

## **READOUT: DEPUTY MAYOR BUERY AND COMMISSIONER AGARWAL HOST ROUNDTABLE WITH COMMUNITY AND ETHNIC MEDIA ON ACTIONNYC**

Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives Richard Buery and Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs Nisha Agarwal hosted a roundtable with ethnic and community media to increase awareness of ActionNYC's services for immigrant New Yorkers, and its role as a bridge to free and safe immigration help.

ActionNYC is the nation's largest investment by a municipality towards immigration legal services and was launched yesterday. Mayor Bill de Blasio announced the \$7.9 million investment in December 2014. ActionNYC features a trusted network of community-based partners that provide outreach, community navigation, and legal services. ActionNYC provides a free comprehensive legal screening to all of its clients and provides application assistance for a wide-range of cases, including green card renewals as well as citizenship and DACA applications, and it will help prepare New Yorkers for expanded DACA (Deferred Action or Childhood Arrivals) and DAPA (Deferred Action for Parents of Americans), if those programs move forward.

Deputy Mayor Richard Buery announced that ActionNYC services will now also be part of New York City's Community Schools in immigrant-rich neighborhoods across the city. The ActionNYC team will work with trusted parent coordinators, guidance and college counselors, principals, and community school directors to connect students and their parents and families to ActionNYC services. Commissioner Nisha Agarwal announced that ActionNYC's website is now live and that all New Yorkers can visit [nyc.gov/actionnyc](http://nyc.gov/actionnyc) to learn more about the program. Commissioner Agarwal also previewed the future ActionNYC advertising campaign, including its logo, a bridge that represents the program's commitment to connecting immigrant New Yorkers to City services and government.

C. Mario Russell, Esq. (Director of Immigrant and Refugee Services, Catholic Charities Community Services); Linda Sarsour (executive director of the Arab American Association of New York, AAANY); and Maria Lizardo (executive director of the Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, NMIC) then discussed how ActionNYC was building the capacity of their organizations to serve all immigrants in their local communities. Mario Russell of Catholic Charities spoke to the innovative nature of the ActionNYC model and how the model provided services in the communities that have the greatest needs. Linda Sarsour of AAANY commented on the unprecedented nature of the initiative, including its ability to invest in immigrant community spaces and small and medium-size community based organizations that are the most trusted resources in immigrant communities. Maria Lizardo of NMIC discussed the role that word of mouth will play as immigrants continue to tell their families and friends about the quality of the free, legal immigration support they received, including connections to social services like SNAP.

Reporters from a variety of publications asked a range of questions on ActionNYC's model, outreach strategy, and services, including topics related to the rights of immigrants who reside in

New York City. A topline summary of the topics covered during the Q&A session is incorporated into the FAQ below.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:**

### **Program Design**

#### **What is ActionNYC?**

ActionNYC is free, safe, and secure legal immigration help for all New Yorkers, with needs ranging from Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) to green card renewals to citizenship. It is the nation's largest investment by a municipality to prepare for executive action and build legal capacity. The \$7.9 million initiative will provide free, safe immigration help across the five boroughs, where immigrant New Yorkers live and in the languages they speak.

#### **How does ActionNYC operate?**

The ActionNYC model is based on three pillars: Outreach and marketing; Community navigation; and Legal services.

- **Outreach:** Composed of community-based organizers, along with MOIA's outreach team. Outreach will engage traditionally underserved immigrant communities to provide information about ActionNYC services and schedule appointments.
- **Navigators:** Based in community-based organizations. These individuals will screen ActionNYC clients for eligibility for immigration relief; when applicable, provide application assistance; and connect individuals to relevant social services such as IDNYC, DACA education/ workforce credentials, and Medicaid.
- **Legal:** Composed of immigration attorneys who will review the legal work conducted by the navigators; provide legal advice to clients; represent straightforward cases; and decide next steps with all cases.

All three aspects of the program are connected through proprietary technology tools.

#### **How many New Yorkers could benefit from the program?**

All immigrants can benefit from ActionNYC's services, including approximately 898,233 immigrants who are documented noncitizens as well as 540,700 undocumented New Yorkers.

#### **How many New Yorkers will be served through ActionNYC in its first year?**

Our outreach efforts will result in in-person interactions with an estimated 70,000 New Yorkers in our first year. Initial estimates are that approximately 23,000 appointments will be made in ActionNYC's first year.

#### **How do I make an ActionNYC appointment?**

To make an appointment, call 1-800-354-0365 between 9AM-6PM, Monday - Friday or call 311 and say "ActionNYC." We can make appointments in the language that you speak, and you can be served in the language that you speak.

**How will you handle high demand?**

We are carefully monitoring needs, and will evaluate on an ongoing basis if and when additional legal clinics and expanded capacity at navigation sites are needed.

**Who are ActionNYC's community partners?**

- Arab American Association of New York
- Asian Americans for Equality
- Atlas: DIY
- BronxWorks
- CAMBA
- Catholic Charities Community Services
- Center for Family Life
- Center for Popular Democracy
- DRUM – Desis Rising Up & Moving
- Legal Aid Society
- Little Sisters of the Assumption Family Health Services, Inc.
- Lutheran Social Services of New York
- Make the Road New York
- New York Immigration Coalition
- Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation
- The Research Foundation of the City University of New York

**How did you select the participating organizations?**

We conducted a highly competitive selection process that also follows City procurement rules.

**Why incorporate ActionNYC in Community Schools?**

ActionNYC in Community Schools will integrate ActionNYC's new service delivery model with DOE's innovative Community Schools program. Foreign-born students and students of foreign-born parents represent about 46% of the Community Schools student population, and immigration legal services are among the most important tools available to empower and engage immigrant families. Through ActionNYC, we will reach immigrant families who may not access City and nonprofit services by any means other than those provided through the schools. Moreover, providing free immigration legal services in Community Schools fulfills one of the Mayor's platform pledges and will enhance trust and communication between schools and immigrant students and families.

**How many schools do you hope to reach?**

During a full calendar year we hope to reach 20-25 Community Schools.

**Nature of Services:**

**How will a client served by ActionNYC know their information is safe?**

All services are confidential. All ActionNYC clients' information will be completely confidential and held with the organization helping with an individual's case. Sensitive information will not be shared with others.

**What if you can't afford legal help?**

ActionNYC services are free. The de Blasio administration believes that all immigrants should have access to legal justice. That is why there is no cost for you to receive immigration legal help with ActionNYC.

**Can you serve immigrants who don't speak English?**

Yes. ActionNYC serves immigrants in the language they are more comfortable speaking. ActionNYC's outreach, navigation, and legal service providers speak more than ten languages including: American Sign Language, Arabic, Bangla, Cantonese, English, French, Haitian-Creole, Hindi, Korean, Mandarin, Nepali, Russian, Spanish, and Urdu. Moreover, all ActionNYC sites have access to instantaneous telephonic interpretation.

**What happens to immigrants who are not eligible for a change in their immigration status?**

ActionNYC provides a full, comprehensive immigration legal screening for everyone served by the program. If a client served by ActionNYC is not eligible for a change in their immigration status, they can still get good immigration legal advice. And it will be free and safe.

**Supreme Court Case:**

**What is happening with expanded DACA and DAPA?**

The Supreme Court is reviewing a case that determines whether the President's 2014 executive actions on immigration may move forward. The executive actions provide important, temporary relief to an estimated 4 million undocumented immigrants. Through an expanded Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA), more undocumented immigrants would qualify for work authorization and temporary protection from deportation. Similarly, the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) program would grant this protection to the parents of U.S. citizen children and permanent residents.

Even though the federal government is not accepting expanded DACA and DAPA applications yet, ActionNYC can help New Yorkers identify their eligibility for these programs and start preparing their documents now. If the Supreme Court rules in favor of these executive actions as early as June 2016, New Yorkers need to be prepared. There may be a small window of opportunity to apply for these programs if they move forward.

**What happens if expanded DACA and DAPA does not move forward?**

ActionNYC will continue to move forward as its goal is to help all New Yorkers navigate the legal landscape as it stands. This goes beyond the executive action programs. ActionNYC will allow us to respond proactively, as notarios and other fraudulent providers may position themselves as alternatives in an uncertain environment.

At the same time, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs will continue to organize and advocate at the local and nationwide level on immigration reform.

## **Immigrants' Rights**

### **Immigration fraud, such as the existence of notarios, does happen in New York communities. How is the de Blasio administration addressing this problem?**

While New York City has always invested in ways to deter immigration fraud, ActionNYC will create a more coordinated system that gives immigrant New Yorkers a clear, community based alternative to fraudulent providers. The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs is also part of a task force formed by the Mayor and NYS Attorney General to combat fraudulent activity.

### **I have been the victim of immigration fraud. Can I report it?**

Call the New York State New Americans Hotline at 1 (800) 566-7636. The operators will take a report of your complaint and share it with prosecuting offices in NYC. 311 can also connect New York City residents to the New York State New Americans Hotline.

### **What are the rights of immigrants and immigrant families in New York City?**

- Privacy - City agencies are forbidden by Executive Order 41 to ask about immigration status unless it is necessary to determine eligibility for a benefit or service.
- Language Access - City agencies that provide direct social services are required by law to arrange for interpretation and translations in individuals' primary languages.
- City Services - All New Yorkers have the right to access most City services, regardless of immigration status, including education, health care services, emergency food and shelter, legal services, and municipal ID.

### **Where can newly-arrived immigrants and refugees get help?**

The following Resource and Referral Guide provides information on services available to recently arrived immigrant children and their families and caretakers, including refugees. These services include education, child and family welfare, health, legal, and other services.

English version: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/imm/html/recently-arrived/recentlyarrived.shtml>

Spanish version: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/imm/html/recently-arrived/guia.shtml>

### **How many Syrian refugees are arriving in the United States and the NYC area?**

Since October 1, 2014, 1,682 Syrian refugees have been admitted to the United States. Of that number, 78 have been resettled in the New York metropolitan area.

### **When will additional Syrian refugees arrive?**

The City does not screen refugees nor do we participate in the process. However, the overall process can take up to 24 months to complete prior to settlement.

### **How many Syrian refugees will NYC receive?**

The Office of Refugee Resettlement, a federal entity, determines the location where refugees are placed and at what number. New York City does not typically receive many refugee resettlement placements, in large part due to the cost of living in the city. In federal fiscal year 2014, New York City and Nassau and Suffolk Counties combined received just 215 refugees, compared to 3,870 refugees placed in the rest of New York State.

**What is Mayor de Blasio and the City's position on the arrival of refugees?**

The de Blasio Administration welcomes refugees seeking safety and stability. Mayor de Blasio and 17 other mayors from the Cities for Action coalition wrote a letter to President Obama last month urging him to accept additional refugees and expressing our willingness to accept thousands more.

**What is the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs doing to prepare for refugees?**

NYC agencies and the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs provide a range of services to immigrants of all statuses, including refugees. Those include public education, universal pre-kindergarten, health care, child care, and much more. The City is prepared to provide necessary support to all refugees who are resettled in our city. In addition, we are prepared to help refugees access the federal and state supports for which they are eligible.