

**Attendance and Minutes of
The SNAP Task Force Meeting of July 20th, 2017**

ATTENDANCE SHEET

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|---|--|
| 1) Derek Singh – NYC HRA-FIA | 17) Linda Lee – LiveOn NY |
| 2) Sabrina Simmonds – HRA Office of
Advocacy & Outreach | 18) Marta Mychak – New York Legal
Assistance Group |
| 3) Ellen Vollinger (<i>via teleconference</i>) | 19) Juana Almonte – Part of the Solution
(POTS) |
| 4) Dawn Secor – Hunger Solutions NY | 20) Ailin Liu - Public Health Solutions |
| 5) Bridget Gibbons – Benefits Data Trust | 21) Melissa Brito – Queens Community
College Single Stop |
| 6) Kiana Davis – Bronx Defenders | 22) Edwin Ortiz – Urban Justice Center |
| 7) Shani Hernandez – Bronxworks | 23) Ariel Savransky – UJA-Federation (<i>via
teleconference</i>) |
| 8) Vanisha Cosby-Billups – CEO | 24) Ed Ortiz – Urban Justice Center |
| 9) Annelise MacLeod – Central Queens Y | 25) Emanuel Negron – FBNYC |
| 10) Lourdes Rosa-Carrasquillo - CIDNY | 26) Anaeltzin Sarabia – FBNYC |
| 11) Esther Schwartz – Community Council
and Consulting | 27) Mark Herreros – FBNYC |
| 12) Nicole Quinn – CUCS | |
| 13) Allanah Lewis – Diaspora Community
Services | |
| 14) John A. Rivera – Fortune Society | |
| 15) Lori Andrade – Health & Welfare
Council of Long Island (<i>via
teleconference</i>) | |
| 16) Michelle Zambrano – Health Leads NY | |

The meeting began at 1:12PM

Emanuel Negrón (Food Bank For NYC) opened the meeting by welcoming the participants and introducing all attendees. After giving an overview of the meeting's agenda, Emanuel introduced Ellen Vollinger from the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) to present national updates.

I. Outlook in Congress on SNAP and National Updates

- USDA's Food and Nutrition Service has filled three political leadership positions that will be closely involved with the SNAP program – FNS Administrator, Chief of Staff to the Undersecretary, and Policy Advisor
- Ellen said that cuts to SNAP are likely as part of the FY18 budget process. However, FRAC and its allies continue to advocate for protecting and strengthening the program
- The House Agriculture Committee has resisted instructions to cut SNAP in its FY2018 budget, though Chairman Conway has negotiated to cut \$10 billion from its jurisdiction, which could have impacts on the next iteration of the Farm Bill
- Ellen praised Mayor Bill de Blasio for his leadership in supporting the Farm Bill at the most recent meeting of the Conference of Mayors in Miami Beach
- Ellen encouraged Task Force members to continue advocating for SNAP, lifting up stories about those who benefit from the program, and reassuring clients that nothing has changed in regards to SNAP eligibility
- Organizations can join on to a letter urging President Trump and Congress to support federal nutrition programs like SNAP on FRAC's website at <http://frac.org/action/snap-farm-bill>

Luz Carrasquillo (CIDNY) asked if the action steps on FRAC's website were available in multiple languages. Ellen Vollinger said the materials are only available in English at this time, but offered to see if additional languages could be made available.

II. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

A representative from USDA FNS was unavailable for the July 2017 NYC SNAP Task Force meeting. Emanuel Negrón (FBNYC) summarized the following items released by FNS. Full summaries are available on page 3 of the July 2017 Research Packet (RP).

- Trends in USDA SNAP Participation Rates: FY 2010 to FY 2015
- State Agency Requirements for Required and Missing Verification from Regular Initial Applications
- Changes to the Martinez Fleeing Felon Test After the Barry V. Lyon Decision

III. Presentation by Sabrina Simmonds, HRA Office of Advocacy and Outreach

Emanuel Negrón introduced Sabrina Simmonds (HRA), who provided a demonstration of the ACCESS HRA Provider Portal. The initial cohort of community-based organizations (CBOs) using the Portal will be issued a 3-4 digit code, which clients will use to authorize up to 5-6 community-based organizations to access their case information for SNAP, Cash Assistance, and/or Medicaid. This includes select notices, upcoming appointments, pending documents, and upcoming payments. The authorization includes a HIPAA agreement for Medicaid. Clients can revoke a CBO's access at any time.

Annelise MacLeod (CQY) asked if users could see whether another organization is working with the same client. Sabrina said this information cannot be viewed by CBOs, though staff are welcome to ask clients which organizations they belong to.

Sabrina explained that each Provider Portal organization must appoint an administrator, who will have the ability to add and remove users. If an organization has multiple sites, they can either opt to have one administrator for all sites, or multiple administrators across sites. This can be performed on the Provider Portal back end.

Annelise asked if the Provider Portal/ACCESS HRA was intended to replace POS. Sabrina said that both options remain available for CBOs. Ana Sarabia (FBNYC) added that the two systems can work in tandem, as POS can be used to print out an FIA-1146 and submit necessary documents.

Sabrina said that clients will soon be able to fill out and submit Periodic Reports via ACCESS HRA. The option is expected to be available in November or December of 2017.

Long Ho (LiveOn NY) asked if a mobile version of the Provider Portal is forthcoming. Sabrina offered to bring the feedback back to HRA.

Ana Sarabia asked if POS remains an option as a submission portal for SNAP. Sabrina responded that clients have the option between POS and ACCESS HRA. The website is not intended to replace POS, and the Provider Portal is a new feature designed to help providers manage their clients' cases and upcoming appointments.

Ed Ortiz (Urban Justice Center) said that if his organization fills out the application on a client's behalf, they would not be able to later represent that client in court for their benefits case. Sabrina commented that his organization should not submit applications using ACCESS HRA, but could use the Provider Portal to provide case management.

Annelise asked how long it takes for notices to publish to the Provider Portal. Sabrina said that as soon as the notice is generated and mailed to the client, it will be available in the Portal.

Bridget Gibbons (Benefits Data Trust) asked if the Portal could be used as proof to show that documents were submitted to HRA. Sabrina said that the documents will appear on the Portal, but it may not indicate if the documents were accepted by the agency as verification of an eligibility factor. Ed Ortiz asked what happens in the event that a case lacks sufficient documentation. Derek Singh (HRA) said the agency does not have a system to determine if documents are valid, as the decision is made by an eligibility specialist. The turnaround time on accepting documents submitted through the ACCESS HRA app should generally be within 48 hours.

Ellen Vollinger (FRAC) asked if there was a way to indicate that a document had been rejected by HRA. Sabrina said that providers can view the E-Notices in ACCESS HRA to see if documents were accepted or not. Annelise MacLeod (CQY) asked if there was an easier means to review all pending documents. Sabrina said the current iteration of the Provider Portal just includes E-Notices, but encouraged Task Force members to attend upcoming User Acceptance Testing sessions to provide feedback to HRA. Sabrina added it is a good practice to double check the Infoline and review all notices received by the client, including mail notices. She said there have been cases where ACCESS HRA has helped clients verify they made payments to their landlord. Sabrina noted that providers that work with high-risk clients (e.g. victims of domestic violence) will notice that certain information such as address will not be available.

Lourdes Carrasquillo (CIDNY) asked if there were trainings available to better understand how HRA reviews documents. Emanuel invited Lourdes to attend an upcoming Document Readiness training offered by Food Bank For NYC.

Sabrina asked Task Force members if they thought the Provider Portal would be useful for them. Emanuel said that the Portal will enable providers to be proactive with case management and ensure that SNAP submissions turn into enrollments. Ellen Vollinger (FRAC) said that the tool looks appealing from a national perspective, adding that in her opinion, other districts will look to HRA's Provider Portal as a model for facilitating case management. Annelise Macleod agreed that ACCESS HRA has proven helpful for managing her client's cases.

IV. Mediation

Mediation Analysis Report for June 2017

Anaeltzin Sarabia (FBNYC) reviewed highlights¹ from the June 2017 Mediation Analysis Report. The report is based on a total of 168 mediation requests submitted by Mediation Model participants in the month of June 2017. Ana thanked the organizations represented in the report for submitting their issue logs.

Miguelina Diaz (Hunger Free NYC) said she had encountered issues with the On-Demand hotline for SNAP recertification. She said that the interviewers saw the client's application in the system, but could not complete the interview until they received the client's documents. Derek Singh (HRA) responded that clients should still be interviewed even if documents are missing. Miguelina said that she submitted the documents at the same time as the application via POS. Derek recommended Miguelina forward these cases directly to him for review.

Kiana Davis (Bronx Defenders) said that the POS recertification liaisons regularly inform her that the cases have been processed, but her clients subsequently receive an FIA-1146 form requesting additional documents. A Task Force member added that upon calling the Infoline, an HRA worker informed her that FIA-1146 are issued to all clients regardless of what documents were submitted at the time of application/recertification. Derek said that this is not true. HRA only issues an FIA-1146 when documents are missing. He asked Task Force members to note when HRA workers provide information to the contrary so he can follow-up with Infoline staff. Derek said that the final decision on documents rests with an eligibility specialist, though a computer match may trigger a request for additional documents.

Kiana said there have been a few instances where her clients receive an FIA-1146 requesting all documents submitted at the time of application via POS. She asked if it is possible for HRA to add a note to the 1146 notice specifying why a particular document was not accepted. Derek asked Kiana to forward him specific case numbers where clients received a request for all documents already submitted.

Ana Sarabia (FBNYC) noted that the number of document-related issues submitted for mediation saw a sharp increase in June. Emanuel encouraged Task Force members to forward trends and case numbers to Derek so HRA can review. Derek said that HRA wants to identify systemic barriers and address these barriers directly with staff.

Annelise Macleod said that HRA frequently asks for bank account information, even when the household is categorically eligible for SNAP. Derek said that HRA may ask for bank account statements in order to verify if there is any interest gained, which counts

¹ See pg. 3, June '17 Mediation Analysis Report, for full highlights

as unearned income. HRA performs a data match that is not real-time, so the agency may need to verify if there has been any change to a household's available resources.

Long Ho (LiveOn NY) said that some of his clients who were approved for expedited benefits did not receive a decision as to their eligibility for ongoing benefits. Upon reviewing the cases in ACCESS HRA, the account reports a one-time payment but does not indicate if the client was approved for ongoing benefits. Derek said that the timeframe depends on when the client submitted their application, as well as if the client submitted all pending verification.

V. Human Resources Administration (HRA)

Mark Herreros (FBNYC) presented the following updates released by the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA). Full summaries of each of these items are available on page 8 of the July 2017 RP.

- Policy Bulletin #17-63-OPE: Introduction of the Renamed, Revised, and Reformatted "For Your Records: Documents We Received From You" (EXP-76R) Form
- Policy Bulletin #17-58-OPE: Schedules for July – December 2017
- Policy Bulletin #17-59-SYS: SNAP POS Release Notes Version 11.2

The Meeting Adjourned at 2:30PM