

Introduction

On March 1, 2020, the Department of Social Services submitted to the Mayor and the New York City Council, and posted on our [website](#), a report of the findings from an audit, including the outcome of consultations with the organizations that have experience working with visitors, as required by Local Law 169 of 2019.

The audit focused on operations, policies, and procedures at the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA or Agency) Job Centers and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Centers, with the goal of increasing operational efficiency at such Centers. The report submitted provided a comprehensive plan to address operational efficiencies at Job and SNAP Centers. Further, the report includes data responsive to 17 metrics prescribed in the Local Law, including comprehensive responses to advocate input.

At the time of the report's submission, of over 70 recommendations received, 25 of the recommendations had been addressed as follows: we had already agreed to implement 8 actions and we issued reinforcing procedures to make sure our policies are followed in relation to 17 recommendations. At the time of submission, just after the first COVID case was reported in the City, we were exploring the feasibility of approximately 20 of the recommendations and working with advocates to develop responses on approximately 30 other recommendations¹.

Pursuant to Local Law 167 of 2019, the Department of Social Services/Human Resources Administration ("DSS/HRA") is required to submit to the Council and post on its website an initial progress report detailing the efforts to improve the client experience.

Such report shall include, at minimum:

1. What changes to operations, policies and procedures have been implemented to improve wait times;
2. The current wait times at each Job center and SNAP center and how such wait times are calculated;
3. What changes to operations, policies and procedures have been implemented to improve the efficiency and ease of use of the department's phone lines or any similar successor technology;

¹ These are approximated numbers as some of the recommendations were either asked by multiple advocacy groups or were repeated/identical in nature in various sections of the recommendations.

4. What changes to operations, policies and procedures have been implemented to address staff-to-visitor ratios;
5. What changes to operations, policies and procedures have been implemented to improve access to technology in Job centers and SNAP centers; and
6. Whether the number of visitor complaints received has increased or decreased since the implementation of the plan to improve the client experience.

At the time of submission of the report pursuant to Local Law 169 a year ago, one would have had a difficult time predicting what would transpire in the weeks that immediately followed. On March 15, the Department of Social Services issued a directive that *HRA's Offices remain open and ready to serve those in need. However, we understand the current situation and for individuals unable or unwilling to come to our offices for scheduled appointments, NO NEGATIVE CASE ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN. This includes, but is not limited to, appointments for services such as with the Office of Child Support Services as well as appointments or assigned activities with Career Service providers.*

For clients who are seeking benefits or services but do not wish to report to their assigned center, HRA Centers will assist clients no matter which center they report to².

On March 20, 2020, in order to ensure timely communication to our elected officials and their staff as well as countless community-based organizations and advocacy groups, the Commissioner held a stakeholder call to provide updates on DSS/HRA/DHS actions in response to COVID-19. Each week since then, Commissioner Banks has hosted this weekly call and will continue to do so until such time they are no longer needed. Communications updates have been sent to approximately 5,600 elected officials, their staff, community-based organizations, and advocate partners following each weekly call, and those communications can be found [here](#).

On March 22, 2020, we issued the following communication summarizing critical changes in our operations to protect the health and safety of our staff and clients³.

We at the Department of Social Services (DSS)/Human Resources Administration (HRA)/Department of Homeless Services (DHS) are committed to ensuring that clients receive continued support in these extraordinary times.

We are updating you in writing on the changes we have made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and we will continue to do so in the days to come as new developments unfold.

² <https://myemail.constantcontact.com/IMPORTANT-HRA-UPDATE--COVID-19.html?soid=1132271164418&aid=2YjBZ1HMasl>

³ <https://myemail.constantcontact.com/DSS-HRA-DHS-COVID-19-UPDATE.html?soid=1132271164418&aid=H3cpZNe5U94>

For clients in need of public benefits, we have implemented the following changes – and clients are being informed via ACCESS HRA, email, robocalls, text messages, flyers, and signage in our offices as well as social media:

- Starting last week, with State waivers that we requested, we have eliminated all requirements for HRA in-person appointments for clients, and we are preventing any adverse case actions for HRA clients who do not keep previously scheduled appointments. We are continuing to work with the State to obtain necessary federal waivers related to recertification periods.*
- Since we anticipate that more New Yorkers will be applying for public benefits as a result of the economic dislocation from COVID-19, we asked the State for – and received – permission to accept Cash Assistance (CA) applications online, which began on Friday, March 20. The interview portion of the application process will be conducted by telephone.*
- We have also asked the State for waivers relating to our services in the Medicaid, Home Care, Adult Protective Services, and Domestic Violence programs in order to conduct business in a way that minimizes face-to-face interactions.*
- Today, the State has informed us that based on the federal legislation signed on Wednesday, March 19, 2020, no person who currently has Medicaid coverage will lose their coverage during the COVID-19 pandemic.*
- Along with elected officials, service providers, and advocacy organizations, we successfully advocated for a moratorium on evictions as well as utility shut-offs – both of which will avoid unnecessary visits to an HRA Center to apply for these emergency benefits.*
- All federal Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) requirements have been suspended.*
- Home Bound clients and clients with disabilities are being informed that applications can be submitted through ACCESS HRA. For clients who cannot or do not want to use ACCESS HRA, Home Visits are available. Staff conducting these home visits will adhere to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene’s guidelines and protocols for such visits.*
- Applications for emergency intervention services, including those for domestic violence survivors, can be done by telephone.*
- Applications for burial services can be submitted by email, fax, and mail.*
- Applications for benefits and services from the HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) can be obtained through ACCESS HRA.*
- State fair hearings are being held by telephone and video without the need to appear in person.*

For clients experiencing homelessness, we have implemented the following changes:

- With guidance from Health and Hospitals (H+H), we have provided a protocol for thousands of staff in DHS shelters and HRA shelters/congregate care settings and DHS outreach workers to help identify clients who are*

experiencing possible COVID-19 symptoms and connect them to a medical assessment and care.

- We created isolation capacity to provide shelter to clients who have COVID-19 symptoms or who test positive and do not need to be hospitalized. We have brought on additional shelter capacity to free up existing shelter space for isolation capacity.*
- We are procuring additional drop-in center capacity.*
- We have provided shelter providers with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) cleaning protocols and we are making sure that providers are equipped with the necessary cleaning supplies.*
- We are promoting social distancing in congregate shelters by extending and staggering mealtimes.*
- We have provided our street outreach teams with hand wipes (in the absence of hand-sanitizer supply) and socks to distribute to clients experiencing street homelessness.*
- We have streamlined the shelter application process through the use of telephone interviews and conferences, submission of documents by email, and the use of Skype. We asked for a suspension of the Income Savings Plan (ISP) requirement and we have been authorized to grant good cause to participating clients.*

On March 25, 2020, we announced that in order to help stop the spread of COVID-19, we consolidated our HRA Job, SNAP, and Medicaid Center locations, as of noon on Tuesday, March 24, 2020. We asked the State for – and received – permission to accept Cash Assistance (CA) applications online through ACCESS HRA which began on March 20, 2020. The interview portion of the CA application process is being conducted by telephone. And we reminded clients that SNAP applications, and those for emergency benefits such as utility or rent arrears, were already available through ACCESS HRA.

As a result of these consolidations, we advised New Yorkers to apply for public benefits online at ACCESS HRA in order to prevent unnecessary visits to an HRA center. For New Yorkers who lack internet access or internet-ready devices or have challenges using technology, we obtained federal and State waivers permitting telephonic signatures on applications so that HRA staff can take Cash Assistance and SNAP applications over the phone. For clients who cannot or do not want to apply online, a list of Job, SNAP, and Medicaid center locations that remained open can be found here: [Job](#), [SNAP](#), and [Medicaid](#).

The following locations remained open to serve clients whose needs cannot be met through ACCESS HRA or over the phone.

Bronx

Crotona #46:

1910 Monterey Avenue, Bronx, NY 10457
Phone: 929-252-7310 | 929-252-7511

Fax: 917-639-2474 | HDU Fax: 718-901-0264

Monday – Friday 8:30am to 5:00pm

This center includes a children's area that does not provide supervision.

Rider #38:

Address: 300 Canal Place, Bronx, NY 10451

Phone: 718-742-3924

Fax: 917-639-2507 | HDU Fax: 718-742-3926

Monday – Friday 8:30am to 5:00pm

Brooklyn

Clinton Hill #67:

Address: 495 Clermont Ave, Brooklyn NY 11238

Phone: 929-221-2809 | 929-221-1568

Fax: 917-639-2511 | HDU Fax: 718-639-7705

Monday – Friday 8:30am to 5:00pm

This center includes a Children's Corner, which provides supervision during limited hours.

Coney Island #63:

Address: 3050 West 21st Street, Brooklyn, NY 11224

Phone: 929-221-3856 | 929-221-3867

Fax: 917-639-2515 | HDU Fax: 917-639-2516

Monday – Friday 8:30am to 5:00pm

This center includes a children's area that does not provide supervision.

Manhattan

Waverly #13:

Address: 12 West 14th Street, New York, NY 10011

Phone: 212-652-1551 | 212-620-9224

Fax: 917-639-2505 | HDU Fax: 917-639-2506

Monday – Friday 8:30am to 5:00pm

This center includes a Children's Corner, which provides supervision during limited hours.

Queens

Queens #53:

Address: 32-20 Northern Blvd, 4th Floor, Queens 11101

Phone: 718-784-5919 | 718-784-6043

Fax: 917-639-2493 | HDU FAX: 917-639-1120

Monday – Friday 8:30am to 5:00pm

Staten Island

Richmond #99:

Address: 201 Bay Street, Staten Island, NY 10301

Phone: 929-221-7915 | 929-221-7906f

Fax: 917-639-2519 | HDU Fax: 917-639-1109
Center Hours: Monday – Friday 8:30am to 5:00pm

Specialized Service Centers

Home Visit Needed/Reasonable Accommodations Request Operations #90:

109 E. 16th Street, New York, NY 10003

Phone: 929-252-6704 | Fax: 917-639-0433

Appointments: 718-557-1387

Applicants and participants are not seen at this location.

Waivers

A comprehensive list of waivers sought throughout the pandemic can be found in Appendix A.

Changing How Clients Access Benefits

As we have previously reported and testified to, it is our longstanding vision to transition from using only Face-to-Face interviews as part of the Cash Assistance application requirement to allow for such interviews to take place by telephone at the client's choice — just as we are permitted to offer SNAP/Food Stamps clients pursuant to federal and State waivers that we received several years ago. Prior to COVID, New Yorkers could only apply for Cash Assistance (CA) in-person at one of HRA's Job Centers. As stated in our audit report submitted last year, giving Cash Assistance clients the same option to apply by telephone without having to come to an office as SNAP/Food Stamps clients have had for several years is subject to State approval. In an effort to improve the client experience for Cash Assistance clients, pre-pandemic we had taken initial steps for this transformation in the hope that we would eventually receive approval from our State oversight agency, OTDA. These initial steps towards implementation proved invaluable in order to protect the health and safety of clients and staff and expand access to benefits for clients in need of assistance during this public health emergency.

At the outset of the pandemic, DSS-HRA was finally granted a State waiver that we had been seeking for many years, and in less than one week's time in March we immediately stood up a system for New Yorkers to apply for CA online and conduct their interview by phone, following the successful and effective blueprint we developed in pioneering remote/mobile access to SNAP/Food Stamps via ACCESS HRA. This waiver permitted clients to conduct all business online and by telephone in order to reduce foot traffic in our centers to protect the health and safety of clients and staff. **Since receiving the waiver, 85% of Cash Assistance applications have been submitted online with about 162,000 interviews conducted by telephone.** In that time, we have seen the number of Cash Assistance applications nearly double.

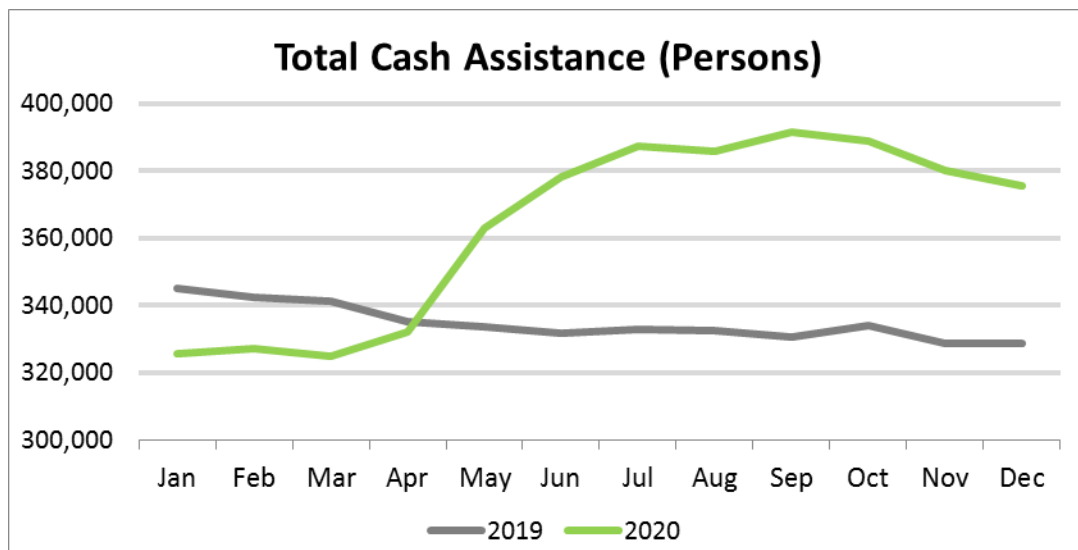
After the stay-at-home order took effect in mid-March, during the height of the pandemic this spring, and as the economic impact of the pandemic became evident, HRA saw record increases in applications for benefits, including Cash Assistance and SNAP/Food

Stamps. For example, during the beginning of the pandemic in NYC when uncertainty was most prevalent, COVID cases were on the rise, and stay-at-home orders were implemented—and with Cash Assistance now made available via online ACCESS HRA for the first time—HRA saw record applications for Cash Assistance in March and April 2020. In May through September, applications returned to lower-than-average levels before climbing back up beginning in October. 2020 saw the highest December applications in over a decade.

- In March 2020, the Agency received approximately 12,740 more CA applications than March 2019, a nearly 53% increase.
- In April 2020, the Agency received approximately 7,980 more CA applications than April 2019, a more than 31% increase.

Between February 2020 and December 2020, there was an approximately 48,500-person (+14.8%) increase and a more than 27,000-case (+15.1%) increase in the CA caseload.

In addition to the telephone interview waiver, DSS-HRA advocated for and was granted waivers by the State temporarily suspending many of the ongoing engagement requirements that are mandated under federal and State law in order to remain enrolled and to demonstrate continued eligibility for federal and State benefits; the waivers included suspending requirements like employment program engagement and/or eligibility rules such as substance use services procedures, which, in the past, and under previous Administrations, would have led to cases closings in the normal course. To that end, as CA cases have been closed at historically low rates due to the waivers, in addition to application increases, there has been a steady increase in the CA caseload since the beginning of the pandemic.



We have also seen historic increases in the demand for SNAP. **From the start of COVID (March 2020) through June, the period in which DSS-HRA experienced the greatest surge in SNAP applications, the Agency received 121,364 more SNAP applications than in the same period in 2019, a 113% increase.** From July through December,

SNAP application volume returned to just higher than normal levels, with the Agency receiving 30,880 more SNAP applications than in the same period last year, an 18% increase. **Taken together, from March through December, the Agency received 152,244 more SNAP applications overall than in the same period during the prior year, a 55% increase.** Between February 2020 and December 2020, there was a 164,699-person increase (11.1%) in the SNAP caseload. In February 2020, 76% of SNAP applications were submitted electronically outside of DSS-HRA centers, with this figure increasing significantly to approximately 98% in May and June, remaining in the 90s (94.2%) since then/ through December 2020.

As required by LL169 of 2019, the March 2020 audit report summarized and responded to issues regarding operations, policies, and procedures at Job Centers and SNAP Centers raised by organizations that have experience working with visitors; and included the advocate recommendations. Below is an update on the progress in the implementation of such recommendations:

I. IN-CENTER ISSUES - CLIENT EXPERIENCES, PHYSICAL SPACE, TECHNOLOGY, AND OTHER CUSTOMER SERVICE ISSUES

A. Ticketing (kiosks and ticket accuracy)

UPDATE: (3 items completed, 2 items in progress)

Self-Service Check-In Kiosks/Automated Ticketing/Client Routing System (Kiosks): In February 2020, the Agency gave an overview of the Kiosk technology redesign requirements to a subset of the advocates, and in November 2020 provided the Kiosk redesign plans that had been developed to the advocates who are part of the HRA workgroup in order for them to provide feedback on the proposed changes. A second demonstration of the Kiosk redesign was provided to the advocates in February 2021. Once the Kiosk redesign has been programmed and the system enhancements implemented, the Agency will retrain Center supervisors and staff on the new Kiosk system. This redesign is targeted for implementation in Fall 2021; however, there is a dependency on potential changes to operations that may be required depending on the level of COVID-19 cases at that time, and therefore there may be a need to reevaluate the current design.

In order to enhance the client experience in the Job Centers and after feedback from advocates as well as our staff, the Agency sought to revise and improve the automated client routing system within the Centers. The proposed Kiosk system updates are intended to help make the client's routing experience at the Centers more fluid and effective. To that end, the Agency made some changes to the Kiosk options and routing to allow more flexibility for clients and capture additional transactions / reasons why clients are in the Centers. This added flexibility includes new/additional client options to help the client identify the necessary service and route the client to the appropriate service area/unit. Moreover, the Kiosk redesign will have new questions and updated routing logic that the Agency believes will

better route clients to appropriate service areas in the Centers. Clients with scheduled Center appointments will still be presented with that routing option, but it will also allow them additional options to fit their needs and minimize errors in routing. For clients with multiple needs, the routing process will continue to allow staff to route clients finishing one transaction to another area / unit, if needed, to address all the issues the client has before exiting the building. The Kiosks are also staffed with workers whose job it is to assist clients navigate the Kiosk system. The staff are well-trained and knowledgeable. These Kiosk changes and accompanying ACCESS HRA changes are expected to result in better client experiences as well as faster and more consistent service.

Language Access Training: Annual Language Access Training was conducted in December 2020.

De-Escalation Training: Although we began De-Escalation training in 2019, the training was interrupted in 2020 due to the pandemic and the transition of our staff to working from home. Our training team worked to convert the training to a virtual instructor-led platform in 2020. Staff from the open Job Center offices will receive the De-Escalation training starting in March 2021. The remainder of staff will receive the training once additional sites reopen.

Monthly Mandated Training: Monthly mandated trainings resumed in February 2021. Throughout the public health emergency, COVID-specific trainings were conducted to ensure staff were made aware of changes in policy/procedure related to various COVID waivers and easements we requested and received.

B. Ticketing - Generating a record of the reason for a client's visit / handling unscheduled visits.

UPDATE: (2 items completed, 1 item not feasible)

Receipts: The agency has continuously reinforced the requirement of providing clients with receipts in accordance with our procedures PB #17-17-71-OPE (Confirmation of Contact with Your Center) and PB #17-63-OPE (Introduction to the Renamed, Revised, and Reformatted "For Your Records: Documents We Received from You"). In February 2021, the Agency conducted refresher training on these procedures in order to reinforce that clients must be provided with receipts as confirmation of contact with the Agency or a visit to a Center, even if one is not explicitly requested by a client. Clients also must be provided with a receipt when they submit documentation to the Agency. Throughout the pandemic, staff have been reminded of the importance of having receipts sent to clients by mail.

In early March 2020, the Fair Hearing and Conferencing Unit (FH&C) implemented

the process of providing clients with receipts. Form M-186a is the “Conference Receipt” and it indicates the date of the conference, the manner in which the conference was conducted, the issue for the conference, and any notice(s) at issue for the conference. Receipts are being issued to clients by staff who are working remotely for telephone conferences and we will ensure that the process continues when additional Centers reopen.

Kiosk Form: The Agency evaluated the recommendation to create a form that could be completed by clients in their own words to assist with Kiosk routing. This recommendation is not technologically or operationally feasible. The technology system cannot interpret free text in order to route a client to a service area.

C. Failing to Treat Clients Holistically: Clients visiting the Center for two or more issues.

UPDATE:

Kiosks: The Kiosk redesign addressed in section I(A) above will be more user-friendly so that clients will be presented with more options to route themselves as they deem necessary based on their individual needs.

D. Document Submission

UPDATE: (1 item completed)

Document Receipts: The Agency conducted refresher training in February 2021 on HRA Policy Bulletin #17-63-OPE, which outlines the policy for staff to provide documentation receipts to clients.

E. Waiting rooms and lines to get into Centers are not managed and the physical layout of Centers does not accommodate client volume or rate of traffic.

UPDATE: (1 item completed, 2 items in progress)

Sweeps of Waiting Area: We continue to make sure that the open Centers comply with our procedure to do sweeps of waiting areas and any lines at the Center. We will also continue to work with advocates during our regular workgroups in order to update our procedure—Policy Bulletin #99-20. During the pandemic, we have had to limit the number of clients in our waiting areas to comply with the public health guidelines. In order to make sure that lines move swiftly, staff are monitoring the lines in order to address issues that can be resolved without clients needing to enter the waiting area.

De-Escalation Training: Although we began De-Escalation training in 2019 the training was interrupted in 2020 due to the pandemic and the transition of our staff to working from home. Our training team worked to convert the training to a virtual instructor-led platform in 2020. Staff from the open Centers will receive the De-Escalation training starting in March 2021. The remainder of staff will receive the training once additional sites reopen.

Improving Quality of Waiting Rooms: As of August 2020, the Agency has installed USB outlets at 24 Centers citywide to improve waiting rooms, including all Centers that are currently open.

F. Clients are turned away from Centers - verbal denials and deterrence.

UPDATE:

No Wrong Door: The Agency continues to reinforce its policy that there is no wrong door for clients in accessing benefits.

As discussed more fully in the introductory section of this update, there have been both short-term and long-term achievements that have resulted in improved access to benefits and services for clients, in many instances eliminating the need for a client to visit the Center altogether.

Please note, however, that during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have reinforced with staff that they must resolve issues remotely and not direct clients to visit Centers unless necessary, given public health and safety concerns.

G. Wait time(s) information for clients

UPDATE: (2 items on hold)

The Agency remains fully committed to reducing client wait times and streamlining services to ensure that clients have easy access to the benefits they need.

Temporary COVID Allowances: During the public health emergency, the Agency has been able to reduce the instances in which clients need in-person service as it has received State approval that allows online submission of the Cash Assistance (CA) application via ACCESS HRA. Additionally, temporary waivers have been approved to allow the following: telephone interviews for CA applications and recertifications; elimination of the SNAP interview requirement for SNAP applicants/recipients who have verified all mandated eligibility criteria through documentation; telephonic signatures on applications so that HRA staff can take CA and SNAP applications over the telephone for clients who lack

internet access or internet-ready devices or have challenges in using technology; and suspension of mandatory CA work requirements and in-person appointments.

Long-Term Vision: To reiterate, our vision for the Cash Assistance program is to transition for the long-term—after the temporary waivers for the public health emergency end—from requiring Face-to-Face interviews to allowing telephone interviews for both applications and recertifications, just as we have been offering to SNAP/Food Stamps clients for several years. HRA has made significant progress towards streamlining and modernizing services for SNAP clients and we are seeking to follow the same strategy for our Cash Assistance program. By leveraging much of the technology used to improve SNAP services, the Agency will enhance the CA client experience at its Job Centers.

ACCESS HRA: By providing a more self-directed service model through the use of the ACCESS HRA Web Portal, the ACCESS HRA Mobile App, and the NYC HRA Mobile Document Upload tool, clients have an alternative to visiting our Centers and waiting for in-person service – they can now complete many transactions from the convenience of their home or any location in the community with internet access using a smartphone, tablet, or computer. We believe that as CA clients become more comfortable with ACCESS HRA and its mobile app, in-person Center visits will decline as they have for the SNAP program, and, in turn, wait times to see staff will be minimized. The addition of Cash Assistance (CA) applications submissions and the uploading of the CA Periodic Six-Month mailer through ACCESS HRA allows clients to avoid having to come to a Center. With the easements granted during the pandemic we have drastically reduced the traffic into the Centers. We are advocating for many of these easements, discussed above, to continue post-COVID.

One Number IVRS: There will be an expansion of case information available to Cash Assistance clients over the telephone through the One Number IVRS system – which will reduce the need to come to an office to get basic information. The rollout of this new system is currently targeted for December 2021.

Website Information and Electronic Coasters: This has been on hold because of the public health emergency, during which time we have reduced the number of open Centers. However, at a future date, we will explore the feasibility of providing information on the website about when Centers tend to be busiest and when wait times might be highest. We will also explore the feasibility of introducing electronic coasters and other electronic ticketing options.

In conclusion, the Agency has been investing in technology to simplify processes and requirements to better serve clients – and will continue to do so, which will address recommendations that we incorporated in the 2020 audit report.

H. Long wait times to reschedule appointments

UPDATE: (1 item under consideration, 1 item in progress)

Rescheduling Ticket: The Agency is exploring whether, as part of the Kiosk redesign, a ticket could be added to allow clients to reschedule appointments. It is important to note, however, that wherever possible, we seek to serve clients already in the Center rather than rescheduling them for another visit.

One Number IVRS: The implementation of One Number IVRS technology—currently targeted for December 2021—will assist in ameliorating this issue.

I. Staff accountability

UPDATE: (1 items completed, 2 items not feasible)

Employee Identification Badges: In September 2020, the Agency published CD Memo #20-25, reminding staff that they must wear their Employee ID Badges. Reinforcement training on this was conducted in February 2021.

Peer Specialists and In-Center Ombudsmen: The Agency has explored the recommendation for Peer Specialists and CBO in-person ombudsmen in every Center and has determined that there are Civil Service and Social Services Law limitations that preclude our ability to implement this.

J. Cell Phones

UPDATE: (1 item completed, 1 item on hold, 1 item in progress)

USB Outlets: The Agency recognizes the critical role that cell phones play in everyday living. The Agency has installed USB outlets in all waiting areas at 24 Centers citywide, thereby increasing the cell phone charging capabilities at our Centers. This was completed in August 2020.

Cell Phone Policy: While it has been on hold because of COVID, the Agency will be reinforcing its cell phone policy during a future staff training to make sure that clients are not prevented from using cell phones in Centers.

WiFi: The Agency is continuing to explore the possibility of providing public WiFi in Job Centers, in coordination with the City broadband access plan. Floor plans are being reviewed to determine the number of access points needed and the cost of procuring services, which will need to be addressed in the budget process with the Council.

K. Office Hours and Times

UPDATE:

We continue to believe that providing CA clients with the option to avoid having to come into Centers via telephone and online access is the path forward to improve the client experience. Therefore, we are working to change the Cash Assistance program model to mirror SNAP so that transactions can be completed online at a client's convenience without having to come into an office. The goal is to reduce the number of people who must come to the Center for services.

The short-term allowances during the public health emergency and the long-term vision we described in 1(G) above will help address issues relating to office hours and times.

L. Computer Systems

UPDATE: (2 items in progress)

On an ongoing basis, including during the pandemic, the Agency is reviewing its systems to improve their functionality, support the various programs administered by the Agency, and to streamline processes in order to gain efficiencies to better serve clients. Of course, a significant dependency for the Agency is the State's legacy system that is the underlying system of record.

IES: The City is continuing to partner with the State on its Integrated Eligibility System (IES) project, which will be a comprehensive revamp and expansion of the State's Welfare Management System (WMS) on which the Agency depends.

ACCESS HRA: While HRA has incorporated many Agency appointments into the ACCESS HRA system over the years, we are continuing to identify additional appointments to incorporate and expect to be able to display these appointments by the end of this calendar year. This will in turn provide clients with more details regarding their case. ACCESS HRA also continues to improve its communication to clients. The Agency has worked closely with the advocates to make sure that the communications on ACCESS HRA are clear to the clients especially during the pandemic when certain processes have changed, sometimes literally overnight based on new federal and State waivers we have received.

M. Feedback on Experiences and Noncompliance at Job and SNAP Centers

UPDATE: (4 items completed)

Continuing Workgroups: We have maintained our partnership with the advocate community through the continuation of our many workgroups. We value the

feedback that we receive through these workgroups, many of which involve current and former clients. During the pandemic the workgroups have continued virtually and by telephone.

Weekly Advocate Calls: The Agency understands the importance of two-way communication during this unprecedented time, therefore because things were changing quickly we established regular and consistent calls with the advocacy community. These calls first occurred daily in order to discuss emergency changes with the Cash Assistance, SNAP, Medicaid and Homecare programs and then progressed to weekly calls as time went on. The calls provide the advocates with a forum to bring issues to our attention quickly.

Weekly Commissioner Briefing Calls: Commissioner Banks hosts a weekly call with advocates, electeds, service providers, and CBOs to address critical issues surrounding the impact of COVID-19. A weekly update communication is sent out with information and answers to questions raised during the weekly briefing.

Office of Constituent Services Reports: We are mandated by Local Law 171 of 2019 to report on comments, questions, and complaints received through OCS. The first annual report was submitted in January 2021.

N. DV/DVLs/special assessment

UPDATE: (2 items in progress)

COVID-19 Easements: During the public health emergency, all in-person engagements for survivors of domestic violence have been waived and the Agency has set up call-in numbers for assessment and crisis counseling.

Training: The Agency has committed to conducting refresher training for all staff around domestic violence issues and will continue to also develop its training with a culturally sensitive approach. As discussed in last year's response at page 60, we will continue to have our DV and DVL staff take all relevant and available trainings which are now being offered virtually by the State.

DV Advocate Workgroup: The standing workgroup meeting with the advocacy community will resume in March 2021 after being on hold during the pandemic. As was done prior to the pandemic, the workgroup will elicit input from the advocates for potential changes to the State brochure, the Employment Sanction Notice, and the OCSS Sanction Notice, which would require State approval. The workgroup will also elicit feedback from the advocates regarding the DV waiver system and the Agency's protocol for responding to complaints.

Center DVLs: DVLs are currently working remotely during the pandemic. We will re-evaluate DVL staffing at the Centers once the pandemic is over.

O. Social Workers

UPDATE: (1 item completed, 1 item on hold)

Social Workers at Job Centers: The Agency hired and onboarded 6 social workers in January 2020 for the pilot program.

Social Work Pilot Program: The pilot program and report mandated by Local Law 162 of 2019 are on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Once the Centers reopen, the Agency will resume work on the report and social worker deployment. The City Council was informed of the delay due to the public health emergency in March 2020.

P. Bill of Rights

UPDATE: (2 items on hold)

HRA Client Rights and Responsibilities Flyer (FLY-969) and DSS' Non-Discrimination Policy (FLY-997): Reinforcement training for these items is scheduled for March 2021 and the policy will continue to be reinforced regularly, and it will be included in our new hires trainings.

I. APPLICATION CHURNING:

A. Managing Application Submissions, Missed Appointments and Denials

UPDATE: (1 item on hold)

Given the waivers we have received that enable the Agency to refrain from taking a range of negative case actions and modify various aspects of the application process, this engagement has been on hold during the public health emergency, but we will continue to engage advocates on ways to reduce unnecessary reapplications.

B. Robo-Calls and Missed Appointments

UPDATE: (1 item on hold)

Robocalls Expansion: The Agency will evaluate the possible expansion of Robocalls after the One Number IVRS is rolled out this year as Robocalls cannot be expanded under the existing IVRS system.

C. Child Care Appointments

UPDATE: (1 item on hold)

Child Care Appointments: There is currently a temporary waiver in place that allows the Agency to suspend CA work requirements when remote options are not available, thus obviating the need for child care in order to meet engagement requirements. While this has been on hold as a result of COVID-19, we will continue to discuss child care issues with the advocates in the future as well as reevaluate applicant engagement, including child care appointments.

D. Secret Shoppers

UPDATE: (1 item on hold)

Secret Shoppers: The Agency will reevaluate the Secret Shopper recommendations once the public health emergency is over.

E. Include Center Zip Codes on HRA's Website

UPDATE: (1 item completed)

HRA Website: In July 2020, the Agency posted on its website the zip codes that belong to each Job Center along with a note that individuals with an emergency may apply at any location.

F. Conferences

UPDATE:

As a reminder, HRA employs various methods by which clients can resolve case issues and as a result we have been able to reduce fair hearings by 54%. These resolution forums include walk-in conferences with Fair Hearing & Conference staff or Family Independence Administration staff, telephone conferences, calls to Infoline, as well as various specialized mailboxes that advocates may use to bring cases to our attention. Staff are trained to assist clients with any and all issues when they reach out to the Agency, regardless of whether they formally request a conference and we continuously remind our staff of this. Conferences have continued both remotely by telephone and at the open Centers during the pandemic.

During COVID-19, we have increased our contacts with advocates and have weekly workgroup meetings to discuss issues related to Cash Assistance, SNAP and MICSA/HCSF and the Commissioner hosts a weekly briefing with advocates, elected officials, service providers, and CBOs. We continue to provide opportunities for advocates to raise issues and concerns and collaborate with us on solutions.

G. Mandatory Dispute Resolution (MDR)

UPDATE: (1 item on hold)

MDR: MDR appointments have been suspended in response to COVID-19 given the in-person nature of the appointment. When we return to in-person service, we will evaluate whether MDR appointments should resume. If so, we will work with the advocates to consider any improvements or changes that are recommended as well as the feasibility of additional reporting metrics.

H. Notification

UPDATE:

There have been many easements of federal and State requirements which we have obtained during the public health emergency that have made it easier for clients to access and maintain their benefits. Once the pandemic is over, we will continue to explore the advocate recommendations in this section as we seek the continuation of as many easements as possible under federal and State law.

During COVID-19, we have used ACCESS HRA as well as our website to communicate changes and requirements for submission of eligibility documentation in real time. During our weekly advocate meetings, we have worked closely with advocates to make sure our communications with clients are clear and we have made many of the changes advocates have asked us to make in our communications to clients.

I. Non-Citizens

UPDATE:

COVID Easements: Due to the public health emergency, the immigration status documentation requirements have been modified for CA applications. CA applications and recertifications will not be delayed or denied if applicants/participants are unable to provide immigration status documents due to the public health emergency. Applicants/participants are then required to submit the documentation at the earliest possible opportunity.

Similarly, during this time, SDOH and OTDA are applying modified standards for proof of immigration status required for Medicaid eligibility. If clients are unable to provide proof of immigration status due to the public health emergency, the application should still be submitted, and clients will be given an opportunity to submit documents later. Clients whose citizenship status cannot be verified through data sources will also be given an opportunity to submit their documents later.

Training: We will re-train on Policy Bulletin #17-49-OPE, which covers the HRA Office of Refugee and Immigration Assistance clearance that must be requested by

staff prior to a case being denied for immigration status. We will also administer the Fundamentals of Noncitizen Eligibility for Public Benefits during this calendar year and retrain staff on the duty to assist in compliance with PB #16-04-OPE.

II. SCREENING FOR EMERGENCIES

A. Emergency Screening Process

UPDATE:

As we stated in our Agency audit report last year, the screening process for client emergencies is currently part of the application interview and Paperless Office System question set for staff, and plain language questions in ACCESS HRA's electronic CA application make it easier to identify emergency situations. While the Agency has implemented many of the recommendations provided by the advocates, we will discuss these matters further in the advocate workgroups.

In order to meet the needs of our clients during the pandemic the Agency extended the authorization period for immediate needs grants from five days to fifteen. This also reduced the need for clients to contact the agency if their immediate need persisted beyond five days.

Moreover, since 2014 through these and other efforts, we have seen an increase in the Agency's provision of rent arrears grants, with a total of more than 350,000 households receiving these grants from 2014 through 2020, significantly more than the Agency did previously. Prior to this Administration, DSS provided emergency rent arrears benefits to an average of about 42,000 households annually. In Calendar 2019 DSS provided emergency rent arrears benefits to over 57,000 households; and annual expenditures increased from approximately \$125m in 2013 to nearly \$250m in 2019. In 2020, the number of arrears cases was lower than in previous years due to pandemic-related moratoria on evictions. HRA/DSS remains committed to ensuring eligible clients apply for and receive these benefits when the current moratorium ends.

III. TAKE OVER OF PROCESSING FHEPS APPLICATIONS -- HOMELESS DIVERSION UNIT (HDU)

A. Managing FHEPS

UPDATE:

Referring back to the Agency's original response on page 76 of the audit report last year, we will continue to work with the advocates in our regular workgroup meetings regarding any concerns surrounding State FHEPS.

IV. HOMELESS POPULATION

A. Apartment Search Allowance Problems

UPDATE:

As referenced in last year's Agency audit report last year on page 77, we will continue to work with the advocates to ensure that clients are receiving the benefits to which they are entitled.

B. Storage Payment Problems

UPDATE:

Referring back to last year's Agency audit report on page 77, we will continue to discuss with the advocates any issues they are seeing related to storage fees.

C. Notification of the Availability of Special Needs Grants

UPDATE:

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we transitioned our provider trainings covering ACCESS HRA and the ACCESS HRA Provider Portal to a virtual platform. From January through mid-March, we trained a total of 203 providers at our in-person training sessions. From April through December, we trained 4,011 providers online. This brings our total number of providers trained in 2020 to 4,214. These trainings are also a forum for questions and concerns from those working directly with HRA and DHS clients.

During the pandemic, the Agency received approval from the State for a long-standing request to allow online submission of the Cash Assistance and Emergency Assistance applications through Access HRA. This new functionality allows applicants who may have a special need to apply for special needs grants online. In response to this approval, we developed specific trainings for providers to assist clients in using the platform to submit these applications.

On March 20, 2020, Commissioner Banks held the first standing weekly DSS-HRA-DHS COVID-19 Community Briefing call with elected officials, advocates, and community-based providers. Each call includes important updates and provides an open forum for external partners to ask questions and raise concerns. Following each call, an update communication is sent by email to over 5,600 external contacts summarizing the information presented during the call.

We have also encouraged external partners to reach out with program and policy questions, providing the DSSoutreach@dss.nyc.gov mailbox to community-based

providers and advocates and the intergov@dss.nyc.gov mailbox to elected officials and their staff.

Additionally, DSS outreach has conducted weekly or bi-weekly calls since March 2020 with three leading SNAP benefits access organizations: Met Council, Food Bank, and Hunger Free America. These calls have served as an additional forum to hear specific feedback and concerns from their respective networks of providers and clients. This information is shared with program leadership, allowing the Agency to quickly identify and address issues and improve general practices.

The DSS-HRA NYCHA Outreach team held a series of in-person emergency assistance and special needs grant enrollment events in the summer and fall of 2020, and in December 2020 held the first virtual event. We will continue to hold these virtual trainings in 2021.

In 2021, we plan to establish a community provider working group with CBO members to provide an open forum for these partners to provide feedback and ask questions. We will also continue to expand our training offerings for both external partners and clients. We remain committed to and will continue to seek new and innovative ways to engage the community.

D. Meals and Restaurant Allowance

UPDATE: (1 item in progress)

Systems Connectivity: The Agency is continuing to explore the possibility of a State WMS/City CARES systems interface or data exchange that would help us to track a client's housing status, so that if a client changes/leaves shelter the State Welfare Management (WMS) will be updated. This would also help the Agency administer restaurant allowances as needed. A State WLM for systems development has been submitted by the Agency to OTDA for approval. Implementation will be dependent on prioritization by the State and the provision of Agency funding.

V. SERVING CLIENTS WITH DISABILITIES

UPDATE: (1 item completed)

HRA is committed to serving clients with disabilities to ensure meaningful access to its benefits and services. The Agency has comprehensive processes in place to assist clients with disabilities that have been implemented pursuant to the court's jurisdiction in the 2005 Legal Aid Society litigation that relates to disability access that this Administration settled in 2015: *Lovely H. v. Eggleston*, 05-cv-6920 (KBF). As a result, HRA has increased the number of reasonable accommodations for clients from 90 per year as of April 1, 2014, to nearly 58,000 as of November 2020. The Stipulation and Order of Settlement in *Lovely H. v. Eggleston*, which was approved by the court on June 22, 2015, requires the implementation of

comprehensive processes to serve clients with disabilities.

Disability Screening: Throughout 2019, HRA piloted a Disability Screening Tool within five Job Centers. The screening tool identifies clients who are in need of reasonable accommodations (RAs) in order to access our programs and services. The system then electronically records and tracks RAs. In the Fall of 2020, HRA was able to implement improvements to the system for the five pilot Centers, and in January 2021 the screening tool was rolled out to six additional Job Centers. Six more Job Centers were added in February 2021, and we are completing citywide rollout at the final Centers in March 2021. In January 2021, 20 trainings were conducted for 202 staff members at the Centers. In February, 26 trainings were conducted for 343 staff members. Trainings for the remainder of the rollout are being conducted in March 2021.

Virtual Event: The Agency's Office of Disability Affairs hosted a 2-hour virtual training event called *The Changing Landscape of Accessibility: How to Be Inclusive in our Digital World*. Held on August 6, 2020, this event focused on ways to promote accessibility in our increasingly digital world. Led by a panel of experts from the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD), we discussed specific tools and ways to make virtual meetings, documents, websites, and social media more inclusive for people with many kinds of disabilities. The event also celebrated the 30th anniversary of the passage of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). Over 125 staff were in attendance.

Access During Pandemic: During the pandemic, people with disabilities have benefited from the Federal and State waivers and easements that HRA obtained, removing the need to have to travel to Centers for in-person appointments and allowing clients to use technology to manage their cases or to complete interviews via phone. We also obtained a waiver to enable HRA staff to take applications by telephone from clients who have challenges in using technology; our request to extend this waiver — the application signature waiver — to community-based organizations was denied. As a result of our continued training and outreach with advocates and provider agencies who assist people with disabilities, we have seen an increase in the use of the ACCESS HRA Provider Portal. This enables them to access real-time information about cases without having to call HRA or rely on clients to share their notices.

HVN Wellness Checks: We were concerned that clients who are currently coded as Home Visit Needed (HVN) or who are pending a review of HVN status were at more risk during the COVID pandemic, and as a result our Customized Assistance Services staff began conducting telephone outreach calls as wellness checks to those individuals. During these calls, staff assist and/or provide referral information and resources for any concerns regarding COVID, benefits, and food insecurity. Staff have also become authorized enrollers for the City's GetFoodNYC Emergency Home Food Delivery program and have been directly enrolling eligible clients. In addition, staff enrolled clients in the City's air conditioner program last

summer.

ASL Direct: One particularly successful outreach effort conducted during 2020 was a mailer promoting DSS' ASL Direct service. HRA sent a flyer to all the clients known to HRA as having ASL as their primary language. Our Deaf and Hard of Hearing Information Specialist reported that she has seen the call volume double post-outreach, increasing to 120-160 calls a month. Clients shared that it was “a relief” to know about ASL Direct and that it was the “perfect time” to have been connected to this type of help. Though ASL Direct has been included in other Outreach Communications, HRA is currently conducting a targeted ASL Direct email campaign for advocates and professionals who serve people with disabilities.

Fair Fares: During this past year, we were able to extend the Fair Fares Program, which helps low-income New Yorkers with their transportation costs, to Access-A-Ride users with disabilities who meet the Fair Fares eligibility criteria.

VI. LANGUAGE ACCESS

UPDATE: (3 items completed, 1 item in progress)

The Agency remains committed to making sure that clients receive information in their preferred language and to creating a multi-lingual Agency by hiring additional bilingual staff. The Agency will continue to provide a forum for the advocates to express any concerns regarding language access through our advocacy workgroup.

LEP Training: Annual LEP training for staff was completed in December 2020. Among other things, this training covered the material presented in Policy Directive #18-10-OPE entitled “Serving Limited English Proficient (LEP) Individuals.”

Mandatory Fields: We have confirmed that a client’s reading and spoken language preference is a mandatory field in the Agency’s Paperless Office System (POS). A staff member must fill these fields out when processing a case. This ensures that clients will receive HRA notices in their preferred reading language. Note: HRA provides notices in 11 languages. This also serves as an alert for our staff that interpretation services may need to be provided. Clients can change these indicators via ACCESS HRA (also available in the Provider Portal), by calling Infoline, or visiting a Job or SNAP Center.

QA Review: Internal audits include checks of LEP notices to ensure they are in clients’ preferred language. In 2020, a field was added to the audit tool to confirm whether the notice reviewed was sent in the client’s preferred language. While internal audits were temporarily suspended as a result of COVID-19, this will be implemented when the Agency resumes normal audit work this Spring.

Translations: Several years ago, the Agency did an extensive review of all notices and forms to ensure that we have included translated text snippets and check boxes

for any reasonably expected client circumstances. Due to the nature of the Agency's work, there may continue to be a minimal number of unique client situations that would require the use of free text. The Agency solicited examples of notices from advocates on any free text that has appeared more than once on any notice so that we can work to develop additional text snippets that can be translated. Moreover, the Agency is enhancing the process whereby staff members may reach out to our Office of Refugee and Immigrant Affairs (ORIA) to get assistance with translations for case-specific free text.

Language Line Usage: The Agency currently provides comprehensive reporting on usage annually as required by Local Law 73. This data is made public and gives a detailed annual overview of the number of interpretation appointments provided by calendar year, disaggregated by language, program, and the type of service provided.

Client Feedback/Survey: This is currently on hold because of the public health emergency. However, we will continue to explore the possibility of instituting a survey for clients to provide feedback on their interpretation services.

VII. PHONE ACCESS ISSUES

UPDATE: (1 item completed, 1 item in progress, 1 item not feasible)

One Number IVRS: We are pleased to report that the implementation of the new One Number IVRS is currently slated for rollout this December 2021, despite the challenges we have faced during the public health emergency. One Number will become the central telephone contact for HRA clients through a single contact number and entry point. The goal is to offer New Yorkers easier ways to interact with HRA through technology and reduce wait time in Centers. Multiple IVRS applications will be streamlined and integrated into one system and one number for clients and stakeholders to call to maximize resources and improve client service. The One Number IVRS is being designed to align with leading practices, improve efficiency, and incorporate speech recognition.

The new One Number IVRS will:

- Provide directed dialogue capabilities so that callers can respond to questions with keywords to reach the information they need quickly.
- Enable routing and internal transfers based on agent skill set, enabling callers to reach the agents with the right expertise with minimal disruption.
- Provide self-service options supported by web service integrations with HRA systems to allow callers to check case status and benefit information, request documents, reschedule appointments, and carry out other common interactions.
- Offer the option to hold a caller's place in the queue and automatically call them back when an agent becomes available.

- Allow for call recording, listening, and archiving in support of the Agency's management and accountability and program integrity needs.
- Provide robust reporting to enable ongoing management and planning around agent staffing, content refinement, bandwidth needs, and other ongoing operational and strategic considerations.

Rescheduling via ACCESS HRA: The Agency further explored the possibility of allowing clients to reschedule appointments through ACCESS HRA and determined that it is not feasible because of the technological complexity it would entail as well as funding constraints. Moreover, our long-term vision is to align the Cash Assistance program with SNAP with the hope of reducing in-person appointments, thereby addressing the rescheduling issue the way we have for SNAP clients by giving CA clients control of when they call to be interviewed through an "on demand" approach.

Advocate Liaisons: In December 2020, HRA shared with advocates a list of liaisons who are Regional Managers and Deputy Regional Managers.

VIII. MAILING

A. Mail Processing Problems (returned mail):

UPDATE: (1 item in progress, 1 item on hold)

Returned Mail: The Agency is continuing to reinforce with staff that they must check available systems, as well as the case record, for any alternative addresses and to resend any returned mail if a new address is found. We are also reviewing our current practices and will revise and update our current procedure as necessary. Reinforcement training will also be conducted on our current procedure for processing returned mail (PD #10-36-OPE) and any revised procedures. Clients can also update their mailing address through ACCESS HRA.

Move-Out: We are working with the State to create an automated file transfer of not only the client's residential address but also their shelter type, which may affect certain benefits. This is part of the effort described in section IV(D) above. Moreover, while delayed because of COVID-19, we will continue to reinforce the requirement that staff update a client's address where HRA is aware of a client's new address after a move from shelter into an apartment.

B. Permission for clients to add a second address:

UPDATE: (1 item in progress)

Second Mailing Address: The Agency has determined that POS can store a secondary mailing address for a client in its system. We are now evaluating the necessary work and resources required to implement this change in POS in order to

ensure that clients can get both HRA and State CNS notices at the second address. This change to POS will require time to develop and test. There is also a dependency on the State modifying its systems in order to have the State notices mailed to the second address.

C. Appointment notices going out too close to the date of the appointment

UPDATE: (1 item on hold)

Timing of Appointment Notice Mailings: This has been on hold because of the suspension of in-person appointments during COVID-19. However, we are committed to looking into this issue when in-person appointments return.

IX. NOTICES

UPDATE: (1 item in progress)

Notices and Notifications: The Agency is committed to reviewing and improving its notices, where needed, in order to make sure that clients understand them and that they contain pertinent information. Throughout the public health emergency, the Agency has partnered with advocates to refine and change client messaging and notices and notifications. We will continue to do this when normal operations resume.

X. ACCESS HRA

UPDATE: (3 items in progress, 2 items completed, 3 items not feasible)

State CNS Notices: After a technical review of the State's CNS system we have determined that it is not practicable or technologically feasible to add State CNS notices to ACCESS HRA at this time. However, DSS has identified an approach that we hope will provide clients with the relevant information in ACCESS HRA related to certain case actions simultaneously communicated via State CNS notices. This information, such as a pending closing reason, will be displayed on ACCESS HRA in the client's account. We will explore whether additional information can also be displayed. The new State IES system, mentioned above in I(L), will replace the CNS Notice System, and at that time the State notices are expected to be available to pull into ACCESS HRA.

Payment Information: The Agency explored the request to display in ACCESS HRA payments from the past 3 years and determined that it was not feasible. Also, the Agency explored the recommendation regarding payment period and discovered that there was an issue with the way that the information was being imported. This issue has been resolved and the payment period information that is now displayed provides greater insight into payments made to or on behalf of clients. Currently, ACCESS

HRA displays two payment statuses and we will explore whether additional statuses can be displayed.

ACCESS HRA Training for HASA: HASA staff were trained on the use of ACCESS HRA in February 2021.

ACCESS HRA Hotline: The Agency explored the possibility of an ACCESS HRA hotline for user assistance but determined it is not feasible given the current state of Agency resources and funding during the pandemic.

RECOUPMENTS

UPDATE: (1 item completed)

Undue Hardship: The Agency made a formal request to OTDA, by letter dated September 30, 2020, to remove the necessity of affirmative action by the client in certain cases to request an undue hardship review for recoupments. The Agency proposed that for certain cases we could rely on information available in the client's case record to determine undue hardship in order to automatically reduce their recoupment rate to 5%. We await a response from the State.

XII. Improve Services in the Bronx

UPDATE: (1 item on hold)

Bronx Recruitment: The Agency remains committed to encouraging residents in the Bronx to take Eligibility Specialist (ES) and Job Opportunity Specialist (JOS) exams. These Civil Service exams are currently on hold as a result of COVID-19. Targeted outreach and marketing will be conducted once the exams are scheduled.

2020 Reform Highlights

The 2020 audit report presented major reforms from 2014 through 2019. This update reviews major reforms during 2020.

Improve Access to Benefits and Services:

Short-Term Achievements:

- From its onset and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, HRA has advocated for and received significant temporary waivers of State and federal requirements to provide clients greater access to benefits and services by:
 - permitting online submissions of Cash Assistance (CA) applications via Access HRA from anywhere
 - launching a CA telephone interview option for clients to conduct their CA application or recertification eligibility interview by phone without having to leave their home
 - eliminating the SNAP interview requirement for SNAP applicants and recipients who have verified all mandated eligibility criteria through documentation
 - permitting telephonic signatures on applications so that HRA staff can take CA and SNAP applications over the phone for clients who lack internet access or internet-ready devices or have challenges using technology
 - suspending CA work requirements and in-person appointments for the safety of staff and clients
 - eliminating negative case actions if clients do not submit their 6-month CA mailer and SNAP periodic reports
 - extending the certification periods of SNAP and CA cases coming due to temporarily eliminate the need for clients to submit recertifications and potentially lose benefits if not completed timely
 - allowing verbal authorization from clients to disclose confidential health information over the telephone
 - extending the 180-day limit on domestic violence emergency shelter stays
 - permitting certain Adult Protective Services (APS) client home visits to occur via alternative means of communication such as, facetime, skype, or video conferencing.
 - extending Medicaid renewals for one year without full eligibility review

Long-Term Achievements:

- Successfully advocated for the State to end the eligibility finger-imaging requirement for Cash Assistance (CA) applicants/recipients
- Worked with the State to remove the photo requirement on NYS Common Benefit Identification Cards (CBIC), and implemented a referral process from Job and SNAP Centers to IDNYC so that our clients can continue to have photo IDs if needed

- Implemented a citywide process to offer clients temporary “Vault” Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards which can be used to redeem SNAP and Cash Assistance benefits until they receive their permanent CBIC from the State through the mail
- Revised the “You Must Submit Documents for Your SNAP Case!” (FIA-1146) notice to help clients better understand what documentation must be submitted to complete the SNAP application
- Obtained State approval for a revised New York State (NYS) Client Notification System (CNS) Expedited-SNAP Servicing notice, so clients are reminded that additional documentation is needed to establish eligibility for ongoing SNAP benefits
- Expanded the Internet Quorum (IQ) inquiry/complaint tracking system, which allows HRA to better handle client complaints and issues and offer faster turnaround
- Expanded the SNAP Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) process to permit SNAP households with participants aged 55 and older or with disabilities without earned income to recertify through IVRS
- Implemented an easier security voucher redemption process for landlords of deceased CA clients whose tenancy was in effect on the date of death
- Implemented more self-service Kiosks at the Rider, Jamaica and Crotona Job Centers, which reduce initial waits to get into the center waiting area
- Conducting waiting room sweeps to find people that can utilize some of our self-service options (Scanners, PC Banks, etc.) and similarly deploying staff to canvass lines, if any, at centers to assist and educate clients on such tools
- Expanded the number of On-Demand agents to 350-400 daily and created a rotation for them to have one day out of every ten conducting other non-telephone business for better employee retention and morale
- Enhanced service delivery (clinical assessment, vocational services, wellness planning and federal disability advocacy) for WeCARE clients through full implementation of the new Self-Sufficiency, Employment, Assessment and Management System (SEAMS)
- Launched the electronic Fair Fares application process which expanded access to all NYC residents who believe they qualify to apply and submit documents for review by the Electronic Application processing unit.
- Integrated Access-A-Ride for eligible paratransit users into the Access HRA/Fair Fares system
- Through the Restaurant Revitalization Program, received 62,000 donated free meals for individuals facing food insecurity
- Simplified the Emergency Food Assistance Program’s (EFAP) eligibility criteria and application
- Expanded eligible items for funding through the EFAP Administrative Reimbursement Grant
- Increased the Burial Allowance from \$900 to \$1700 and increased the required cap on funeral cost to qualify for the program from \$1700 to \$3400

COVID-19 Reforms and Operational Changes:

- Implemented an agency-wide remote services model, allowing the vast majority of HRA staff to work and serve clients safely from home
- Mobilized, trained and implemented remote work for FIA and redeployed DSS staff to work from home handling Cash Assistance and SNAP-only applications
- Implemented a drop box for clients to submit their completed CA or SNAP-only applications at the 7 open HRA Centers citywide
- Incorporated over a thousand DSS/HRA staff from other program areas to assist Cash Assistance and SNAP Operations to handle the surge in additional applications due to the COVID-19 pandemic and local shutdown
- Began accepting Burial Services applications via email and fax
- Implemented voluntary & virtual appointment processes for all aspects of WeCARE
- Implemented a new outreach process to Home Visits Needed/Homebound (HVN/HB) clients to ensure well-being and food security during the pandemic
- Implemented virtual field visits for SROs/Master Leased and Senior program move-ins
- Developed strategies with contracted providers (Master Leased, SROs and Seniors) aimed at reducing COVID-19 cases in their buildings and collaborated with DOHMH and H+H on response plans and COVID testing for vulnerable tenants
- Waived all in-person engagements for survivors of domestic violence and set up call-in numbers for assessment and crisis counseling
- Distributed Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to staff working in open HRA centers and enforced social distancing measures to promote a safe environment for staff and clients
- Maintained 6 open HASA Centers (at least one in each borough) to continue providing emergency services (including emergency housing) to clients during the pandemic; safety initiatives included the installation of document drop boxes for use by clients and sneeze guards in the client service areas
- Developed a new model for delivery of HASA case management services which included a weekly wellness check protocol to monitor client well-being during the pandemic

Reduce Homelessness:

- Implemented a Streamlined Rent Arrears Process in which Job Centers handle all Emergency Assistance / One Shot Deal (EA/OSD) rent arrears requests for amounts less than \$7,200 and less than 6-months of arrears without the need for referral to the Rental Assistance Unit (RAU)
- Developed a Homelessness Prevention Administration (HPA) approval process for Congregate Care residents who have excessive rent arrears
- Established a case assignment system to provide right to counsel (RTC) legal services to all tenants at risk of eviction in Housing Court

- Created an auto-renewal process for CityFHEPS rental subsidy recipients
- Added 141 new units of HASA supportive housing for persons with a history of mental illness and/or substance use as well as homelessness

Modernizing Services and Processes:

- Added PC banks and Kiosks at the Rider, Jamaica and Crotona Centers.
- Successfully sought a State waiver for and implemented an online Cash Assistance application process using ACCESS HRA (AHRA) at 14 participating CBOs
- Implemented the ACCESS HRA online application for Single Issue (SI) grant applications to obtain various supplemental and Emergency Assistance subsidies
- Added the SNAP Case Change Reporting form to ACCESS HRA to allow online submission of case changes
- Permitted clients to submit the CA Periodic Mailer form electronically through Access HRA and the HRA Mobile Document Upload apps
- Continued system enhancements to better service clients, including ACCESS HRA and other system upgrades to better process applicant information and ensure accurate and timely processing
- Rolled out SNAP Telephone Interview Processing Services (TIPS) On-Demand satellite units to five in-person SNAP Centers to ensure that telephone interview services would be available at various locations in case a site goes down
- Implemented On-Demand “Processing Pods” in SNAP TIPS On-Demand Centers, allowing On-Demand staff to vary their work and understand the processing part by spending every fifth workday processing SNAP applications, increasing work satisfaction and decreasing processing errors
- Fully implemented the Coordinated Assessment and Placement System (CAPS) to increase efficiencies for referrals and placements into supportive housing
- Fully implemented the clinician portal, Electronic Medical Record (EMR), for Visiting Psychiatric Services (VPS) to prevent evictions and address urgent clinical needs
- Enhanced the Fair Fares Web application to allow for clients to report cards lost, stolen, or lost in the machine via web; upgrades also included opting-out options, auditing and administrative reviews, and enhanced reporting tools

Additional Accomplishments:

- Standardized training curricula for Office of Support Services (OSS) New Hires, and trained current OSS staff on unit procedures and Cash Assistance and SNAP program eligibility
- Revised Cash Assistance Periodic Mailer Form M-327H to simplify CA interim reporting requirements and remind participants to sign the form (pending OTDA sign-off)
- Completed specifications to migrate additional Office of Central Processing (OCP) tasks, including Landlord Security Voucher redemption, Utility Grant payments, and Child Support Payments into POS

- Implemented an Income Clearance Program (ICP) module in the POS to assist staff in processing actions and to better monitor unit workload
- Established a quarterly convening between HRA/DSS and the Columbia University Center for Justice to help streamline access to benefits and services for formerly incarcerated clients
- Published a new procedure outlining the actions to be taken by management, staff, HRA Police, and Contracted Security Guards in responding to Center incidents, while ensuring all clients are treated with courtesy, compassion, and respect
- Developed an anti-bias and trauma-informed training program
- Retrained and provided enhanced training for the HRA Office of Police Operations (HRA OPO)
- Completed the roll-out the Body Worn Camera (BWC) initiative for HRA PD staff
- Launched the Restaurant Revitalization Program (RRP) to support restaurants across the city by offering \$2.01m million worth of wage-reimbursement funding to cover up to \$30,000 of labor costs per business; a total of 68 restaurants were funded, selected based on their location in the hardest hit communities and whether they were a women or minority-owned business
- Launched the Work Progress Program's (WPP) Workplace, an online service that serves as a platform for WPP providers to share resources and employment/training/educational opportunities and discuss best practices
- Launched a new child support debt reduction program which allows noncustodial parents (NCPs) to reduce up to \$10,000 in child support arrears assigned to the New York City Department of Social Services (DSS) by completing a state-certified substance use treatment program
- Launched the lift sanctions initiative for custodial parents on Cash Assistance, which allows custodial parents to inform the Office of Child Support Services (OCSS) of their intent to comply with child support requirements in the future; once sanctions have been lifted, the client's full cash and medical benefits are restored
- Revised the child support summons package by adding information to the package aimed at clarifying expectations and softening the tone of the court summons
- Expanded ACCESS HRA to allow HASA clients to report address and income changes.

Client-Centered Reform

As we reorganize services to improve and streamline how we connect our clients to benefits/resources, it is important to note the channel shifts we are seeing in how New Yorkers are now accessing their benefits via the ACCESS HRA platform:

- Pre-pandemic, citywide SNAP in-center foot traffic had declined by more than 50% since 2014, largely driven by the increased use of ACCESS HRA.

- The percentage of SNAP applications submitted online increased from 23% in 2013 to 88% in 2019.
 - 80% of those applications are submitted out-of-center, with the remainder submitted online at DSS-HRA kiosks and PC banks within HRA centers.
 - Meaning approximately 70% of all SNAP applications are submitted online and out-of-center.
 - The percentage of SNAP applications submitted online increased in 2020/ In February 2020, 76% of SNAP applications were submitted electronically outside of DSS-HRA centers, with this figure increasing significantly to approximately 98% in May and June, remaining in the 90s (94.2%) since then/through December 2020.

Taken together, these client-centered reforms have helped reduce wait times and eliminated or reduced the need to come into a Center. Digital service delivery and modernization of the Agency's processes improves the experience for our clients as it is more efficient and frees staff to focus on cases that require more in-person contact.

DSS is seeking to make permanent a COVID-related waiver allowing telephone interviews for the application for and recertification of Cash Assistance as well as for DV and substance use screenings and assessments. The current waiver expires on March 31, 2021. Making the current waiver permanent through language in the State budget will prevent a gap in coverage if the waiver is not extended while legislation is being considered. We are grateful for the partnership of Senators Persaud and Krueger and Assemblymember Rosenthal for introducing S3223-A/A5414 which allows persons applying for or receiving public assistance the option to be interviewed by phone.

Prior to COVID, New Yorkers could only apply for Cash Assistance (CA) in-person at one of HRA's Job Centers unlike SNAP clients who since 2015 have been able to apply by telephone without having to come to an office. The change we are seeking is subject to State approval and absent that approval we are seeking legislative solutions in order to align our service delivery model.

To reiterate what we outlined at the beginning of this report, at the outset of the pandemic, DSS-HRA was granted a State waiver so that New Yorkers could apply for CA online and conduct their interview by phone. Throughout the pandemic, we've had to request waiver extensions multiple times in order to protect the health and safety of staff and clients and align the CA program with the client- and dignity-centered remote/mobile service delivery that we've had for SNAP clients since 2015. **Since receiving the waiver, 85% of Cash Assistance applications have been submitted online with about 162,000 interviews conducted by telephone.** And as we've noted, in that time, we have seen the number of Cash Assistance applications nearly double.

During the initial weeks of the pandemic with increased uncertainty, COVID cases on the rise, and stay-at-home orders newly implemented, we made Cash Assistance available via online ACCESS HRA for the first time. We saw record applications for Cash Assistance in March and April 2020 and during the time period of May through September,

applications returned to lower-than-average levels before climbing back up beginning in October.

2020 saw the highest December applications in over a decade.

- In March 2020, the Agency received approximately 12,740 more CA applications than March 2019, a nearly 53% increase.
- In April 2020, the Agency received approximately 7,980 more CA applications than April 2019, a more than 31% increase.

Between February 2020 and December 2020, there was an approximately 48,500-person (+14.8%) increase and a more than 27,000-case (+15.1%) increase in the CA caseload.

In addition to the telephone interview waiver, which made benefits more accessible, DSS-HRA requested and received waivers from the State to temporarily suspend many of the ongoing engagement requirements, required for continued eligibility for federal and State benefits. Waivers allowed us to suspend requirements such as employment program engagement and/or substance use services rules. Under prior Administrations, failure to engage in such requirements would have led to case closings in the normal course. With these factors taken into consideration, as CA cases have been closed at historically low rates due to the waivers, and the historic application increases, there has been a steady increase in the CA caseload since the beginning of the pandemic.

No Wrong Door – Modernizing HRA’s Offices and Locations

The agency’s long-term goals include ensuring HRA is in the communities of the greatest need by right-sizing our current client-facing locations and relocating into areas of highest need. In executing this strategy, we are implementing new service delivery models to better meet client needs. Further, as we move away from a specific program-focused (each program operates separately) service-delivery approach to a more client-centric, “no wrong door” approach we are increasing opportunities to co-locate with other agencies and community-based organizations (CBOs) to leverage community-based outreach and resources. And finally, we are continuing to maximize use of technology wherever possible.

Appendix A: NYC HRA COVID-19 Waiver Requests And Statuses

	State Agency	Program Area	Description of Request	Status
1	OTDA	CA	Allow CA telephone application interviews	Approved
2	OTDA	CA	Allow CA telephone recertification interviews	Approved
3	OTDA	CA	Remove or defer the requirement for employment and eligibility in person appointments and assignments	Approved
4	OTDA	CA	Extend CA recertification periods	Approved
5	OTDA	CA	Provide flexibility to not take negative action for clients who fail to return the six-month mailer	Approved
6	OTDA	CA	Suspend State requirement for local district to provide clients with a photo on their CBIC Card if vendor not operational or clients cannot travel to site	Approved
7	OTDA	CA	Waive the signature requirement for applications in situations on which a client is receiving assistance on the phone from DSS or CBOs	Partial Approval: Did not receive approval for CBOs
8	OTDA	CA	Reconsider request to suspend the requirements of ISP , including distribution of invoices	Approved
9	OTDA	CA/SNAP	Suspend the SNAP ABAWD work rules and delay implementation of new ABAWD rule	Approved
10	OTDA	CA/SNAP	Emergency Supplement of SNAP Benefits for Current Recipients up to the maximum allotment for the household size	Approved
11	OTDA	SNAP	Waive the signature requirement for applications in situations on which a client is receiving assistance on the phone from DSS or CBOs	Partial Approval: Did not receive approval for CBOs

	State Agency	Program Area	Description of Request	Status
12	OTDA	SNAP	Adjustment to certain SNAP Interview Requirements	Approved
13	OTDA	SNAP	Extend SNAP recertification periods	Approved
14	OTDA	SNAP	Remove or defer the requirement for employment and eligibility in person appointments and assignments	Approved
15	OTDA	SNAP	Provide flexibility to not take negative action for clients who fail to return the periodic report	Approved
16	OTDA	SNAP	Suspend the SNAP ABAWD work rules and delay implementation of new ABAWD rule	Approved
17	OTDA	SNAP	Emergency Supplement of SNAP Benefits for Current Recipients up to the maximum allotment for the household size	Approved
18	OTDA	OPA	Suspend mandatory CA/SNAP and Medicaid data matches	Partial Approval: Some matches have resumed
19	OTDA	OPA	Extend SNAP claim establishment period	Partial Approval
20	OTDA	OPA	Suspend FEDS and EVR investigations	Approved
21	OTDA	Fair Hearings	Suspend fair hearings where ATC has been granted	Partially Approved: Non-aid cases are being prioritized

	State Agency	Program Area	Description of Request	Status
22	OTDA	Fair Hearings	Agency fair hearing reps and clients to participate remotely by telephone	Approved
23	OTDA	Child Support	Suspend all credit reporting after P.A.U.S.E. was put into effect and for the duration of the COVID-19 crisis pursuant to SSL § 111-c(2)(h).	Partially Approved
24	OCFS	APS	Extend timeframes for initial eligibility, visits, ongoing assessments.	Approved
25	OCFS	APS	Extension of eligibility determination from 60 days to 90 days- 18 NYCRR § 457.2(b)(4)(i)	Approved
26	OCFS	APS	Waiving Face to Face contact required under 18 NYCRR § 457.5(b)	Approved
27	OCFS	APS	Permit client contact by telephone rather than in person, but continue to make home visits when necessary to ensure safety of client	Approved
28	OCFS	ODV	Allow DV survivors to remain in DV shelters for up to 180 days rather than the current 90 days without a request for an extension	Approved
29	OCFS	ODV	Permit reimbursement beyond 180 days for DV survivors who are self-isolating or quarantined in a DV shelter until such clients are no longer a public health risk	Approved on a Case by Case basis
30	OCFS	ODV	Allow placement and reimbursement for single adults placed in larger than what a single would normally be eligible for	Approved on a Case by Case basis
31	OCFS	ODV	A waiver of the reimbursement for a sponsoring agency staff person to visit the safe dwelling on a weekly basis and to permit telephone contact	Approved
32	OCFS	ODV	Allow expedited approval of new DV shelter capacity, including hotel space	Approved on a Case by Case basis

	State Agency	Program Area	Description of Request	Status
33	SDOH	Home Care	Waive required nurse visit, social work assessment visit for all service assessments, including immediate needs applications, regular applications and renewals	Approved
34	SDOH	Home Care	Allow case workers and nurses to conduct telephone interview assessments in lieu of home visits for renewals	Approved
35	SDOH	Home Care	Extend required time frames for Licensed Home Care Services nurse Home Visits, Homecare Worker Annual Medical Exams and all trainings	Approved
36	SDOH	Home Care	Extend required time frames for all Personal Care and Managed Long Term Care service authorizations and required CDPAP six-month nurse visits	Partial Approval
37	SDOH	Medicaid	Extend coverage of all Medicaid authorization periods, including for Stenson and Rosenberg clients	Approved
38	SDOH	Medicaid	Waive eligibility documentation requirements and allow attestation. Applicants who receive Medicaid without all required documents would only receive coverage for 6 months	Partial Approval (except non-citizens will be placed on an advanced renewal schedule after PHE)
39	SDOH	Medicaid	Allow approval of full Medicaid coverage for community surplus cases by not requiring clients to pay-in or incur/submit bills	Approved
40	SDOH	Medicaid	Suspend or delay mandatory Medicaid data matches	Approved
41	SDOH	CA	Suspend Child/Teen Health Program (C/THP) oral script that workers are required to read to our clients when processing an application/recertification.	Approved

	State Agency	Program Area	Description of Request	Status
42	OTDA	Child Support	Consider noncustodial parents for services supported by federal funds appropriated for employment and training under Title VIII of the CARES Act (H.R. 748), the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Section 170(a)(1)(B), or any subsequent appropriation to assist them in re-connecting to work and paying their court-ordered child support obligations to support their children.	Pending follow up with OTDA
43	OTDA	SNAP	Permit flexibility in establishing or disposing of new SNAP overpayment claims	Pending
44	OTDA	CA	Suspend special grant repayment time periods and recovery of overpayment	Pending
45	OTDA	CA	Request to allow the Agency to reduce recoupment to 5% for cases that meet certain criteria	Pending
46	OCFS	APS	Extension of timeframe to commence investigation for 24-hour cases (emergency cases) to 48 hours	Pending – Executive Order needed
47	SDOH	Medicaid	Waive recovery of overpayments for coverage that may have been incorrectly paid during the emergency	Pending
48	OTDA	CA/SNAP	Waive the requirement to verify school attendance	Denied
49	OTDA	CA/SNAP	Waive income and resource requirements for CA and SNAP people who cannot work/ work reduced hours due to quarantine requirements	Denied
50	OTDA	CA/SNAP	Suspend time period required for repayment agreements associated with any special grants	Denied

	State Agency	Program Area	Description of Request	Status
51	OTDA	CA/SNAP	Suspend conducting Federal Quality Control reviews and remove the emergency time period from any future reviews	Denied
52	OTDA	CA/SNAP	Waiver to extend the period that a household is given to sell real property from six months to twelve months	Denied
53	OTDA	CA/SNAP	Waive the limits on the amount of money that can be exempt for a bona fide funeral agreement	Denied
54	OTDA	CA/SNAP	Waive the requirement to verify the presence of all household members	Denied
55	OTDA	CA/SNAP	Waive the requirement to verify application for unemployment benefits at application for households that contain individuals who recently lost employment, and to provide for systemic check at recertification	Denied
56	OTDA	CA/SNAP	Allow DSS to grant good cause for individuals who are in sanction status for CA/SNAP for failure to comply with a work requirement, or are in sanction status for a voluntary quit situation, and would be deemed unable to reengage due to the COVID-19 pandemic, without the need for an individual determination to be made. Alternatively, DSS requests that OTDA temporarily waive the provisions in such regulations to permit the district to grant good cause without the need for an additional determination.	Denied
57	OTDA	SNAP	DSS asks that the State make a request to the Federal Government for waivers of federal law so that (a) New York City recipients of SNAP may purchase hot food with their benefits and (b) more SNAP vendors be allowed to participate as a "retail food store" so long as the COVID disaster declaration is in effect and (c) the SNAP student eligibility criteria be waived	Denied

	State Agency	Program Area	Description of Request	Status
58	OTDA	Child Support	Suspend administrative child support enforcement actions for non-custodial parents	Denied
59	OTDA	Child Support	Temporarily modify both the state and federal Tax Offset Program (TOP) defenses for the 2020 TOP certification under 18 NYCRR 346.9(b)(1) to include a defense that the arrears were due to job loss as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.	Denied
60	OTDA	Child Support	Halt the certification of all Department of Motor Vehicle license suspensions that would otherwise occur after P.A.U.S.E was placed into effect on March 22nd; and grant DSS greater authority to remove individuals currently in the license suspension process pursuant to the latitude in 18 NYCRR §346.12(a)(1)	Denied
61	OTDA	Child Support	Halt the Property Executions (PEX) of bank accounts that would otherwise occur after P.A.U.S.E was placed into effect; or in the alternative, grant DSS greater authority to remove the levy on individuals with frozen bank accounts pursuant to 18 NYCRR §346.11(b) by temporarily changing the threshold for past due support that triggers the PEX process from two months to six months. Alternatively, temporarily suspend CPLR 5205(d)(3) and CPLR 5222 (k) which allow DSS to seize a bank account of any size.	Denied
62	OTDA	Child Support	Request issuance of an Executive Order directing that once the Family Court begins to accept child support petitions for filing, for any modification petitions filed in the 2020 calendar year, support magistrates are required to review whether the NCP had the ability to pay during the COVID-19 crisis, and, if the support magistrate determines that they did not, to vacate any arrears that accrued during the crisis, pursuant to the authority in FCA §451(1)	Denied
63	OTDA	Child Support	Reverse the distribution order selected in the state plan and effectuated in 18 NYCRR 347.13(d) for any tax refund offset stemming from the CARES Act to allow the Custodial Parent of a former assistance case to be paid prior to DSS being reimbursed. This waiver would allow the CARES tax refund offset to be paid directly to the family, providing additional cash support to children during the crisis.	Denied

	State Agency	Program Area	Description of Request	Status
64	OTDA	Child Support	Allow, for current assistance cases, a one- time pass-through bonus to the custodial parent for any tax refund offset stemming from the CARES Act and waiver of the required reimbursement to the federal government for 100% pass through by granting a one-time reprieve from section 42 USC §657 (a)(6)(B)(ii). Because the bonus is temporarily exempt from being countable for PA benefits, the client and the family would get additional support when it is most needed.	Denied
65	OTDA	CA	Raise dollar amount of accrued rent arrears issued to FHEPS households	Denied
66	OTDA	Child Support	Lift and suspend child support sanctions	Denied
67	OCFS	APS	Extension of timeframes for the initial supervisory consultation from 24 hours to 48 hours for clients who have refused access during the home visit and may need an OGA -NY SSL § 473-c.	Denied
68	OCFS	ODV	Approve emergency DV shelter per diem adjustments on an emergency basis to account for the facility underutilization due to quarantine, isolation and other factors during the COVID emergency	Denied – Follow up required
69	SDOH	Medicaid	Waive timeframes for eligibility determinations on applications as well Immediate Needs Personal Care Services.	Denied
70	SDOH	Home Care	Allow approval of temporary increased services as needed for at risk clients that will be reimbursed by Medicaid without the required nurse assessment review and documents/ doctor's orders	Denied
71	SDOH	Home Care	Extend time frames for processing new Personal Care Service applications for Nursing Home patients seeking return to the Community	Denied
72	OTDA	CA	Waiver of the State FHEPS eligibility requirement that an eviction proceeding has been commenced in court	Denied
73	OTDA	CA	Waiver of the 45-day wait period for Safety Net Cash Assistance applications	Denied
74	OTDA	CA	Waiver of the Cash Assistance eligibility interview	Denied