

**Attendance and Minutes of
The SNAP Task Force Meeting of October 19th, 2017**

ATTENDANCE SHEET

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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 1) Derek Singh – NYC HRA-FIA | 15) Michelle Zambrano – Health Leads NY |
| 2) Sherry Moss – NYC HRA-FIA | 16) Miguelina Diaz – Hunger Free NYC |
| 3) Brenda Williams – HRA SNAP Outreach Services | 17) Katie Kelleher – Legal Aid Society |
| 4) Milagros Rodriguez – HRA SNAP Outreach Services | 18) Susan Sternberg – Legal Aid Society |
| 5) Ellen Vollinger – Food Research and Action Center (<i>via teleconference</i>) | 19) Long Ho – LiveOn NY |
| 6) Saima Ahktar - Empire Justice Center (<i>via teleconference</i>) | 20) Tom Furstenberg-Carroll – Met Council |
| 7) Dawn Secor – Hunger Solutions NY | 21) Vladmir Mukhotaev – Met Council |
| 8) Bridget Gibbons – Benefits Data Trust | 22) Juana Almonte – Part of the Solution |
| 9) Kiana Davis – Bronx Defenders | 23) Emma Lopez – RiseBoro |
| 10) Cecilia Riera – Bronx Defenders | 24) Ariel Savransky – Urban Justice Center |
| 11) Annelise MacLeod – Central Queens Y | 25) Mark Herreros – FB NYC |
| 12) Suyin Mui – Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC) | |
| 13) Nicholas Posada – Fortune Society | |
| 14) Lori Andrade – Health & Welfare Council of Long Island (<i>via teleconference</i>) | |

The meeting began at 1:10PM

Mark Herreros (Food Bank For NYC) opened the meeting by welcoming the participants and introducing all attendees. After giving an overview of the meeting's agenda, Mark summarized policy items released by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA). Full summaries of each of these items are available on pages 7-8 the October 2017 Research Packet (RP).

I. New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA)

- GIS 17 TA/DC039: Treatment of Hurricane Harvey, Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria Evacuees Applying for TA, SNAP, and Medicaid
- GIS 17 TA/DC040: TA, SNAP Budgeting of AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps NCCC, and AmeriCorps VISTA Payments

Dawn Secor (Hunger Solutions NY) commented that OTDA officials tried to push back against requiring a written/verbal affidavit from evacuee households attesting that they will close their benefits case in Puerto Rico. She said that New York State will likely not pursue households who receive SNAP and NAP benefits. Dawn encouraged Task Force members to ask evacuee households about their immediate plans to return to Puerto Rico. Even if a household intends to move back to Puerto Rico in the future, it may be worthwhile for them to apply for SNAP while the documentation requirements are relaxed through October 31st.

Katie Kelleher (Legal Aid Society) asked if HRA will issue its own guidance on how it will treat evacuee households applying for SNAP. Derek Singh (HRA) said that HRA is following the procedures set out by OTDA. Katie also asked how she could advocate for households from Puerto Rico to receive D-SNAP benefits. Ellen Vollinger (FRAC) said there is no D-SNAP in Puerto Rico because nutrition benefits are issued differently in Puerto Rico – the territory does not have a SNAP program. However, Congress is including disaster relief as a special release as part of an appropriations bill recently passed by the Senate.

II. Outlook in Congress on SNAP and National Updates

Mark introduced Ellen Vollinger from the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) to present national updates.

- With respect to SNAP, there are no changes to policy or widespread cuts at this time. However, threats to SNAP continue to materialize as part of the ongoing budget debate
- Ellen said that the House's FY2018 budget resolution has a very negative proposal in regards to SNAP. The Agriculture Committee chairman has said that assumed cuts to SNAP could result in \$150 billion in cuts over 10 years. Converting the

program to a block grant remains a possibility. FRAC continues to advocate against structural changes to the SNAP program

- H.R. 1276, a bill that would strengthen the SNAP program and benefit adequacy, currently has 70 co-sponsors
- The House Agriculture Committee held a special listening session for the upcoming Farm Bill at SUNY Cobleskill. Ellen said there was good testimony at the meeting. New York State food banks shared stories of SNAP clients, and many members of the farm community spoke out against cuts to SNAP. Ellen praised Hunger Free America and Hunger Solutions NY for their input
- Ellen said it has been difficult to serve households in Texas and Florida affected by recent hurricanes. There have been long lines of people waiting up to 10 hours to apply for disaster assistance. She said it is important to have a strong SNAP program when responding to disasters, as well as coordination between federal, state, and local partners
- Ellen praised Food Bank For NYC for its efforts to support food banks providing disaster relief in Texas and Florida

III. Mediation

Mediation Analysis Report for September 2017

Mark Herreros (FBNYC) reviewed highlights¹ from the September 2017 Mediation Analysis Report. The report is based on a total of 89 mediation requests submitted by Mediation Model participants in the month of September 2017. Mark thanked the organizations represented in the report for submitting their issue logs, and opened the floor to discussion for Task Force participants.

Miguelina Diaz (Hunger Free NYC) said she encountered issues with clients not receiving their scheduled telephone interviews. Efforts to reach the rescheduling hotline have been unsuccessful or require numerous attempts. Miguelina said calling the number would sometimes result in a busy signal. Kiana Davis (Bronx Defenders) reported similar issues, and said her clients are not called back even when leaving a callback number. Sherry Moss (HRA) said she would verify if the system is working, noting that the hotline for Constituent Services has had similar issues with long wait times.

Miguelina Diaz (Hunger Free NYC) also said she had trouble sending in recertifications via fax. Some of her clients have come back to her office reporting problems with their case. Sherry Moss (HRA) asked if the recertifications were validated as received. Miguelina said some of them were received, while others were not. Derek Singh (HRA) asked Miguelina to email him whenever she encounters these issues in the future.

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

Kiana Davis (Bronx Defenders) said some of her clients remain in single-issuance status after the 30-day processing time, with ongoing benefits still pending. Derek Singh asked Kiana if her clients were asked to return any documents. Kiana said her clients received no notice from HRA. Long Ho (LiveOn NY) reported similar issues. He said some of his clients failed to receive ongoing benefits, even after waiting 45 days.

Long also said that some of his clients' documents submitted through fax fail to reach HRA. Sherry Moss (HRA) recommended Long use the HRA Document Upload mobile app to return documents. Katie Kelleher (Legal Aid Society) asked if there was a way to submit documents converted into a PDF format, rather than use the app's camera feature. Sherry said HRA is investigating the possibility of allowing clients to attach saved documents in the future, but for now, clients have to use their device's camera to submit documents using the app.

Sherry Moss said that the target date to expand On-Demand interviews for new applicants is in Spring 2018. HRA must ensure adequate staffing for the expansion to occur. The agency will send out a letter to community partners with additional information closer to the rollout date.

Mark Herreros (FBNYC) reminded Task Force Members to submit their Issue Logs to Food Bank For New York City in a timely manner to ensure their mediation cases are reflected in each month's Mediation Analysis Report. Derek Singh (HRA) commented that the Mediation Analysis and the efforts of those who contribute to it help HRA identify and communicate issues directly to managers and front-line staff at the SNAP Centers.

IV. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Mark Herreros introduced Chris Anna Nisbet from USDA FNS' Northeast Regional Office to present updates from the agency. Full summaries are available on page 3 of the October 2017 Research Packet (RP).

- The Extent of Trafficking in the SNAP Program: 2012-2014
- SNAP – Issues with Certification Materials Submission Instructions
- Press Release: USDA Brings Key Resources to Individuals and Communities Hit By Recent Hurricanes
- Press Release: USDA Continues Disaster Assistance Puerto Rico
- SNAP Process and Technology Improvement Grants Awarded

V. Presentation by Bridget Gibbons, Benefits Data Trust

Mark introduced Bridget Gibbons (Benefits Data Trust), who spoke about her organization's efforts to provide SNAP outreach and application assistance to NYC households. Benefits Data Trust has operated in New York City as the New York Benefits

Center (NYBC) since April 2014. Starting in January 2017, NYBC coordinates with HRA to develop text and robo-call reminders for clients and provide application assistance and support. The messages target groups such as those completing their recertification or those receiving single issuance benefits. Additional information about the New York Benefits Center is available at: <http://www.bdtrust.org/location/%E2%80%8Bnew-york-benefits-center/>

VI. Reports and Notable Items from Other Sources

Mark Herreros (FBNYC) summarized the following reports included in the October 2017 RP on pages 10-12:

- "EMPOWERS" Bill Opens Door to Radical SNAP Changes That Would Put Benefits For Low-Income Households at Risk – Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
- Eliminating LIHEAP Would Leave Poor Families in the Cold – Urban Institute
- Who is Poor in the United States? A Hamilton Project Annual Report – Brookings Institution

The Meeting Adjourned at 2:45PM