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## TLC Launches Resource Center Offering Legal, Financial and other Services to Hard Hit Drivers, Owners

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The New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) launched its Driver Resource Center (<https://portal.driverresourcecenter.tlc.nyc.gov>) **May 12**, offering a wide range of services to all TLC-licensed drivers and medallion owner-drivers.

Among the services available to licensees are legal services, financial counseling, health and mental health referrals, and public benefits application support.

- Medallion owner-drivers can work with a legal professional to review loan agreements, renegotiate relevant financing agreements, challenge debt collections or judgments and much more.
- Drivers can schedule a free, one-on-one appointment over the phone with a financial counselor to manage money and create a spending plan, develop a strategy to minimize debt, draft letters to creditors to lower payments or temporarily suspend payments due to hardship, keep personal and business finances separate, access local, state and federal emergency resources, and much more.
- Licensees can receive assistance signing up for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Cash Assistance, and Medicaid renewal applications.
- The Center will provide referrals to mental health programming and help licensees sign up for health insurance.

“TLC Licensees, Medallion Owners/Drivers and For-Hire Vehicle Drivers, are among the most vulnerable workers in our city amid the COVID-19 pandemic. They deserve all that we can give them to stay healthy and support their families.” said **TLC Commissioner and Chair Aloysee Heredia Jarmoszuk**. “The Resource Center will connect drivers to all the services New York has to offer. The Center will be a transformative tool in the fight to get through this crisis and emerge from it a better, fairer city.”

The NYC Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP) played a key role in ensuring the Center’s launch.

“We commend the TLC for launching remotely and helping drivers navigate through this difficult time. Drivers are struggling now more than ever, and the City is here to support them,” said **DCWP Commissioner Lorelei Salas**. “We’re proud to be able to be a part of the TLC Driver Resource Center and provide free, confidential, one-on-one financial counseling through our Office of Financial Empowerment. A phone appointment with a financial counselor can help drivers manage funds, reduce debt, draft letters to creditors and much more.”

The Center was conceived by City Council Members as a space where drivers could receive financial and mental health referrals as well as referrals to non-profit organizations for other advisory needs, and became a reality when Local Law 220 of 2018 was enacted on December 15 of that year. While working aggressively toward the Center’s creation, the TLC was able to expand on the Center’s planned scope with such resources as legal services and advocacy for those owner/drivers seeking to have lenders right-size their loans.

"The Council is deeply proud of our efforts to help for-hire vehicle drivers, which are becoming more important by the day as this industry is among the hardest hit by this awful virus," said **New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson**. “We heard directly from the people hurt by turmoil in this business that they needed access to resources ranging from mental health services to financial counseling, and this Resource Center will give drivers and medallion owners the help they need and deserve. We will keep working to help drivers get through this pandemic and continue to succeed in a post-coronavirus New York City."

“During this unprecedented global health crisis we need to make sure that all taxi drivers across all sectors are receiving the support and the resources they need to stay afloat. The majority of the drivers who operate in the City are immigrants who are trying to make an honest living. I support this great center as I also will continue advocating to get livery drivers to work alongside the MTA to provide services for riders impacted by the overnight closures,” said **Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, Chairman of The Transportation Committee**. “This pandemic has financial impacted thousands of New Yorkers. I look forward to continuing to work alongside TLC Commissioner and Chair Aloysee Heredia Jarmoszuk, as we explore and implement all the necessary measures to help taxi drivers.”

"This new center is good news for NYC taxi drivers, many of whom have borne the brunt of the COVID-19 emergency," said **NYC Council Finance Chair Daniel Dromm**. "Our drivers now have a safe space staffed with professionals equipped to meet their physical, financial and mental health needs. As an elected official whose district is home to thousands of drivers, I commend the TLC for working with the NYC Council to establish this valuable resource."

"With our subways shutting down in the early morning hours, essential workers will start to rely more and more on TLC drivers and for-hire vehicles recruited by the MTA," said **Council Member Carlos Menchaca, Chair of the Immigration Committee**. "These drivers, too, are essential workers now, as they've always been for the City's survival. The new Driver Resource Center is therefore necessary to provide these workers with access to legal, financial, and health resources. I commend the TLC for expanding the services offered before launching."

"It's never been more critical to support and uplift working people. Amidst a global pandemic, drivers have continued to provide services, allowing many of us to stay home and socially distance," said **Council Member I. Daneek Miller, Chair of the Committee on Civil Service and Labor**. "Any effort to improve their physical, mental, and financial health is truly a worthwhile endeavor. I commend the TLC for launching this resource center and providing much-needed services during this difficult time." "During a period of such uncertainty and unpredictability, our City's cab drivers need us to have their back. The TLC Resource Center is a great step forward to provide access to benefits, legal services, mental health counseling, and guidance to TLC licensees and medallion owners who have been struggling to get by for years. I commend TLC Commissioner and Chair Aloysee Heredia Jarmoszuk for her work to make this program a reality," said **Council Member Margaret S. Chin**.

I applaud TLC and their City partners for this important initiative connecting TLC drivers and medallion owner-drivers to a citywide network of dedicated support," said **New York City Council Member Andrew Cohen**. "These resources and services are more important now than ever to ensure the livelihood of our essential TLC workforce, as drivers who were struggling to stay afloat even before this crisis are now facing unprecedented uncertainty and financial pressure. The new Resource Center will bring much-needed relief to hundreds of thousands of drivers who have made enormous contributions to our City and are continuing to provide vital services on the frontlines of this crisis."

"I commend TLC and all the participating partners' efforts in establishing the Driver Resource Center," said **New York City Council Member Stephen Levin**. "Taxi drivers, who were hard hit before COVID-19, are essential workers during this pandemic. But they are struggling to make ends meet and need the help of all of us now more than ever."

"The unprecedented economic crisis in our COVID world comes at drivers who were already steeped in debt and poverty," said **New York Taxi Workers Alliance Executive Director Bhairavi Desai**. "While ultimately we need structural change through policy, the needs of each individual matter and require direct attention. The Center is a thoughtful investment into workforce development made by the City, especially as we have faced suicides and bankruptcies, and comes at a time we are facing food scarcity and hunger. NYTWA looks forward to working with the Center and its non-

profit partners to arm drivers with resources and legal options as we look to survive and ultimately rebuild more whole than before."

"The city's for-hire vehicle drivers need support now more than ever. Our response team, that is part of the first of its kind Mental Health program designed for drivers, has been helping thousands of drivers navigate this crisis," said **Brendan Sexton, Executive Director of the Independent Drivers Guild**. "Having the TLC's Driver Resource Center available to join us in assisting drivers as they negotiate with leasing companies, lenders and creditors will be huge. Thanks to Commissioner Aloysee Heredia Jarmoszuk, the TLC and the entire interdepartmental City team for building this much-needed resource."

"NYLAG is proud to be a part of the Taxi and Limousine Commission's new Driver Resource Center." said **Beth Goldman, President & Attorney-in-Charge of the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG)**. "We look forward to providing much-needed legal services to medallion owner-drivers who are facing debt and other civil legal issues stemming from ownership of these medallions. We applaud the Mayor and the City Council for recognizing the critical need for legal services in addressing this crisis."

"Neighborhood Trust's financial counseling services are designed to help vulnerable workers in a moment of crisis, and our phone-based model is particularly effective at meeting the unique challenges of today," said **Justine Zinkin, CEO, Neighborhood Trust Financial Partners**. "We're proud to be called upon to offer our financial counseling services alongside legal and health services and help give drivers the support they deserve. "

Financial counseling and legal assistance services at the Driver Resource Center are operated by DCWP's Office of Financial Empowerment (OFE) and are offered in partnership with Neighborhood Trust Financial Partners and New York Legal Assistance Group.

TLC-licensed drivers, and taxi medallion owner-drivers will be able to access these services by visiting directly at <https://portal.driverresourcecenter.tlc.nyc.gov>, or through the TLC's web site at [www.nyc.gov/tlc](http://www.nyc.gov/tlc).

The New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission was created in 1972 by Charter mandate and is the nation's largest and most active regulator of taxicabs and for-hire vehicles.