

**Attendance and Minutes of
The SNAP Task Force Meeting of December 21st, 2017**

ATTENDANCE SHEET

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) Sherry Moss – NYC HRA-FIA | 15) Langina Pena – Met Council |
| 2) Brenda Williams – HRA SNAP Outreach Services | 16) Tom Furstenberg-Carroll – Met Council |
| 3) Milagros Rodriguez – HRA SNAP Outreach Services | 17) Bibiana Blanco - Met Council |
| 4) Damaris Sorrentini – HRA SNAP Outreach Services | 18) Tiffany Morton – Single Stop John Jay |
| 5) Ellen Vollinger – Food Research and Action Center | 19) Miguelina Diaz – Hunger Free NYC |
| 6) Sayma Reza - Queens Community House | 20) Katie Kelleher – Legal Aid Society |
| 7) Dawn Secor – Hunger Solutions NY | 21) Juana Almonte – Part of the Solution (POTS) |
| 8) Collen Donovan – Hunger Solutions NY | 22) Anaeltzin Sarabia – Single Stop USA |
| 9) Bridget Gibbons – Benefits Data Trust | 23) Chi Zheng - Met Council |
| 10) Kiana Davis – Bronx Defenders | 24) Basil Francis – Met Council |
| 11) Cecilia Riera – Bronx Defenders | 25) Damaris Delgado – Lenox Hill Neighborhood House |
| 12) Annelise MacLeod – Central Queens Y | 26) Mark Herreros – FBNYC |
| 13) Suyin Mui – Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC) | 27) Lauren Phillips – FBNYC |
| 14) Gia Mui – Chinese American Planning Council (CPC) | 28) Eunice Chica – FBNYC |
| | 29) Emanuel Negrón – FBNYC |
| | 30) Salma Ahktar - Empire Justice Center |

The meeting began at 1:15 PM

Mark Herreros opened the meeting by welcoming the participants and introducing all attendees. After giving an overview of the meeting's agenda, Mark introduced Ellen Vollinger from the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) for a national update.

I. Outlook in Congress on SNAP and National Updates

Ellen Vollinger from FRAC with national updates

- Tax Overhaul - impacts on hunger and housing communities as the deficit hole has been widening and policy makers will attempt to use the deficit as rationale for spending cuts to safety net programs that SNAP households depend on. Congress will come to a short term continuing budget resolution (CR) to funding the government through January 19. They will have to revisit this funding agreement and come up with a long term solution when they return after the holiday break.
- Disaster Spending Package - A third disaster spending package following a devastating hurricane season has been developed. This package has been criticized by many for not providing enough aide to Puerto Rico. The package does include Farm Bill interests like dairy and cotton which would be paid for by cuts to SNAP. Both Jim Weil, director of FRAC, and the president of the National Farmers Union oppose this funding stream as they disagree that any Farm Bill funding should be paid for with funds from another Farm Bill program.
- National Accuracy Clearinghouse - If this disaster spending package is not approved, it may be discussed during National Accuracy Clearinghouse- a system designed to prevent dual enrollment in SNAP across states (there is little evidence this is a pervasive problem). There is no timeline from USDA on when this would be implemented. There are a limited number of states where this might be attempted, but all SNAP outreach workers in the tristate area should be sure their information is accurate, their systems are tested, and that they have the capacity to do so.
- Illinois SNAP Enrollment System - IL has implemented a new computer enrollment system that has been closing many SNAP cases. Changing the enrollment system is not an easy change to make, but something to flag. Do not expect these changes to come immediately, but keep an eye on.
- Farm Bill - still no language from Senate or House Ag committees, especially in the nutrition title. Expecting early 2018.
- Potential SNAP Cuts - Another potential path to cuts is through "welfare reform" a favorite of Paul Ryan and House GOP. Senate Majority Leader, Mitch McConnell, has said that welfare reform will not be taken up in 2018, instead the Senate will be focusing on infrastructure and will need support from Democrats. But no assumptions can be taken off the table.

- Messaging - Messaging should remain the same: no cuts to SNAP, no structural changes to SNAP, no block granting SNAP, no time limits for ABAWDs unless offered opportunities for E+T.
- HR 1276 - Closing the Meal Gap Act presented by Rep. Alma Adams of NC currently has 82 co-sponsors (started with 30). Bill includes support for ABAWDs, benefits adequacy, and more. The more Democrats sign on the more outward facing media showing a critical mass support of SNAP.
- Upcoming- FY 19 Budget
 - Likely to see a proposal from the White House in February.
 - Proposals from USDA FNS for greater State flexibility, begging the question if states will administer SNAP without safeguards. Eligibility determined by private sector contractors indicated that the final decision would rest with states, it is hard to know what the spectrum of state flexibility would look like. There is already approval for Michigan and Louisiana to use their flexibility.
- ABAWD Waiver for NYS- there is no word yet but everything seems to be delayed. Other states have been approved later than usual this year, so the delay from NYS is not necessarily an indication of the waiver being denied. Up to 6 other states are also awaiting news of their ABAWD waiver, but the pipeline is opening up. If HRA does not hear, they will have to operate as if there is no waiver at all. It will be a systematic hardship for all involved. ABAWDs will receive notice that they are required to comply with ABAWD restrictions by 12/29.
 - Ellen Vollinger and Dawn Secor from Hunger Solutions New York (HSNY) pointed out that political control determines much of how waivers are distributed. Used Mississippi as an example. MS is so low-income that every county would qualify for a waiver but the state's executive office chose not to apply.

III. Mediation

Mediation Analysis Report for October 2017

Mark Herreros (FBNYC) highlights from November 2017 Mediation Analysis Report. The report is based on a total of 200 mediation requests submitted by Mediation Model participants in the month of November 2017. Marked thanked the organizations represented in the report for submitting their issue logs, and opened the floor to discussion for Task Force participants.

Clients not receiving benefits:

Miguelina Diaz (Hunger Free NYC) reported many recertification issues in November, with issues persisting into December. Cases still being worked on once mediation process initiated. Her issues are all on-demand cases. She says she is not getting a response from the Center, but clients are receiving benefits. Sherry from HRA will look into ensuring responses in timely manner.

Lagina Pena (Met Council) noticed the majority of her clients not receiving benefits were those who worked with liaisons, no problems with On-Demand.

Document Issues:

Tom Furstenburg (Met Council) reports issue with clients receiving requests for documents they have submitted. Emanuel Negrón (FBNYC) suggested submitting case numbers directly and Sherry (HRA) said this would always be most helpful and would make it easier to address these issues. Tom (Met Council) also has clients receiving notifications about submitting documents late but reminding them of a five-day grace period. When clients submit within the grace period they are still being denied. Sherry (HRA) encourages mobile uploads and to move away from any fax or self-service methods of submitting documents. Lagina (Met Council) is also having cases denied due to documents.

Sherry (HRA) said to those concerned about document requests that HRA can look at case deferral dates with rejection codes, but if documents were submitted before the deadline the case will be opened. Please send case information and HRA staff will look into it.

Ana Sarabia (Single Stop) who had recently sat down for a meeting with POS HelpDesk team reminded those with issues that the team is currently handling technological issues and working on repairing the problem. Sometimes the system will find old cases instead of the one you are currently seeking help with. So long as you submit case information including pertinent details about the case they will look back into errors.

Communication issues:

Sayma Reza (Queens Community House) reports that clients are applying, being denied, starting mediation, then being called to say they are denied again without a callback number. Her organization is calling HRA to verify but still not able to move forward. Sherry (HRA) says it is possible to escalate to another step in application process and plans to follow up.

Miguelina (HFA) asks what the timeframe is for new on-demand applications. Sherry (HRA) says this is scheduled for March. There is training happening now and moving forward for Call Center employees to better manage fluctuating wait times.

Long Ho (LiveOn NY) reports clients having trouble with InfoLine for the last two months. Because of this, clients who do not receive their telephone interview are unable to reach out to Info-Line to reschedule. Sherry Moss (HRA) says if it is necessary he should begin the Mediation process. Phone interviews are preferred but will do face-to-face interviews if necessary.

Long Ho (LiveOn NY) also reports that clients are having interviews cancelled by robo call with no notice and they are unable to return the call. The clients are receiving their initial interview date but then receive the robo call. Sherry will look into the issue.

Miguelina (HFA) asked if clients are reporting denial letters, will the case be reopened? Sherry (HRA) reports they documents will be accepted.

ABAWD Waivers:

Sherry (HRA) with regards to the ABAWD situation- HRA is obligated to move forward as if there are no waivers. As soon as word of any waiver comes through, they will shift gears.

Emanuel (FBNYC) suggests all present and their colleagues become well-versed in work requirements.

Dawn (HSNY) said that Hawaii was ready to move forward as if there were no waivers in their state on 12/1 and received notification of their waiver on 11/29. No other state has received their waiver after their old waiver expired. OTDA has said that if they receive the waiver late (January) they will reverse course and anticipate a lot of confusion.

Sherry (HRA) says that if those who qualify as ABAWDs meet the work/training requirements in January then the clock on their ABAWD limits does not start.

Dawn (HSNY) reminds NYC participants that all NYC members of taskforce are in a better shape than upstate.

IV. Human Resource Administration (HRA)

Mark Herreros (FBNYC) summarized the following policy bulletins released by HRA in December 2017 RP on pages 6-7.

- PB #17-101-OPE: ACCESS HRA Release 4.1 SNAP Periodic Report
- PB #17-103-OPE: Revisions to the Functions of Staff at the Hurricane Relief Center
- PB #17-99-OPE: Schedules for January – June 2018
- PB #17-102-OPE: Monthly Updates

V. Reports and Notable Items from Other Sources

Mark Herreros (FBNYC) summarized the following reports included in the December 2018 RP on pages 7-10.

- Trade-Offs at the Dinner Table: The Impacts of Unwanted Compromises – Food Bank For NYC
- How Is Food Assistance Different in Puerto Rico Than in the Rest of the United States? – Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
- The Impact of Proposed 2018 Changes to Key Safety Net Programs on Family Resources - Urban Institute

The Meeting Adjourned at 2:45 PM