



**Testimony of Steven Banks, Commissioner
Department of Social Services**

**Before the New York City Council, Committee on Finance and Committee on General
Welfare
NYC Department of Social Services Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget Hearing**

May 10, 2021

Good morning. I would like to thank the City Council's Finance and General Welfare Committees and Chairs Dromm and Levin for giving us the opportunity to testify today about the Department of Social Services' Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget and our work to improve services for New Yorkers in need.

My name is Steven Banks and I am the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Social Services (DSS). In this capacity, I oversee the Human Resources Administration (HRA) and the Department of Homeless Services (DHS). Joining me today are DSS First Deputy Commissioner Molly Murphy, HRA Administrator Gary Jenkins, DHS Administrator Joslyn Carter, DSS Chief Program Planning and Financial Management Officer Ellen Levine, and DSS Chief of Staff Scott French.

My testimony today will highlight the major facets of the DSS/HRA/DHS FY22 Executive Budget, which reflect our efforts to address income inequality, fight poverty and homelessness, and help New Yorkers in need get back on their feet.

At the outset, I want to highlight policy changes at the federal level that will benefit New Yorkers served by our agency, including: support from the American Rescue Plan, a \$1.9 trillion relief package that includes \$12.6 billion in direct aid for New York State, and \$5.98 billion in direct aid for New York City. The package includes funding for enhanced unemployment benefits, direct cash payments, and nutritional programs such as P-EBT and SNAP. The American Rescue Plan also includes a critical appropriation of additional rent relief to bring the total funding for New York State to \$2.4 billion for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP).

At the State level, DSS has worked closely with the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and the Legislature to ensure our clients can access ERAP. As part of the State budget process, the Legislature enacted legislation to implement the federal ERAP initiative. The framework for the rent relief program provides help for households that include a member who has qualified for unemployment, or has had a drop in income or other financial hardship due to COVID-19 and demonstrates a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability and has a household income at or below 80% of the Area Median Income. New Yorkers, including New York City

residents, will be able to access this funding through a statewide portal that is being created by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA). We expect this OTDA portal to be live by the end of this month. To help New York City residents apply for and receive this essential rent relief, DSS is using federal funds allocated to us in the federal relief appropriations to procure outreach and application assistance from community-based organizations in all five boroughs. The final State budget also included an Excluded Workers Fund, which will provide critical support to New Yorkers who may not have been eligible for pandemic-related benefits due to their immigration status. And just last week, with our continuing advocacy on this issue, Senator Kavanagh, the Chair of the Senate Housing Committee, has introduced legislation (S.6573) to require the State to permit DSS to set the rent levels for the State FHEPS rent supplement program at the Fair Market Rental levels as determined by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development and to reimburse us for payment of these rent levels in accordance with traditional public assistance funding streams.

In addition, prior to enactment of the State budget, by an overwhelming margin, the Senate and Assembly passed legislation that will make permanent our COVID-19 waiver allowing clients the option to have telephone interviews to apply and recertify for Cash Assistance, without the need to go into one of our offices. This change will provide Cash Assistance clients with the same option that SNAP clients have had since 2016, following DSS obtaining a waiver in 2015 from the Obama Administration to make it possible for all clients to choose to apply and recertify for SNAP by phone without the need to travel to an office to do so. Since receiving our temporary State Cash Assistance waiver during the pandemic, 85% of Cash Assistance applications have been submitted online with about 162,000 interviews conducted by telephone. The bill is currently on the Governor's desk, and we are continuing to work with the Legislature to ensure it is signed – which will dramatically improve the client experience.

Budget Overview

An important component of the City's overall recovery has been an infusion of federal funds, most recently as part of the American Rescue Plan as well as other COVID-related relief. Federal funds were added to the DHS and HRA budgets in the Executive 2022 plan to bolster key priorities, such as in Legal Services for Tenants, Anti-Hunger Programs, Rental Assistance, Street Homeless programming, among others. This additional federal investment will allow HRA/DHS/DSS to more quickly rebound from the pandemic-related fiscal belt tightening over the past 14 months, and these investments also allow programs that are key elements of agency goals to remain in place while the local economy improves. However, these federal funds are time-limited, and therefore it is critical for the city to have a strong recovery.

HRA/DSS

The FY21 HRA/DSS budget is \$10.6 billion, \$7.9 billion of which are City funds, and consists of 12,781 positions, of which 9,309 are City-funded. The FY22 budget is \$11 billion, and \$8.46 billion are City funds, with 13,618 positions, of which 10,133 are City-funded.

The DSS/ HRA budget increases between FY21 and FY22 by \$421 million in total funds and \$584 million in City funds, primarily as a result of Medicaid funding adjustments, including a shift of

funds from Health + Hospitals to the Medicaid budget to cover new Medicaid initiatives, including the Upper Payment Limit initiative (UPL), as well as enhanced Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) savings from the State.

The DSS/HRA budget increased by \$927 million in total funds and \$619 million City funds between the January and Executive Plans due primarily to the Medicaid adjustments as well as additional funding for rental assistance and federal funding for services and programs during the pandemic. The DSS/HRA City-funded headcount is higher in FY22 than in FY21 due to one-time vacancy savings that occurred in FY21 only.

The primary initiatives funded in the FY22 HRA/DSS Executive Budget are as follows:

- **Housing Anti-Discrimination:** \$2 million in total and City funds in FY22 and the outyears were added to expand enforcement of housing discrimination laws, including source of income discrimination within DSS's Source of Income Discrimination Unit.
- **Access to Counsel in Eviction Cases:** \$23 million in total funds in FY22 and the baseline, were added to fully fund universal access to legal services for tenants facing eviction. This brings the based-lined amount to \$166 million.
- **Case Management Services:** \$3.5 million in total and City funds in FY21 and \$10.7 million in total and City funds in FY22 were added for case management services for families who formerly experienced homelessness who have transitioned to permanent housing through our cluster conversion initiative.
- **Information Technology:** \$8.98 million in total and \$4.6 million City funds in FY21 and \$42.9 million in total funds (\$29 million City) in FY22 for maintenance and support of the DSS/HRA and DHS information technology operations.
- **Food Assistance:** \$32 million in FY22 in total funds to fund the Pandemic Food Reserve Emergency Distribution, including 13 positions and \$4.9 million in the baseline to fund the Emergency Food Assistance Program and the Office of Food Policy.
- **HASA Housing:** \$47.9 million in total and \$34 million City funds in FY22 to support HASA emergency housing costs.
- **Janitorial and Security Prevailing Wage:** \$13.5 million in total and \$7.1 million City funds in FY21 and \$23.8 million in total funds (\$12.5 million City) in FY22 for prevailing wage increases for janitorial and security services.
- **Master Lease:** \$4.7 million in total and City funds in FY22 for new master lease units and support services.
- **Immigrant Affairs:** \$2 million in total and City funds in FY21 for Low Wage Worker Legal Services and \$2.6 million in total and City funds for other initiatives, including Action NYC, Know Your Rights, We Speak and Rapid Response.
- **Indirect Cost Rate:** \$8.3 million in total funds in FY21 and the outyears to fund the indirect cost rate restoration to not-for-profit providers which will provide financial stability for hundreds of nonprofit human service providers as they continue to partner with the City on a recovery for all of us.
- **Rental Assistance:** \$161 million in FY21 and \$168 million in FY22 in total funds for the additional projected costs of City rental assistance programs which are added to the rental assistance budget to true up projected expenditures for new shelter move outs in the coming year and the ongoing actual costs for clients who moved out in prior years. This brings the

FY22 budget for City-funded rental assistance to \$325 million – and we will continue to move out as many clients as possible.

- **Hart Island Capacity Study:** HRA is procuring a vendor to continue operating Hart Island as the City’s public burial grounds in the next fiscal year as well as a vendor to evaluate the ongoing capacity for burials on the Island. The FY22 Executive Budget includes \$112k in FY21 and \$426k in FY22 in total and City funds for this capacity study of Hart Island; additional funds will be added to operate the burial ground on the Island when the RFP process is complete.
- **HRA Clean-Up Corps:** \$29 million of total funds in FY22 to fund HRA Clean Up Corps, part of a New Deal-style, Citywide jobs initiative.

Savings Initiatives:

To further support our budget through savings, HRA/DSS will leverage several efficiencies to maximize resources. These savings include initiatives such as:

- **Enterprise Licensing:** a \$3.1 million reduction in total and City funds in FY21 only for an adjustment associated with a realignment of the Microsoft Enterprise Licensing Agreement citywide, utilizing capital funding where possible.

And the Executive Budget plan also includes COVID related savings:

- **Carfare:** a reduction of \$11.3 million in FY21 in funding due to Carfare expenditures less than expected during COVID 19.
- **JTP DCAS:** a reduction of \$226k to DCAS Jobs Training. Participant expenditures were lower than expected due to a pause in referrals during COVID 19.
- **JTP DSNY:** a \$1.3 million reduction because Department of Sanitation Jobs Training expenditures were lower than expected due to a pause in referrals during COVID 19.
- **Child Support Processing:** \$833k in FY21 only savings due to the impact of COVID-19 on court activity.

DHS/DSS

The FY21 DHS budget is \$2.8 billion, of which \$1.2 billion are City funds. The budget supports 2,101 positions including 2,044 which are City funded. The FY22 DHS budget is \$2.2 billion, and \$1.3 billion are City funds, and 2,158 positions are supported, of which 2,102 are City-funded.

The DHS budget decreases by \$681 million in total funds from FY21 to FY22, primarily due to Federal COVID-19 relief funds that were added in FY21. For example, there is \$615 million in FEMA funds in FY21 primarily related to the pandemic hotel sheltering program. (There are also CRF and pandemic ESG-CV funds in the FY21 budget). The FY22 budget will be adjusted for FEMA impact as the COVID-19 crisis develops and health guidance is updated.

This decrease in FY22 due to the Federal revenue in FY21 is partially offset by American Rescue Plan funds added in FY22 to support programs including the Journey Home, Street Outreach, Safe

Havens, and Street Medicine. Additional funding may be added in FY22 depending on COVID-related program needs, as determined by public health guidance.

New DHS funding for FY22 includes:

- **EAF Revenue:** \$85 million of City funds in FY21 and FY22 for an EAF Revenue Shortfall related to NYS changes in EAF eligibility requirements.
- **Healing NYC Expansion:** 1 position and \$101k in FY22 and \$96k in total and City funds in the outyears to expand the Healing NYC program for outreach.
- **DHS IT Maintenance:** \$1.3 million in total and City funds in FY22 and the outyears for ongoing DHS technology maintenance.
- **Janitorial Prevailing Wage Adjustment:** \$5.9 million in total and City funds in FY21 and the outyears to fund previously approved prevailing wage increases for janitorial services.
- **DHS Clean-Up Corps:** \$3 million in total funds in FY22 for DHS Clean Up Corps, as a part of the same Citywide initiative mentioned above.
- **Journey Home:** \$76.9 million in total funds in FY22 to fund the Journey Home programs, including safe havens, street outreach, and street medicine.
- **Street Outreach Programming:** \$4.6 million in total funds in FY21; \$15.2 million in total funds in FY22 and \$9.4 million in total funds in FY23 and the outyears for street outreach at subway stations and rapid response.
- **Indirect Cost Rate:** \$9.6 million in total funds in FY21 and the outyears to fund the restoration of indirect cost rate in not-for-profit contracts

The investments presented here today, as well as the reforms made over the last seven years, provide a framework on which to build to continue to support New Yorkers in need in future Administrations. Looking back at our work over the last seven years, much of which was accomplished through our collaboration with the City Council, we see many lessons learned that we hope can help inform future social services policy in New York City.

Reforming Social Services

In 2014, I presented our first Executive Budget to the City Council as Commissioner. This presentation provided a summary of our services as well as an analysis of program inefficiencies that we inherited from previous administrations. In particular, our analysis seven years ago identified policies and procedures in need of improvement – and we set out to reform programs so that they would prevent homelessness instead of causing it, that families and individuals would have access to the public benefits to which they are entitled instead of being subjected to punitive policies, that duplication and inefficiencies would be eliminated, that unnecessary financial penalties and sanctions would be avoided, and that employment programs would be more effective in alleviating poverty and fighting income inequality.

We have continued to build on the reforms we set out to accomplish in FY15, and the progress that we have made is reflected in the following key initiatives, among many more that we have implemented which are listed in the attached appendix:

- **Increased access to public benefits and assistance** by ending a one-size-fits-all approach to service delivery. In particular, we implemented technology initiatives to streamline administrative processes; eliminated counter-productive case sanctions and reduced unnecessary fair hearings by cutting the number of hearing requests in half; closed Center 71, the “Intensive Services” Center which served a punitive function to cut off assistance for New Yorkers in need; and eliminated WEP, the unpaid Work Experience Program, which required clients to work for no compensation in jobs that provided no valuable work experience and instead implemented new employment programs that emphasize education and training, including an option to count four-year college participation;
- **Reached full implementation of our right-to-counsel program in eviction cases**, with support from the Council. Under this program, coordinated by HRA’s Office of Civil Justice and in partnership with legal service providers, vulnerable New Yorkers facing eviction are eligible for free legal representation, regardless of zip code, immigration status, or, with a waiver, income level. The positive results of these efforts have been clear, with residential evictions by City marshals down by 41% between 2013 and 2019, while nationwide evictions were on the rise during this time, and the percentage of tenants facing eviction in court with legal representation was 38% in 2019, up from 1% in 2013 – and during the pandemic we have been able to assign counsel in virtually every case heard in court;
- **Launched the largest municipal commitment to-date to build supportive housing** by making the commitment to develop 15,000 new units in 15 years, through the NYC 15/15 initiative. Through the ongoing NY/NY and NYC 15/15 supportive housing programs, there have been 12,545 total supportive housing placements from DHS shelter, from January 2014 through February 2021.
- **Through Fair Fares, in partnership with the Council, we designed a 21st Century government benefits program framework** that was responsive to New Yorkers’ needs, and built a model for future social services delivery. Over 223,000 New Yorkers have enrolled in the program, and eligible clients can be enrolled online through Access HRA, and then receive their Fair Fares MetroCard by mail without ever having to visit an office. Moreover, the required eligibility documentation is simple and straight-forward which benefits both clients and agency staff. Modern and agile program frameworks like this one, along with the effective blueprint we developed in pioneering remote access to SNAP via Access HRA, stood us in good stead as the pandemic hit and service delivery changed, and we continue to advocate with the State for permission to permanently provide remote Cash Assistance applications to improve client access. And the streamlined eligibility process and criteria for our Fair Fares program would greatly improve the client experience for the federal and state Cash Assistance, SNAP, and Medicaid programs.
- **Transformed HASA** by ensuring New Yorkers with HIV are able to receive housing, transportation and nutritional support through HASA for All. Prior to 2016, New Yorkers with HIV, in addition to meeting income eligibility requirements, needed to be clinical/symptomatic with HIV illness or AIDS to receive these critical supports. Today, we administer a program grounded in science and compassion that permits individuals to obtain services upon an HIV diagnosis making them eligible for an Emergency Shelter Allowance,

which includes a monthly transportation and nutrition allowance as well as a 30% income contribution cap toward rental costs for public assistance recipients. These changes advance our goals towards individual viral load suppression and achieving decreased disease transmission rates to once and for all end the epidemic.

Reforming Homeless Policies

Homelessness in New York City and jurisdictions across the country is the very real result of decades of changes in our economy – particularly the exponentially increased income inequality – and past choices made in New York City, Albany, and Washington. The shelter census increased 115% between 1994 and 2014 including growing nearly 40% to more than 51,000 in just three years between 2011 and 2014 following the end of the Advantage rental assistance program as a result of State and City cuts.

From 1994-2012, the City suffered a net loss of about 150,000 rent-stabilized units, or 16% of the total rent-regulated stock. From 2005-2015, rents increased by 18.4% whereas incomes increased by only 4.8%. While the city's overall rental vacancy rate of 3.5% poses problems for people of all incomes, renters only able to afford an apartment costing \$800 or less must search in a market with a vacancy rate of just 1.15% in 2017, down from 1.8% in 2014.

As we testified at the March Preliminary Budget hearing, we have called on the State to support shelter services and outreach by restoring the State's traditional 50/50 cost split for single adult shelters in New York City, outreach workers, safe havens, stabilization beds, and the cost of homeless services for the overnight MTA initiative. Despite the fact that a Consent Decree enforcing the State Constitution obligates both the State and the City to provide shelter to single adults experiencing homelessness, the State has steadily reduced its support for single adult shelters and services in New York City from 50/50 to a mere nine percent. Additionally, the State provides zero dollars to support the 600 homeless outreach workers and more than 3,000 safe haven and stabilization beds that the City has funded that have enabled more than 4,000 people to come off the streets and subways and remain off since 2016.

Simply put, the State must return to paying its fair share for life-saving services for single adults experiencing homelessness. Even as the overall DHS shelter census and the number of children and adults in family shelters have been reduced significantly as we will discuss later in this testimony, there are record numbers of people in the DHS single adult shelters. In addition to the ongoing affordable housing crisis, one of the drivers of the single adult DHS census growth is the State's failure to invest in reentry services to prevent discharges from State prisons to DHS shelters. Tragically, history is repeating itself. Just as State deinstitutionalization from State mental health facilities without sufficient community mental health services has contributed to modern day mass homelessness for single adults, now State decarceration without sufficient community reentry services is resulting in a State prison to shelter pipeline.

Against this backdrop, we want to discuss the progress that has been made on our commitments to address 40 years of federal, State and City policy failures by focusing on the four pillars of the 2017 Turning the Tide plan – prevention first, providing social services permanent rehousing

programs, transforming the haphazard approach to providing shelter, and addressing street homelessness:

- **Breaking the trajectory of growth in the DHS shelter census:** after nearly four decades of an ever-increasing DHS shelter census in our city, we have finally broken the trajectory of growth, holding the DHS census essentially flat year over year – for the first time in more than a decade – at approximately 60,000 in 2017, 2018, 2019, and then reversing the growth trend with the DHS census now below 50,000, which is less than the DHS census when the Administration began.
- **Significantly fewer children and adults in family shelters:** With our investments in prevention and rehousing, we have driven down the number of children and adults residing in shelter on any given night. – from a peak after the Advantage program ended of 43,208 in December 2014 to 27,463 yesterday – which is a decrease of nearly 15,750 people and the lowest number since 2012. In particular, there are 15,630 children in family shelters, a decrease of 9,860 since there were 25,490 children in shelter in 2014. And whereas there were 18,812 unique families with children who applied for shelter in the 12 months before January 1, 2014 there have been 9,778 unique families with children who have applied for shelter in the last 12 months. This trend has been in place well before the pandemic began but has accelerated while the eviction moratorium has been in place, demonstrating the impact on homelessness when the eviction machinery stops – just as the elimination of the Advantage rental assistance program and the resulting exponential increase in family homelessness illustrated the folly of fighting homelessness with no permanent housing.
- **Ending the 21-year Giuliani cluster program:** We have ended the use of more than 2,800 cluster units as shelter, reducing citywide cluster use by over 75%, and we have been converting hundreds of cluster units into permanent affordable housing for families experiencing homelessness. In January 2016, at the high point of the cluster program, the City was using 3,650 cluster units to shelter families. We are on track to be completely out of clusters by the end of this year.
- **Provided permanent housing to more than 165,000 New Yorkers using our social services tools:** We have helped more than 165,000 New Yorkers exit shelter and transition to permanent housing or avoid shelter altogether, using rental assistance and rehousing programs. We have also streamlined a number of these housing assistance programs into one, to make it easier for clients and landlords alike to secure housing opportunities, and we operate an aggressive, dedicated unit at DSS focused on combatting Source of Income discrimination to ensure landlords are not unlawfully closing doors of opportunity to those experiencing homelessness.
- **Ending the use of more than 260 shelter sites:** We have shrunk the DHS footprint by 41% by phasing out more than 260 shelter sites that did not meet our standards and replacing them with a smaller number of borough-based shelters located as close as possible to the anchors of life like schools, jobs, health care, houses of worship and family support networks – with 89 sited and 46 already operating, with an average of nearly 230 days between community notification and opening.

- **Helped thousands of New Yorkers off the streets and subways:** We have helped more than 4,000 people experiencing street homelessness come inside from the streets and subways and remain off through our HOME-STAT outreach program, by tripling the number of outreach workers from 200 to 600 and increasing five-fold the number of low-barrier safe haven and stabilization beds from 600 in 2014 to more than 3,000 today, with more than 1,200 added during the pandemic and more beds on the way. And during the MTA's overnight shutdown over the past year, we have helped more than 800 people come off the subways and remain inside.

These critical steps are the result of our focused efforts and the aggressive reforms set out in our *Turning the Tide* plan. As the first comprehensive plan to address homelessness presented by an administration, we have worked to address the haphazard system that built over 40 years, and brought program accountability and oversight to support New Yorkers experiencing homelessness. While we know there is much more work to be done to end a homelessness crisis that has built up over four decades, we are making tangible impacts through our focused efforts on prevention first, providing permanent housing and decent shelter, and addressing street homeless. And we believe that, through this model, we've built a foundation for a future Administration to build on and continue to make progress.

For your information, we have included in an appendix a full list of our DHS and HRA reforms.

With that, we look forward to our continued partnership with the Council for the remainder of this year, and I deeply appreciate your support, recommendations and commitment to our clients over the last seven plus years. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I look forward to answering your questions.

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

*The State denied the FHEPS waiver in June 2020, but then reversed the denial and granted the waiver in March 2021.

2020 HRA Reform Highlights

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
- Implemented a Medicaid program “Batch Buy- In Process” at the end of 2020, which has allowed us to enroll over 14,000 clients in the Medicare Savings Program, and expanded the process to enroll Cash Assistance clients.
- Implemented a process for clients in the Surplus Income program to maintain their coverage by calling to request an extension even if they are unable to submit a bill or payment due to the COVID health emergency.
- Implemented an initiative for the Medicaid program to use e-Faxes for the submission of new applications, which was not available prior to COVID.

- Provided clients in the MBI-WPD program with a grace period extension for unemployment for 6 months at a time for the duration of the COVID emergency.

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.

2020 DHS Reform Highlights

Procedure Development

- Interim Reasonable Accommodations (RA) Process (Butler): DHS provides RAs to clients consistent with applicable laws except where doing so would fundamentally alter the nature of DHS services. DHS will not discriminate or retaliate against any client for requesting an RA, nor will DHS make an adverse determination regarding shelter eligibility or benefits as a result of a disability when the failure to comply relates to a disability requiring an accommodation that has not been provided.
- Selected Infectious Diseases Investigation and Outbreak Prevention: this policy outlines the roles and interactions between DHS facilities, Outreach teams, DHS Office of the Medical Director, and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in the event of an individual case or potential outbreak.
- Service Coordination with No Violence Again (NoVA) staff for PATH and AFIC: the purpose of this procedure is to delineate the requisite actions that DHS staff at Prevention Assistance and Temporary Housing (PATH) and Adult Family Intake Center (AFIC) sites must take when individuals possibly experiencing domestic violence present at these locations.
- Medication Storage and Self-Administration: this procedure establishes a uniform practice for offering optional medication storage and monitoring to clients as they self-administer their medication. This procedure does not apply to medical clinics that may operate within a DHS facility.
- Single Adult Bed Management: the purpose of this procedure is to clarify and establish consistency regarding the management of bed assignments and vacancies in the Single Adult shelter system.
- DHS' Guide to Improving Services for LGBTQI Clients - Frequently Asked Questions: DHS created this guide to share information about homelessness in the LGBTQI community and to highlight resources that staff should use to better support LGBTQI clients.
- DHS released a Transgender, Non-binary, and Intersex Clients policy applying to all providers and staff that includes: guidance for appropriate service delivery; background on terminology and purpose; an introduction of gender pronouns and chosen name to Agency procedures; and a script for modeling respectful introductions to clients.
- DHS added a field in CARES for preferred/chosen name, a name that clients may use that is different than their legal name. CARES nightly rosters print preferred name over legal name, which prevents clients from being "outed" as transgender during roster checks.
- To ensure clear and consistent standards of social service delivery across the agency, the divisions of adult services, family services and street homeless solutions are developing models of practice, which include:
 - What must be done: All service delivery actions from entry to exit, including case management efforts, operational actions with client interaction and adherence to regulations, policies and procedures.

- How to do it well: Descriptions of how to complete each action with quality, a person-centered approach, a trauma-informed lens, transparency and accountability.
- What is to be measured: Standardizing how and what we measure by ensuring anything currently measured is noted in the model and all standards in the model are measured, and updating the twice annual Monitoring Instruments to reflect these measures.
- Developed the HOME system, which functions as a rehousing wrap-around to CARES, providing the following functionality:
 - Subsidy eligibility and letter generation.
 - Apartment stock and viewings through the Public Engagement Unit.
 - Transportation requests for viewings and shelter move outs.
 - Veteran rehousing (including non-DHS clients).
 - As of August 2020, DHS program staff use HOME to submit CityFHEPS packages and HPD's Homeless Housing Applications.

Training & Development

- Transgender, Gender Non-Binary, Intersex (TGNBI) Procedure Training: this provides a learning experience designed to help staff understand the experiences, needs, and concerns of TGNBI clients seeking or receiving services at a DHS facility.
- DHS Language Access: this provides information to staff and providers about language access requirements and policies for serving clients who speak languages other than English. Staff learn tools for providing services to our diverse client base. Training covers interpretation services, CARES and manual forms, and translation services.
- DHS has partnered with CUNY's School of Professional Studies to develop a series of trainings that provide a system-wide framework for engaging and supporting our clients. The 10 introductory-level trainings provide guidance on skills such as using a trauma-informed approach, understanding mental illness, and being culturally sensitive. The courses are: Using a Trauma-Informed Approach; Motivational Interviewing; Cultural Sensitivity; Mental Illness and Substance Use; Understanding Violence; Crisis Intervention; Suicide Assessment and Prevention; Self-Care; Key Activities; 5 Steps to Home.

Initiatives

- Influenza vaccination: DHS made the flu vaccine available to all congregate shelters last fall/winter, including all single adult and adult family shelters, all Safe Havens and Drop-in-Centers, Stabilization Beds facilities and selected Families with Children shelters with shared bathrooms. The medical providers who offered COVID testing administered the flu vaccines.
- Overdose Prevention: DHS continues to focus on opioid overdose prevention and in particular, reduction of deaths due to overdoses, by making naloxone available at all its facilities at all times. In CY2020, DHS trained over 2,100 clients and 3,000 staff to administer naloxone, distributed 14,352 naloxone kits, and administered naloxone 730 times, reversing over 90% of overdoses.

COVID-19 Response Reforms

- Conducted shelter de-densification at all our Single Adult Shelters.
- Hold monthly COVID testing at all our Single Adults and Adult Family Sites.
- Conduct daily COVID testing at all our Single Adult Intake locations.
- Opened our own DHS Vaccination POD to service all our congregate shelters, clients and staff.
- Implemented a mobile vaccination program in conjunction with our mobile testing initiative.
- Hosted Town Halls for both clients and staff to combat vaccine hesitancy.