Fiscal Year 2025 Impact Report goes into far greater detail about CFC's critical accomplishments. I will share the most important highlights. In Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25), CFC saw an increase in the number of providers by approximately 1.3% (nine additional providers) and helped those providers supply more than 47.1 million pounds of food across 170 neighborhoods in our City. That was about 3 million more pounds of food than was supplied in FY24. In FY25, CFC providers recorded 1.9 million more visits than in FY24- with the visit count for FY25 being 37.1 million. Across FY24 and FY25 the breakdown of the ages of the people served remained the same, approximately 49% adults, 30% children, and 21% older adults.

Our FY27 plans for CFC build on our FY25 and FY26 successes. We recognize the critical role CFC and our provider partners play in advancing food security. That is precisely why the administration proposed increasing the baseline of CFC funding to \$69.4 million in FY27, further investing in the network of provider partners and our shared capacity to uplift food security in our communities. In addition, DSS recently released a challenge-based procurement inviting qualified vendors to design and implement a scalable, participant-centered solution, likely to be voucher-based or credit-based, to enhance the City's emergency food assistance system. Through this pilot, and augmenting the work of the Community Food Connection funded pantries and community kitchens, DSS seeks to expand food access, increase participant choice, and reduce some operational inefficiencies within the emergency food network. In the initial phase of the pilot, the agency will enroll 400-600 households. DSS expects to make a contract award shortly and envisions that the pilot will start in FY27. We want to be sure to meet the challenges of affordability shocks around energy and their knock-on consequences, including consequences for inflation estimates. As always, we will continue to closely monitor the situation our providers face and work with the Mayor's Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

Legislation

Introduction 790 sponsored by Council Member Joseph would require DOHMH and the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) to annually report on warming centers, including an assessment of the geographic availability of warming centers and recommendations on the

distribution and utilization of warming centers across the City. We support transparency and data-informed public policy making. We would want to have further conversations with the sponsor and the Council about what agency (or team of agencies) is best placed to produce the most effective report. The provision of different kinds of warming centers is a function that cuts across multiple agencies and partners; we would want to be sure the legislation takes due consideration of that fact in crafting the reporting requirement.

The Preconsidered Introduction (File #T2026-1550), we understand as focused on combating SNAP Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Card skimming, creating an office within DSS to focus on proactive measures to prevent SNAP EBT skimming and requiring annual reporting on SNAP EBT skimming in New York City. We wholeheartedly agree that SNAP EBT skimming is a heinous crime, literally stealing food from the most vulnerable in our communities. It is important that SNAP clients know the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) advises EBT cardholders to take advantage of EBT Card Freeze – permitting clients to freeze or unfreeze their card to protect their benefits. Cardholders can go visit ebtEDGE.com to learn more.

At the direction of the federal government, the authority for restoring skimmed benefits expired on December 21, 2024 and the US Department of Agriculture directed our State oversight body, OTDA, that states must cease accepting applications for the replacement of stolen SNAP benefits. Households are still able to submit applications for the replacement of stolen Cash Assistance (CA) benefits. The federal direction to cease collecting applications to replace stolen SNAP benefits, relates to the preconsidered introduction in that HRA does not have the facility to act here. State authorities may have the facility to monitor and act as they are responsible for issuing replacement EBT cards. That is a transaction that can happen independent of DSS-HRA and without DSS-HRA facilitating.

We were deeply appreciative to see Governor Hochul's New York State budget proposed funding for the long-term solution to these crimes against our clients: putting the chip technology used in debit and credit cards onto EBT cards (that is Europay Mastercard Visa microchips or EMV chips). We strongly urge the State authorities to implement that solution as quickly as practicable. New York State has authority over the cards and the transition to more secure technology to the use of chips to stop EBT card skimming.

We would like further discussion with the Council about this preconsidered introduction and the limits federal and State authorities' mandates have created in this area. Given the legal and operational concerns, we do not believe it is feasible to proceed with this legislation at this time..

Advancing food security is a critical goal, and as with almost any goal worth achieving, we face significant hurdles. Affordability challenges, current energy shocks reverberating through the economy to our food system, and longstanding challenges like ensuring that our neighbors who may not be as literate with technology or who may speak another language connect with the culturally competent outreach that meets them where they are. We remain committed to overcoming those hurdles with the help of our hardworking staff at DSS-HRA-DHS, our outstanding partners across government, and the array of community organizations, institutions, and advocates who are dedicated to making food security for every New Yorker a reality. Thank you, Chair Hudson, members of the Committee on General Welfare, and your colleagues on the Council for your ongoing contributions to this important work. We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with you on this issue.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify and welcome your questions.

Thank you.

Value Statements

Overarching

- We believe that in our city no one should go hungry.
- We take our role in ensuring that New Yorkers can put nutritious food on the table very seriously.
- In recent years the agency has done a tremendous amount to ensure that New Yorkers are able to access our benefits without any significant barriers.

CFC

- CFC providers across the city are offering nutritious food to New Yorkers in need at a time when grocery bills are steadily increasing.
- We believe that no one in our city should go hungry.
- CFC serves as a critical component of our broader efforts to make sure people are connected to benefits
- Food pantries and community kitchens serve as a critical component of food security for vulnerable New Yorkers.

SNAP

- In terms of SNAP, we are operating within parameters not set by the City of New York. We are a rule taker from the federal government, New York State government, and those related oversight authorities like OTDA and the Department of Health and Human Services.
- That said, we do our best to deliver services to New Yorkers in a manner that's dignified and work to ensure that we are helping New Yorkers put food on the table in one of the most expensive cities on the planet.

Council Questions

1. How many providers are currently in the Community Food Connection (CFC) network?
 - Generally, at any given time we have approximately 700 funded providers including pantries, mobile kitchens, and community kitchens.
 - As of January 2026, we had 621 food pantry providers and 89 community kitchen providers.
2. How many agencies requested more food in FY26? Is CFC able to fulfill all of those requests?
 - Taking step back – CFC works on basis of allocation system
 - o In fiscal year we do primary 6 month allocations
 - o F27 funds would be available in cycle 1 – Jul-Jan, Jan-Jun
 - o In Cycle 1 – we do allocations to providers based on provider capacity and neighborhood need.
 - Neighborhood need – determined by formula looking at supply gap per neighborhood: emergency food need, and emergency food supply
 - Provider capacity – based on ongoing relationship, including ongoing inspections & dialogue to better understand their capacity to intake food and distribute it, so they don't have food spoiling or languishing
 - o That forms basis for cycle 1
 - o If \$64.9m holds – you'd see 2 roughly equal application of ~\$32m per cycle
 - o Inputs we also look at: how CFC providers did in spending their funds
 - Some providers may have unspent money
 - We put unspent money in second half allocation and distribute
 - We work on fiscal year basis – food need be ordered, and providers need take receipt by June 30
 - We use allocation model; and occasional do supplemental allocation to ensure the funds are spent, and the individual needs of the provider are considered in the calculation
3. Does DSS have any idea how many New Yorkers have lost access to SNAP since the changes to work requirements under H.R.1 took effect?
 - March was first month an individual was due to comply with the new ABAWD rules
 - No one at this point will have their SNAP case closed due to ABAWD noncompliance
 - Under ABAWD rules – an individual is allowed 3 months noncompliance before reduce or close SNAP case
 - First month for sanction would be June – for noncompliance in March, April and May

4. The changes to SNAP's policies towards Able Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD) affect approximately 123,000 New Yorkers, according to data provided to The City by HRA. How many people out of the 123,000 have been reached out to by the agency?
 - We're doing outreach
 - o To affected individuals on SNAP
 - o To the greater community at large – including local CBOs – where individuals may receive services or attend programming
 - o To point them to information, or us to answer question and assist folks in complying or being granted an exception
 - We use a variety of outreach
 - Series of notices – can receive through Access HRA, online, through mail
 - o Notices are in local law languages
 - o Rolling out text messages, robocalls, and push notifications
 - o We've added pop-ups on Access HRA
 - We're using the communications modes possible to communicate with individuals around these requirements and what folks are required to do
 - Note that we communicate through various modes, based on someone's preference.
 - o If someone request we communicate with them via mail – that's how we communicate
 - We've conducted trainings through Community Outreach teams and NYC Benefits providers (several serve older adult populations). CBOs that serve older adults have been part of our community outreach. CBOs offering volunteer opportunities include older adults orgs. We work with partners at NYC Aging – to share information with their networks
5. How many complaints about stolen benefits has HRA received this fiscal year? Is this more or less than the previous fiscal year?
 - At the direction of our State oversight authority, OTDA, who in turn were directed by the federal government, we had to cease accepting requests for replacement of stolen SNAP benefits as of Sept 2025
 - During period when we were allowed to replace benefits – we replaced \$50m; the majority of that figure being SNAP.
 - Profoundly disappointing we're not allowed to replace those benefits.
 - Note that clients are still able to submit applications for stolen Cash Assistance benefits.
6. How many individuals used warming centers during the most recent cold spell (cumulatively)?

- Speaking specifically for DHS warming buses, we count the number of people entering buses. Individuals do not have to provide information to enter the bus. We counted 4,371 entries for the period January 24-February 14 and 1,924 entries for the period February 22-March 4.
- Note that NYC Health and Hospitals, NYC Public Schools, and other partners also provided warming centers in response to this emergency.

Community Food Connection (CFC)

Value Statements

- The Community Food Connection program is important to the Administration and often serves as an initial touchpoint for many New Yorkers seeking City services. The program has served 20.8M people in FY 26 (as a duplicated number) through January 2026.
- There are currently 716 CFC providers across the five boroughs.
- CFC providers across the city are offering nutritious food to New Yorkers in need at a time when grocery bills are steadily increasing.
- We believe that no one in our city should go hungry.
- CFC serves as a critical component of our broader efforts to make sure people are connected to benefits
- Food pantries and community kitchens serve as a critical component of food security for vulnerable New Yorkers.

Top Lines

716 CFC providers across the five boroughs have served over 20M individuals in this fiscal year (July 2025 through January 2026). Note this number includes duplicates.

- The Community Food Connection program is important to the Administration and often serves as an initial touchpoint for many New Yorkers seeking City services

Community Kitchens + Food Pantries, Individuals Served				
	Children	Adults	Seniors	Total
Total monthly avg	881,961	1,437,524	646,089	2,965,574

Community Kitchens: Individuals Served				
	Children	Adults	Seniors	Total
Jul '25	20,194	210,483	64,279	294,956
Aug '25	19,788	190,741	62,707	273,236
Sep '25	39,224	223,311	70,952	333,487
Oct '25	41,797	227,136	73,327	342,260
Nov '25	37,206	210,728	72,497	320,431
Dec '25	27,168	188,553	65,619	281,340
Jan '26	18,894	16,3529	78,342	260,765

TOTAL	204,271	1,414,481	487,723	2,106,475
Monthly Avg	29,182	202,069	69,675	300,925

Community Kitchens: Providers

	Number of Providers	Number of Providers Reporting for that month	Percentage of Providers Reporting for that month
Jul '25	90	79	88%
Aug '25	89	85	96%
Sep '25	89	86	97%
Oct '25	89	86	97%
Nov '25	89	85	96%
Dec '25	89	87	98%
Jan '26	89	83	93%
TOTAL	89	84	95%

Food Pantries: Individuals Served

	Children	Adults	Seniors	Total
Jul '25	739,082	1,122,040	491,114	2,352,236
Aug '25	814,223	1,170,417	565,022	2,549,662
Sep '25	849,205	1,217,035	576,913	2,643,153
Oct '25	972,566	1,346,093	708,735	3,027,394
Nov '25	988,299	1,380,900	625,188	2,994,387
Dec '25	863,920	1,272,311	581,980	2,718,211
Jan '26	742,164	1,139,390	485,945	2,367,499
TOTAL	5,969,459	8,648,186	4,034,897	18,652,542
Monthly Avg	852,780	1,235,455	576,414	2,664,649

Food Pantries: Providers			
	Number of Providers	Number of Providers Reporting for that month	Percentage of Providers Reporting for that month
Jul '25	618	491	79%
Aug '25	617	555	90%
Sep '25	615	559	91%
Oct '25	622	558	90%
Nov '25	622	560	90%
Dec '25	622	556	89%
Jan '26	628	530	84%
TOTAL	621	544	88%

Community Food Connection Questions

1. Will the City be filling in the gaps in terms of food assistance should there be a large number of individuals unable to comply with ABAWD requirements?
 - We are pleased that Mayor Mamdani in his preliminary budget has baselined CFC’s funding contract at \$69.4M in FY27 and the outyears.
 - This represents a dramatic increase to the current baseline budget figure and should better and more predictably meet the needs of food insecure New Yorkers—in conjunction with other providers of food assistance, prominently UWNYP, Food Bank, and City Harvest.
 - In FY26, the two primary allocations (done as six-month cycles) from CFC to pantries and soup kitchens were roughly \$24M apiece.*
 - In FY27, assuming the figure remains unchanged in the adopted budget, the two primary allocations will be nearly \$35M apiece, the highest ever. This funding should help address the needs of persons characterized as ABAWDs who have an interruption in their benefits and seek out pantries and community kitchens.**

* There were add-ons in FY26—\$2.9M + \$4.9M + \$15M—but \$49M was the base number for the cycle one and two allocations.

** An inference to be drawn here is that \$69.4M is a base and that additional funds might be added, as in FYs past, based on circumstances (e.g., adding \$15M in November 2025 to address the apparent SNAP shutdown) but not sure we’d want to be explicit about that. We could also be prepared to say: as circumstances evolve and warrant in the next FY, the City will evaluate the possibility of adding additional funds to the CFC food budget to meet the moment.

2. City Council designated \$4.9M in funds to be distributed to CFC funded providers in FY26. Has that happened?
 - Yes. The funds were recently allocated to 392 providers (out of nearly 700) and became available to them on April 6.
3. Can you be more specific?
 - Total programs receiving supplemental allocation: 392 programs
 - Total value of allocations across the 392 programs: \$4,899,995 (due to rounding)
 - Range of supplemental allocation (per program): \$294 – \$56,023
 - Average supplemental allocation (per program): \$12,500

4. How was the allocation determined?
 - CFC examined which programs had spent through the end of February at least 50% of their funds and could likely accept additional funding, place orders to the contracted food vendor, and take receipt of the food items by June 30.
5. Do all Council Districts have at least one CFC funded provider?
 - Under the criteria, all CM districts received funding with the exception of one—Tiffany Caban’s. Her district has only three CFC-funded providers, none of which met the criteria.
6. Broadly, any changes in the program regarding inflation and economic instability?
 - Comparing first 7 months of Fiscal Year 2025 to Fiscal Year 2026, we have seen a slight decrease in the overall number of people served, from 21.5M to 20.8M. Please note that some of this decrease may be due to provider reporting variations including reporting lags.
7. What is the breakdown of fresh produce versus frozen food distributed through CFCs?
 - The way the data is collected is as follows: Dry, Frozen, and Refrigerated (which includes fresh produce).
 - For Fiscal Year 2026 so far (year-to-date), as of February 2026:
 - o Dry: 21.2M pounds, or approximately 58%
 - o Refrigerated: 12.7M pounds, or approximately 35%
 - o Frozen: 2.8M pounds, or approximately 8%
8. Are there increases in numbers served?
 - Data shows a slight decrease in the overall number of people served so far this year compared to last year. Number of People Served (duplicated):
 - Fiscal Year 2025 (July '24 – January '25): 21.5M
 - Fiscal Year 2026 (July '25 – January '26): 20.8M
 - Talking point: Please note that some of this decrease may be due to provider reporting variations including reporting lags.
9. What is the number of CBO food pantries citywide? Broken down by borough.

- As of February 2026: Total # of food pantries = 627
 - o Brooklyn - 224
 - o Bronx - 121
 - o Manhattan - 97
 - o Queens - 158
 - o Staten Island - 27

10. What is the number of community kitchens citywide? Broken down by borough.

- As of February 2026: Total # of community kitchens = 89
 - o Brooklyn - 26
 - o Bronx - 15
 - o Manhattan - 34
 - o Queens - 10
 - o Staten Island - 4

11. Allocations per borough

- Fiscal Year 2026 Allocations by borough as of 3/30/26:
 - o Brooklyn – \$23.2M
 - o Bronx - \$13.5M
 - o Manhattan - \$10.7M
 - o Queens - \$15.2M
 - o Staten Island - \$2.0M

12. Do we know what the actual spending thus far in FY26 is and how much was spent in FY 25?

- Total spending for FY25 was \$58.6M. Total spending FY26 as of February is \$37M.

13. Advocates are calling on the Administration to baseline 100 million dollars for emergency food to prepare for the fallout from ABAWD rules. Will we see more funding added in the executive budget?

- For individuals who have their benefits impacted, the Mamdani administration has committed additional funding to CFC. We will be referring New Yorkers to our network of providers while we work with people who may be able to reinstate their SNAP compliance at some point.

- This administration tripled funding for CFC from baseline. We've made tremendous investment in the Preliminary Budget, adding City funding of \$53.6M starting FY27. This brings the total budget to \$76.2M for FY27 and the outyears.

14. How do we get more pantries in the Bronx? What are you doing to expand access to food, particularly in the Bronx?

- As of February 2026, the Bronx has 121 food pantries and 15 community kitchens. We welcome applications and have a readily accessible application online. It should be noted that CFC funding is considered supplemental so any successful applicant will need to demonstrate an existing funding source as part of its application.
- CFC has a relatively simple application for pantries who seek CFC funding. To be considered for CFC funding, a pantry must demonstrate another funding source since CFC is considered to be supplemental funding. In the new FY, we would welcome an opportunity to work with the council and others on discussing high priority and underserved areas in the Bronx to discuss the opportunities and challenges (such as, identification of suitable space) in creating new pantries.
- We have an open application for CFC. The application does not close. Pantries are welcome to apply on a rolling basis.
- We are thrilled we have increased funding. We have heard and seen that Bronx is underrepresented. We are working to get adequate food support with existing, new and mobile pantries and service as many New Yorkers as possible.

10. Will federal budget cuts have a drastic impact in our ability to feed people?

- There was previously some federal pandemic funding that is no longer in there.

11. We know that billions of dollars were cut from SNAP and Medicaid resulting from the enactment of H.R.1. What percentage of CFC budget is federal funds? And what support do you get from the state to run food pantries?

- The Federal funding of HRA's FY26 Food Assistance budget is approximately 5%. There is no State funding that supports HRA's Food Assistance budget.

CA and SNAP

CA Value Statements

- We take our role in ensuring that New Yorkers basic needs are met very seriously.
- In recent years the agency has done a tremendous amount to ensure that New Yorkers are able to access these critical benefits without any significant barriers.
- In terms of CA we are operating within parameters not set by the City of New York. We are a rule taker from the federal government, New York State government, and those related oversight authorities like OTDA and the Department of Health and Human Services.
- That said, we do our best to deliver services to New Yorkers in a manner that's dignified and work to ensure that we are helping New Yorkers to meet their needs in one of the most expensive cities on the planet.

SNAP Value Statements

- We take our role in ensuring that New Yorkers can put nutritious food on the table very seriously.
- In recent years the agency has done a tremendous amount to ensure that New Yorkers are able to access our benefits without any significant barriers.
- In terms of SNAP, we are operating within parameters not set by the City of New York. We are a rule taker from the federal government, New York State government, and those related oversight authorities like OTDA and the Department of Health and Human Services.
- That said, we do our best to deliver services to New Yorkers in a manner that's dignified and work to ensure that we are helping New Yorkers put food on the table in one of the most expensive cities on the planet.
- We believe that in our city no one should go hungry.

General Questions

1. How many New Yorkers rely on SNAP and CA?

As of February 2026, more than 1.7 million New Yorkers are receiving SNAP benefits and more than 580,000 New Yorkers receive CA benefits

2. How are you assessing the accessibility of benefits to people who are eligible for them?

As a metric of SNAP's reach, USDA's Program Access Index (PAI) tells us the proportion of people with family income below 125% of the federal poverty line (FPL) who receive SNAP.

3. How is HRA performing with respect to connecting people eligible for SNAP with assistance?

Thanks in part to DSS-HRA's efforts to strengthen accessibility and reach every New Yorker in need, the 2024 Program Access Index (PAI) for SNAP = 95.7%, which means we are administering SNAP benefits to more than 1.79 million New Yorkers out of the 1.87 million below 125% FPL. This is the highest PAI since the agency started reporting this index.

The 2024 Program Access Index data is the most recent available due to the fact that the 2025 Census data used in the calculation will not be released until the fall.

4. How does NYC compare to NYS and nationally on this PAI measure?

NYC's PAI has historically outpaced that of NYS or the US overall. While the USDA has not yet released the 2024 PAI for the U.S. or New York State, the 2023 PAI for the US was 80.0% and for NYS was 85.3%, compared to NYC's 94.9%.

5. How many people receiving one-time CA in FY25 – returned for ongoing assistance in a year. What's that say about economic stability?

That doesn't reflect how the program works. There are households not receiving CA, who apply for a one-shot deal. Some households receiving CA apply for one-shot deals. Someone on CA may go off CA. Someone not receiving CA, may apply due to changes in their financial circumstances. Unable to exactly answer the question. We provide a robust network of social safety net programs – available as individuals need them and as individuals qualify.

6. When is a migrant eligible for CA? Public assistance?

There's a complex set of eligibility requirements that are a combination of NYS and federal law. Is an individualized assessment that our staff does. Depending on where one is in their immigration journey – they may be eligible or not. That needs to be assessed on case-by-case basis.

- a. Isn't child eligible for CA after being born, when from mixed status family?

Happy to go through details with you at a separate time. Gets complicated and want to make sure I have the experts at the table.

7. Are we seeing increases in the number of New Yorkers in need of Cash Assistance? If so, do we know why?

During the first four months of fiscal year 26, the number of persons receiving Cash Assistance was 604,000 which is a 4 percent increase of last year compared to the same period in the prior year. However, from October 2025 to February 2026, the caseload has actually decreased by 4 percent.

8. How does return to mandatory engagement for CA work in combination with ABAWD requirements? Are clients required to meet both SNAP and CA work requirements?

9. Have the agency starting sanctioning for ABAWD?

– First countable month is March so earliest sanction would happen in June

10. Are you able to estimate the number of households that will be sanctioned and lose benefits due to ABAWD non-compliance? If so, how many?

○ Unable to estimate

11. What is the administration doing to get the word out about ABAWD compliance?

– The city is operating and communicating on every possible level. That includes direct client communication: text, emails, push notifications. To ensure we're communicating with people impacted. We're also pursuing a whole of City approach – we've done and continue to do webinars and meetings with advocates, CBOs, to have information. We believe individuals will seek trusted messengers – to include folks outside HRA. We continue to develop outreach plans as we move to time where individuals may receive strikes for noncompliance. We look forward to collaborating with the council to make sure we get the word out to all impacted by ABAWD changes.

12. In terms of outreach for ABAWD compliance it seems like there might be a large number of SNAP recipients at NYCHA complexes and at DHS shelter. How are you getting the word out to those populations?

○ We are working with NYCHA REES and their Zone Coordinators to schedule ABAWD-specific workshop events at the NYCHA REES offices. DSS Outreach

also conducts regular enrollment at NYCHA developments throughout the city. DSS Outreach team will also have the capacity to support with ABAWD specific questions and assist with next steps during scheduled benefits enrollment events.

- Also working with DHS to provide training for Street Outreach DHS staff as well as info sessions for DHS shelter providers to ensure that they are able to help clients navigate complying with work requirements and seeking an exemption where appropriate.

13. During the prelim budget hearing Administrator French said that Eligibility Specialist no longer had mandatory overtime. However, staff testified following the administration. According to them Eligibility Specialists were subjected to mandatory overtime until February 2026. Can you please let us know when the last time Eligibility Specialists were mandated to do overtime?

The last date Eligibility Specialist were mandated to do overtime was 12/7/2023

14. Please help us understand how the agency is using Artificial Intelligence in processing and eligibility determinations. How are these tools being regulated?

The SNAP program hopes to use AI to support eligibility staff to reduce worker caused payment errors. A tool is under development that will inform processing staff if there is discrepant income information in a case record for the worker to review and update, before the worker transmits that case decision. This tool is being cleared for use by HRA's CISO, OTDA's CISO, and OTI's Cyber Command and AI Director.

15. Given the long wait times on infoline how do clients with questions and concerns regarding ABAWD reach the agency?

Clients have multiple channels to contact the agency beyond the phone. They can reach us through email, traditional mail, fax, as well as digital channels through NYC.gov and ACCESSHRA.

Online: Visit www.nyc.gov/hra and use the "Send an Email to the Commissioner" link: <https://www.nyc.gov/html/mail/html/mailhra.html>

By Email: constituentaffairs@dss.nyc.gov

This mailbox is monitored Monday through Friday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Clients can often receive faster service by email. Online and emailed inquiries are handled in the same manner as phone inquiries.

By Fax: (917) 639-9241

By Mail:
Human Resources Administration
Office of Constituent Services
150 Greenwich Street, 35th Floor
New York, NY 10007

12. Have you seen declines in the number of individuals applying for SNAP since the implementation of ABAWD rules?

- At this point its too soon to tell whether there have been a decline in SNAP applications specifically due to ABAWD work requirement. We encourage all who feel they are eligible for benefits contact us at AHRA to apply for benefits.
- Most people who can work are working. This is about an administrative burden imposed by the federal government that makes it harder for people.
- We believe work is an important part of people's lives. We are all here at work. We want to help support people's ability to thrive. We have HRA's Career Services Division which helps clients build the skills and experience needed to achieve career success and financial stability. Working closely with each client, Career Services connects individuals to opportunities that match their skills, interests, and goals – supporting them every step of the way toward meaningful and sustainable employment. Based on their situation, clients work with Career Services providers in a wide range of programs.

CA/SNAP Benefits Processing/Timeliness

1. Can you review where we stand now with respect to the CA and SNAP backlog?

Backlog as of February 2026 was 2,268 for CA and 455 for NCA SNAP.

- We have eliminated the backlogs from the past few years by focusing on four approaches: staffing, technology, waivers and operational efficiencies.
 - DSS has hired nearly 1,000 new staff since January of 2023 to process applications.
 - Increased staff training
 - Strengthened remote application processes to make applying easier.
 - CA On-demand interviews to allow clients to call on their own time for interview
 - CA on-demand authentication to more effectively route calls to ensure clients calling for an interview are connected to an eligibility worker
 - CA 6-month mailer waiver, Selective Case Review
- There will always be a select number of applications that will exceed the 30-day review timeline due to several reasons including:
 - Clients who call for their interview at the end of the 30-day period
 - Clients who need additional time to submit necessary documents who are granted an extension by the agency past the 30-days
 - We believe it is important to grant individuals additional time rather than require them to start the application process all over
- Our improving CA and SNAP application timeliness rates (in the face of historically high application volume for both CA and SNAP) further speaks to the advances we have made over the past year with our most recent CA and SNAP timeliness rates for February:
 - SNAP
 - CA

	26-Feb	25-Feb	% change		FY26_Y TD Average	FY25_Y TD Average	% change		FY19Y TD Average (pre COVID)	% change over FY26_Y TD

CA Applications	43,409	42,786	1.5%		46,464	47,638	-2.5%		25,966	<u>78.9%</u>
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	Feb-26	Feb-25	% change		FY26 YTD average	FY25 YTD average	% change		FY19 YTD average (pre COVID)	% change over FY YTD26
SNAP Applications	25,891	28,983	-10.7%		29,009	33,001	-12.1%		25,157	2.9%

* YTD: July – February

2. On the timeliness rate and delays for SNAP – what is the agency doing to get the timeliness rate back above 90% as it had been for many years?

- Timeliness for SNAP (CA and NCA) for February MMR is 83.1%
- Timeliness for CA for February MMR is 68.8%

3. On the timeliness rate and delays for Cash Assistance - what did the agency do to get the timeliness rate back up?

- We have eliminated the backlogs from the past few years by focusing on four approaches: staffing, technology, waivers and operational efficiencies.
 - DSS has hired over 1,500 new staff from January of 2023 to March 2026 to process applications.
 - Increased staff training
 - Strengthened remote application processes to make applying easier.
 - CA On-demand interviews to allow clients to call on their own time for interview
 - CA on-demand authentication to more effectively route calls to ensure clients calling for an interview are connected to an eligibility worker
 - CA 6-month mailer waiver, Selective Case Review

4. Explain the denial rate for Cash Assistance – why is it so high?

- DSS-HRA is primarily responsible for administering Cash Assistance and related benefits. NYC DSS-HRA does not control or determine the eligibility criteria for Cash Assistance and related emergency grants, we work to ensure we are delivering these critical benefits for New Yorkers in compliance with key State and federal government eligibility criteria tied to these benefits.
- Because we have taken significant steps to reduce the barriers to applications, we have seen many more people apply earlier in their own journeys. When people needed to physically come into the centers, they generally didn't do so until they had collected all the paperwork, and done their own rough estimate of how much they might qualify for given income. When people can apply from home, they are much more likely to do so early on in that process, and may opt not to complete, or not to complete at that time. People are always welcome to reapply.
- The CA denial rate/cases include duplicates in that the same individual could have applied for the same benefit more than once. Both recurring and non-recurring (single-issue) cases are included in CA caseloads. For single issuance/non-recurring cases, the rejection rates are also impacted by key pandemic-related factors and eligibility criteria.
- At the same time, the rate was also impacted by unprecedented increases in need with more New Yorkers applying for emergency assistance after key pandemic-related supports and protective measures were lifted like the State's eviction moratorium on January 15, 2022.
- These numbers include cases where an applicant did not see the entire application through to the final stages for ex. they did not submit required documentation after an interview and did not follow through.
 - o *The top rejection reasons for Cash Assistance applications in FY 2026 to date are :*
 - Failure to complete the interview/eligibility process (51%)
 - Y95-Case Rejected for Emergency Assistance for reasons such as failure to submit documents, inability to pay future rent and others (14%), and
 - V21-Failure to Provide documents (14% of the total)

5. Why is the denial rate so high for emergency rental assistance? (i.e. One Shot Deals)

- State requirements surrounding applications for Emergency Assistance generally require households to demonstrate more than just a financial need, they also must demonstrate the ability to afford the rent going forward. For many folks, this bar is not met.

- Notably, this requirement for future ability to pay does not apply to Emergency Assistance to Adults, which is specifically for individuals receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
6. Does the agency quantify the damage caused to households by untimely benefits application processing? If so, what conclusions do you come to. If not, why not?
- Even one individual impacted is unacceptable however, we recently announced that our SNAP and CA backlog has ended, and we continue to focus on improving timeliness rates.
7. Please provide the current backlog and number of new applications for SNAP, Cash Assistance, and rental assistance voucher applications.
- SNAP Backlog for February: 455
 - SNAP Applications for February 2026: 25,891
 - CA Backlog for February: 2,268
 - CA Applications for February: 43,409
- We have eliminated the backlogs from the past years. There are several reasons why applications may exceed the 30-day review period including clients calling for their interview at the end of the 30-day period or clients needing additional time to submit required documents which the agency grants by an extension past the 30 days.
8. I understand the agency is failing to meet emergency needs for SNAP and Cash. That's a violation of law and your court orders. What are you doing to get people urgently needed benefits?
- In February 2026, we provided Expedited SNAP benefits to 95% of eligible households within the seven-day time period required by law.
- In February 2026, we provided Expedited SNAP benefits to 95% of eligible CA-SNAP households within the seven-day time period required by law.

9. Please provide On-Demand wait times.

On Demand Application Wait Time

	CA App Avg. Wait Time (hh:mm)	Difference	SNAP App Avg. Wait Time (hh:mm)	Difference

25	Feb-	0:53		0:15	
<u>26</u>	<u>Jan-</u>	<u>1:33</u>		0:23	
<u>26</u>	<u>Feb-</u>	<u>1:08</u>	<u>+15 min (Feb-25)</u> <u>-25 min (Jan-26)</u>	0:11	-4 min (Feb -25) -12 min (Jan-26)

Internal Note: Provided the On Demand application wait time for CA and SNAP that excludes abandoned calls. This is the data we provide for Reynolds as part of the CA reporting for the lawsuit. The SNAP and CA data include last day applications (calls that come in on the 30th day for an interview). These calls are prioritized to be answered first for SNAP but not for CA.

- Year over year in-person wait time for service at HRA BAC offices have been increasing. What is the current wait time and what are we doing to get those wait times down? We believe the increases have been mainly driven by high application volume, and a resumption of in-person services.

BAC Avg Wait Time		
FY25 YTD	FY26 YTD	diff FY25 YTD to FY26 YTD
1:05	1:49	0:44

SNAP Avg Wait Time		
FY25 YTD	FY26 YTD	diff FY25 YTD to FY26 YTD
0:21	0:24	0:03

BAC Foot Traffic			
FY25 YTD	FY26 YTD	diff FY25 YTD to FY26 YTD	% diff FY 25 YTD to FY 26 YTD
123,352	117,369	-5,983	-4.9%

SNAP Foot Traffic			
FY25 YTD	FY26 YTD	diff FY25 YTD to FY26 YTD	% diff FY 25 YTD to FY 26 YTD
36,177	30,026	-6,460	-21.5%

10. What is the average wait time on Infoline? Are you seeing more foot traffic in the centers because clients are unable to get help over the phone? What is the weekly foot traffic that you're seeing in centers?

- Infoline wait times are long right now. We are hiring and exploring technological solutions to improve that. I will point out that Infoline does include a callback function, so rather than waiting on the phone, clients can get a return phone call. In addition, analysis has shown that the majority of calls to Infoline can be resolved on AccessHRA. We are working to improve guidance so people understand what tools are available online.
- Combined foot traffic for SNAP and CA decreased by 9.5% from February 2025 to February 2026. The caseload has also decreased by 4.5% (~49,000 recipients) for SNAP and by 2% (~9,200 recipients) for CA from February 2025 to February 2026.

	Month	CA	SNAP	Total Both Programs
2024	January	118,334	39,057	157,391
	February	97,439	30,487	127,926
	March	107,667	34,857	142,524
	April	111,648	34,155	145,803
	May	117,678	35,365	153,043
	June	109,383	31,425	140,808
	July	124,954	35,645	160,599
	August	130,866	36,319	167,185
	September	133,221	36,887	170,108
	October	140,715	37,875	178,590
	November	115,200	34,472	149,672
	December	115,903	36,508	152,411
2025	January	120,471	37,092	157,563
	February	120,471	37,092	157,563
	March	114,701	37,289	151,990
	April	125,656	40,638	166,294
	May	122,700	39,473	162,173

	June	113,985	36,492	150,477
	July	119,329	36,132	155,461
	August	123,307	34,499	157,806
	September	135,099	35,025	170,124
	October	121,220	29,518	150,738
	November	99,529	22,874	122,403
	December	119,587	30,695	150,282
2026	January	117,312	28,300	145,612
	February	103,567	23,163	126,730

11b. What are you doing to address these long Infoline wait times?

- Wait times are long. It will take time to turn that ship. Is not question of staffing – but how we use technology, how we overall structure our approach in getting assistance to clients. We’re actively working on. It will take some time to change that. We do have a call back feature – individual doesn’t have to remain on hold. They can leave their number and get a call back.

11. What percent of clients are using AHRA?

- In February 2026, 93% of CA applicants used AHRA to apply. In February 2026, 88.3% of SNAP applicants used AHRA to apply and 51.3% (January 2026) of those recertifying used AHRA to apply or recertify for their benefits

13. I know the caseloads have increased, but how are we going to start processing 90 to 95 percent of applicants in a timely fashion again?

- Current (February 2026 MMR) timeliness for CA is 68.8% and for SNAP (CA + NCA) is 83.1%.

The average monthly CA application volume is 46,464 for FY26 to date, that’s an increase of 79% from the same period in FY19 at an average of 25,966.

The average monthly SNAP application volume is 29,009 for FY26 YTD to date, that's an increase of 2.9% from the same period in FY19 YTD at an average of 25,157.

The average monthly MA application volume for FY26 YTD is 28,401, which is a 12% increase from the FY19 YTD average of 25,398.

14. Are there any delays in each program for processing new applications or recertifications or renewals?

Backlog as of February 2026 was 2,268 for CA and 455 for NCA SNAP.

15. According to the PMMR, in the first quarter of 2025, the average in-person wait time for clients was 84 minutes. The PMMR attributed this to an increase in foot traffic at HRA offices and a higher volume of applications. What's being done to address this?
16. According to the PMMR there has been an increase in participation in Cash Assistance, SNAP and Medicaid with a 17 percent increase in Cash Assistance, a six percent increase in SNAP, and a two percent increase in Medicaid. What is the current average monthly volume of new applications for each SNAP, Cash Assistance, and Medicaid, and how does this compare to pre-pandemic levels?
- Average monthly volume of new Cash Assistance applications for FY26 to date is 46,500. The average volume looking at the same period for FY25 was 47,600, so we're seeing a decrease of roughly 2 percent. SNAP monthly average application volume for FY26 YTD is 29,009, while FY25 YTD was 33,001. We're seeing a decrease of about 12.1%. Medicaid applications FY2026 YTD had an average of 28,401, while FY25 YTD they had an average of 31,491. There's overall been a decrease in Medicaid applications by about 10%.

Return to Mandatory (RTM) and ABAWDs

Value Statements

- To be clear, DSS-HRA is required by law to implement return to mandatory engagement and the imposition of sanctions.
- Within the sanction process, we offer opportunities for individuals to come into compliance with the requirements.
- We are committed to connecting clients with training, education, and workforce development to assist them as they proceed along a path of self-sustainability.

Questions

1. What is the status of mandatory engagement? Did it roll out as expected in April 2025?
 - We started rollout in April 2025 and it continues. We had to adjust in the fall due to the ABAWD changes. We have been coordinating the parallel tracks there. We will continue to rollout mandatory engagement. Also transitioning to providers – no wrong door, single point of entry. Connecting clients with training, education, and workforce development – to connect them to good jobs on path to self-sustainability
2. How many clients have been sanctioned since the start of sanctions?
 - Since the rollout of mandatory engagement there have been approx. 2500 cases that have been sanctioned
 - Internal Note:
 - o There have been 240 line-level sanctions and 757 case-level sanctions for a total of 997 sanctions since the return to mandatory through the end of January 2026.
3. How many clients have returned after their case was closed due to sanctioning?
 - Our sanction process is multi-step to engage people along the way. It includes outreach from providers and engagement with city staff. That process prioritizes reengagement for individuals rather than sanctions. That's what we've seen as we rollout mandatory engagement.
 - 66 of the 240 clients with a line-level sanction returned to active status and 239 of the 757 sanctioned cases were re-opened.

4. Why are we sanctioning clients for small amount of cash? Isn't this punitive?
 - o I would caution against presenting as a thing that will result in people losing their benefits. While mandatory engagements are requirement – is about connecting people to whole scope of workforce development and supports. Including training, education, and career pathways. We do believe that through mandatory engagement we'll connect households with financial stability over the long term
5. Why was DSS required to return to CA work requirements/mandatory engagement?
 - DSS/HRA is required by Federal and State law to re-institute CA sanctions for non-compliance with work-related appointments and assignments.
 - Mandatory engagement with work or education requirements has been longstanding component of CA that was paused during Covid. Under federal and state regulations – we must reinstate. We are in process of rolling out – began in April 2025.
 - This is a federal requirement. The federal government has made clear – each state must meet a work participation rate for individuals on TANF. For past years, states haven't been put into sanction process. In NYC – our work participation rate was low – we were usually meeting through individuals who were employed. Starting Oct 1st – federal government has said states that don't meet work participation rate could be put in sanctions and result in fiscal penalties to the state – that can be passed to locality. Our approach to mandatory engagement – to create programs that connect individuals to training, education, and career pathways. Allowing them to secure a good job – and connection to services that support them. We're rolling out intentionally through the rest of the year. We're working with households to comply – to as much as possible avoid any negative on a case
6. How many New Yorkers are you anticipating will be sanctioned?
 - We have redesigned the sanctioning process to give clients multiple opportunities to comply before their case is sanctioned. This approach differs from how HRA implemented the sanction process in the past.
7. How easy is it for clients to re-open their case after closure?
 - CA recipients may resolve a sanction at any point in time by demonstrating compliance with work requirements, or by informing DSS/HRA of a reason why they are not subject to work requirements. Also, safeguards are in place to prevent a sanction, if prior to imposition, HRA's case review finds that supportive services like

childcare, transportation and reasonable accommodations were not in place and available at the time of non-compliance.

8. What sorts of work opportunities, training and education are available for clients?

- HRA's Career Services helps Cash Assistance clients build the skills and experience needed to achieve career success and financial stability. Working closely with each client, Career Services connects individuals to opportunities that match their skills, interests, and goals – supporting them every step of the way toward meaningful and sustainable employment. Based on their situation, clients work with Career Services providers in a wide range of programs.
- **Pathways for Access to Careers and Employment (PACE)** is a workforce development program that helps clients:
 - o Find jobs that offer family-supporting wages, benefits and career growth opportunities
 - o Explore careers in growing industries in New York City
 - o Gain valuable skills and credentials (such as Commercial Driver License certification) to increase their marketability
- **Education Services/TAG** is responsible for connecting clients to training and/or education-based opportunities that assist with gaining credentials and experience necessary to progress in the career of their choice. There is also a focus on growing and managing the opportunities present in multiple Community Based Organizations around New York City to ensure all clients have access to a training and/or education resource no matter where they are located.

Programs Administered by Career Services

- **HRA Business Link** matches employers with jobseekers who have the skills they need. Business Link hosts several job fairs during the year and offers job opening alerts by text message through TEXT 2 WORK.
- **NYC Pathways to Industrial and Construction Careers (PINCC)** is an exciting workforce program that focuses on connecting low-income New Yorkers to trainings and jobs within the industrial, transportation, and construction sectors in NYC at no cost to participants.

- **Jobs Plus Program (JPP)** is a place-based employment program administered by HRA for residents in 40 New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments throughout the five boroughs. Jobs-Plus programs help residents build skills and connect to the labor market to increase their incomes and financial security. Jobs-Plus program sites are located within the developments they serve or within walking distance.
- **CUNY Educate. Develop. Graduate. Empower. (EDGE)** is a joint program between HRA and CUNY designed to help HRA clients enrolled at CUNY schools with academic counseling, support, and employment services so they can succeed in their studies and graduate in a timely manner.
- The **Youth Leadership Council Program** brings together youth individuals from across New York City to develop their leadership qualities and skills to be future leaders, possibly in New York City government.
- **Internship Placement Services (IPS)** which looks to connect individuals into internships around New York City when they are unable to complete their engagement hours under normal work-study with a CUNY program.
- **The Work Progress Program (WPP)** assists nonprofit organizations to provide beneficial internship opportunities for low-income youth and young adults in all five boroughs of New York City. Nonprofit organizations are designated as WPP Service Providers and conduct internship programs for participants ages 16-24.
- **Alternative Engagement (AE)** provides participants with workforce development and education opportunities, outside of traditional self-enrollment through TAG, by connecting participants to existing free programs in education, vocational training and employment opportunities. These opportunities are offered by HRA partnering community-based organizations and focus on teaching participants necessary skills that will lead to meaningful and lasting employment.

- **SNAP E&T Venture V Programs:** Career Services manages the activities of Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP)-only clients in training and education programs that receive **Venture**, SNAP Opportunity, and Wage Subsidy contracts from OTDA. The **Venture** program portfolio includes over 40 non-profit programs providing occupational skills training and adult basic education services that lead to higher wage employment to several target populations throughout NYC: Low Literacy, Young Adults, Ex-Offenders, Under- or Un-employed, Limited English Proficiency, and Non-Custodial Parents.
 - **Career Track** is a free employment program for noncustodial parents who have an NYC child support case. The program helps noncustodial parents find employment or enroll in training leading to good jobs in a variety of industries. It also provides additional support to help get a good job, such as MTA MetroCards, one-on-one support, financial planning, career coaching, and help with understanding and managing their child support case.
 - **Community Centered Workforce Development Program (CCWDP)** offers low-income residents in underserved communities of Williamsburg, Borough Park, Gravesend, Crown Heights, and employment opportunities that lead to empowerment and self-sufficiency.
9. What if the client has a disability or substance use challenge and is unable to comply with work requirements?

If a client reports a barrier to employment they are then referred to either the Wellness Comprehensive Assessment and Employment Program (WeCARE) for mental health or health assessment and or Substance Use Centralized Assessment Program (SUCAP) for a substance assessment and treatment referral if needed. If clients do not comply with either appointment then the sanction process will begin.

For WeCARE, clients who are not complying with their appointments will be outreached for 17 days and then moved into the conciliation process with FIA where there are further attempts to engage the client. If that process is unsuccessful the client will be notified of the sanction.

For SUCAP, clients who miss their appointments are also outreached for re-engagement for 10 days and notified in writing of the sanction if the outreach is unsuccessful.

- The process is the same for clients with disabilities or substance use challenges. They are all subjected to sanctions and notified in writing.

10. How are clients being notified about return to mandatory engagement?

- Current clients who are referred for a mandatory appointment with a Career Services or WeCare providers are informed in writing that they may be subject to sanctions due to noncompliance. HRA also added messaging that sanctions are returning on its website, on Access HRA, Infoline, 311, social media, and informed community partners, local electeds, and legal advocates.

Additionally for WeCARE, clients were informed in writing prior to the resumption of mandatory engagement. WeCARE vendors engaged in telephone outreach, emails and texts to inform all active clients of the necessary requirements to engage. Vendors were also provided with scripts for telephone outreach. Currently all appointments letters do state the mandatory language. Clients are pre-called and reminded of their upcoming appointment and given opportunities to reschedule or conduct their appointment virtually or in-person if preferred.

11. How many New Yorkers are subjected to ABAWD rules? And who is impacted?

- As of February 2026, 119,027 SNAP recipients were identified as ABAWDs. .

ABAWDs are SNAP recipients ages 18 through 64 who are not pregnant, do not reside in a household with someone under the age of 14, and who are able to work. The following individuals are not considered ABAWD:

- Younger than age 18, or age 65 or older,
- Someone in the household is younger than age 14,
- Receiving disability benefits from a public or private source, such as Veterans Affairs or New York State disability benefits,
- Pregnant,
- Unable to work at least 80 hours per month because of a physical or mental health reason,
- An Indian, Urban Indian, California Indian, or other Indian eligible for the Indian Health Services, or
- Excused from the General SNAP Work Rules because they are:
 - o 16 or 17-year-old who is not the head of the household or who is in school or in an employment program at least half-time,

- o Unable to work because of a mental or physical health reason,
- o Taking care of a child younger than age 6,
- o Taking care of an incapacitated person,
- o Meeting the work rules under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program,
- o Receiving or applying for unemployment benefits,
- o Participating in a drug or alcohol addiction treatment program,
- o Enrolled in a school, training program, or college at least half-time (students may be subject to other eligibility rules),
- o Already working at least 30 hours per week,
- o Already earning \$217.50 (30 times the federal minimum wage) or more per week, OR
- o An SSI applicant or recipient

12. Since November, how many total SNAP applicants and recertifications were deemed ABAWD under the new criteria?

- As of February 28, 2026, there are 119,027 ABAWDs
 - o NCA (36,242) and CA SNAP (82,785)

13. How many newly found ABAWD SNAP clients attended their initial PACE appointment? How many did not?

- Since November 2025, 8% of NCA SNAP ABAWDs attended their initial PACE appointment.

14. Talk to me about H.R. 1. There was a lot in there that impacted DSS/DHS/HRA. SNAP cuts amount to \$187B over the next decade and close to 1 trillion over the next decade in Medicaid cuts. So can you talk to me about those impacts and what the city is doing to mitigate impact to its social safety net, which includes your vast network of providers

- HR1 implemented devastating amendments to varying parts of the SNAP operation that will have impacts on clients and benefits.
- The changes to ABAWD eligibility and elimination of existing waivers have put as many as 120K new workers at risk of reduced or eliminated benefits. Since the passage of HR1 DSS has engaged in aggressive outreach efforts to ensure clients who might be impacted connect with HRA to explore options for complying with the new works requirements.

- HRI adjusted the administrative cost sharing for SNAP increasing the State share from 50% to 75% which the State has indicated would get passed to localities, costing NYC another \$111M annually to manage the SNAP program.
- HR1 also implemented a benefit cost shift to States based on PER Error rate that could result in NYS assuming as much as 15% of the cost of SNAP benefits for NYers (\$1.2B for NYS and \$750M for NYC)
- HR1 also eliminated automatic HEAP benefits for SNAP recipients potentially reducing ~\$200/mo in benefits for 70K NYC households
- HR1 also removed SNAP eligibility for a subset of qualified immigrants.

15. Have you seen declines in the number of individuals applying for SNAP since the implementation of ABAWD rules Does the administration have a position on work requirements?

- At this point its too soon to tell whether there have been a decline in SNAP applications specifically due to ABAWD work requirement. We encourage all who feel they are eligible for benefits contact us at AHRA to apply for benefits.
- Most people who can work are working. This is about an administrative burden imposed by the federal government that makes it harder for people.
- We believe work is an important part of people's lives. We are all here at work. We want to help support people's ability to thrive. We have HRA's Career Services Division which helps clients build the skills and experience needed to achieve career success and financial stability. Working closely with each client, Career Services connects individuals to opportunities that match their skills, interests, and goals – supporting them every step of the way toward meaningful and sustainable employment. Based on their situation, clients work with Career Services providers in a wide range of programs.

UJC Questions for HRA re ABAWD implementation

1. Can HRA share a copy of its current ABAWD policy? The last policy that we saw is from November 2025 and fails to include critical details about how HRA's ABAWD systems will work.

HRA Response: We are in the process of finalizing the policy and will publish before April 11th.

2. We would like to comment on a number of issues with the notice/form LDSS-5193 (REV. 10/25).

- a. The ABAWD requirements are buried in page 6 of the notice. We believe these should be at the beginning when these are the requirements most likely to cause people to lose their benefits.

HRA Response: We use a local equivalent to the LDSS-5193, the FIA-1250. It follows the flow of the FNS model notice for a consolidated work notice; we will explore re-factoring this notice with our OTDA partners and seek input from other community and client stakeholders.

- b. HRA does not sufficiently explain this important ABAWD compliance option. “Participate in a work experience activity approved by HRA or volunteer in a community service activity for the number of hours per month equal to the household's SNAP benefit divided by the higher of the federal or State minimum wage.”

- i. This language is extremely confusing and will not be understood by most people who receive this notice. HRA should give an example and should calculate the number of hours based on the person’s monthly benefits since they know people’s monthly benefit amounts|

HRA Response: We will explore the feasibility of a personalized hours calculation being displayed in the form – this would require significant re-factoring and programming – but in the interim will begin revising the form to include a standardized example to make the concept easier to understand.

- c. The notice doesn't include clear instructions on how to comply with ABAWD work requirements, i.e. where to upload/send documents, what documents and forms must be submitted, etc. The notice only repeatedly tells people to "call the phone number on the last page of this notice." The last page lists only a phone number buried at the bottom of the last page that is not clearly identified. When called, this number identifies itself as HRA’s interview number.

HRA Response: We’ve modified the landing message and removed the reference to being an interview line. Our initial roll-out efforts lean into our network of PACE providers to orient clients on ABAWD rules and reporting timelines and the various ways individuals can meet their requirements.

- d. The notice should include a copy of critical forms such as the Medical Exemption form.

HRA Response: The Medical Exemption form is sent to clients who otherwise do not screen exempt from ABAWD rules during their eligibility interview.

Additionally clients who are engaged in activities to comply with ABAWD rules do have the ability to ask for an exemption at anytime by providing the medical statement or documentation supporting their request.

3. Has HRA publicized the forms that people can use to document compliance with ABAWD hours? (Monthly ABAWD Volunteer Participation Record, Monthly ABAWD Education & Training Participation Record, Monthly Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Job Search Activity Record). We saw these referenced in a training but could not find actual links to the forms posted online. How do recipients access these forms? Where and how should these forms be submitted? Can these records/forms be completed directly within ACCESS HRA?

HRA Response: The forms are now published here: [Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents - HRA](#). Clients can upload these forms via the AHRA mobile app. Because the forms require counter signatures, they are not able to be completed directly within AHRA, but we are exploring technology options that would make this possible in the future. Clients also can be referred to either WeCARE or SUCAP to complete have a clinical assessment conducted if they are requesting an exemption and do not have supporting documentation to substantiate.

4. One of our members received a LDSS-5193 saying he needed to meet ABAWD requirements but no FIA-1021K (a notice with a scheduled appointment with a case manager at HRA PACE). Are all recipients supposed to be receiving appointments with HRA PACE?

HRA Response: Non-Cash Assistance SNAP clients who are ABAWDS and receive an FIA-1250 listing them as such are supposed to receive a PACE appointment letter (the FIA-1021K). Cash Assistance SNAP clients should already have received a notice to comply with their CA work requirements which will serve as compliance with ABAWD requirements.

5. Is HRA proactively reaching out to vulnerable groups such as street homeless and other homeless NYers to make sure that they don't lose SNAP due to ABAWD requirements?

HRA Response: Since October 2025, DSS has convened thousands of community partners working with vulnerable populations to share information and resources about the implementation of ABAWD work requirements and how to support impacted SNAP clients with qualifying for and accessing exemptions or complying with the new requirements. In addition to these information sessions, DSS has developed a two-hour in-depth training for community providers working with SNAP clients to better understand how to support clients in securing exemptions or effectively documenting their compliance with the requirements. As of March 30th, DSS has held 21 trainings with 670 attendees from 96 unique community organizations and City agencies.

In April 2026, DSS Outreach will begin a coordinated direct outreach campaign to connect directly with SNAP recipients in the community and help them understand whether the new ABAWD rules apply to them, how to request an exemption, and/or how to meet the new requirements through work or community service hours.

6. Can a Licensed Master Social Worker sign the ABAWD Medical Statement?

HRA Response: Yes, any Qualified Health Provider may sign the medical statement including credentialed staff from WeCARE and SUCAP programs.

Older Adults and SNAP

1. How many older adults were enrolled in SNAP in 2025 and in the previous year?
 - 2025 - There were 603,069 older adults on SNAP
 - 2024 - There were 590,381 older adults on SNAP
2. What was the SNAP Recertification Rate for older adults in 2025 and the previous year?
 - 2025 – 208,480 (84.9%) older adults were recertified for SNAP during 2025
 - 2024 - 127,019 (85.7%) older adults were recertified for SNAP during 2024.
 - Internal note: Recertifications take place at the case level, but since the Local Law reporting requirement is for older adult individuals, we looked at the case recertification information and then counted the number of older adults on the case.
 - It is important to note that just because someone was on SNAP during 2024 does not mean that they had to recertify in 2024.

2025 SNAP Recertification Rate

All SNAP	NCA SNAP
All Individuals	
84.2%	84.3%
Older Adults Only	
84.9%	85.2%

2024 SNAP Recertification Rate

All SNAP	NCA SNAP
All Individuals	
85.4%	85.1%
Older Adults Only	
85.7%	85.8%

3. What is the older adult SNAP participation rate in 2025? How does the participation rate compare to the estimated number of older adults in NYC who are eligible for SNAP that year?
 - According to the latest data available:
 - This is greater than the 2023 older adult SNAP participation rate of 75.9% (507,736,106 enrolled/669,300 estimated eligible for SNAP)
4. Can you describe the method of enrollment and recertification for SNAP for older adults?
 - To make SNAP enrollment easier, a Simplified SNAP Application/Recertification form (LDSS 5166) is available for older adults (60 years of age and older) and New Yorkers with disabilities, whose households are without earned income. Clients can

access the Simplified SNAP application online at <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/hra/help/snap-benefits-food-program.page> or they may call Infoline to request that a paper version be mailed to them.

- Pursuant to a waiver granted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service which the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) pursued at HRA/DSS' request, cases with all adults 55 years of age or older and/or cases where all adults are disabled can also recertify for SNAP benefits by phone using an automated Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS), if there is:
 - No budgeted earned income (from job or self-employment);
 - No change to unearned income (Supplemental Security Income [SSI], Social Security, pension, etc.); and
 - No change in residence or household composition.
 - Older adults may also apply and recertify (if they have changes to residence or income) or manage their SNAP case using the ACCESS HRA (AHRA) website or mobile application using a smartphone or tablet. They may also submit documentation using the ACCESS HRA Mobile app. Clients who lack internet access or internet-ready mobile devices, or who need additional in-person assistance, may also visit any HRA center or a partnering Community-Based Organization.
 - In addition, HRA has partnered with Hunger Free America to take SNAP applications and recertifications from older adults or individuals with disabilities over the phone who are unable to avail themselves of the aforementioned methods. HRA's partnership with Hunger Free America included targeted outreach to recipients of NYC's GetFoodNYC delivery program who were likely eligible but not enrolled in SNAP, and the organization continues to assist older adults and other individuals who may be homebound or digitally disconnected with applying for SNAP over telephone by utilizing a verbal signature.
 - HRA also permits all SNAP eligibility interviews to be conducted by phone "On-Demand" by clients initiating a call to HRA at their convenience, rather than visiting a center for an in-person interview, unless they chose to.
5. Can you describe HRA's SNAP Campaign Advertising to get the word out to older adults?
- In 2025 we continued our outreach campaign targeting existing clients, including older adults; this campaign included collateral distributed at Benefits Access Centers, food pantries, community-based organizations, libraries, and older adult centers.
 - Older adults were a part of our target audience for organic social media throughout 2025; our target audiences also included a focus by neighborhood; in addition, we also targeted single parents/guardians.
6. SNAP Outreach Older Adult Center Engagement

- In 2025, DSS Outreach continued in-person services at community partner locations. From January 2025 – December 2025, DSS Outreach provided recurring in-person and virtual services at 41 older adult centers and older adult serving partner organizations.
- ACCESS HRA, ACCESS HRA Provider Portal, and SNAP application trainings also continued to be offered virtually. DSS also added a training in November on changes to SNAP work requirements.
- In 2025, DSS conducted a total of 76 SNAP-related trainings, which included 1,902 attendees, in using these tools to submit SNAP and other benefit applications; and provide benefit case management via ACCESS HRA.
- Training attendees include staff from other municipal agencies and community partner organizations, including older adult center staff. These trainings were also a forum for questions and concerns from providers and advocates working directly with HRA and DHS clients, including older adults.

EBT Skimming

1. How can we prevent further EBT skimming? What next policy steps do you suggest to help stop this plague of people stealing benefits?
 - In terms of policy steps, we support State legislation that would require implementation of chip technology in EBT cards. That is S.1465/A.699 sponsored by Senator Serrano and Assembly member Gonzalez-Rojas. EMV chips, or "smart" cards, provide an additional layer of security to help prevent skimming. The private sector (companies like Visa and Mastercard) reports reductions in fraud of 87 percent when they transitioned to using chip technology on cards.
 - The Governors' 30-day amendment to the Executive budget appropriated \$1.8 million for costs associated with the implementation of chip enabled cards of which \$700,000 was ear marked for New York City. The Senate and Assembly one-house budget bills accepted this proposal.
 - We ask the Council to join us in advocating to NYS for the passage of the Governor's proposal to enhance and modernize EBT cards..
 - We also want to ensure every EBT card user knows about the ability to lock their card. Once a card is locked, no transactions can occur until it is unlocked. The EBT Edge app allows users to lock and unlock their card from within the app. For the best security against skimming, we encourage clients to utilize this app so they can unlock their card, make their purchase and then relock the card.
2. The skimming situation is dire; so many of our constituents have been impacted. What is taking NYS so long to act? Has the administration been in conversation with OTDA about the implementation of chip technology?
 - Yes. The administration has been in touch with OTDA about the implementation of chip technology.
3. Will all of a client's stolen benefits be replaced?
 - It depends. The replacement benefit you are eligible to receive is either the amount of cash benefits that were stolen, or an amount equal to two (2) times the cash benefits you received in the most recent complete month during which you received Cash before your benefits were stolen, whichever is less. Clients are eligible to have their cash benefits replaced 1x per federal fiscal year (October –September)

Note however – The federal authority that allowed for the replacement of skimmed SNAP benefits ended December 20, 2024. As of September 30,

2025, New York State stopped accepting all benefit replacement claims for SNAP. This does not affect replacement claims for Cash Assistance.

4. How long does it take for clients to receive their benefit after they submit a claim?
 - o Processing times vary. We ask that clients accepted for replacement benefits allow for up to four weeks for replacement benefits to be put on their card and to receive a notice in the mail notifying you of our decision.
5. How has HRA performed in replacing stolen benefits?
 - This has been a result of City and State government working together to assist vulnerable people victimized by this crime. Timeline:
 - o Recall that council members helped spotlight the fact that these crimes were occurring in 2022; at the time there was no mechanism in place to restore benefits.
 - o The state had to submit a plan to the federal government on restoring benefits by February 2023. Federal and state partners granted permission to restore stolen benefits put forth the framework permitting social service agencies to restore benefits.
 - o We began issuing replacement CA and SNAP benefits in August 2023.
 - o Federal legislation subsequently made SNAP benefits stolen after December 20, 2024 ineligible for replacement. As of September 30, 2025, New York State stopped accepting claims for SNAP replacement benefits.
 - The number of SNAP cards eligible for refund claims in 2025, approved and investigated by HRA/DOI due to the use of hidden skimming devices on card readers (NYC only).
 - o 1,272. Note that this figure represents distinct CINs, (clients) rather than distinct cards. We also accept claims for any type of electronic theft, but we believe the vast majority to be caused by overlay devices placed on card readers. Only DSS approves the benefits (not DOI) and DOI did not investigate any of these particular claims (to my knowledge).
 - The total monetary value of stolen benefits claims approved by HRA in 2025 (NYC only).
 - o Cash Assistance: \$2,138,641,
 - o SNAP: \$973,322.
 - o Total: \$3,111,963 (This is based on date of claim determination date.)
 - The number of SNAP card thefts approved by HRA/DOI in 2025 (NYC only).
 - o 1,272 (as above, this is clients not cards)
 - The number of SNAP recipients affected by theft in 2025 (NYC only).

- o 29,138 clients filed SNAP claims in CY2025. The true number of clients impacted is likely much higher, because SNAP reimbursement has been largely unavailable in CY2025.
- 6. How much has HRA reimbursed since 2023 and how many SNAP recipients overall have received reimbursement since the beginning?

Between 2023 and March 1, 2026 DSS received roughly 191,000 distinct skimming claims and approved \$50.6 million in replacement benefits:

- \$43,740,503 in SNAP replacement (96,200 approved claims)
- \$6,895,998 in Cash Assistance replacement (38,610 approved claims)

Food Quality at Shelters

Value Statements

- The safety and well-being of our DHS clients is of the utmost importance and part of our care extends to the more than 14 million meals and snacks served annually throughout the DHS shelter system.
- The provision of three meals a day and snacks to clients adheres to New York City Food Standards, the set of requirements around City purchases of food, beverages, meals, and snacks served by City agencies; those standards include regulations on sweeteners, sodium, artificial colors, and preservatives.
- DHS employs a range of strategies to monitor the quality of meals served from reviewing menus, to taste testing by staff, to conducting surveys to obtain a sense of clients' satisfaction with meals and snacks.

Top Lines

Food Quality was one of DSS 2025 priorities. To strengthen the quality assurance procedures in the food and nutrition policy, DHS developed a multidisciplinary work group to create policies, tools and reporting systems for shelter providers and DHS staff. Although ongoing food quality monitoring is the responsibility of the shelter providers, DHS checks food quality with random spot checks and conducts food focused site visits, , meal quality tests, and client satisfaction surveys.

Inspections

- All locations providing meals are required to have a food service establishment permit through the NYC department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH). DOHMH conducts food safety inspections once a year.
- The routine site review inspection (RSRI) team conducts site inspections twice a year. The RSRI site inspections includes facility related food safety questions.

Meal Quality Tests

- The DHS policy instructs providers to conduct meal quality tests once a month for each meal served at all locations that provide meals.
- DHS released the Food Vendor Quality Assurance Policy in April 2025 with detailed instructions for providers to conduct meal quality tests and the next steps for providers to take if a meal is not acceptable. . The Food Vendor Quality Assurance policy was revised based on the experiences of 2025 and is expected to

be released in April 2026. DHS will begin scheduling trainings with providers once the policy is released.

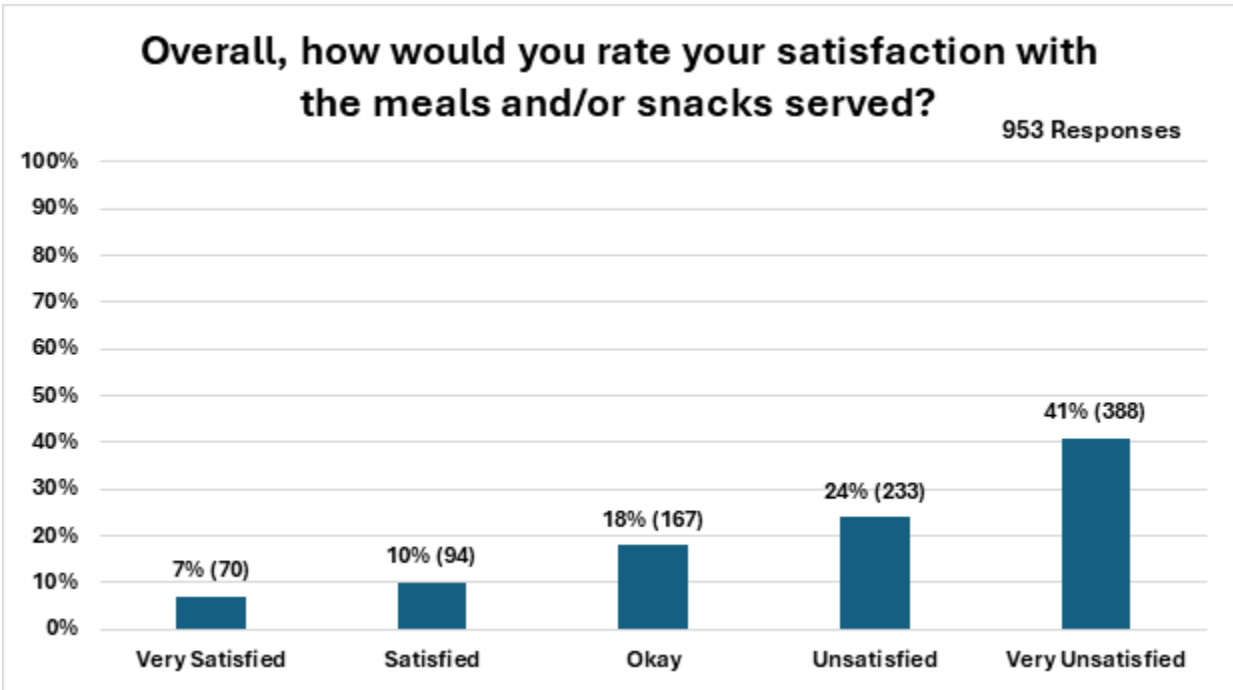
- o The fields have been created in the building compliance system and DHS is updating the BCS education materials.
- DHS nit will conduct random meal quality tests on each food vendor at least once a year with additional tests for any vendor with ongoing unacceptable meal quality tests. T· The administrative contract unit will conduct quarterly meal quality tests on meals provided by the DHS contracted food vendors. The team will increase testing and notify the vendor if they are placed on a PIP or CAP (soon to be Vendor Quality Assurance Policy) per Vendor Quality Assurance Policy.

Client Satisfaction Survey

Client Food Satisfaction Survey is administered by three methods

1. DHS contracted food vendors are participating in Local Law 905-A from January 2026 – June 2026.
2. The DHS policy instructs providers that serve meals to distribute the “DHS Client Food Satisfaction Survey” twice a year and use the data to inform meal service Providers must also report the data to DHS.
- o
3. DHS gives clients the opportunity to respond to the Food Satisfaction Survey directly to DHS through an electronic survey, The Health Service Office will review and share results with vendors and DHS/DSS.

For internal reference – the overall satisfaction results from 2025



Talking Points

- DHS ensures that families with children have access to three nutritious meals per day.
- In Tier II facilities, families with children are able to cook their own meals with food they've purchased for their families.
 - Families with children shelters have food pantries that are stocked with food items meeting the NYC Food Standards and are available to families that may need support at times in accessing food.
- In other facilities where families do not have access to a kitchen, three healthy, nutritious meals that comport with the NYC Food Standards are provided daily to families.
 - DHS works closely with food vendors to encourage that menus for facilities provide a variety of options and are culturally diverse.
 - To further ensure that families have access to food that they like:
 - DHS permits families with children in commercial hotels to bring cooked/prepared meals into shelter to eat as a meal that day.
 - DHS also permits families to store shelf-stable/non-perishable food items that are ready to eat and do not require kitchen amenities.
- Families with dietary restrictions for disability or medically related needs are accommodated through our reasonable accommodation process.
 - Food vendors are able to provide meals or adjust servings of standard meals to comport with common dietary restrictions like:
 - Heart healthy/carbohydrate consistent
 - Renal for dialysis (kidney disease)
 - Gluten free
 - Pureed
 - Double portions
 - Iron rich
 - Vegan
 - Vegetarian
 - Allergen free (depending on allergy type)
 - If a family has significant or complicated food allergies or has other needs that cannot be accommodated by our food vendors, we can transfer those families to a Tier II facility through the reasonable accommodation process.

Food Quality at Shelters Questions (Fabienne Laraque, Diana Cangemi)

1. Do clients receive a satisfaction survey about the food?

Yes, clients receive client satisfaction surveys. Note that the surveys are distributed in several ways and that clients are free to respond or not. Given that the surveys are voluntary and not randomly assigned, and the usual responder bias, the survey results indicate the opinion of the clients who reply and not of the entire DHS population who receive meals.

2. What are you doing to increase satisfaction with food at DHS shelters?

- DHS operates 500 shelters, the vast majority of which have contracted food services. There are instances where improvements can be made – when we're alerted to those instances, we work with the vendors and shelter providers to make sure improvements are made. On the whole – we're seeing satisfactory taste results from our vendors.
- While the food satisfaction survey f indicated a majority of clients were not satisfied with meals, it is important to note that taste is subjective and the meals will have less salt and/or seasoning than most people are used to eating. . In terms of food quality – we have not had outbreaks of foodborne diseases. We have developed a process to track vendor meal quality test results completed by shelter staff and DHS. When we tasted food – over 80% were satisfactory in 2025. When we obtain unsatisfactory results, we alert the provider to make revisions or follow up with their contracted food service vendor

3. Is there a scoring system (food tasting)? Which providers are doing a good job?

- 2a. The meal quality test includes a taste indicator.
- 2b. A food tasting was included in current RFP for food vendors. Most of the meals evaluated by DHS but been found to be acceptable in taste but did have other items that needed to be corrected .

4. How many client complaints have there been in the past year concerning food?

- When DHS hears complaints we take them seriously and investigate. Should there be recurring issues, the agency could put directly contracted vendors or shelter providers could put subcontracted vendors on a Vendor Monitoring Agreement and enforce that they correct whatever action must be corrected.
- Taking a step back to review the process:
 - o Clients may submit a complaint to the Ombudsman's Office, through 311, or complain directly to the provider. In addition the DSS Health Service Office receives occasional complaints from DOHMH if someone sends a complaint to them about a DHS shelter
- We take those complaints and investigate them.

- We do what we can to alleviate any issues.
 - Should there be larger issues, we have the option to put the contractor on a Corrective Action Plan.
 - At this point we do not have a contractor on a CAP at present.
 - We have had vendors on CAPs and they have corrected the issue.
 - Food represented 2.51% of complaints (1,479 complaints) in calendar year 2024
- If the Health Service office receives a complaint, it is forwarded to programs operations to address with the shelter staff.

5. DHS serves individuals and families from different ethnic backgrounds. What is the agency doing to ensure the cultural needs of its clients are being met?

- DHS understands the importance of cultural diversity.
- Therefore, DHS has been promoting cultural diversity in its meals by:
 - Requiring 50% of dinner meals to be culturally diverse for its direct food contracts.
 - For its shelter providers, recommend using client feedback to inform meal service and provide a culturally diverse menu.
 - Encourage all food vendors to provide culturally diverse meals.

6. How many meals does DHS serve per day?

- Three meals a day: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner;
- currently between two (2 all 3 DHS Contracted food vendors including standard and specialty meals it is 6,115 meals a day (inclusive of B,L,D) among 13 sites across NYC (1 site serves 3 programs)

7. There have been various reports of the low food quality being provided at shelters. Why is more than half a billion dollars being spent on these low-quality meals?

- ⌚ Meals and meal service are not uniform across DHS sites. The providers either prepare meals on site or may receive meals from one of many food vendors. “Low-quality” is a general term and could indicate the meal was not acceptable for a variety of reasons. The DHS meals must meet the NYC Food Standards, which require limited salt and fat, no added sugar, and provide a minimum number of servings of fruits, and vegetables and whole grains. Plant-forward meals are emphasized for health reasons. This is a large operation, and we recognize there could and have been occurrences when the meals do not meet our standards for contents or taste. Given the reported unfavorable response to the meals however, and the variability, DHS has prioritized consistent food quality (content, portions, and palatability) as an important step in improving satisfaction. Since 2025, the agency has developed procedures, tools, and references to assist with continuous monitoring and improvement. DHS

and the DSS medical office also started direct meal tests which include checking contents and taste.



In 2025, 48 meal quality testing “occurrences” that included 120 meals were conducted and 107 were tasted. 23 vendors in the samples and 1 provider that prepares meals at the site were included..

☐ DHS sampled at least one meal from 21 vendors in 2025.

☐ Majority of the tests had an item that needed to be corrected but most (87%, 93/107) were considered “acceptable” for taste.

☐ The testing will continue and at least one meal from every vendor will be reviewed for taste and contents annually

☐ DHS issued the Food Vendor Quality assurance policy in April 2025 with detailed instructions for providers to conduct monthly meal quality steps and require a response and corrective actions from providers and food vendors if a meal is not acceptable

■

☐ In 2026, the Food Vendor Quality Assurance Policy was revised based on the experiences of 2025.



- In addition, our Admin Contract AC has tasted meal samples and have found them to be satisfactory to good.

8. What are you doing to ensure the meals taste good?

As mentioned above, the majority of the meals tasted were acceptable to good. But because of complaints and the food satisfaction survey results, DHS strengthened its food quality monitoring procedures;

Taste is subjective, DHS encourages vendors and providers to make condiments available for clients to add based on preferences

Admin Contract Team tastes the meals during our Quarterly meal testing.

9. What is the City’s plan to reform the oversight process to ensure that meals are appropriate for halal and Kosher observing clients?

MOFP assessed current halal and kosher standards and procedures across agencies to develop forthcoming guidance to all agencies on providing religiously inclusive meals. The guidance will be applicable to all agencies and their contractors that procure and/or serve food and meals, with sections specific to meal service type. The goal is to bring consistency across religious meal programs and to ensure compliance with New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) Halal and Kosher Programs.

This new guidance will provide recommended language to be used in food-related contracts and solicitations, instructs agencies with City-operated kitchens that prepare halal meals to receive 3rd party certification, and will equip agencies with operational best practices including product storage, record keeping, transparent communications with consumers, and soliciting client feedback. MOFP will assist agencies with implementation of the guidance, as needed, and address issues with compliance.

10. How does DHS certify that vendors are providing halal meals? Please provide specific certification standards used in city contracts and detail verification processes used by agencies.

- The current DHS Food and Nutrition Policy states that DHS facilities must provide diets prepared in accordance with clients' religious beliefs. The policy also states that all halal foods shall be provided by vendors certified by the Islamic Society of North America, the Majlis Ashura of the New York Metropolitan Area, or the National Association of Muslim Chaplains. DHS consulted MOFP for recommendations when the agency determined the policy needed revision. Based on recommendations made by MOFP, a forthcoming update to the policy will clarify halal and kosher certification requirements and ensure all contractors and sub-contractors are compliant with the NYSDAM Halal and Kosher Registration programs. The updated policy will no longer identify specific halal or kosher certifiers. Instead, it will require all vendors to provide proof of valid 3rd party certification and NYSDAM registration. If the identified certifier is operating within NYS, the certifier is also required to be registered with NYSDAM.
 - The most recent DHS request for proposals for meal vendors includes language to mirror this policy, stating that that contractors and sub-contractors should be capable of meeting specialty dietary requirements. The RFP includes requirements for 3rd party certification, NYSDAM registration, as well as labeling requirements so that all halal or kosher meals are clearly marked with ingredients listed for further transparency. Please see the full RFP here for reference:
https://passport.cityofnewyork.us/popup.aspx/en/bpm/process_manage_extranet/35554
11. What oversight processes ensure consistency in standards across nonprofit and emergency contracted shelters?

- The DHS Food and Nutrition policy provides standards for all providers to follow. Live training on the policy was conducted when the policy was created in 2019 and when the policy was updated in 2024. A recorded Food and Nutrition Policy training is available for providers on the DHS training platform.
 - Office of Compliance sent providers a letter in 2026 to remind shelter providers they are responsible to provide meals that meet the NYC Food Standards and follow the quality monitoring processes required by DHS.
 - DHS Nutritionist began monthly dietitian hours for food vendors, providers that prepare meals, and providers that contract food vendors in 2025 and is continuing these monthly meetings through 2026.
12. Food and Nutrition training will be scheduled in 2026 when the revised Food Vendor Quality Assurance policy is released. Are there any vendors on Corrective Action Plans (CAPs) presently?
- We've done an investigation into Regina specifically. At this point, we will be advancing with a corrective action plan with them.
 - Admin Contracts directly contracts with Riviera and Whitsons who combined serve 12 sites. There have been no CAPs issued under our direct contracts.
13. Do providers have any responsibility in ensuring food safety or food vendor contract compliance?
- Regarding food safety, yes, providers have a responsibility in ensuring food safety.
 - All providers that serve meals are responsible for obtaining a food service establishment permit.
 - The food and nutrition policy for providers and DHS staff includes processes to monitor food safety
 -
 - DHS contracted vendors must ensure that they comply both with the menu and nutrient amounts. The vendors must serve based on the portions and weight per meal and maintain DHS directly run site equipment as detailed above.
14. According to the State Comptroller's 2018 audit, DHS inspectors grew from 2 to 28 inspectors. Are all of these inspectors Routine Site Review Inspectors who have added food to their duties, or do these inspectors focus solely on food?
- We currently have seven inspectors in the RSRI unit that conduct all RSRI inspections including the food component of the inspections.
 - *Internal note from Contracts team:* not really sure where the 28 staff members may have gone -Attrition and cancellation of our A&E staffing contract.
13. Has DHS been reaching its target of inspecting each shelter 2 times a year?

- All applicable sites are inspected twice a year for food compliance.

14. Does DOHMH inspect food also?

- Yes, DOHMH inspects food service establishments for proper holding and heating temps. DOHMH does not taste the food.

15. Is DHS aware of the amount of food wasted in pounds on an annual basis?

- It would be difficult to track food waste.

16. Who is monitoring the amount of food that a shelter orders since much of it gets tossed in the trash?

- Yes, we monitor it.
- It is a delicate balance. At the end of the day – the goal is to make sure we are not without food for anybody that needs it. We go through this process to make sure we are counting the discards. Some days – folks may be hungrier than others. If there is more discard – we factor that in and try to meet the need the following day.
- Shelter providers are required to monitor their food discards.

17. How many contracts are being held for food in DHS? Contract Value for each?

Based on previous spend and projections. Sites are transitioning to their own contracts with food vendors.

Three DHS contracts all of which are a 3-year renewal:

Whitsons: \$93,079,457.75

Dhall: \$23,527,857.50

RC Stillwell: \$43,563,509.17

Monthly costs vary based on need. If clients decrease/increase, meals decrease/increase, etc.

18. What is the amount of food contract per diem?

- Admin Contracts Response: \$28,323.54.00 (between RC/Whitsons) includes standard and specialty meals across all three contracts.

19. What is the price per meal (B:breakfast/L:lunch/D:dinner) per contractor?

Dhall

B	\$2.08
L	\$4.85
D	\$5.13

RC

B	\$3.74
L	\$3.79
D	\$3.96

Whitsons

B	\$3.81
L	\$5.23
D	\$5.21

20. What is the breakdown between % shelters getting food from prime contractors versus subcontracted food?

- Note – this isn't the best apples to apples comparison. There are different terms in the contracts.
- Percentage based on shelters that are subbed versus shelters that get direct meal service
- Estimated number of sites that serve meals (vendors and providers that prepare meals – 382 from BCS
- For background:
 - o By contract, few direct sites. Was range of 80% subcontracts.
 - o The great majority are subcontracts rather than directly provided
 - o Emergency sites should be 100% subcontract

21. How often are providers and food vendors audited?

- Admin Contract Response: Team goes out on a quarterly basis (depending on workload/deadlines). Picks up sample and measures and reviews against menu of the day.
- HSO conducts random meal quality tests and will test one meal from food vendors annually.

22. How much does DHS spend per year on food contracts at DHS-run facilities and provider-run facilities?

For DHS contracted food vendors:

Whitsons: FY24 \$49,632,935.14; FY25 thus far (based on all invoices submitted thru December/partial Jan) \$13,281,977.69 \$18,359,689.56. FY26 billed thus far \$4,891,354.89.

Dhall: FY24 \$6,878,425.68 FY25 thus far \$1,656,744.65 (based on submitted invoices through Jan/partial Feb)
\$2,106,653.85. FY26 \$318,197.96

RC Stillwell: FY24 \$13,585,705.25; FY25 thus far (partial Feb) \$4,705,718.16
\$6,388,655.77. FY26 billed thus far \$3,022,827.85.

24. Does DHS have any MWBE food vendors? How many MWBE businesses are engaged in the shelter food procurement process currently? What is their contract value?

- All DHS contract food vendors are MWBE vendors.

25. Does DHS have a new food contract and when will it conclude?

- Contracts will expire on 6/30/2026; submitted RFP for processing; proposals were due March 12, 2026. Proposals are being reviewed by ACCO.. Plan is to submit a 3 month extension with the current vendors as the timeline does not seem feasible that the new contracts will register by 7/1.

- i. How are we ensuring that nutrition needs are being met at Families with Children shelters bot

All Shelters must provide meals that meet the NYC food standards, which ensures that all meals are healthy, nutritious, and meet caloric requirements for healthy diets. DHS works closely with providers that prepare meals and food vendors to ensure that menus for facilities are compliant with the food standards, provide a variety of options and are culturally diverse. To further ensure that families have access to food that they like:

- ii. DHS permits families with children in commercial hotels to bring cooked/prepared meals into shelter to eat as a meal that day.
 - iii. DHS also permits families to store shelf-stable/non-perishable food items that are ready to eat and do not require kitchen amenities.
 - iv. DHS is encouraging vendors and providers to have shelf stable alternatives and condiments available for clients.

26. How does DHS meet the needs of people that have disabilities or have food restrictions because of allergies or medical conditions?
- a. Families that have any disability or medically related needs for a specific diet/dietary restrictions or who have significant needs such that they need to cook their own meals, they can submit a reasonable accommodation through DHS' reasonable accommodation process. Documentation to substantiate their disability or medically related need is required. DHS is able to assist any families that need help obtaining documentation. Clients needing assistance can complete a HIPAA form with their provider's information and the Agency will reach out to obtain documentation.
 - b. Food vendors are able to provide meals or adjust servings of standard meals that comport with common dietary restrictions like:
 - i. Heart healthy/carbohydrate consistent
 - ii. Renal for dialysis (kidney disease)
 - iii. Gluten free
 - iv. Pureed
 - v. Double portions
 - vi. Iron rich
 - vii. Vegan
 - viii. Vegetarian
 - ix. Certain common and easy to remove allergen-free can be provided on a case-by-case basis (depending on allergy type)
 - c. If a family has significant or complicated food allergies or has other needs that cannot be accommodated by our food vendors, we can transfer those families to a Tier II facility through the reasonable accommodation process, based on appropriate clinical documentation.
27. We have heard that there are no children's meals provided in shelters. Is that true? How does DHS ensure that children receive adequate and appropriate nutrition?
- a. DHS understands the importance of introducing new and different foods to children to encourage healthy eating habits. To that end, meals provided to adults can also be provided to children and can either be at a smaller portion or the same portion, understanding that children will consume less than adults. All meals served to children meet the NYC Food Standards, The DHS policy instructs vendors to have age appropriate meals available. It is important that children be exposed to different kinds of food. However, DHS also understands that children do have different likes/dislikes and may not be as open to trying new foods as older children and adults. To that end, we are actively working with our food vendors and providers to provide have alternative items like PB&J and to increase

the frequency of those “child preferred” entrees on the children’s menu so that they have options should they wish to choose a different meal.

28. We have heard reports that children are getting sick from food in shelter? How do you address the needs of children that cannot consume food provided in shelter?

- a. DHS is committed to providing safe food. Actual food poisoning/foodborne illness would not just affect children but people of any age and those are extremely rare and have not occurred to recent memory. If DHS is alerted in real time of an illness it will investigate and refer to DOHMH if needed.

DHS has seen an increase in RA requests for kitchens, some relating the need for a kitchen to children’s food intolerance. Some children may have underlying medical issues, understandable based on potential travel histories, and intolerance may not be related to the shelter food specifically. DHS has reviewed some of the medical notes and found the documentation is unclear or lacking details needed to assess the medical nutrition need. To help improve the process and gain better understanding on the recent increase, the HSO office has done outreach and provided education to medical providers.

When a medical or disability related needs is clearly indicated by the medical documentation, DHS handles the request in the same manner for children as for adults –through the reasonable accommodation process. Families that have any documented disability or medically related needs for a specific diet/dietary restrictions or who have significant needs such that they need to cook their own meals, they can submit a reasonable accommodation through DHS’ reasonable accommodation process. Documentation to substantiate their disability or medically related need is required. DHS is able to assist any families that need help obtaining documentation. Clients needing assistance can complete a HIPAA form with their provider’s information and the Agency will reach out to obtain documentation. It is important to note that just having a medical note is not a guarantee that the RA requested will be granted. The medical note must link the requested RA to the medical condition or DHS may provide an alternative or deny the request.

- b. Food vendors are able to provide meals that comport with common dietary restrictions like:
 - i. Heart healthy/carbohydrate consistent
 - ii. Renal for dialysis (kidney disease)

- iii. Gluten free
- iv. PureedDouble portions
- v. Iron rich
- vi. Vegan
- vii. Allergen free (depending on allergy type)
- c. If a family has significant or complicated food allergies or has other needs that cannot be accommodated by our food vendors, we can transfer those families to a Tier II facility through the reasonable accommodation process.

29. Can you walk us through the Food Satisfaction Survey process?

DHS solicit clients' opinion on meals in 3 ways:

- a. DHS contracted food vendors are participating in Local Law 905-A from January 2026 – June 2026.
- b. The DHS policy instructs providers that serve meals to distribute the “DHS Client Food Satisfaction Survey” twice a year and use the data to inform meal service. Providers must also report the data to DHS.
 - i. Each site must compile their satisfaction survey data into one report and submit to DHS in July during the Annual Food Standard Assessment.
 - ii. Providers are required to enter the data from their client food satisfaction survey in BCS. ~~The expected start date is September 2025 provided the work is done by ITS.~~
 - iii. The satisfaction survey fields were built in the building compliance in 2025 and the revised survey was approved for distribution. DHS is preparing education.
- c. Thirdly, DHS gives clients the opportunity to respond to the same Food Satisfaction Survey directly through direct QR code distributed via a flyer to shelters. The Health Service Office reviews and share results with DHS/DSS and will share results with food vendors.
 - ~~i. Each site preparing meals will receive an individual QR code to post in food service areas.~~
 - ~~ii. Clients can scan the code and respond to the Food Satisfaction Survey using the Qualtrics platform.~~
 - ~~iii. HSO office will review the results annually and share results with DHS shelter operations team and DSS ACCO office.~~
 - iv. In 2025, the Health Services Office collected 956 surveys from 135 sites who either use one of 26 vendors or prepare meals onsite. The results show variability regarding meal portion sizes and taste proportion of clients who responded being dissatisfied. Note that the survey is not randomized and subject to responder bias. Also note that the meals comport with the NYC Food Standards (low in salt and fat with no added

sugar, no fried food and high standard amount of fruits and vegetables) and therefore are going to lack not have the amount of salt and fat most are used to, and mass-produced meals for a large and varied population are going to lack certain spices or ingredients people may be used to at home. DHS takes all results seriously and will continue to share the results with our Contracting Office and shelter operations every 6 months. Food satisfaction is important to us and DHS has taken many steps to improve satisfaction, including: the DSS Health Service Office developed a process to share the satisfaction survey results with vendors monthly so they can review and make improvements; The DSS HSO will send monthly satisfaction reports to vendors in June 2026; training of shelter providers and food vendors; encouraging cultural diversity; encouraging access to extra condiments; adding child-friendly meals; creating an oversight unit that works with the DHS nutritionist to test and taste meals and improve quality.

Legislation

Int 740

1. Should this legislation be changed to DSS' responsibility?
 - No. As the bill is currently drafted, the warming centers are not exclusively aimed at individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness.
2. What lessons has DSS learned from the cold snap earlier this year?
 - The city faced a period of prolonged cold and snow that we have not seen in several years. The city used a wide range of approaches to get and keep people inside, the best place to stay safe in the cold.
 - We are always assessing ways we could do better for the future and are already planning for next winter. We're looking into how to activate some resources, like warming centers, more quickly and efficiently, and to have better scalable resources to get to every vulnerable person indoors and outdoors.
3. How does DHS partner with city agencies to ensure that warming centers and buses are easily accessible to vulnerable New Yorkers during Code Blue?
 - During the recent severe cold weather spells, the City took a number of steps to ensure that warming centers were accessible to vulnerable New Yorkers including:
 - Listing all warming center and bus locations were posted on the 311 Website.
 - Sharing information about severe weather and resources on LINKNYC Kiosks
 - Ensuring that warming buses had appropriate signage
 - Email lists of warming locations to all of the City's contracted outreach teams

Year-round the locations for Drop-In Centers are listed on the City's website.
4. What steps can be taken to ensure that New Yorkers experiencing homelessness are properly informed of warming center locations?
 - The City has palm cards listing the location for Drop-In Centers which they regularly hand out. The list of DICs is also available online.
 - The City's contracted outreach teams are kept informed of all warming centers.
 - Warming Centers are listed on the 311 website.

5. Has DHS begun to assess or identify new warming center locations that may have been previously overlooked?
 - DHS is always working to keep abreast of new trends / hotspots for homeless conditions. As new needs arise, we regularly pivot our resources to respond to such needs.
 - This is part of why we have embraced the warming bus model. If at the beginning of the code blue season we place a warming bus at a location that was a hot spot for homeless conditions last year, but find that homeless conditions have shifted locations, we can easily relocate the bus to address the new condition.

6. How many staff are needed to fully operate the city's warming operation?
 We would need more information in order to be able to answer this questions. It would depend on the size/capacity of the warming center, the operating hours of the warming center, the set up of the warming center (one large room vs several small rooms, whether the warming center is expected to serve meals, etc.

7. Please provide a breakdown of DHS street outreach staff by year, for the last 5 years.
 - For canvassers only—limited to contracted outreach providers and reflecting staff actively on board—the figures are as follows:
 - 2021: There were 186 canvassers on board across our 5 outreach providers.
 - 2022: There were 233 canvassers on board across our 5 outreach providers.
 - 2023: There were 296 canvassers on board across our 5 outreach providers.
 - 2024: There were 323 canvassers on board across our 6 outreach providers.
 - 2025: There were 313 canvassers on board across our 6 outreach providers

8. What improvements can we make to increase success outcomes for individuals in need of assistance during a Code Blue emergency?

9. Would additional staff and other resources be required for DSS to conduct warming center operations? If so, what would be the estimated cost?
 - We would need more information in order to be able to answer this questions. It would depend on the size/capacity of the warming center, the operating hours of the warming center, the set up of the warming center (one large room vs several small rooms, whether the warming center is expected to serve meals, etc.

10. How is this administration's plan for encampments different than the previous administrations?

- Under the previous administration, NYPD led encampment outreach efforts, and managing encampment structures was treated as a policing issue.
- - Under this administration, the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) leads this process. They engage with clients, set the schedule for any cleanups if needed, and do intensive daily outreach with clients. DHS manages all outreach to individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness, of which only a small portion use encampment structures. If needed, those structures are cleaned to ensure the safety of all pedestrians and fellow New Yorkers. All outreach uses a client-centered, service-forward, clinically-informed approach.
- - If cleanups are needed, DHS outreach teams will return every single day during the seven-day notice period– building trust, offering shelter placements, connecting people to drop-in service, medical care, and other city resources. This is a fundamental shift: engagement first, consistent outreach, enforcement later.
- - Our goal is simple: if clean ups need to be done, clients are given seven days notice and on day seven, outreach has already led to as many placements as possible – and as few people as possible remain outside.
- - This transformation is backed by real investment: The preliminary budget includes \$31 million in baseline funding for DHS outreach and \$11.9 million for NYC Health + Hospitals.
- - That means 66 additional staff – including nearly 60 outreach workers, stronger oversight, improved technology to track engagements, expanded transportation so clients can get to shelter quickly, three additional SHOW units to engage people living in encampments, and a third Bridge to Home site to provide long-term care for New Yorkers with serious mental health needs.

11. One of the people that died during the cold snap earlier this year was recently discharged from a hospital. What are you going to do going forward to ensure that you are engaging hospitals. I know DHS said at an earlier hearing that you send an email but what more are you doing to prepare for winter?

- DHS takes a number of steps to prepare for extreme weather conditions. Every year we:
 - Update, publish and disseminate the code blue policy
 - Deploy Warming Buses to End-of-line Stations
 - Open Warming Centers
 - Gather vulnerable lists from our outreach providers
- Hold a Code-Blue kick off meeting with our outreach providersReach out to H+H emergency rooms to see if they have clients in need of placements.Send a letter to all

hospitals via H+H leadership and the Greater New York Hospital Association for distribution to all hospitals, with Code Blue or Code Red/Grey procedure.

12. Please provide a detailed and individual level accounting of the previous contact DHS had with the people that died during the cold snap.

- As noted, there were fatalities during the previous cold spell from late January to early February. Due to data privacy and client confidentiality requirements, we are unable to provide case-specific details. Confidentiality obligations remain in effect after death, and we cannot disclose any identifying or administrative information that could reveal the identities of the decedents.
- Among those who passed away, some individuals had prior interactions with the DHS shelter system—ranging from decades ago to more recent engagement. Their shelter histories and types of interaction varied; some left the system before securing permanent housing, while others exited to permanent placements.
- It is important to emphasize that prior interaction with DHS does not indicate that an individual was experiencing homelessness at the time of death. Likewise, the fact that an individual was found deceased in a public location does not mean they were experiencing homelessness or had ever interacted with the shelter system.

13. What is the exact dollar amounts of New York State funding to New York City for Code Blue operations (DHS stated in their testimony during the code blue hearing that the amount was in the hundreds of thousands of dollars out of the state’s total budget of \$20 million).

- The Department of Social Services (DSS) submitted claims totaling \$4,084,472, of which the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) approved \$605,132 for reimbursement.

14. Please provide a complete list of the organizations, agencies, and institutions that have data-sharing agreements with DHS to access StreetSmart data.

- There are six organizations that have data-sharing agreements with DHS to access StreetSmart data. Those include:
 - SOS (the New York State Safe Option Support Program) MOU
 - Parties are:
 - DHS
 - NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH)

- Coordinated Behavioral Care (CBC): a nonprofit composed of behavioral health organizations that, through a network of providers, provides coordinated intervention services
- The five contracted outreach providers:
 - Breaking Ground
 - Goddard Riverside
 - Bowery Residents Committee
 - Project Renewal
 - Samaritan Daytop Village

15. What does DSS currently do with personal belongings of individuals experiencing street homelessness who enter shelters, safe havens, or stabilization beds during Code Blue? How many bags are permitted to be stored and where?

- During the most recent cold spell—specifically the 24-hour Continuous Enhanced Code Blue—DHS communicated with all contracted providers and requested flexibility regarding onsite policies for client belongings. DHS and its providers agreed to prioritize health and safety during this period, allowing individuals to come indoors and get warm even if they arrived with more belongings than would typically be permitted.
- Under standard policy, unsheltered individuals seeking shelter are generally allowed to bring up to two bags of personal belongings, due to limited unit space, fire safety requirements, and overall capacity constraints. However, individuals are not required to forgo their belongings. DHS can secure client’s property, including issuing vouchers for storage while they work with shelter providers to arrange longer-term solutions, such as storage assistance through HRA.

16. During the Code Blue declarations between January and February of 2026, DHS ran a pilot program where formerly homeless individuals accompanied trained outreach workers to engage with unsheltered people to convince them to accept shelter placements. Was the pilot program evaluated? If so, what were any findings? How many people were trained? fHow many individuals did they engage? Of those people, how many were provided shelter services?

- DHS launched a pilot program to incorporate peer engagement into street outreach efforts, funded by the NYC Fund to End Youth and Family Homelessness. Through this initiative, clients residing in street bed sites who expressed interest in outreach work were identified, trained, and invited to participate in outreach activities for several hours per week, based on their availability and interest. Participants, serving as peer outreach workers, receive a stipend to engage directly with unsheltered individuals, sharing their lived

experiences to help build trust and encourage individuals to come indoors and access services.

- Currently, seven peers are participating in the initiative. The program remains ongoing and has not yet been formally evaluated but we are exploring ways to replicate and possibly expand this initiative for future Code Blue emergencies with the support of our philanthropic partner.

17. During a Code Blue declaration, does DHS require that shelter residents leave shelter premises during daytime hours? If so, for how long? Where are shelter residents routed to go during this time?

- DHS clients are not required to leave shelter during the day, regardless of whether a Code Blue is in effect. While clients are encouraged to use daytime hours for appointments, employment opportunities, or other activities that support housing stability, they are not compelled to leave. Case management and other services are provided onsite throughout the day. Occasionally, clients may be asked to temporarily vacate dormitory or sleeping areas to allow for cleaning or maintenance; advance notice is always provided, and alternative indoor spaces remain available during these periods.

18. Were the 10 warming buses acquired during the 2026 Code Blue declarations temporary and intended specifically to be warming buses or are they permanent additions within the City's ownership? Who operates the buses? Is there a chain of events that results in a bus being dispatched to a particular location? If yes, please describe.

- In January 2026, NYCEM contracted S&J to support Emergency Warming Bus operations. These temporary additions were implemented in response to unprecedented frigid temperatures over an extended period.
- During February 9–12, 2026, representatives from DSS Emergency Management (DSS EM), DSS Office of Medical Director (OMD), Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), and Health + Hospitals (H+H) met with NYCEM to establish criteria for activating additional warming buses during future cold weather events. It was determined that citywide warming buses would be deployed when the National Weather Service forecasts four consecutive days with a maximum high temperature of 25°F, in conjunction with Enhanced Code Blue operations for the preceding four nights. This trigger would also initiate Continuous Enhanced Code Blue operations, which involve 24/7 enhanced outreach to vulnerable populations while normal canvassing is suspended.
- These decisions were scheduled for further discussion and finalization during the citywide Hot Wash meeting. Following the Hot Wash, the Citywide Winter Weather Emergency Plan would be updated to incorporate these new triggers and operational protocols.

19. During the hearing, you testified that street homeless outreach staff had worked overtime during Code Blue. Is overtime still happening? How many hours has outreach staff worked so far under the 2026 Code Blue declarations?

- Regarding the number of hours worked by outreach staff under the 2026 Code Blue declarations, we are still compiling the data and will provide the figure once available. We did not want the data-intensive nature of this question to delay responses to the other inquiries.

The Preconsidered Introduction (File #T2026-1550)

1. Can you share your thoughts on the bill?

Challenges with the bill include:

- Tracking what's included as SNAP fraud – given there is no actual tracking mechanism as they're describing what they're looking at in the bill
- We would be happy to discuss further with the Council to better understand what you're looking to achieve
- We would like to further discuss the frameworks with which we do and do not receive information about benefits stealing.
- Given the end of the Federal authorization to replace skimmed benefits – the agency has stopped receiving SNAP skimming applications from individuals.
- We can accept and replace benefits of CA benefits
- There's not an active, open pathway for reporting in the way that this bill requires.
- Also – definition of SNAP fraud – defined in state and federal law and the reverse – defined as client stealing from federal government; not fraud against clients,
- Appreciate the opportunity to speak further with Council on this

Appendix

Council Questions

(Add as page 15)

1. Do you know in FY25 how many quality control inspections have resulted in corrective action plans? How many, so far in FY26?
2. How many of the corrective action plans were directed at DHS's food providers, provider subcontractors, and providers preparing food on site?
3. Can you tell me what percentage of single adults and adult families received public benefits in Fiscal 2025 and so far in Fiscal 2026? Specifically, what percentage received SNAP benefits?
4. What was actual spending on food in drop-in centers in Fiscal 2025, what is it so far in Fiscal 2026, and what is the budget in Fiscal 2027?

Preconsidered Intro Talking Points

(Add as page 74 and 75)

Talking Points

- **Claims processing and Benefit replacement**
 - As of April 1, 2026, DSS has received roughly 250,000 skimming claims and approved \$50.8 million in replacement benefits:
 - **\$43,740,503 in SNAP replacement**
 - \$7,068,655 in Cash Assistance replacement
- **When appropriate, we've engaged in law enforcement partnerships or joint investigations**
 - Collaboration with Federal, State and local law enforcement and various District Attorney Offices
 - Helped identify thousands of terminals which were likely locations of skimming devices and referred to law enforcement.
 - Supported investigative operations with NYPD Financial Crimes Taskforce and DOI, including removing skimming devices from various locations
 - Another example: Operation Flagship, where HRA joined with USSS (secret service), NYPD, USDA, Kings County DA and DOI to tackle skimming issue and seize devices (removed >100 devices)
 - Supported successful investigations that lead to indictment and sentencing
- **Operation Flagship**
 - Operation Flagship conducted May 21-23 , 2025 in NYC Region
 - 3,251 terminals and devices checked
 - 55 skimming devices removed
 - Operation Flagship 2.0 conducted Oct. 7-9, 2025 in NYC region
 - 4,086 terminals and devices checked
 - 65 skimming devices removed
 - DSS investigators helped with the operation, we believe some sites were selected using DSS data analytics
- **Community Presentations by the Accountability Office (AO):**
 - Conducted numerous presentations about skimming risks, including:
 - Kings County District Attorney's Office (KCDA) – presented with Eric Gonzalez and NYPD, media present
 - Manhattan District Attorney's Office (DANY) – presented with Alvin Bragg and former DOI commissioner Jocelyn Strauber, and NYPD
 - Department of Aging
 - HASA

- Various senior citizen centers/ community centers- presented with NYPD, DOI present to provide support for Q&A

Materials available online:

- DSS has developed materials on skimming prevention (how to protect your benefits) and what to do if clients get skimmed.