



HRA's SNAP Telephone Interview Staff Work Hard to Meet Demand and Improve Services

HRA has made many changes to make it easier for clients to access vital benefits like SNAP. Online applications, phone interviews and a number of other improvements have transformed the way clients interact with the agency. As many as 85 percent of non-Cash Assistance SNAP application interviews, and 60 percent of non-Cash Assistance recertifications are now done over the phone, and staff at HRA's Telephone Interview Processing Services (TIPS) locations have been working hard to meet the new demand.



TIPS 43 and Regional Managers: Standing: Regional Manager Lori Parker, Jayah Taylor, Woodley Fontilus, Center Director Stephanie Gooding, Sylvia Quinones, Gurjit Badhan, Sharon Ezell, and Assistant Regional Manager Lloyd Gaynor; Seated: Loretta Bellamy, Francine Ellis-Bugg, Elandres Ortiz, Thengincherril Sebastian, Stephanie Willins, and Danine Green

TIPS center staff handles phone interviews from clients and applicants living in all five boroughs. TIPS 43 in Queens handles applications from Queens and the Bronx. TIPS 24 handles all of Brooklyn and TIPS 11 handles Manhattan and Staten Island. Staff at the Mail Application Referral Unit (MARU) work to schedule an interview with clients and match any submitted documents with the right cases so that the TIPS staff member conducting the interview has the information available to conduct the telephone application interview.

Deadlines are tight. If they are found eligible for SNAP, clients must receive their benefits within 30 days according to federal law. Those that qualify for expedited SNAP must receive their benefits within five days. Sometimes clients need to reschedule appointments or can't be reached, which makes the process even more complex. On top of this, TIPS centers also handle recertification for SNAP benefits. HRA has a budgeted number of staff to deal with the demand, and so the Agency has used a combination of new technology, efficient scheduling and hard work to deal with the high volume of cases.

When cases come in, they are sorted into queues according to their deadline, and the process has been improved to allow staff to identify cases which clearly do not qualify, or which qualify for expedited processing. Improvements to HRA's back-end systems let center staff and managers monitor the workflow more easily and identify areas that need more help. HRA's Agile Communication Environment



Regional director Lori Parker with TIPS 24 Director Hollie Lopez and Raysheen Peters, Tiffany James, and Rusie Bajue (not pictured)



TIPS 11 Seated: Center Director Mayleen Frederick, Iona Wiggins, Ruth Green. Standing: Treska Beason, Amina Serrar, Delissa Kato. Not Pictured: Janet Muir, Clara Badia, Shawna Little-Shamshideen

(ACE) lets TIPS staff keep track of calls and monitor for quality control, ensuring that every effort is made to reach clients.

When HRA installed self-service computer banks for applicants to apply for SNAP, the volume of telephone interviews began to increase. HRA had a significant challenge to deal with, but by working overtime, improving back-end processes, scheduling smartly and using the assistance of colleagues from other parts of the agency, HRA was able to effectively address the challenges.

“TIPS center staff work diligently to address the challenge of a rising demand for phone interviews,” said Sherry Moss, Assistant Deputy Commissioner of HRA’s Division of SNAP Services. “The teamwork and dedication of both the leadership and staff result in their tremendous accomplishments in helping New Yorkers in need get their benefits on time so they can feed their families.”

“We’re here to serve New Yorkers in need, and modernizing the process has helped us do that,” said Stephanie Gooding, director of TIPS 43. “Our staff has embraced the new system, and we’ve received a lot of support from leadership throughout the process.”