

**PRESS RELEASE
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**“SKIP THE TRIP”: CITY LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN URGING NEW YORKERS TO USE THE
NEW ACCESS HRA APP TO MANAGE THEIR BENEFITS**

Multilingual campaign will run across the five boroughs and across mediums to reach as many New Yorkers as possible



NEW YORK— The Department of Social Services today announced the launch of its comprehensive “Skip the Trip” advertising campaign highlighting the new and enhanced features recently introduced to the City’s ACCESS HRA website and mobile app, which make it easier for New Yorkers to apply for and manage their benefits without having to visit an HRA office.

“The Access HRA website and mobile app have had a tremendous impact on how we serve and interact with our clients, making it simpler and faster for clients to manage vital benefits information on the go,” said **Department of Social Services Commissioner Steven Banks**. “With this comprehensive system update, we’ve upgraded our applications and added features that will help New Yorkers save even more time, allowing them to apply and manage their benefits from the palm of their hands, anytime, anywhere, rather than having to go to an HRA office.”

“At HRA, we’re focused on continuing to connect New Yorkers in need to crucial resources while making the process as easy and convenient as possible, so that no one in our City has to choose between a trip to the grocery store and a trip to one of our offices,” said **HRA Administrator Grace Bonilla**. “That’s why we’re making sure we’re covering all five boroughs with this campaign—to reinforce that we not only have their backs, but are focused on doing better every day.”

The ads target New Yorkers who receive or are eligible for SNAP and Cash Assistance with the message “ACCESS HRA is an easy, convenient way to get help.” To get the word out and reach as many New Yorkers as possible who could be potentially positively impacted by these changes, the ‘Skip the Trip’ campaign will feature impactful, eye-catching ads in multiple languages on subways, buses, and bus shelters; across a range of media, including radio and community newspapers; within local businesses; and online, including across social media platforms. Languages include English, Spanish, Korean, Russian, Arabic, Chinese, Polish, Bengali, Haitian Creole, and Yiddish.

See the ads [here](#).

About the Upgrades:

The new and improved ACCESS HRA is mobile responsive, allowing for seamless integration of the mobile app and website. New Yorkers can apply for SNAP benefits or recertify for SNAP or Cash Assistance using their phones, which is the primary device the majority of our clients use to access the internet. In addition, clients will now have the ability to make changes to their cases including updating their income or household size. The previous version of the mobile app only allowed users to update contact information, such as email and or mailing address. The redesigned ACCESS HRA website and mobile app are now more user-friendly, adding prompts and reminders to clients when they need to take important actions, like submitting a required document using the app. Overall, the ACCESS HRA tools allow clients to:

- Apply for SNAP online
- See what documents HRA requires for their application, and submit them electronically using their phone’s camera, just like online deposits in most banking apps.
- Check which documents HRA has received.
- Check the status of their case or application
- View the SNAP and Cash Assistance balances on their Electronic Benefit Transfer card (which works like a debit card for public assistance benefits).
- View a record of Cash Assistance payments made directly to landlords for housing.
- Track upcoming appointments related to the case
- Sign up to receive text or email alerts when recertification deadlines are approaching

The ACCESS HRA website and mobile app are part of broader efforts by HRA and the Department of Social Services to improve services and flexibility for clients, while allowing HRA center staff to focus on the cases that require more in-person support.

Strengthening use of this innovative technology has enabled HRA to achieve significant progress across a number of workstreams impacting clients and staff alike, making interactions simpler and more seamless for both clients and staff so as to improve outcomes for all, including:

- processing over 4.1 million pages of documentation through the app
- reduced employee administration time;
- reducing rejection rates for failure to provide documentation by 20%;
- reducing HRA center visits by 37%; and
- reducing missed appointment rates by 10% with push notification appointment reminders and a re-orientation towards on-demand eligibility interviews.

Other changes include self-service computers and scanners at HRA centers, improvements to HRA’s internal processing of applications, improved telephone interviews, and increased community engagement.

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About the Department of Social Services (DSS)

The Department of Social Services, comprised of the Human Resources Administration (HRA) and the Department of Homeless Services (DHS), serves more than three million New Yorkers annually through a broad range of services that aim to address poverty, income inequality, and prevent homelessness. In April 2016, following a comprehensive review of the City's homelessness policies, Mayor de Blasio announced a major restructuring of homeless services in New York City and appointed Commissioner Steven Banks to lead the Department of Social Services, which integrated HRA and the Department of Homeless Services under a joint management structure. HRA serves over 3 million New Yorkers through the administration of more than 12 major public assistance programs with 15,000 employees. DHS oversees a broad network of shelters and services with 2,000 employees, and is dedicated to helping New Yorkers experiencing homelessness get back on their feet as quickly as possible. DSS is central in implementing Mayor de Blasio's agenda to expand opportunity for more New Yorkers, help homeless New Yorkers secure stable housing, address income inequality, and ensure that New Yorkers receive the benefits and assistance to which they are entitled.