

COVID-19 RESPONSE & RECOVERY

INTRODUCTION

New York City was one of the first American cities struck by COVID-19, and among the hardest hit, becoming an epicenter for the nation. But New York City, primarily due to the resolve and ingenuity of everyday New Yorkers, showed the way forward in responding to and recovering from this enormous international health, economic, and humanitarian crisis. The city rapidly implemented a comprehensive mobilization of personnel and resources. This includes an unprecedented health response predicated on science and data; the overnight creation of new programs to combat hunger at scale; the procurement and distribution of over 100 million pieces of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to frontline workers; the adaptive use of technology to maintain critical services; the redeployment of thousands of City workers to tackle emergent issues such as social distancing compliance; and the creative use of streets and sidewalks for recreation, travel, and commerce.

From the beginning of the coronavirus crisis, New York City made a decision to focus on the science and to have a data-driven response. The City deployed a wide array of public health measures, including education and critical outreach campaigns; distribution of vital supplies such as masks; placement of large numbers of testing and vaccination sites throughout the city; mobilization of contact tracers and take care ambassadors; and constant response and recovery programs. The City monitored the evolving science around COVID-19 to implement and continuously expand proven methods for preventing and combatting the disease. These methods, put in place throughout the City, included social distancing, testing, and contact tracing—and eventually, vaccination. With this multiagency approach, the City administered over 12.5 million vaccine doses in the 9 months from the first vaccination dose in December 14, 2020 through September 14, 2021.

As the City focused on a “Just Recovery for All,” the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion & Equity (TRIE) has continued to be on the forefront of the City’s efforts to engage the communities hardest-hit by COVID-19. The taskforce has monitored response in affected neighborhoods and among vulnerable populations. It has also identified key disparities through analysis and dialogue with affected communities. Its goals have been both to meet the immediate needs of those neighborhoods and to shape long-term strategies so they come back stronger. The work of TRIE is highlighted throughout the chapter.

This chapter provides a summary of the City’s COVID-19 response through the MMR reporting period of July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021. It cannot fully capture the rapid and complex nature of the efforts, but it lays out key aspects of the City’s response during this time. It is important to note that due to the public health implications of this health crisis, we have included some information outside of the traditional reporting period to provide for a more accurate and complete accounting. In addition, there are installments of this chapter in the Fiscal 2020 Mayor’s Management Report and the Fiscal 2021 Preliminary Mayor’s Management Report. These installments have additional information and context pertinent to their reporting periods.

FRONT LINE HEALTH RESPONSE

From July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021, the City experienced 574,281 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 162,650 probable cases, for a total of 736,931 total cases. A confirmed case is a positive result from a molecular test (PCR/nucleic acid amplification test/diagnostic test). A probable case is defined as either a positive antigen test result; a person who has symptoms and was exposed to a confirmed case; or a person who has died whose cause of death on their death certificate is "COVID-19" or an equivalent, although a positive molecular test is not on record.

To educate City residents about COVID-19, testing and vaccines the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) disseminated messages to New Yorkers through many forms of media to educate the public on the health impacts of the pandemic, as well as to mitigate risk, stigma, and fear. This effort involved developing and issuing more than 300 guidance documents, including fact sheets, FAQs, presentations, and guides for the general public, as well as sector-specific materials, which were translated into at least 13, and in some cases up to 26, languages and printed and distributed more than one million copies of these communications. The Department also invested more than \$125 million in citywide, multilingual, multi-media campaigns on subways and buses, and through neighborhood businesses (including laundromats, bodegas, and supermarkets), billboards, murals, NYC Link kiosks, digital/online, newspapers, television, and radio. To meet New Yorkers where they are DOHMH partnered with 41 community-based organizations to provide education to over 2.5 million people in their communities and conducted outreach across 167 zip codes to enable wider neighborhood, cultural, language, and demographic reach.

The City also provided coronavirus resources in multiple languages, including through a specially created COVID Call Line. This call center fielded 139,152 calls, 27,073 of which were related to vaccines.

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) faced unprecedented demands on its operations in Spring 2020 due to excess mortality in the City from COVID-19, and since then it has maintained much of its expanded forensic operations. OCME was able to handle the sharply increased demands by establishing a full-scale disaster mortuary as well as a long-term decedent storage facility at the South Brooklyn Marine Terminal (SBMT) near 39th Street. As part of its public health role, OCME has expanded postmortem COVID-19 testing beyond deaths falling strictly under the Medical Examiner's jurisdiction to include natural deaths that occurred at home of individuals with respiratory illness history. Data from this expanded testing directly informs both City and State public health officials in their work on COVID-19 deaths and viral respiratory disease epidemiology. In the reporting period, there were 9,884 confirmed deaths and 510 probable deaths, for a total of 10,394.

During Fiscal 2021, the New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) continued to strategically direct its resources to support the City's COVID-19 response and long-term recovery efforts. Among the highlights was the launch of the Pandemic Response Lab (PRL) in partnership with NYC Health + Hospitals (H + H) in September 2020 for the purpose of increasing the City's COVID-19 testing capacity. By the end of Fiscal 2021, the PRL had completed over 3.4 million COVID-19 tests and had capacity to process up to 45,000 tests per day. NYCEDC also continued its collaboration with local manufacturers to produce medical supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE) during the first several months of Fiscal 2021, securing approximately 900,000 test kits, 550,000 medical gowns, 3.7 million face shields and 1,670 ventilators for the City while simultaneously supporting nearly 3,000 jobs locally. In March 2021, NYCEDC selected Columbia University as the first winner of its Rapid Testing Innovation Competition to support the development of reliable and inexpensive rapid COVID-19 tests to help New York City reopen safely.

To support the City's long-term recovery, NYCEDC began laying the groundwork for the launch of the Pandemic Response Institute (PRI) later this year. PRI will help prepare the City for future pandemics and other health emergencies by promoting collaborative and innovative research, health data integration, and community workforce capacity building. PRI aims to address gaps in health infrastructure to combat structural inequities that have disproportionately caused harm to communities of color. NYCEDC's work on PRI is part of the broader LifeSci NYC initiative, which aims to invest \$1 billion in life sciences to establish New York City as a global leader in the industry.

In an effort to stay ahead of COVID-19 virus variants, the Health Department's Public Health Laboratory (PHL) increased sequencing capacity and is coordinating data with the PRL and relevant partners. As of June 30, 2021, PRL and PHL have successfully sequenced over 22,000 specimens. PHL was part of a group that identified the emergence of B.1.526 (Iota) in NYC. As of June 30, 2021, 6,881 variant genomes with B.1.526 lineage have been detected at PHL. The Delta

variant was first detected in NYC in April, and it now accounts for over 95% of variants detected in NYC. The increased transmissibility of the delta variant that has led to its rapid emergence and predominance is believed to be due to an increase in the amount of virus that infected persons produce.

The Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) contributed over \$1 billion worth of items to keep New Yorkers safe during the pandemic. In Fiscal 2021, the DCAS Central Storehouse distributed more than \$259 million in COVID-19-specific items to medical facilities, City agencies, and other public entities. This included \$83.6 million in disposable face coverings, \$52.6 million in KN95 masks, and \$11.6 million in hand sanitizer.

To mitigate healthcare facility staffing shortages at the onset of COVID-19, in July 2020 NYC Emergency Management (NYCEM) established a Group Purchasing Organization (GPO) that allows healthcare facilities to develop surge staffing contracts. GPO uses predefined rates that will help to prevent inflation during a future surge and allows facilities to manage their own contracts through direct relationships with vendors.

VACCINE FOR ALL

In preparation for vaccine distribution, DOHMH developed an equity strategy to guide the agency's planning and implementation to reduce population differences in COVID-19 mortality and serious morbidity. The strategy aims to address mistrust, misinformation, and concerns about vaccine safety, and to promote transparency. In addition, DOHMH developed city health recommendations for prioritizing essential workers based on risk. DOHMH also coordinated vaccine planning discussions among healthcare partners including hospitals, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), home health providers, the New York City Fire Department (FDNY), and OCME to establish plans for vaccinating staff in advance of a Food and Drug Administration-authorized COVID-19 vaccine. Administration of vaccines was further supported by an aggressive community engagement effort that in the period from January to June 30, 2021, conducted 51 webinar presentations and news media outlet interviews, 20 community conversations in a variety of languages and together with 15 community partners, provided services to immigrant older adults. In addition, canvassers at the Vaccine Command Center (VCC) have had over 6 million conversations and knocked on nearly 1.5 million doors.

It has been estimated that New York City's historic vaccination campaign has prevented about 250,000 COVID-19 cases, 44,000 hospitalizations and 8,300 deaths from COVID-19 infections since the start of the vaccination campaign through July 1, 2021.

To bring the vaccines to New Yorkers, DOHMH planned the ordering of almost 10 million Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson (J&J) doses under the initial weekly allocation caps of the Centers for Disease Control. Administration of doses was facilitated by significant enhancements made to the Citywide Immunization Registry (CIR), which is used to capture immunizations administered in New York City. CIR was expanded to include an online application used to enroll health care facilities into the NYC COVID-19 vaccination program. As of August 3, 2021, over 1,870 providers were registered, representing more than 2,860 NYC vaccination locations. To achieve this level of participation, over 40 webinars and 2 feedback surveys were conducted to help providers with enrollment, vaccine management and clinical operations.

Helping New Yorkers find vaccines was facilitated using the interactive online NYC COVID-19 Vaccine Finder. Over 1000 sites were added to the NYC Vaccine Finder between January and June 2021 including those operated by the City and state governments, chain and independent pharmacies, community health centers, private providers and pop-up locations.

In December 2020, the Mayor's Office created the NYC COVID-19 Vaccine Command Center (VCC), an interagency effort to facilitate, coordinate, and promote the equitable distribution of vaccine throughout the City. As of July 2021, VCC and DOHMH have worked with providers to administer more than 10 million doses, including more than 20,000+ through a City-run in-home vaccination program. The VCC worked with NYCEM, DOHMH and H+H to create 60 fixed vaccination sites and more than 40 mobile teams that conduct pop-up vaccination events at over 100 locations per week. The City also conducted outreach about vaccines at over 5,500 outreach events and across 4.5 million outbound calls to NYC residents. Thanks to these efforts, nearly 80% of adults and 70% of eligible children have received at least one dose, outpacing the national rate.

DOHMH COVID-19 Points of Dispensing (PODs) or Vaccination Hubs were initiated on January 10, 2021 with three sites, expanding quickly to 15 sites within a week. By June 27, 2021, 819,000 vaccinations were administered at PODs to over 407,000 individuals, constituting over 9 percent of all vaccinations administered citywide. During the reporting period, over 10,000 staff from City agencies, the NYC Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) and clinical temp agencies worked more than 14,000 hours at PODs.

DOHMH conducted extensive vaccine handling and supply operations to support its own PODS and other providers. As of June 30, 2021, DOHMH:

- Received and stored 1,032,350 doses of Pfizer, Moderna, and J&J vaccine
- Packed and shipped over 959,070 doses of vaccine in 1,910 deliveries to PODs and other providers without loss of a single vial due to temperature excursions or handling issues
- Filled over 1,100 supply requests

The City also contracted with 16 vendors to provide immunization services through fixed site, pop-up and mobile clinics, and at-home vaccination services. To improve equitable access to vaccines, from January to July 2021, a high-capacity immunization vendor with 34 DOHMH-operated clinics administered over 368,000 vaccinations and set-up 26 pop-up clinics administering over 2,500 vaccinations. Two contracts with non-profit organizations supported the City's 28 FQHCs and 42 independent pharmacies to prepare them to offer COVID-19 vaccinations in their catchment areas. From the start of vaccine availability on December 14, 2020 through June 30, 2021, FQHCs administered 569,189 doses.

As part of the City's in-home vaccination program, DOHMH nurses and non-clinical staff called over 35,000 highly vulnerable New Yorkers to provide information about the COVID-19 vaccine, address questions, and book vaccine appointments. Calls have resulted in over 800 in-home appointments and more than 12,000 conversations to build vaccine confidence. While the in-home vaccination program began with homebound New Yorkers, it has grown into a universal program for all over the age of twelve.

When the CDC's Federal Pharmacy Partnership Program for Long Term Care Facilities (LTCFs) ended on February 21, 2021, DOHMH's Vaccine Operations Center (VOC) worked with long-term care pharmacies and community vaccinators to ensure a seamless transition of access to vaccine for LTCF residents and staff. From the conclusion of the federal program through July 28, 2021, resident vaccination in nursing homes increased from 66 percent to 82 percent while staff vaccination increased from 41 percent to 68 percent. In congregate settings, including group homes for people living with developmental disabilities, behavioral health supportive housing and congregate treatment centers for people living with substance use disorder, approximately 21,400 staff and residents were vaccinated as of July 19, 2021. Notably, 85 percent of residents living in group homes for people living with developmental disabilities have been vaccinated—a significant accomplishment given the risk to these residents and the high rates of transmission observed in these settings.

To assure New York City residents that vaccination remains safe, the VOC continually monitors reports from the FDA/CDC Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System (VAERS). From December 18, 2020 through July 2, 2021, 7,775 VAERS reports were received about individuals living in the City. Investigations were conducted of 491 of these to verify the association of the adverse event with vaccination and to determine the associated medical circumstances.

In June 2020, DOHMH created the Congregate Settings Investigations and Response Unit (CSIRU). This unit coordinates with federal, state, and local agencies to conduct COVID-19 outbreak detection and response in congregate settings in the City to reduce overall COVID-19 mortality and morbidity among vulnerable populations. Between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021, CSIRU investigated 19,076 cases and identified 62,472 contacts and 1,956 clusters across 1,804 facilities. In addition, this unit facilitated 29,305 COVID tests at 1,032 facilities and vaccinated more than 1,000 residents and 1,200 staff in nursing homes. For non-nursing-home settings, the CSIRU initiated an onsite vaccination program in 93 facilities which administered 119 doses of J&J and 796 doses of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines to residents and staff. To help prevent the spread of COVID-19, CSIRU provided Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) training to 77 DOHMH staff and 433 participants representing staff and residents of congregate residential facilities, and CBOs. It

also conducted 53 onsite IPC safety consultations. This unit also conducted 525 investigations of vaccine breakthrough cases, 355 re-infection cases, and 140 cases that were both re-infection and vaccine breakthrough.

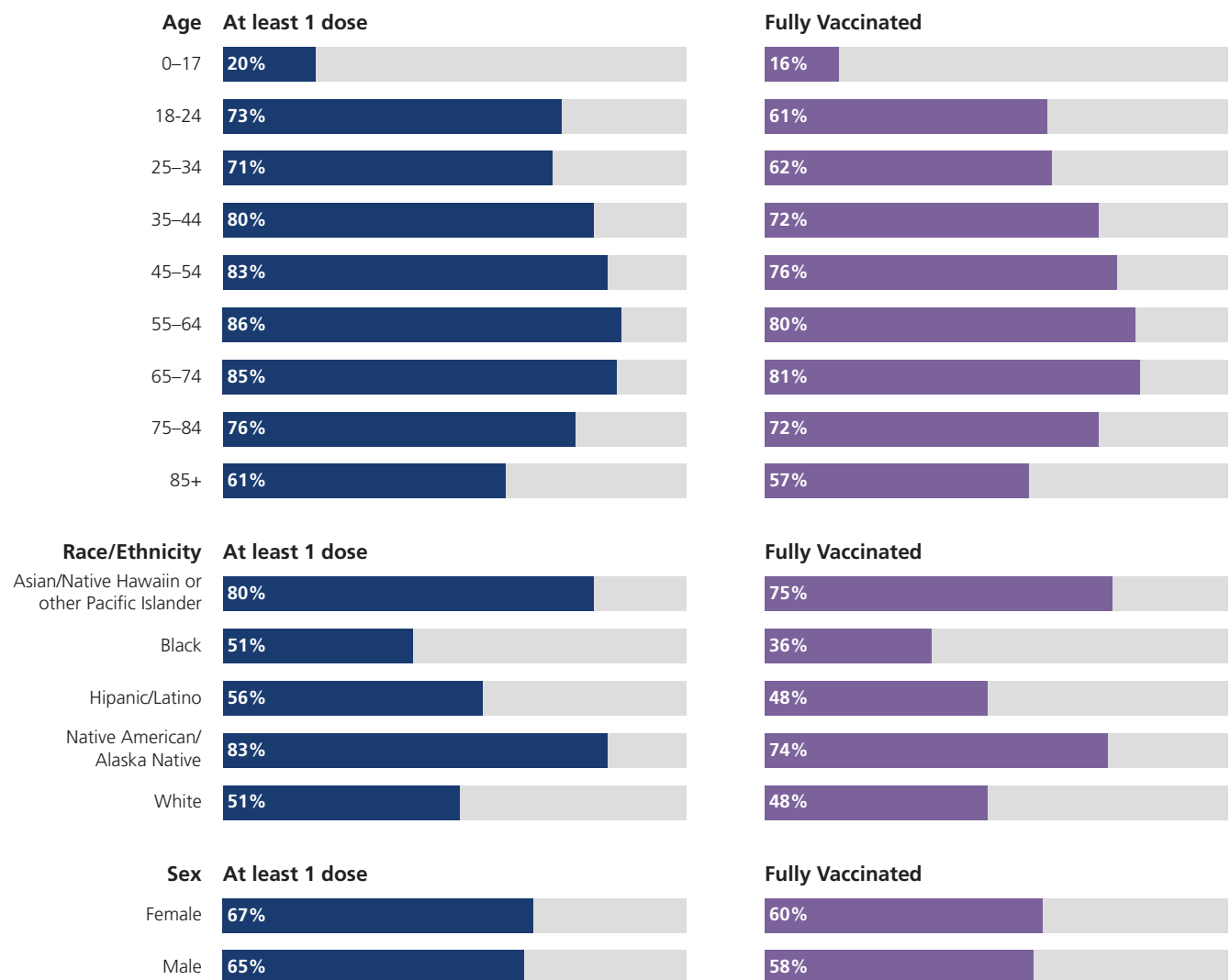
To support enthusiasm for the available COVID-19 vaccine, the City was able to offer incentives. The incentive program began with tickets to local New York City attractions to cultural attractions. It has grown to include \$100 for every first dose that can be redeemed digitally, picked up in person, or received via mail. The City is also offering referral incentives to Community Based Organizations, faith organizations, and businesses to empower them to serve as a trusted voice.

Vaccinations by Demographic Group

This table shows data on the percent of NYC residents vaccinated by age, race/ethnicity and sex

Data as of 9/8/2021.

NYC Residents Vaccinated



Only residents 12 and older are eligible for vaccination

The number of people who received at least one dose includes people who are fully vaccinated.

The Hispanic/Latino category includes people of any race. Vaccination rates for people identified with unknown sex, unknown race/ethnicity, or other race/ethnicity are not available.

TEST AND TRACE

On June 1, 2020, the Trace Program was launched as one of the major pillars of the New York City Test & Trace Corps, with the goal of slowing the spread of COVID-19 by interrupting the chains of transmission. Since then, the City has carried out one of the largest contact tracing efforts in modern history, using a force that is now comprised of over 4,000 contact tracers. Each day, contact tracers work to identify cases (people known or presumed to have COVID-19), trace their contacts (people they were in contact with who might have been exposed to COVID-19), recommend isolation or quarantine, and assist with the provision of resources. In addition, contact tracers provide education, monitor cases and contacts daily, support individuals in isolation or quarantine by evaluating their needs for supportive services, and let individuals in isolation or quarantine know when they can leave.

The Trace Program constantly evolves as the pandemic evolves. Examples of its evolution include the City's special contact tracing efforts (e.g., accelerated contact tracing, community engagement, information gathering, home specimen collection, and the investigation of facility exposures) and new contact tracing tools (e.g., Validate My Tracer, which helps to verify the identity of a tracer to reduce the risk of scams, and the COVID Alert NY Proximity app). Since April 2021, tracers can now screen and connect patients to monoclonal antibody treatment (mAb) in order to reduce the risk of severe infection. Finally, they have made over 7 million outbound calls to connect former cases and contacts with vaccination information and appointments. The contact tracers, who speak more than 40 languages, represent and build trust among the communities they serve. The Trace Program is voluntary, and many New Yorkers have chosen to participate as a result of their interactions with the contact tracers. As of June 30, 88 percent of 820,147 cases have been reached; 78 percent of all cases (638,922) and 62 percent of all contacts (660,692) have completed intakes; and 98 percent of cases and 96 percent of contacts report having not left their homes since the last time they spoke with a contact tracer. Additionally, tracers began identifying contacts of contacts in summer 2021. Through the Take Care initiative, NYC Test & Trace Corps ensures that anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 and their close contacts have the resources needed to safely separate in a hotel, free of charge, or at home, to help prevent the spread of the virus. In Fiscal 2021, there have been 289,026 Resource Navigators referrals completed and 22,258 guests who have safely separated in take care hotels.

In April, the NYC Test & Trace Corps announced the launch of the AfterCare program to support New Yorkers living with the long-term effects of COVID-19. The new initiative, which is housed in the Take Care program, leverages the City's wide-ranging resources to help Test & Trace clients cope with the far-reaching impact of COVID-19 on all aspects of life. An estimated 10 percent of people with COVID-19 experience "Long COVID," a collection of symptoms that develop during or following a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19, that continue for weeks or months afterward. AfterCare connects Test & Trace clients with ongoing health and social needs to the full range of resources and referrals relating to Long COVID, including H + H COVID-19 Centers of Excellence. These centers provide assistance in the areas of physical health, mental health, community support, and financial support, such as paid sick leave.

NYC Test and Trace Corps also operates 3 mass vaccination (24/7) sites in 3 boroughs, Bathgate, Brooklyn Army Terminal, and Citi Field. Citi Field is the most popular City-run site in New York City and recently surpassed 200,000 doses administered since its first day in operation to September 2021. This is an average of approximately 1,200 doses per day. As of September 2021, NYC Test and Trace's mobile vaccination fleet has administered over 125,000 doses.

EDUCATION

After extensive efforts to ensure the health and safety of its staff and students, the City was able to reopen its school buildings in September 2020, the only major school district in the country to welcome back students at the start of the school year. The City supplied all schools with abundant personal protective equipment; ensured safe ventilation; instituted mandatory school-based COVID-19 testing; and created an interagency Situation Room that enables quick responses to positive cases in schools.

In preparation for the 2020–2021 academic year, H+H, and DOHMH ensured nursing coverage in every public school building and all early childhood programs across the City. As a result, every student and staff member has a qualified medical professional available every day who can respond if they present with symptoms at school. These medical professionals work in close partnership with the NYC Test + Trace Corps team assigned to public schools.

The “Bridge to School” citywide initiative for the 2020–2021 school year, announced in August 2020 focused on the social and emotional wellbeing of students and adults to create a safe, supportive learning environment that confronts the trauma caused by the COVID-19 crisis. Through this initiative, which builds on past expansion of mental health supports in schools, schools across the City were equipped to integrate trauma-informed practices into school reopening. Beyond training and direct classroom support, the Department of Education (DOE) produced a Bridge to School Resource Guide. This guide made grade-appropriate tools available to educators, including activities and lesson plans for both remote and in-person learning, which helped students build coping skills; process grief; re-connect; and better orient themselves to blended-learning or online classrooms during first the few weeks of school.

The Office of Community Mental Health (OCMH) partnered with DOE and DOHMH to offer onsite mental health support in 248 high-need schools and access to onsite mental health clinics in 129 of those schools. OCMH also supported training to help educators and caregivers better identify symptoms of trauma and emotional and psychological distress in order to meet the mental health needs of their school communities.

In all schools, for all students, the City ramped up its capacity to provide high-quality remote learning. In addition to providing more than 500,000 LTE-enabled iPads to students, efforts expanded to improve internet service and technical help to families. The City has also provided educators with highly rated educational resources and professional development that facilitate effective learning from home.

For families opting for in-person instruction, City agencies came together to ensure that schools had access to additional outdoor space during the school day. The City approved over 150 streets for various educational uses, such as classroom education, physical education, recess, lunch, and school arrival and dismissal activities. Schools are allowed to use approved streets Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The City looks forward to welcoming all children and staff back for in person instruction for the 2021–2022 academic year.

SAFEGUARDING OUR MOST VULNERABLE

The City continues to maintain a robust surveillance and epidemiologic infrastructure to monitor the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in NYC. Trends in case, hospitalization and death rates are assessed by area of the City, age group, race/ethnicity, and poverty level. Daily analyses are conducted to identify cases and clusters in high risk congregate residential settings (e.g., shelters, supportive housing, and assisted living facilities) as well as clusters associated with non-congregate settings, including workplaces, schools, and day care centers. New cases are transmitted to the NYC Test & Trace Corps daily for case monitoring and contact investigations.

ESTABLISHING FOOD SECURITY

COVID-19 has caused food insecurity in the City to rise significantly from pre-pandemic levels. At the height of the pandemic, over 1.6 million New Yorkers experienced food insecurity. This number is now estimated to have declined to approximately 1.4 million. Over the past 18 months, the City has taken bold and effective steps to make sure all New Yorkers have access to the food they need during the crisis. At the onset of the pandemic, the City launched the Feeding New York Plan and GetFood NYC.

The GetFood Emergency Home Food Delivery (EFD) program has continued to be available for homebound New Yorkers who do not have anyone who can bring them food and who cannot afford private food delivery options. Vendors engaged by the program provide lunch and dinner for up to two persons in a household. All of the meals provided by these vendors adhere to the nutritional guidelines set forth by DOHMH.

Since the start of the 2020–2021 school year, more than 1,100 DOE schools have continued distributing meals to children learning in person or remotely and there are over 260 DOE Grab & Go sites offering meals to adults. A defining feature of these programs is the vast range of food offered—Halal and kosher meals are available at select Grab & Go sites and vegetarian meals are available at all locations. Certain schools are also offering hot meal service to students attending in-person.

Across both programs since March 2020, GetFood NYC has served over 225 million free meals, provided emergency home delivery to over 1.5 million New Yorkers, and Grab & Go pickup at over 500 DOE Community Meal Hub sites across the City. Among other services, Take Care provides individuals isolating at a hotel with daily free breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Those isolating at home have the option to enroll in GetFood and receive two meals daily for the duration of isolation. Take Care also assists clients with enrolling in food benefits like SNAP and WIC and with accessing food through local food pantries. Take Care Resource Navigators have reached out to more than 280,000 New Yorkers quarantining or isolating in their homes, to help connect them to resources. The Department of Social Services—Human Resource Administration (HRA) managed historic increases in the need for SNAP and Cash Assistance (CA) by building on its pre-pandemic capacity to provide online and telephone access for SNAP clients and then creating such access for Cash Assistance clients. Both SNAP and CA offer a lifeline for New Yorkers who need it the most.

Finally, at the start of the pandemic the City experienced various disruptions in its supply chain, from sharp increases in prices of staples food items, to concerns from truck drivers about entering NYC when it was the epidemic's epicenter. As part of the City's plan to ensure that no New Yorker went hungry as a result of the pandemic, \$50M was designated for a food reserve. Fortunately, these disruptions quickly subsided and in August 2020, the Administration made the decision to transition this food reserve into a new program, the Pandemic Food Reserve Emergency Distribution Program, also known as P-FRED. This program provides direct food resources to hundreds of pantries and community organizations across the city that continue to experience high demand because of COVID-19. Since September, in partnership with HRA, the City has distributed over 11 million pounds of fresh produce and high-quality shelf-stable food through P-FRED.

ENSURING ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH

Due to considerable COVID-19-related operational adjustments, there were substantial changes in how clients were served through many City services, including OCMH programs. Nearly all of OCMH programs have continued to offer critical support to New Yorkers during the COVID-19 pandemic as new engagement strategies were launched to eliminate barriers to care for particularly high-need populations.

To reach veterans during the pandemic, OCMH and the Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) launched Mission: VetCheck, in which volunteers from the veterans community were trained to make supportive check-in calls to veterans. Volunteers have made nearly 31,000 calls to veterans since Mission: VetCheck began in April 2020, with nearly 18,000 calls made during Fiscal 2021. Mission: VetCheck has helped reduce social isolation for veterans and is addressing veterans' needs during the pandemic (callers made 836 referrals back to DVS for help with issues like food assistance, housing insecurity, unemployment, and COVID-19 testing information during Fiscal 2021).

In October, the City announced two additional initiatives that added new mental health services to hundreds of schools in the neighborhoods most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The first program, the School Mental Health Specialist Program, represents a re-engineering of the School Mental Health Consultant Program, an existing OCMH program implemented by DOHMH in partnership with DOE. Launched in 2016, the Consultant Program employed social workers and mental health counselors in public schools to survey existing mental health resources, create mental health plans tailored to individual schools, and, when needed, connect students to mental health support in their community. In the new program, these same mental health workers serve as Mental Health Specialists and provide direct service to students through trauma-informed group work at 350 schools in the neighborhoods hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Each Mental Health Specialist will serve up to five schools. In addition to their work with students, they will provide mental health education to caregivers and school staff to help them address students' mental health needs and strengthen community and family ties. The budget for the Consultant Program will now support the new Mental Health Specialist program, so the new model will not entail additional costs. The second program, Pathways to Care, creates a new partnership between H + H, OCMH, and DOE. This partnership will expedite referrals of students to outpatient mental health clinics, where they can receive ongoing therapy, psychiatric evaluation, medication management, and other clinical services.

To reach New Yorkers in their places of work and worship, OCMH trained over 600 employers and employees in workplace mental health strategies and over 150 faith leaders representing diverse faith traditions in how to promote mental health during and following a disaster.

NYC Well, the City's comprehensive behavioral health helpline, responded to unusually high need levels. NYC Well exceeded its target for answered contacts in Fiscal 2021 by 23 percent. Mobile Crisis Teams continued to go to people's homes when needed, with protocols in place to screen for COVID-19 symptoms before teams entered a home and with access to personal protective equipment for team members.

In June 2020, just before the start of the reporting period, the City replaced Mental Health First Aid trainings with COVID-19 Community Conversations (3C): a virtual model comprised of 1-hour presentations and 3-hour interactive training that provides COVID-19 resources and information to New Yorkers living in one of the 33 neighborhoods designated by TRIE as those hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. These sessions reached over 18,000 residents in these neighborhoods, and 21,000 overall in Fiscal 2021.

Launched in April 2021, the Mental Health Amplifier (MHA) Program is part of the Mayoral Mental Health for All initiative and aims to have an emotional wellbeing check-in with clients at vaccination sites throughout New York City. The check-in also consists of sharing informational material on mental health services and low and no-cost health services for New Yorkers who do not qualify for or cannot afford health insurance. Between April 29 and September 11, 2021, MHAs have engaged 88,252 New Yorkers, had conversations with 65,290 New Yorkers, and distributed nearly 186,000 flyers for [NYC Well](#), [NY Project Hope](#), and [NYC Care](#), combined.

ENGAGING SENIORS

Social isolation is a serious concern that affects a significant number of older adults and poses increased risk for dementia and other serious health and mental health conditions. Since the pandemic and through Fiscal 2021, the Department for the Aging (DFTA) internal staff, contracted providers and volunteers made over 4.8 million wellness and/or social engagement contacts to decrease social isolation among its clients. DFTA's ongoing efforts to decrease social isolation connected older adults to vital resources including food, mental health, and elder abuse intervention services. DFTA also launched media campaigns in the past year to highlight services for older adults, caregivers and identify often hidden victims of elder abuse. Highlighted programs and services included the Caregiver program, Elder Justice, Health Insurance Assistance (HICAP), and the Friendly Visiting and Friendly VOICES programs.

In Fiscal 2021, DFTA also worked with other City agencies, including DOHMH and VCC, to strengthen collaboration and promote COVID-19 initiatives, such as vaccine promotion, for older adults. In the summer, DFTA collaborated with VCC to implement a mobile vaccine initiative at senior centers. DFTA, and its network of providers, made tens of thousands of vaccination promotion calls per week to older adults that receive DFTA services. The calls provided appointment, eligibility information and scheduling assistance. If an older adult didn't have a ride to a vaccine appointment, callers helped them arrange transportation using the City's free transportation resources.

PROTECTING TENANTS

In public housing, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) took proactive steps to ensure the safety and well-being of the approximately 400,000 New Yorkers residing in NYCHA properties. From the beginning of the crisis, NYCHA staff used approximately 2.4 million communications to residents and other stakeholders in the form of phone calls, robocalls, and emails advising about the risks of the virus and measures to prevent its spread. NYCHA launched a COVID-19 resource website and posted safety posters translated into Spanish, Chinese, and Russian at all NYCHA developments. Working with Tenant Associations, NYCHA staff helped mobilize federal Housing and Urban Development Tenant Participation funds to cover the distribution of free meals in coordination with New York City's GetFoodNYC program, and to provide transportation, face coverings and PPE, and other supplies for tenants. NYCHA deployed targeted outreach programs for its most vulnerable residents, including those with active social service cases, those with life-sustaining equipment, and seniors. NYCHA also took special precautions and preventative actions to ensure that the physical state of its facilities was in compliance with public health guidance to keep residents safe, including deploying two vendors to provide regular disinfection services at NYCHA properties citywide. From March 2020 through May 2021, NYCHA's Quality Assurance and Environmental Health & Safety department conducted 5181 inspections at 291 developments to ensure vendors were doing the disinfections properly.

At the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants (MOPT), the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit (PEU), and HRA's Office of Civil Justice (OCJ) created a Tenant Helpline. The City's Tenant Helpline assists residential tenants as they navigate difficult situations, including inability to pay rent and eviction prevention. PEU's Tenant Support Specialists staff the Helpline and provide coaching and case management. They also connect

tenants with OCJ-contracted legal services providers, including the Right to Counsel Program. The Helpline has had great success and is now a permanent resource for NYC’s tenants. These services are available to all NYC residential tenants regardless of income, zip code, or immigration status.

In August, the City launched its first-ever resource portal to help residential renters access free resources from the City to help prevent evictions and keep tenants stably housed. The portal, launched through Mayor’s Office to Protect Tenants (MOPT), the Mayor’s Public Engagement Unit (PEU), and the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT), features an eviction prevention tool to help renters navigate free public and private resources that can stabilize their housing situations. The portal is free and accessible to all residential tenants. Tenants respond to a series of questions about their unique circumstances and are directed to the most relevant resources, such as help navigating an illegal lockout or eviction. The portal also has up-to-date information on the general status of evictions in New York City Housing Court. Through this effort, MOPT, PEU, and DoITT have brought together resources from multiple City agencies, City-funded nonprofit legal service organizations, and community based organizations, improving and streamlining how tenants can learn about the options that may be available to them.

In addition to online resources, the City mailed useful information to tenants about available resources, including: the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) to pay overdue rent and hardship declaration forms to prevent eviction during the pandemic. The City also produces fact sheets with real time information for tenants on tenant rights, eviction protections, and courthouse operations. These resources are available in all required languages.

SERVING HOMELESS NEW YORKERS

Since the outset of the pandemic, the Department of Social Services-Department of Homeless Services (DHS) has worked around the clock to convey the City’s latest guidance to social service provider partners, program experts, staff, and directly to clients experiencing unsheltered homelessness, or in shelters, especially as that guidance has changed in response to changing circumstances throughout the pandemic. This includes protocols for screening and connecting any individuals who experience symptoms to isolation and/or care, which DHS rolled out to shelter providers as well as outreach providers and staff at all of our specialized facilities as part of this all-hands-on-deck collaborative effort to ensure that clients’ health and safety is put front and center.

To monitor health and safety and to continue to prevent the spread of COVID-19, DHS is continuing to offer free testing. This systematic testing occurs directly at shelter locations, providing clients arriving to shelter or already in shelter with an additional layer of protection. DOHMH’s Public Health Laboratory (PHL) continued to provide testing for DHS and between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021, 22,272 specimens were tested.

To provide protections for DHS clients and staff and further reduce COVID-19 rates citywide, DHS continued to make it as easy as possible to get vaccinated by delivering COVID-19 vaccines directly to clients and by initially establishing a dedicated vaccination site for clients. Using the model established for COVID-19 testing, DHS implemented a proactive mobile vaccination program, making vaccines available to clients in shelters where they reside.

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES

The phased reopening of nonessential businesses across the City began before the reporting period on June 8, 2020, once the region had met all metrics outlined by the Governor’s Office as well as the additional metrics outlined by the Mayor’s Office. Major phased reopening took place every 2 weeks between June 8 and July 20, with additional reopening for other industries throughout the summer and fall. Notably, outdoor dining began June 22; schools started in-person instruction September 21; and indoor dining was permitted to begin operating September 30. As of the timing of this report, most COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted as 70 percent of New Yorkers over 18 have received at least the first dose of the vaccine.

On October 6, New York State put into effect a localized approach to restrictions, based on the severity of COVID-19 cases in hyperlocal geographies. In addition to enacting red, orange, and yellow zones, all of which had restrictions beyond those in non-zone areas, the State implemented additional enforcement of business practices and engagement with the public on mask-wearing and public gathering. At the initiative’s peak, there were over 450 inspectors working and inspections surged to an average of over 1,900 completed per day in the last week of October. In total, 315,275 inspections were completed with 2,629 violations issued.

In advance of Phase 1, an interagency outreach and enforcement effort was launched to engage with businesses on the State's health and safety guidelines. Health and safety guidelines fall into five major sections: physical distancing, protective equipment, hygiene and cleaning, communication, and screening. Led by the Mayor's Office of Special Enforcement (OSE), this collaborative effort included an enforcement component, consisting mainly of inspections conducted by 13 City agencies, and an outreach component, including development and distribution of outreach materials, and communication of State and City guidelines to businesses.

In addition to inspection, engagement, and enforcement conducted by inspectors, the commissioners and staff at Small Business Services (SBS), DOHMH, Mayor's Office of Nightlife (ONL), Office of the Mayor's Counsel, and OSE hosted several events for the business community, sharing information and fielding questions about State and City requirements, and resources available for businesses. Dozens of public- and business-facing materials, including reopening guidance, flyers, and resource guides were developed by DOHMH, SBS, ONL, the Department of Transportation (DOT), the Department of Buildings (DOB), and the Mayor's Office of Operations. They were distributed by inspectors and via email, public websites and social media platforms, and at virtual and socially distanced outdoor events, such as business corridor walkthroughs. SBS's Business Restart Hotline took 28,784 calls from businesses seeking support, while the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP) worker hotline received 11,582 calls.

As the summer of 2020 continued, the City announced the Open Restaurants Program, allowing restaurants to use open space on sidewalks and curbsides, expanding outdoor seating options. The program supports the City's restaurants by streamlining the application process while promoting social distancing. As of June 30, 2021, more than 10,000 restaurants are participating in the Open Restaurants Program. Due to its success, the Open Restaurants program has become a permanent part of the City's landscape.

On October 28, the City announced the Open Storefronts program. It permits storefront businesses to use a portion of the sidewalk to display merchandise, sell goods, complete transactions, and provide queuing areas. Building on the success of the Open Restaurants and Open Streets programs, Open Storefronts provides safer spaces for small businesses to rebound in challenging economic times. This program has been extended through September 30, 2021.

Due to rising cases of COVID-19, on November 13, all bars, restaurants, and gyms or fitness centers, and all State Liquor Authority-licensed establishments, were required to close from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. daily. Under these revised guidelines, restaurants were still allowed to provide curbside, food-only pick-up or delivery after 10 p.m. so long as it was otherwise permitted. As of December 14, food establishments were not allowed to offer indoor dining.

As vaccine distribution began, the City was able to reopen indoor dining on February 12. Additional COVID-19 rules and regulations were subsequently relaxed and businesses were allowed to resume normal services with face coverings and social distancing in place. While outside of the reporting period, it is important to note that additional COVID-19 precautions have been enacted by the City. As of August 17, people 12 and older are required to show proof they have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine authorized for emergency use by the Federal Drug Administration or World Health Organization for:

- Indoor dining
 - Includes restaurants, catering halls, event spaces, hotel banquet rooms, bars, nightclubs, cafeterias, grocery stores with indoor dining, coffee shops and fast food or quick service with indoor dining
- Indoor fitness
 - Includes gyms, fitness centers, fitness classes, pools, indoor studios and dance studios
- Indoor entertainment
 - Includes movie theaters, music and concert venues, museums, aquariums and zoos, professional sports arenas, indoor stadiums, convention centers, exhibition halls, performing arts theaters, bowling alleys, arcades, pool and billiard halls, recreational game centers, adult entertainment and indoor play areas

This new requirement—called the Key to NYC—also means staff at these locations must be vaccinated.

In addition to its work around safely reopening, NYCEDC has collaborated with several partners to launch the new Small Business Resource Network. This public-private partnership, funded by a \$2.8 million grant, will establish a team of 22 dedicated Small Business Specialists to work with entrepreneurs in communities hardest hit by COVID-19, helping them gain access to a range of programs and services. The Network will focus on minority-, women- and immigrant-owned businesses that have limited access to the help they need to survive the pandemic.

ACCESS TO OPEN SPACE

In Fiscal 2020, the City announced its Open Streets initiative to allow New Yorkers to safely experience summer in New York City. Open Streets are streets that are closed to through traffic and only accessible for local access, allowing pedestrians and cyclists to use the roadbed for socially distant recreation. Open Streets locations were selected through community engagement and data analysis to include neighborhoods that lack open space and were hard hit by COVID-19. The program includes streets managed by local precincts or local partners such as Business Improvement Districts, block associations, and civic groups. As of the end of the reporting period, the City implemented 83 miles of Open Streets.

At the start of the reporting period, the City announced a new initiative, Play Streets, to provide families with safe, structured activities on Open Streets during weekdays. At Play Street locations, children participated in independent crafting and art projects. Giant board games and various sports drills were also available. Reading corners, dance classes, cardio and yoga exercises were also provided. All programming was creatively designed to meet social distancing guidelines.

In March 2021, the City launched the Open Culture program, which permitted outdoor cultural programming on City streets. This program allows ticketed, socially distanced outdoor performances, rehearsals, and classes at nearly 200 street locations throughout the five boroughs. The Open Culture program provides stages for artists and cultural groups, putting artists back to work and providing New Yorkers the opportunity to enjoy the arts safely in their neighborhoods.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For additional information on items referenced in the narrative, go to:

- Department of Health and Mental Hygiene COVID-19 Information page:
<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-main.page>
- Department of Health and Mental Hygiene COVID-19 Data Information page:
<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-data.page>
- COVID-19 Assistance & Guidance for Businesses:
<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/sbs/businesses/covid19-business-outreach.page>
- 311 COVID-19 Health & Safety:
<https://portal.311.nyc.gov/article/?kanumber=KA-03288>
- NYC COVID-19 Engagement Portal:
<https://cv19engagementportal.cityofnewyork.us/#/display/5e7555117ad6750216160409>
- NYC Open Data Portal:
<https://opendata.cityofnewyork.us/>
- Test & Trace Corps:
<https://www.nychealthandhospitals.org/test-and-trace/?notification>
- COVID-19 Testing Sites:
<https://www.nychealthandhospitals.org/covid-19-testing-sites/?redirect¬ification>