

BUDGET TESTIMONY

Steven Banks, Commissioner

March 17, 2015



Human Resources
Administration

Department of
Social Services

OVERVIEW: NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA)

- HRA serves more than 3 million low-income New Yorkers through a broad range of programs to address poverty and income inequality and prevent homelessness
- Operating budget of \$9.7 billion in 2016 (\$7.56b in City funds)
 - 78 percent is for Medicaid payments and cash assistance benefits
 - HRA continues to be responsible for much of the Medicaid program - which totals \$29 billion in NYC, although only 20 percent of these costs are part of the HRA budget
 - In addition, HRA administers \$3 billion in federal SNAP (food stamps) benefits that do not pass through the City budget

OVERVIEW: NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA)

Education, training, and job placement services to assist low-income New Yorkers in obtaining employment

Cash Assistance (CA) to meet basic human needs

Rental assistance to prevent homelessness

Federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)/Food Stamps benefits and emergency food assistance to food pantries and community kitchens to fight hunger

Services for survivors of domestic violence

Services for New Yorkers living with HIV/AIDS

Services for children, including child support and child care

Protective services for adults unable to care for themselves

Home care for seniors and individuals with disabilities

Home energy assistance

Legal Services, including homelessness prevention, anti-harassment help, and immigration assistance

Enhanced client services through HRA's Infoline call center & the ACCESSNYC online portal

IDNYC – administers the “back office” and back end eligibility reviews and approvals

HRA is about more than cash assistance; we help low-income workers stay on the job

- Annually HRA provides critical support that helps many low-income New Yorkers remain in the workforce:

500,000 receive ongoing cash assistance annually; any given month 350,000 on cash assistance.

2.5 million receiving Medicaid

1.7 million receiving federally-funded food assistance

700,000 receiving home energy assistance

100,000 receiving one-time cash assistance annually to prevent evictions and utility shutoffs and assist with other emergencies

- Efforts aimed at keeping low-income workers in the workforce are much less expensive and more efficient than providing assistance to New Yorkers after they are out of the workforce, especially after an extended absence.

TABLE 1: Benefits and Services

Cash Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 500,000 receive ongoing assistance over the course of a year, another 100,000 get one-time emergency grants. 350,000 recipients in any given month of whom about 8,500 are getting one-time assistance
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1,742,730 recipients as of December 2014
HRA Administered Medicaid	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2,551,697 enrollees as of December 2014 <i>(excludes enrollees in NYS Health Exchange beginning 1/1/14)</i>
Emergency Food Assistance Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1,120,031 average monthly meals/people served in fiscal year 2013
Home Energy Assistance Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 727,533 recipients in heat year 2014*
Child Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 284,624 cases with orders as of December 2014• Over \$742 million in collections in 2014

*heat year runs from November to October.

TABLE 2: Support for Vulnerable Populations

Adult Protective Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3,709 cases being assessed for services as of December 2014• 6,202 undercare cases as of December 2014
Homecare	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 123,191 total home care enrollees as of December 2014
HIV/AIDS Services Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 31,939 cases served as of December 2014
Domestic Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Over 1,000 families served per day in emergency and transitional shelters in December 2014• 3,482 non-residential cases served in December 2014
Teen Relationship Abuse Prevention Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7,428 students received counseling in 2014

OVERVIEW: NYC HRA Staff

- 14,333 budgeted headcount, in FY'16 paid for with a combination of City, State, and federal funds
- Public servants who chose to work at HRA help New Yorkers in need; many dedicating their entire careers to public service
- Diverse workforce: 70% women, 59% African-American, 18% Hispanic, 15% White, and 8% Asian
- Unionized workforce

DC 37 Local 1549	DC 37 SSEU Local 371	DC 37 Local 2627	DC 37 Local 1407	DC 37 Local 924
CWA Local 1180	Teamsters Local 237	The Civil Services Bar Association of Local 237	The Organization of Staff Analysts	The New York State Nurses Association
	The United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners	IBEW Local 3	Local 30 of the International Union of Operating Engineers	

CHART 1: HRA February Plan Budget FY 2015

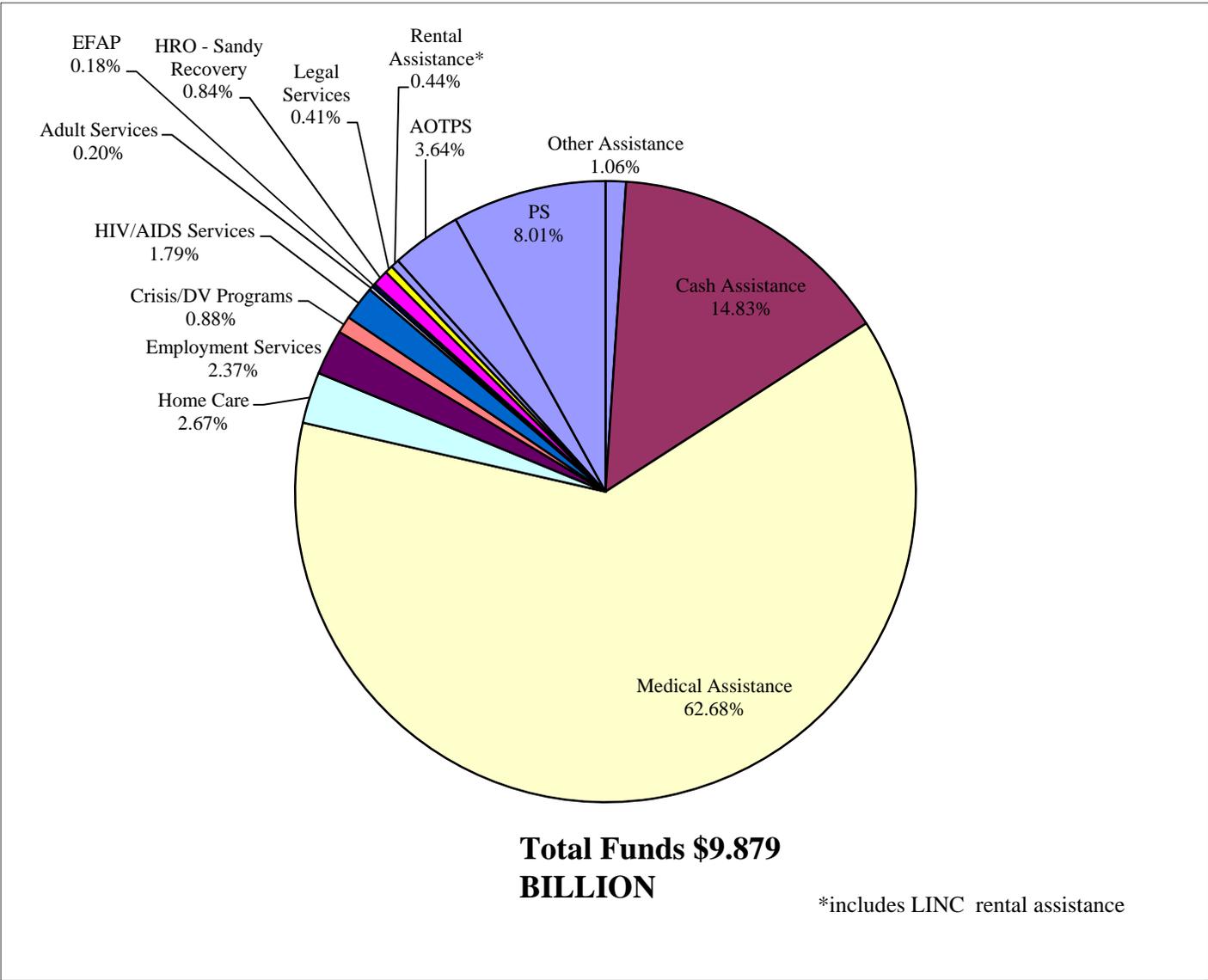
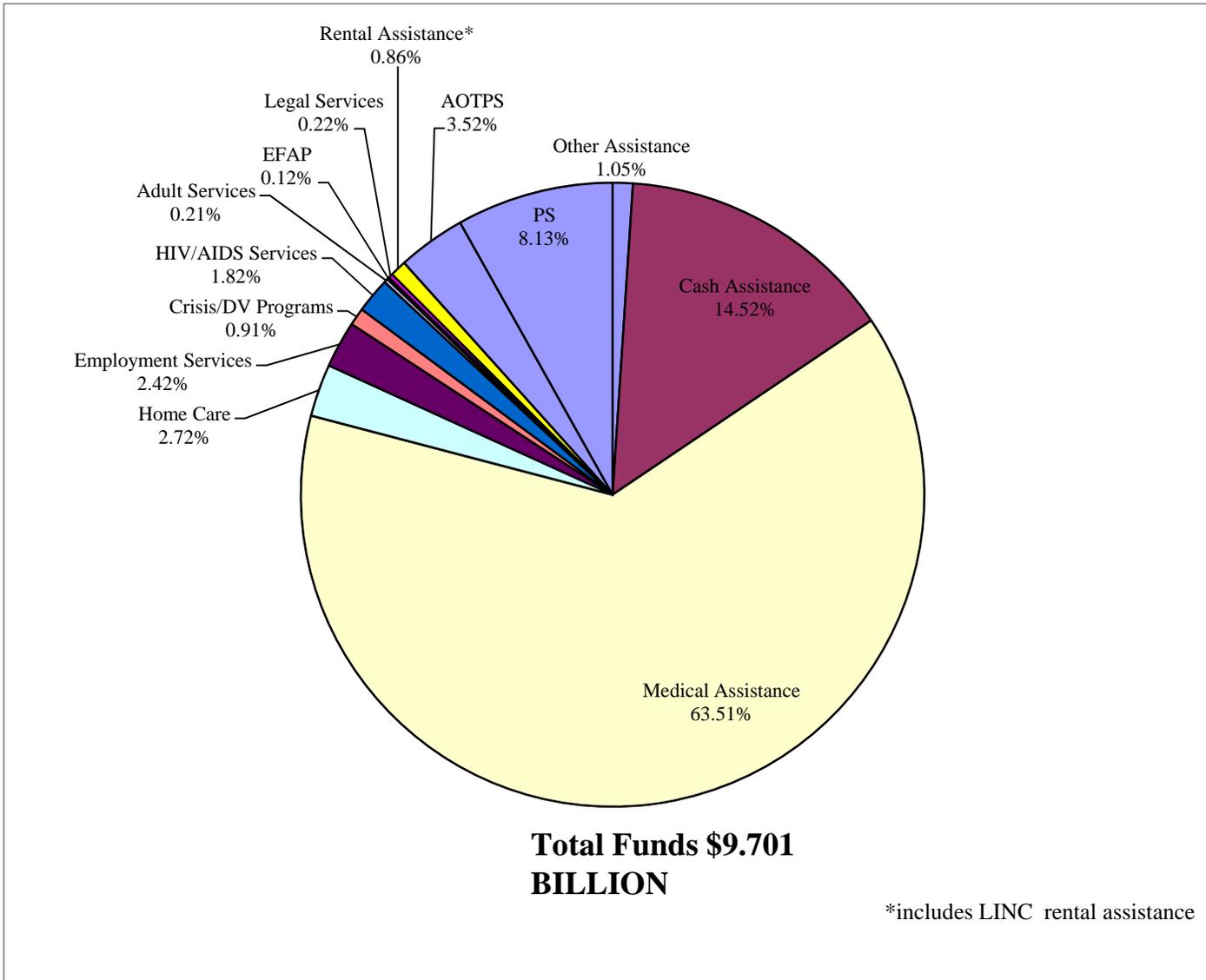


CHART 2: HRA February Plan Budget FY 2016



Budget Detail

- HRA budget* in FY' 15 is \$9.88b (\$7.63b tax levy) declining to \$9.7b (\$7.56b tax levy) in FY' 16.
- HRA's 2016 budget includes:
 - \$6.4 billion for **Medicaid** (\$6.3 billion tax levy, or 66% of the total HRA budget and 84% of the HRA City funds budget);
 - \$1.4 billion (\$584 million tax levy) for **public assistance grants**;
 - \$81 million (\$55 million tax levy) for **LINC rental assistance**;
 - \$21 million in **legal services** (\$7 million tax levy) – additional baseline funding being evaluated for Executive Budget
 - \$234 million (\$62 million tax levy) for **employment and related support services** such as transportation
 - \$177 million (\$86 million tax levy) for **HIV/AIDS housing and support services**
 - \$108 million (\$23 million tax levy) for **domestic violence, crisis and adult services**
 - \$11 million (\$9 million tax levy) for **emergency food**
 - \$789 million (\$232 million tax levy) for staff, working with clients in SNAP and Job Centers, child support offices, HIV/AIDS service centers, and Medicaid offices
 - \$341 million (\$129 million tax levy) for **administrative costs**: leases and supplies for HRA's 68 Job Centers, SNAP centers, HASA offices and other client serving locations.

*as of February Plan

Budget Detail

Capital Budget

- HRA's capital budget of \$211 million*:
 - \$113 million for facilities and construction
 - \$78 million for information technology, including development related to Benefits Re-engineering
 - \$20 million for telecommunications and other capital projects

* 5-year Capital Plan total funds

Budget Detail

February Financial Plan Changes

- The FY'16 budget increased by \$82 million* in total funds and \$76 million in City funds in the November and February Plans combined. This increase includes:
 - \$49 million (\$41.5 million tax levy) for **LINC rental assistance** to help families and adults move out of DHS and HRA shelters, which is in addition to the \$32 million (\$13 million tax levy) that was already included in the Adopted budget.
 - \$5.6 million (\$4.9 tax levy) for **shelter prevention and aftercare programs**;
 - \$9.8 million (\$9.1 million tax levy) for support for the **LINC program**, including apartment inspections, moving and furniture allowance enhancements, and funding for 127 staff to facilitate LINC moves, homeless prevention and processing of emergency rent payments.
 - \$6 million in total funds (\$3 million tax levy) added for additional **anti-eviction legal services**, on top of \$1million added to the Adopted Budget;
 - \$5 million was added in FY'15 for **anti-harassment legal services** and further implementation will be addressed for FY'16 in the Executive Budget
 - funding of \$13.8 million (\$6.9 million tax levy) was added to **restore 515 SNAP positions** that were slated to be cut by the prior Administration.

*excludes Medicaid technical adjustment of \$32m, moving revenue that HRA claimed for HHC to HHC

New HRA Initiatives

Substantial Expansion of HRA's homelessness prevention services

- Creation of New Homelessness Prevention Administration for the expansion of existing and the creation of new programs
- Homelessness Diversion Units (HDUs) located at all HRA Job Centers and at DHS' PATH facility are now utilizing new diversion tools that include short-term financial support
- HRA is now deploying on-site staff at DHS Homebase offices around the City and at the NYCHA administrative hearings office in addition to staff at the Housing Courts
- The Early Intervention Outreach Team (EIOT) for outreach to families and individuals in need of legal assistance or emergency rental assistance based on early warning referrals from the Housing Court
- The Landlord Ombudsman Services Unit (LOSU) established to address the needs and concerns of landlords and management companies that provide permanent housing for families and individuals receiving public assistance
- The Rental Assistance Program to implement the new LINC initiative
- The Legal Assistance Initiatives Program to manage HRA's legal assistance programs
- HRA recently created the Family Independence Administration's Central Rent Processing Unit to centrally process, issue and deliver emergency rental assistance payments

New HRA Initiatives

LINC (Living In Communities)

Since we last testified, as we continue our efforts to prevent and alleviate homelessness, we have created **three new LINC programs**. There now exist six unique LINC programs for homeless New Yorkers.

- **LINC IV/Rental Assistance for 1,100 Homeless Seniors**
 - \$2.6m in City funds in FY15
 - \$8.7m City funds in FY16

- **LINC V**
 - Rental Assistance for 1,000 Working Homeless Adults
 - Time limited rental assistance for working, homeless single adults and adult families without minor children
 - \$2.2m in FY'15; \$7.1m in FY'16
 - Aftercare for working individuals and adult families to assist with employment and maintaining housing after placement in permanent housing

- **LINC VI**
 - Will pay rent on behalf of families with children already in shelter who exit to live with relatives or friends
 - Budget will be part of the Executive Budget discussion

New HRA Initiatives

November & February Plan Initiatives

Focus on expediting relocation from shelter:

- **Landlord Bonus and Enhanced Security Funds:**
 - one-time incentive payments for landlords participating in LINC programs and for a program to reimburse landlords for potential costs not covered by security deposits or rent grants
- **LINC Apartment Inspections:**
 - funding for HPD to perform inspections
- **Broker's Fee for Shelter and HASA Move-Outs:** increased broker's fee to one month's rent for families and individuals leaving shelter with LINC rental assistance and HASA clients moving into private apartments. The broker's fee is 15% of the annual rent for lease agreements of one year or more – currently until March 31.
- **Enhanced Moving Allowances for Homeless Families:** increased furniture allowances and additional funding for moving costs as we project an increase in spending as a result of LINC moves.

New HRA Initiatives

Additional Initiatives

- **Enhanced Homeless Program Support:** 79 staff will provide operational and administrative support as HRA and DHS continue to work on homelessness prevention and provide alternatives to shelter
- **HOME Section 8 Transfer:**
 - We are also working with HPD to transfer HOME Section 8 funds to HRA to implement a new program to help alleviate homelessness. Subject to approval from HUD, HPD will allocate \$20 million of its Federal HOME grant to HRA for a Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) program to move more than 1,200 homeless families out of shelters and into housing beginning in FY' 16.
 - This rental assistance will be targeted to families in homeless shelters receiving SSI and Social Security benefits. The program will begin operation this summer.

New HRA Initiatives

Legal Services Initiatives (LSI)

- Consolidated legal services from DHS, HPD, CJC, and DYCD at HRA in order to enhance coordination and effectiveness
- Contracted services include:
 - Anti-eviction
 - Anti-harassment tenant protection
 - Immigration
 - Domestic Violence
 - Securing federal benefits
 - And other legal matters
- Developing a study of the unmet needs in Housing Court so that we can evaluate what programs will be most effective in preventing homelessness

New HRA Initiatives

Legal Services Initiatives (LSI) (continued)

Anti-Eviction Legal Services

- Baseline increase in FY' 15 from \$6.4 million to \$13.5 million
- Former DHS contracts focused on preventing homeless shelter entry
- Housing Help:
 - 9 community contracts;
 - 1 court-based program
- Created new court referral system to ensure high-risk tenants are referred for services

New HRA Initiatives

Legal Services Initiatives (LSI) (continued)

Anti-Harassment Tenant Protection Program

- Announced in the Mayor's State of the City address; \$36 million program when fully operational
- For residents currently living in 6 neighborhoods identified for rezoning and 13 zip codes in and around rezoning areas to:
 - prevent tenant harassment and displacement,
 - keep families and individuals in their homes,
 - maintain affordable housing and
 - stabilize neighborhoods.
- HRA received \$5 million in the February Plan to begin the initiative in FY'15; additional funds will be part of the Executive budget process.
- To ensure services began immediately, funds in the remainder of FY'15 were contracted to two legal service providers, LSNY and Legal Aid, who already have citywide anti-eviction contracts
- HRA is preparing an RFP and will have new contracts in place by the Fall of 2015.

New HRA Initiatives

Legal Services Initiatives (LSI) (continued)

Immigration Legal Services

- Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI)
 - Former DYCD program, baselined at \$3.2 million
 - Outreach, screening, application and legal representation services for immigrants
 - HRA's RFP will be issued at the end of this month, with new contracts set to begin in FY'16
- Immigrant Services
 - Former DYCD program, funded with federal CSBG grant
 - Four service options: legal services, domestic violence and trafficking, youth, and worker's rights
 - HRA will soon issue an RFP, with new contracts set to begin in FY'16

New HRA Initiatives

Legal Services Initiatives (LSI) (continued)

Immigration Legal Services (continued)

- Unaccompanied Minors Initiative:
 - \$1 million in City Council discretionary funding with additional \$800K from Robin Hood and New York Community Trust
- New York Immigrant Family Unification Project:
 - \$4.9 million in City Council discretionary funding
 - Model program that will provide legal representation to 1,000 low-income immigrants facing deportation

New HRA Initiatives

Legal Services Initiatives (LSI) (continued)

New HRA Program:

Federal Disability Benefits Program

- Creating a new service to complete home-based federal disability benefit applications for homebound clients
- Creating a new legal services program for clients to obtain federal disability benefits after denials through an Administrative Council Review and in some cases appeals to the Federal Courts

New HRA Initiatives

Legal Services Initiatives (LSI) (continued)

Additional Legal Services (Council FY'15 Discretionary Funding)

- Legal Services for the Working Poor:
 - \$1.7 million for a range of civil legal services for the working poor, including housing, benefits, immigration, employment, domestic violence, and consumer credit.
- Legal Services for Domestic Violence Survivors:
 - \$350,000 in legal services for survivors of domestic violence
- Legal Services for Veterans:
 - \$100,000 for family law, public benefits, healthcare, and financial planning for veterans
- US/SSI Advocacy:
 - \$1 million to help unemployed individuals and persons with disabilities receive federal benefits they have been denied
- Citywide Civil Legal Services
 - \$3.75 million for community legal education, hotlines, pro-bono programs, and direct legal assistance across a wide range of civil legal issues
- Anti-Eviction & SRO Legal Services
 - \$5.4 million for housing court representation, tenant organizing & anti-harassment services

New HRA Initiatives

Improving Access to SNAP/Food Stamps

- Nearly 1.7 million New Yorkers currently receive federal SNAP benefits from HRA
 - Data suggest that more qualify but don't receive benefits
- Major effort to make enrollment for federal benefits easier
 - Restoring headcount cut by prior Administration to improve service in our centers
 - At designated HRA SNAP Centers clients can use PCs to submit applications.
 - Client Service Supervisors have also been placed at designated HRA SNAP Centers to assist clients with accessing services on-site.
 - Seeking a waiver for on-demand SNAP interviews, allowing clients to call at their convenience
 - Improving AccessNYC to make possible not only applying online, but also recertifying.
 - Later this year, will be able to use a smart phone to submit documents
- Extensive outreach efforts
 - HRA's Office of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Outreach Services provided outreach services at more than 1,543 individual community events in FY'14
 - With Robin Hood Foundation Benefits Data Trust and DFTA, conducting outreach to 100,000 seniors, 60 and over, who have Medicaid, but not SNAP.
 - Working with NYCHA to identify residents who do not receive food stamps and are likely to qualify for them
 - Mid-April launching major outreach campaign

New HRA Initiatives

Local Law 49

- The HIV/AIDS Services Administration (“HASA”) provides intensive case management services to some of New York City’s most vulnerable residents – persons living with clinically symptomatic HIV or AIDS.
- In order to ensure that HASA clients receive the highest level of care possible, Local Law 49 of 1997 requires an overall staffing ratio of 1:34 for social work staff (case workers and supervisors) . However, for staff assisting families, the ratio must be 1:25.
- Since HRA is committed to meeting these standards, since April 1, 2014, 40 new HASA case workers have been hired. Additional case workers will be hired this month.
- In addition to the case workers, since April 1, 2014 HASA has added 29 new supervisors and 23 eligibility specialists. Eligibility specialists make sure that applications for assistance are processed efficiently and approved benefits are issued in a timely manner.
- HRA will continue to monitor staffing levels at HASA closely to make sure that all Local Law 49 vacancies are filled as soon as possible.

New HRA Initiatives

30% Rent Cap

- After vigorous advocacy from the Mayor, community organizations, and other elected officials, the State passed a new rule in April 2014 that eligible persons living with HIV/AIDS have to pay only 30% of their earned or unearned income towards rent.
- This new law was implemented on July 1, 2014. Shortly thereafter over 7,500 HASA clients received “retro payments” back to April 1.

New HRA Initiatives

IDNYC

- In partnership with MOIA and Mayor's Office of Operations, issued rules governing the application process and issued Commissioner's Executive Order on:
 - Security and confidentiality for applicants' personal information
 - Protocol for outside requests for information
 - Limits on use of duplicate image search technology
 - Administrative review of application denials
- Currently operating in 21 locations, including 2 public facing HRA locations
- IDNYC's entire infrastructure sits within HRA from staffing and equipment, including the front-facing enrollment staff as well as the back-end review staff.
- HRA support includes: back end application processing, deployment of personnel, procurement and space renovation

New HRA Initiatives

IDNYC

PERFORMANCE DATA AS OF MARCH 15, 2015

Total appointments made to submit applications	312,820
Total applications accepted	68,665
Total applications completed	66,239
Total applications approved	63,242
Total cards printed/mailed	55,805 (50,000 th card was printed March 14)
Overall denial rate	Approximately 2% of applications are denied
Next available appointment	March 25 – Corona, Queens

New HRA Initiatives

Lovely H Settlement

- HRA will implement significant reforms to provide greater accessibility to clients with disabilities as part of a proposed Settlement that would end the nine years of litigation of the Lovely H case.
- HRA will develop and implement policies and procedures and modify programs to provide clients with disabilities meaningful access to its programs and services. Examples:
 - HRA, in conjunction with an expert consultant, will develop tools to assess whether clients need reasonable accommodations as the result of physical and/or mental health limitations or other impairments and then provide the appropriate accommodations, including referrals to HRA's Wellness, Comprehensive Assessment, Rehabilitation and Employment ("WeCARE") program or other services designed to assess and meet the needs of clients with disabilities.
 - HRA will provide case management services, based on the needs of the client, in an effort to assist clients with disabilities to maintain their benefits.
 - Before taking a negative action for failure to comply with required activities, HRA will review the case to ensure that the client's disability was not a factor in the non-compliance and that reasonable accommodations, if needed, were provided to enable the client to comply with required activities.
 - HRA will assist eligible clients to apply for federal disability benefits.
 - HRA will develop new training for its staff, including training on disability awareness and effective communication with people with disabilities.
 - A community advisory panel will be formed to advise HRA on its policies and practices that affect clients with disabilities.

New HRA Initiatives

New ADA Office

Some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers are often people with disabilities who require accommodations and support to access the benefits they need to maintain healthy and fulfilling lives.

- The goals of HRA's ADA work are as follows:
 - Improve methods to capture information on people with disabilities who require special accommodations and ensure equal access to services
 - Improve compliance with requests for reasonable accommodations
 - Improve tracking of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) issues across HRA
 - Assess current ADA/*Disability Etiquette* Training & make revisions
 - Evaluate & revise printed materials & forms to improve accessibility
 - Increase relationships with community partners
- Even before the settlement, HRA had created a new ADA office with Jennifer Shaoul as Executive Director of Disability Affairs.
- Projects underway include:
 - Developing guidelines and best practices for web and print access.
 - Developing an agencywide survey to assess systems, training, data collection and policies related to disability issues and reasonable accommodations, including a staff survey.
 - Establishing and building on relationships with various advocacy agencies and community organizations that assist people with disabilities with enrolling in benefits.
 - Developing trainings on reasonable accommodations and disability etiquette.
 - Working within HRA to ensure and support compliance with legal requirements, including the *Lovely H. v. HRA* settlement.

New HRA Initiatives

New LGBTQI Advocacy Office

- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning and Intersex people have been identified as an underserved community, who may be disproportionately likely to live in poverty, and to have difficulty accessing public benefits. To address these client needs, HRA has created a new LGBTQI office with Elana Redfield as Director of LGBTQI Affairs.
- The goals of HRA's LGBTQI work are as follows:
 - Increase awareness and visibility of LGBTQI issues across HRA.
 - Identify, assess and implement solutions to specific obstacles to access and participation for LGBTQI clients in HRA's programs and services.
 - Serve as liaison with CBOs to increase collaboration and transparency regarding LGBTQI issues at HRA.
- Projects underway include:
 - Tracking and resolution of LGBTQI-related complaints.
 - Comprehensive needs assessment for LGBTQI clients, including research and stakeholder surveys, and changes to program areas to allow for increased visibility of LGBTQI issues.
 - Coordinating a work group with community-based organizations and advocates that focus on LGBTQI concerns.
 - Creating and implementing a training curriculum on LGBTQI issues that will provide both a baseline of knowledge and specific guidance for program areas.
 - Developing HRA's day-to-day practices for working with LGBTQI community members, including structural changes in program areas, updates to existing policies and the creation of new resources for staff.

Continuing HRA Initiatives

Language and Immigrant Access: Office of Refugee and Immigrant Affairs

- The Office of Refugee and Immigrant Affairs (ORIA) works collaboratively with HRA's programs to advance language and immigrant access to public benefits.
- Anne Montesano, Executive Director, Office of Refugee and Immigrant Affairs
- The goals of HRA's Language and Immigrant Access work are as follows:
 - Provide guidance and expertise to HRA program areas to ensure access to services for immigrant and LEP New Yorkers
 - Ensure that HRA's programs are in compliance with federal, state and local immigrant and language access laws
 - Work with and support HRA programs to develop and promote policies and tools to help staff provide excellent service to immigrant and LEP New Yorkers
 - Strengthen relationships with community groups to respond to inquiries and gather feedback on HRA services/programs
- Projects underway at ORIA include:
 - Answer inquiries from frontline staff making immediate immigrant eligibility determinations
 - Assess and revise current immigrant eligibility training curricula with program areas to ensure that frontline staff continue to make accurate eligibility determinations
 - Continue to build partnerships with immigrant serving CBOs and advocacy groups
 - Collect and analyze Agency and program data pertaining to immigrant and LEP clients and language service provision to determine that clients receive appropriate services
 - Work in partnership with program areas, to maximize client access to bilingual staff at HRA sites throughout the five boroughs
 - Collaborate with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs to advance the Mayor's priorities around immigrant and LEP access
 - Work to improve the Agency's site and service monitoring process
 - Manage the Agency's interpretation, translation and bilingual testing contracts and processes

New HRA Initiatives

Mayor's Action Plan

- As part of the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety, HRA is part of an interagency effort intended to improve safety and strengthen the community at fifteen (15) target NYCHA developments across the City.
- HRA is deploying outreach specialists at each development to meet with residents and provide guidance for benefits enrollment, help in navigating access to emergency services, troubleshoot existing cases with HRA and solicit feedback from the community.
- We currently have a presence in about half of the developments (7 of 15) and we expect to start in the rest (8 of 15) this spring.

HRA Reforms

Employment Plan

Background

- Recurring annual assistance in a given year is provided to 500,000 clients and 350,000 in any month; about half are children, many more are seniors or either permanently or temporarily disabled and for that reason not subject to work requirements.
- Of the approximately 90,000 who are subject to work requirements, 25,000 have jobs; however, they make so little they still qualify for public assistance
- A 2015 State budget provision subjects HRA to a \$10 million charge back for unnecessary fair hearings
- HRA's past approach was to track job placements for *only* 6 months, but 25% of HRA's reported placements & assistance ended up with clients returning to seek recurring Cash Assistance again within 12 months.
- 23% of applicants* for Department of Homeless Services' shelters had a Cash Assistance case that closed or had a case sanction in the previous 12 months.

*during the first 6 months of 2013

HRA Reforms

New Employment Plan

- Approved by State supervising authority; HRA is developing implementation plans
- Goal: to ensure HRA's employment & training programs are effective in connecting and/or reconnecting New Yorkers to the workforce.
- The reforms to HRA's employment programs are based on these principles:
 - Maximize Education, Training, And Employment-Related Services
 - 60% of employable clients lack a high school diploma
 - Allow recipients up to age 24 to participate in full-time basic education
 - Increase access to targeted training for jobs in high-growth industries and utilize available Career Pathway programs.
 - Allow participation in 4-year college degree
 - Replace “One-Size-Fits-All” Approach With Improved Assessments & Programs That Address Specific Clients’ Needs & Abilities
 - Create New Employment Strategies for Youth, Clients with Limited English Proficiency, Shelter Residents, Those with Work Limitations, Those with Justice System Involvement, and Older Clients
 - Enhance Program Participation and Dispute Resolution

HRA Reforms

Phase Out WEP and Replace it With More Effective And Sustainable Work Activities

- HRA has collaborated with CUNY to implement a paid work study program. In January 2015, we began a program to provide paid work study opportunities for CUNY students who are pursuing an undergraduate degree and need to meet an HRA work requirement.
- As a result of this collaboration, we have phased out approximately 500 CUNY WEP slots, about 10 percent of the total number of WEP slots throughout the City.
- We are developing additional initiatives to replace WEP in accordance with the Employment Plan.

HRA Reforms

Examples of Reforms to Date and Key Impacts

- Reforms to address HRA policies that have harmed clients, have had an adverse impact on staff workload and morale, and subject the City to potential financial penalties:

Joining every other social services district in New York State and 43 other States by accepting the federal SNAP/Food Stamp waiver for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) who are unemployed or underemployed.

Changing HRA's position and supporting the provision in the 2015 State budget that offers four years of college as an option to HRA clients as part of HRA's training and employment initiatives.

Disbanding the counterproductive Center 71 program that resulted in unnecessary case sanctions and closings.

Discontinuing the Immigrant Sponsor Recovery Program that harmed sponsors of low-income legal immigrants and implementing a process to return all payments that had been collected.

Working with the State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance to resolve substantial numbers of pending fair hearings.

Phasing out the requirement that all homeless New Yorkers seek services at a single center in Queens.

HRA Reforms

Increasing access to services for homeless New Yorkers by working with DHS to accept applications for Cash Assistance at DHS intake centers, to process recertifications for assistance at DHS shelters, and to provide rent arrears assistance directly at DHS HomeBase locations.

Created a centralized HRA rent check processing unit to improve the timely processing of rent arrears payments to prevent evictions and homelessness.

Working with the Mayor's Office, the Office of Management and Budget, and DHS to develop new rental assistance initiatives to prevent and alleviate homelessness, including initiatives targeted for survivors of domestic violence who seek shelter from HRA.

Developed an expedited implementation plan for the new 30% rent cap for HASA clients living with HIV and AIDS pursuant to the requirements of the 2015 State budget.

Developed and implemented a letter for landlords specifying the rental assistance levels for which HASA clients are eligible to maximize access to permanent housing.

Implemented reminder and missed appointment calls for Cash Assistance and SNAP recipients to improve client compliance and reduce unnecessary fair hearings

Developed a new initiative with the Robin Hood Foundation to maximize access to SNAP/Food Stamps for senior citizens who are in receipt of Medicaid or LiHEAP but not SNAP/Food Stamps.

Developed a pilot program to reduce unnecessary case sanctions and resulting fair hearings by providing participants in employment programs with five excused absences for illness or a family emergency prior to the implementation of a sanction, like the standard in the recently enacted Local Law requiring the provision of five paid sick days.

Maximizing access to federal SNAP benefits by seeking a waiver from the USDA to allow applicants to self-attest their housing expenses.

HRA Reforms

Seeking additional SNAP waivers to allow SNAP applicants and recipients to schedule telephone interviews at a time of their own choosing.

Extended the time Cash Assistance applicants have to find appropriate child care arrangements from 5 days to 15 days, with an additional 5 day extension.

Consolidated and substantially expanded civil legal services programs at HRA to enhance the provision of legal assistance to fight poverty and income inequality and prevent homelessness.

Worked with OMB and DHS to make sure that adequate broker's fees are in place to alleviate homelessness.

Worked with HPD on a new initiative to address inadequate housing conditions in buildings where substantial numbers of Cash Assistance recipients reside.

Working with NYCHA to ensure that HRA makes timely rent payments to avert the eviction of NYCHA tenants.

Worked with the Mayor's Criminal Justice Coordinator to develop a new initiative to outstation HRA staff on Rikers Island to make sure that necessary HRA assistance and services are available upon discharge.

Expanded HRA's plan for an online portal for applicants and recipients of SNAP/Food Stamps by using the system's existing capacity to include an online portal for Cash Assistance applicants and recipients.

Developed a new client advocacy unit for clients, community members and elected officials, including an ADA coordinator, a Language Access coordinator, and a LGBTQI Services coordinator, to expedite inquiries about client service needs and the resolution of client concerns about their cases.

Thank you!



**Human Resources
Administration**

Department of
Social Services