



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 21, 2015

CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

MAYOR DE BLASIO AND HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION COMMISSIONER STEVEN BANKS ANNOUNCE FOODHELP.NYC TO CONNECT NEW YORKERS TO SNAP BENEFITS

City campaign targets immigrant communities, the elderly and SNAP-eligible but unenrolled residents to receive benefits while boosting the city's economy with SNAP federal funds through campaign website FoodHelp.nyc

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio and Human Resources Administration (HRA) Commissioner Steven Banks today announced a new citywide outreach campaign to spread the word about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamps) to New Yorkers who qualify for SNAP benefits but aren't receiving them. The campaign includes specific outreach to the two largest unenrolled but eligible groups – seniors and immigrants – with the goal of reaching all New Yorkers who can benefit from SNAP. The centerpiece of the campaign is a state-of-the-art website, FoodHelp.nyc, which includes videos featuring real SNAP clients sharing stories of how the program helped them, links to the newly-redesigned ACCESS NYC site where people can apply, and an interactive map with the locations of food pantries, community kitchens and SNAP application locations.

The campaign also includes targeted ads on subways, buses, and bus shelters, and in neighborhood locations such as check cashing stores, bodegas, hair and nail salons, barber shops and laundromats. HRA is partnering with dozens of community organizations, food pantries and advocates to generate a strong social media outreach effort and gain support for the campaign by leveraging the digital presence of community partners and with specially designed posters and brochures. Outreach materials will be available in English and the six Local Law languages (Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Korean, Arabic, and Haitian Creole.)

During 2014, there were an average of about 1.76 million New York City residents receiving SNAP benefits, including more than 650,000 children, and they purchased a total of more than \$3 billion in food. The federal government estimates that \$1 of food stamp spending generates \$1.80 in economic activity, which means SNAP brought about \$5.4 billion to the City economy, much of it to small businesses around the City. The official SNAP participation rate is 77 percent in New York City. That suggests that there are about 550,000 residents who may be eligible but are not receiving the benefit.

"Food insecurity is a persistent challenge we face, and this is not only a striking indicator of the inequality crisis we face, but a status quo we don't accept," said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. "We are going to use every tool we have to make sure New Yorkers know about the food benefits available to them, and that this critical information is easily accessible online at FoodHelp.nyc."

"Every day, over one million New Yorkers struggle to provide wholesome, nutritious food for their families. Food security is a basic human right, and we have an obligation to connect underserved communities, including low-income New Yorkers, seniors and immigrants, to the benefits and resources to which they are entitled. By improving access to healthy food options, Foodhelp.nyc will be a central tool in our goal to combat socioeconomic inequality and a vital resource for New Yorkers in need. I thank Mayor de Blasio and HRA Commissioner Banks for their ongoing efforts to combat hunger in our city," said **Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito**.

“One in six New York City residents – over 1.4 million people – is food insecure and nearly one in four children in New York City is food insecure. FoodHelp.nyc is an entry point for these individuals and families to access SNAP benefits and supplement their meals to include nutritious and healthy food options,” said **Human Resources Administration Commissioner Steven Banks**. “Making ends meet is a challenge for millions of low-income New Yorkers and FoodHelp.nyc is an efficient resource not only for SNAP but also for finding local community kitchens and food pantries across the five boroughs.”

“Every New Yorker should be able to eat balanced, nutritious meals, but far too many families can’t afford to. This inequality has serious effects for the health and wellbeing of our city, especially seniors and young children. Ensuring that everyone who qualifies for SNAP benefits is getting them is an essential part of our city’s approach to improving access to healthy food for everyone,” said **Barbara Turk, Director of the Mayor’s Office of Food Policy**.

“SNAP is a valuable public benefits program that provides crucial support to low-income New Yorkers,” said **Commissioner of Immigrant Affairs Nisha Agarwal**. “We are delighted to partner with HRA on a range of initiatives and commend the administration’s commitment to connecting immigrant communities to a broad range of benefits to which they are entitled, including SNAP. As this is one of the many services and initiatives that help create opportunity and fight inequality in immigrant communities, it is crucial to get the word out about this great program.”

“The SNAP program has always been a win-win, putting healthy food on the table for millions of New York State residents and injecting millions of federal dollars into the local economy. But it’s also been underutilized, which makes initiatives like this campaign crucial,” said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. “According to a 2013 study by the Council of Senior Centers and Services, more than half of New York City’s 500,000 SNAP-eligible seniors don’t sign up. Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Banks deserve praise for acting to increase outreach and enrollment.”

“The Foodhelp.nyc campaign is a concerted effort to lower the number of New Yorkers that add to the alarming 49.1 million Americans across the nation that live in food-insecure households. Enabling our communities - particularly seniors and immigrants to participate in SNAP, which for many is a critical lifeline, is our responsibility and duty. I thank Mayor de Blasio and Human Resources Administration Commissioner, Steven Banks for their dedication to relieving hunger amongst the most vulnerable in our city,” said **Congressman Gregory Meeks**.

Congressman Jerrold Nadler said, “I applaud the Mayor’s efforts to improve outreach to SNAP-eligible New Yorkers. Food security is a major issue in our city and around the country, and this effort will help ensure more New Yorkers have access to the food they need to stay healthy and active.”

“I commend the Mayor for this important initiative,” said **Congressman José E. Serrano**. “SNAP benefits are a crucial part of the safety net to prevent hunger, but despite being eligible, many New Yorkers fail to apply. This effort will help provide families with the resources and information to take part in this important program. We know that far too many New Yorkers go to bed hungry each night. This campaign is an important step in reducing that number.”

“No New Yorker should be hungry. Too many New Yorkers struggle to make ends meet, and a lot of times they are not able to do so. And that is unacceptable,” said **State Senator Jose Peralta**. “This campaign will spread the word, so low-income New Yorkers eligible to enroll in the SNAP program can receive these much needed public benefits. I applaud this effort geared towards helping fellow New Yorkers in need.”

“The launch of FoodHelp.nyc is a step forward in helping connect New Yorkers that are struggling with food insecurity with the resources they need to have access to consistent and nutritious meals,” said **State Senator Gustavo Rivera**. “I commend Mayor de Blasio and Human Resources Administration Commissioner Steven

Banks for working to inform and connect eligible New Yorkers to SNAP benefits in an effort to help alleviate those who are suffering from hunger in our City.”

“When New Yorkers who are eligible get SNAP, it improves their food security and our city's economy,” said **State Senator Daniel Squadron**. “I've worked with the City to make SNAP more accessible by allowing NYCHA housing applicants to also apply for SNAP via the ACCESS NYC site. It's important we continue pushing so that New Yorkers are aware of SNAP's potential to impact lives. I thank Mayor Bill de Blasio and Commissioner Banks for this important outreach.”

“As we head into the end of the school year and parents all over our City will be wondering how they will feed their children without the assistance of school breakfast and lunch programs, Mayor de Blasio's targeted campaign to reduce hunger by helping to raise awareness of available SNAP benefits is leadership at its best. By tackling the growing problem of hunger and food insecurity, this administration is trying to fend off the political chess game of Washington politicians which leaves millions of American families to survive on less than \$70 dollars per week,” stated **Assembly Member Marcos A. Crespo, Chair of the Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force**. “In a nation where soup kitchens now abound, where food pantries run near empty and where millions of our children live in poverty and rely on school meals for their main source of nutrition, it is clear that this that outreach efforts like FoodHelp.NYC are needed and welcomed.”

“As Chairman of the Assembly's Aging Committee, I see too many seniors on fixed incomes making the heartbreaking choice of whether to buy food or lifesaving medication simply because they're unaware of programs like SNAP that are available to help them,” said **Assembly Member Steven Cymbrowitz**. “Increasing SNAP participation for this vulnerable constituency will not only ease seniors' financial burden but will also reduce their stress and improve their nutrition and physical health, allowing them to remain a vital part of our communities.”

“By providing more outreach and information to New Yorkers about SNAP we can help to ensure families and individuals don't go hungry. Thank you to Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Banks, and the Human Resources Administration for introducing FoodHelp.nyc,” said **Council Member Stephen Levin, Chair of the General Welfare Committee**.

“The intentionality with which this administration is conducting outreach on this important benefit speaks volumes about how much our City is interested in securing resources for the most vulnerable. A program that has an impact on such a large number of immigrant and senior-aged New Yorkers must be accessible in different languages and at locations that meet these people where they are. Food insecurity continues to be a real concern for millions in our City, and while outreach alone does not address the systemic concern, it helps to build bridges to resources. I commend the Mayor and HRA for this work,” said **Council Member Carlos Menchaca, Chair of the Committee on Immigration**.

“Significant numbers of working parents, seniors, and legal immigrants in New York City are struggling to afford food and are eligible for SNAP benefits but are not currently receiving them, due to both stigma and lack of knowledge of the program,” said **Joel Berg, Executive Director of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger**. “That's why this outreach campaign is doubly needed. We are overjoyed that the City is finally bringing these vital nutrition benefits out of the shadows.”

“Too many NYC children and their families struggle with food insecurity in part because they are eligible for food stamps but not enrolled. CCC is so pleased that the de Blasio Administration and HRA Commissioner Steve Banks are focusing on addressing this through their new SNAP Campaign and new state-of-the-art website Foodhelp.nyc. This initiative is a crucial step to ensuring that New Yorkers eligible for SNAP benefits know they are eligible, can register for benefits without facing barriers to access, and can better meet the health and nutrition needs of their children,” said **Jennifer March, Executive Director, Citizens' Committee for Children**.

“Nearly 60 percent of all city residents 60 and older who are eligible for SNAP aren’t receiving it – that’s over 320,000 New Yorkers, and it’s a major problem. AARP is thrilled that Mayor de Blasio is making it a priority to address hunger among older New Yorkers and taking this important step to reach those who aren’t taking advantage of these important benefits. Not only will this help fight hunger, it should boost the city’s economy and help many small business owners in the process,” said **Beth Finkel, State Director, AARP New York**.

“Too many of our neighbors in need don’t access all the supports and services available to them. We know this because last year Single Stop served 15 percent of low-income New Yorkers –helping to work through barriers to information and access that are holding them back from connecting to life-changing resources,” said **Elisabeth Mason, CEO and founder of Single Stop**. “We are excited about the potential that this city-wide campaign has to raise awareness about the nutritional opportunities available to help New Yorkers thrive.”

“Make the Road New York applauds the Mayor’s office and HRA for developing a campaign that increases awareness of SNAP benefits for low income, immigrant New Yorkers. We are extremely supportive of this campaign and are happy to see that the outreach materials will be translated into other languages. Make the Road New York meets with individuals daily to help them apply for SNAP benefits. SNAP is a necessary benefit for many of our community members to be able to support their families. We are excited that HRA is initiating this outreach campaign so more low income families will be aware of these benefits,” said **Becca Telzak, Director of Health Programs, Make the Road New York**.

“As the new Executive Director of Hunger Action Network NYS, it has been an eye opener to see how many New Yorkers go hungry every day. As a proud New Yorker, it is unacceptable for this to be happening. It is especially upsetting when programs such as SNAP are available to the many who are going hungry and they are too embarrassed to utilize the program or worse, do not even know it exists. Outreach and education are just the beginning and a wonderful one. Congratulations on this innovative initiative and we look forward to its success,” said **Susan Zimet, Executive Director, Hunger Action Network, NYS**.

“The Legal Aid Society is extremely pleased to see HRA take a pro-active role in expanding access to the SNAP program, especially for seniors and immigrants. It's good for people who need help, and good for the economy,” said **Seymour W. James, Attorney-in-Chief of The Legal Aid Society**. “ We hope that this exciting plan, with its multi-channel approach including targeted ads in places these clients are likely to see them – and in languages they understand – can serve as a template for similar campaigns in the future, as the City strives to do the best it can for vulnerable New Yorkers.”

“HRA’s new initiative, FoodHelp.nyc, will serve as a critical tool in educating and enrolling the 700,000 eligible New Yorkers not receiving SNAP benefits, including the hundreds of thousands who keep kosher” said **Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty’s CEO, David M. Frankel**. “Every day, Met Council works with those who struggle to feed their families kosher and nutritious meals: on average, a kosher meal is 30 percent more expensive. We will continue our work with HRA and our Jewish Community Council network to connect clients, especially seniors and immigrants in need, to our programs, including the nation’s largest kosher food pantry system, emergency food vouchers, home delivered meals, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) enrollment assistance.”

“When resources become strained, far too many New Yorkers face the harrowing decision each month of whether to pay their rent or put food on the table for their children. HRA’s public outreach campaign will be invaluable in getting the word out that SNAP benefits can potentially help them provide nutritious food for themselves and youngsters – so families can stay healthy and housed,” said **Mary Brosnahan, President & CEO, Coalition for the Homeless**.

“Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA) applauds New York City’s effort to expand outreach for SNAP benefits. SNAP, especially when packaged with other key anti-poverty measures, serves as a helpful tool in alleviating poverty and advancing upward mobility,” said **Jennifer Jones Austin, CEO/Executive Director of Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies**.

“New York City’s first line of defense against hunger is strong federally-funded programs like SNAP that enable hungry New Yorkers to supplement their food budgets. City Harvest appreciates the de Blasio administration’s launch of Foodhelp.nyc and its pledge to address hunger with immigrant and senior New Yorkers through SNAP outreach and enrollment,” said **Jilly Stephens, Executive Director of City Harvest**. “Far too many New Yorkers struggle with hunger and this campaign can help.”

“Food Bank for New York City is delighted to support HRA’s new campaign to reach hard-working New Yorkers across the five boroughs who qualify for SNAP but aren’t receiving benefits. As a longtime partner on SNAP access work, we see this as a wonderful complement to other major recent efforts – SNAP Easy Access and expanded Access NYC services – that are making it easier for New Yorkers to apply for benefits in their own communities,” said **Margaret Purvis, President and CEO, Food Bank for New York City**.

“United Way of New York City stands together with HRA and all of our partners to amplify SNAP awareness and access. Core to UWNYP’s work, SNAP benefits are a key gateway to moving New Yorkers beyond poverty toward self-sufficiency. We applaud this important effort by Commissioner Banks and his team,” said **Nicole Gallant, Senior Vice President of Community Impact**.

“Access to food is one of the essentials of a humane and just society,” said **Raun Rasmussen, Executive Director of Legal Services NYC**. “Every day we meet with clients who are not aware that they are eligible for food assistance benefits. Legal Services NYC applauds Mayor de Blasio, Deputy Mayor Barrios-Paoli and Commissioner Banks for their determination to help meet the basic human needs of all New Yorkers through this new outreach campaign.”

“Food is a fundamental need. Yet, there are hundreds of thousands of older New Yorkers who struggle every day to make ends meet, yet they are unaware of the food benefits available to them through SNAP,” said **Igal Jellinek, Executive Director of LiveOn NY**. “This outreach campaign is critically needed so that these valued citizens can remain in their communities and age with confidence and grace. We are glad to be partnering with the City for this valuable initiative.”

“Too many New Yorkers are still food insecure,” said **Sabrina Baronberg, Senior Director of Public Health Solutions’ Food and Nutrition Programs**. “Programs like SNAP and WIC are critical to ensuring that low-income New Yorkers have access to quality nutritious foods for themselves and their families. Public Health Solutions strongly supports HRA’s campaign to enroll more eligible New Yorkers in SNAP and is committed to continuing to provide WIC services and assistance with SNAP enrollment throughout its programs.”

“In partnership with HRA and Single Stop USA, we have helped over 4,000 New Yorkers obtain SNAP when struggling to make ends meet. Over and over again we’ve seen the difference that SNAP benefits can make to families working hard to rebuild their lives. We applaud the City’s effort to help ensure food security for more of its residents,” said **Tony Hannigan, Executive Director of Center for Urban Community Services (CUCS)**.

“Despite the financial recovery in NYC’s private sector, thousands of families struggle every day to provide healthy meals for their families,” said **Denise Miranda, Managing Director of the Safety Net Project of the Urban Justice Center**. “HRA should be applauded for this new campaign that will provide countless families with vital information and expanded access to SNAP.”

“We applaud HRA’s new citywide outreach campaign about SNAP,” said **Jeanette Zelfhof, the Executive Director of MFY Legal Services, Inc.** “We’re glad to help HRA spread the word to the vulnerable and underserved individuals we serve who desperately need this benefit.”

Andres, who is featured in the campaign, said, “After working my whole life, and even owning my own business, SNAP helped me during financial difficulty. Thanks to this assistance, I can buy the food I need to stay healthy and still feel independent.”

Wendy, a SNAP client also featured in the campaign, said, “Migrating to the U.S. with my children presented a challenge, but SNAP supported us with the necessities to build our lives. We don’t have to sacrifice healthy living – whether physical, emotional or spiritual – as a family.”

ACCESS NYC is New York City’s front door for benefit access and information. New Yorkers can use ACCESS NYC to apply online for benefits, such as rent increase exemption programs (SCRIE and DRIE) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP). Residents can also screen for eligibility for 30 benefits and programs, learn how to apply, print out application forms, and find office locations. ACCESS NYC (a program of the Mayor’s Office of Operations) and the Human Resources Administration (HRA) partnered to create the new *Virtual Client Service Center* to modernize the technology platform for benefits access and create an enhanced user experience. This is one part of the Mayor’s work to close gaps in social service delivery as part of our larger efforts to address inequality and lift the floor for all New Yorkers.

###