

# NYC Customer Service Newsletter

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### Bed Bugs by the Numbers

- Number of bed bug complaints received by HPD in 2010 - 13,472
- Number of HPD violations for bed bugs in 2010 – 4,846
- % of adults reporting having bed bugs in 2009 – 6.7%

## Bed Bugs Information, Resources and Management for New York City Residents

Bed bugs are making a resurgence in cities across the United States. To help New Yorkers learn more about identifying, treating and preventing bed bug infestations, the Health Department launched the Bed Bug Portal ([www.nyc.gov/bedbugs](http://www.nyc.gov/bedbugs)) in March 2011. This resource provides scientifically accurate and timely information about how to prevent, recognize, and treat bed bug infestations. The website was developed with funding provided by the City Council following a recommendation by New York City Bed Bug Advisory Board.

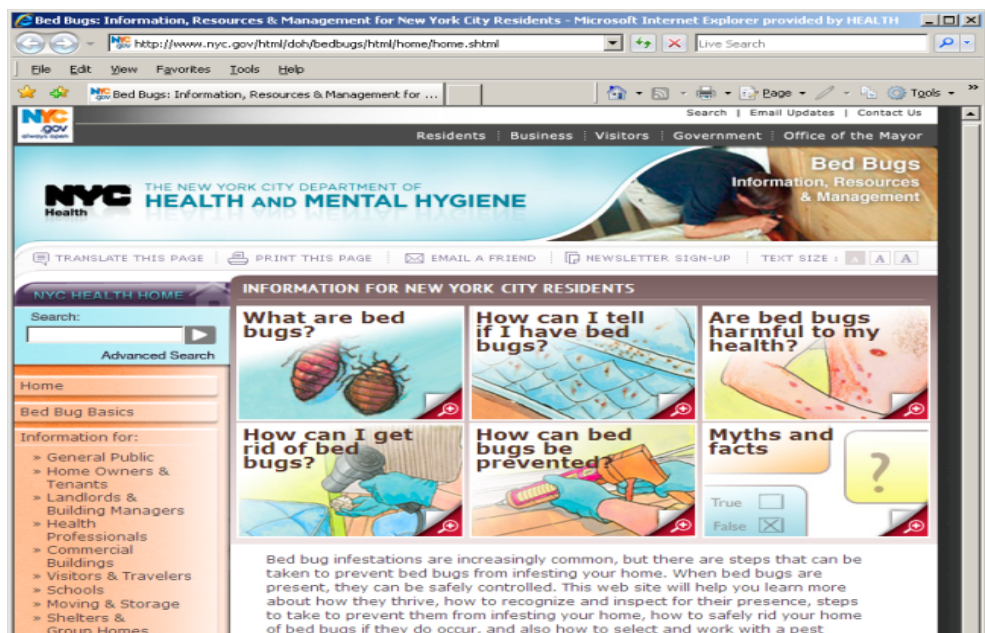
In addition to detailed images, information

and protocols to help manage bed bugs, the site offers interactive features, including a recorded slide presentation and a quiz on myths and facts surrounding this growing problem. There is guidance – from basic advice to comprehensive policies -- that can be implemented by residents, owners and managers of residential and commercial buildings, managers of businesses and employees, and pest management companies. The site reinforces the importance of early discovery, and quick, measured and competent response to the presence of bed

bugs. It also describes how New York City agencies enforce housing and health rules to prevent and respond to bed bugs. Users can check the site regularly, as its content will be updated with new materials and guidance for additional settings.

Bed bugs are a difficult, but not impossible, problem to treat. The NYC Bed Bug Portal will help people take early, effective action to help prevent their spread.

Contact: Sharon Heath, Director of Pesticide Program, Bureau of Environmental Surveillance and Policy, [sheath@health.nyc.gov](mailto:sheath@health.nyc.gov)





**NYCHA Department of Operations Deputy General Manager Carlos Laboy speaks with Citywide Council of Presidents Manhattan South District Chair Rose Bergin at a recent event.**

## **NYCHA Dept. of Operations has Ambitious Goals: New Family Investment Center Example of Holistic Approach**

While NYCHA's Plan to Preserve Public Housing – the Authority's comprehensive plan that will serve as a vital roadmap for the next five years – nears completion, many features of the plan already are being acted upon. The Department of Operations has new ways of running business that will benefit residents.

"NYCHA has many different programs that can influence a development, like mixed-finance, community operations, the Safety and Security Task Force," said Carlos Laboy, the Authority's new Deputy General Manager for Operations. "To be sure services for residents mesh well, we have to look at a development holistically and see how the whole situation affects residents."

The new Family Investment Center at St. Nicholas Houses in Manhattan partners the Property Manager (Department of Operations) together with social service staff (Department of Community Operations). "There is a direct correlation

between maintenance needs, social service needs and the developments' needs," said Mr. Laboy. "If a resident is facing eviction, we want to be sure they receive social services."

The Family Investment Center is a model that other developments will follow. In addition to providing St. Nicholas residents with essential information and assistance, the three social services staff members focus on four key areas – developing residents' economic assets; creating youth empowerment opportunities; building a Resident Green Committee; and assisting residents with tenancy issues.

Another example of how one item can affect many areas recently occurred at the Justice Sonia Sotomayor Houses in the Bronx. Many outdoor lights were out, and the replacement of them was a maintenance issue. However, once new lights were installed, residents told NYCHA that now security at the development was better because it is not so dark anymore at night.

NYCHA has set aside \$11 million to address a backlog in repairs across the City. The Department of Operations is working with the Department of Capital Projects to prioritize property maintenance needs. By this summer, a new system will be in place that is expected to improve how the Authority maintains the developments. "If a roof is being rehabilitated, we need to be sure it's the correct roof that really needs that work," said Mr. Laboy. "We have enough money to fix the priorities, but we don't have enough for everything."

Mr. Laboy and his team have been running all over the City, meeting with residents and visiting apartments, to improve communications. "We have to listen to our clients – the residents," he said. "And while some may be frustrated, we can't change the past. But we can talk about today and tomorrow."

## A New PATH for Families with Children

For 20 years, the overcrowded and chaotic Emergency Assistance Unit (EAU) served as the intake center for families with children seeking shelter in the City of New York. There, in a cramped, poorly-lit and decrepit building, the indignities were numerous: more than 150 families slept on the floor of intake each month. Domestic violence victims were not afforded any privacy, forced to recount their traumatic stories in front of an audience. Children waited with their families for days to receive services.

Recognizing the need for comprehensive and dramatic reform, the City set out to make sweeping transformations to the system, aligned with the recommendations of a court-appointed Special Master Panel. Last month— after years of planning since the closure of the EAU— the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) opened its new Prevention Assistance and Temporary Housing (PATH) intake center, a state-of-the-art and eco-friendly facility that has been specifically sized, staffed and laid out to meet the demand for homeless services.

“The new PATH culminates years of reform within the families system,” said DHS Commissioner Seth Diamond. “Under

the Bloomberg administration, intake has been transformed from a dreary and burdensome process, to one that efficiently serves clients in a dignified and respectful manner. After years of preparation, DHS is proud to unveil this facility to the City, as we embark on a new era of assistance to homeless New Yorkers in need.”

Located in the Bronx, PATH was constructed on the site of the old EAU and has replaced the existing PATH, which was opened in 2004 as an immediate and temporary means for improving conditions at intake. At nearly 77,000 square feet, the Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED)-certified facility measures 213 percent larger than the original EAU, offering clients and staff a more comfortable environment to receive and provide services respectively.

Drawing heavily on the City’s commitment to excellent customer service, the facility aims to provide key efficiencies to clients and staff. Although years ago, families spent an average of 20 hours drudging through the intake process, today’s families receive placements the same day they apply, and benefit from an array of services offered on-site. With a discreetly-located medical suite, storage availability and spacious waiting areas on each

floor— complete with security kiosks and audio-visual notification systems— the center aims to engage clients and make them feel secure in their surroundings, from entry to departure.

Accompanied by Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs and Commissioner Diamond, Mayor Bloomberg visited the new facility on Wednesday, May 11 to reflect on the great progress that has been made in the system. Human Resources Administration (HRA) Commissioner Robert Doar, Councilmember Maria del Carmel Arroyo and Councilmember Annabel Palma were also on-hand, in addition to representatives from Bronx Community Board 4 and former members of the Special Master Panel.

“Through the utilization of the new intake center, we can continue to change the culture of the system from the inside-out,” said Commissioner Diamond. “While shelter should always be preserved as a temporary, emergency resource, we also want it to be accessible to families who lack housing alternatives. PATH allows us to serve these households with the highest degree of professionalism and integrity.”



The new PATH facility in the Bronx is located at 151 East 151 Street.

### SOME KEY EFFICIENCIES OF THE NEW PATH INCLUDE:

**Up-to-date technology**, including wireless and audio-visual capability, as well as public address and flow-management systems;

**Workspace** that is well-lit, separate from waiting areas and configured to best promote worker safety and client confidentiality;

A large **multi-purpose room** and **staff lounge**, which can both be used for meetings and trainings;

**Storage availability** for clients, so that bulky items do not hamper the application process;

A discreetly-located **medical suite** to immediately service appropriate referrals;

**Security** maintained through a combination of DHS Peace Officers and contracted guards, situated throughout the facility.





## Q: What does 311 have in common with your BFF? A: OMG – 311 is now texting!

On May 4, 2011, NYC311 introduced a new channel to engage customers by launching the 311 Text Program pilot. In addition to providing world-class customer service via phone, online, and twitter, 311 now offers customers the ability to interact 24x7x365 via text messaging from a mobile device.

How does it work? A customer can request NYC government information and services simply by sending a question via Short

Message Service (SMS) text message to shortcode 311-NYC (or 311-692). A human “guide” will review the customer’s question, and using 311 Online as the content source, provide an appropriate answer back to the customer via text message. The service is free, although wireless carrier rates may apply.

The texting program is being promoted across 311 through IVR messaging, a 311 Online Featured Program, and 311’s Twitter account.

NYC is the first city to offer an interactive questions & answers texting service. In the first month 2,000 texts were received with plans for continued growth. The most popular topic? Similar to calls to 311, visits to 311 Online, and Tweets, the top inquiry is Alternate Side Parking status.

For insight on some of the more interesting and amusing texts received so far, visit “The 311” blog at: <http://311nyc.wordpress.com/>

## Know before you go...for your favorite Parks facility

Parks maintains over 29,000 acres of city parkland, distributed across thousands of locations. Inevitably, parks or sections of parks are temporarily off limits. Often this is to allow capital renovation to occur, especially thanks to the Bloomberg administration which has made historic investments in parks infrastructure. Sites can

also be disrupted for short term repairs, special events, storms, or other issues. For the first time, Parks now offers a feature on the internet to help patrons check for delays or disruptions before heading out to their favorite park, playground, beach or pool. The service is called “**Know before you go**” and lists sites

with capital projects taking place, and also will list short term disruptions. Managers in each borough and special events can update the information directly to help keep it accurate. Parks New Media and Operations divisions will also be monitoring the new service.

**Property and Facility Closures**

**Bronx**

**Bronx River Parkway**  
**Anticipated Completion: Summer 2011**  
 The East 211th Street entrance is closed. We are creating a formal entrance to the northern section of Bronx Park at East 211th Street and connecting two disconnected segments of the Bronx River Greenway. The project will also intercept storm-water run-off to reduce peak flows into the Bronx River and increase recharge of the ground water. Seating and plantings will be provided to beautify the area.

**Chariton Garden**  
**Anticipated Completion: Spring 2011**  
 The park is closed. We are reconstructing the garden dedicated to the valor and actions of Sgt. Cornelius H. Chariton and Pfc. William Thompson during the Korean War. The renovated garden will feature a new seating area, lush plantings, an ADA accessible ramp, a new drinking fountain and a new flagpole commemorating the two Bronx medal of honor winners.

**Co-op City Field**  
**Anticipated Completion: Spring 2011**  
 The Co-op City Ballfields are currently closed, as we are installing sports lighting at both baseball fields. Thank you for your patience as we improve your park.

**Crotona Park**  
**Anticipated Completion: Summer 2011**  
 A portion of the park is closed. This project will reconstruct the existing playgrounds and entrances along the eastern edge of Tremont Park. A lawn will replace the deteriorated bocce court and pathways between the two playgrounds. Other enhancements include new benches, swings, play equipment, water play areas, fencing, and two new ADA ramps at the existing comfort station. Please pardon our appearance.

**NYC Weather**

Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
81°F 30%	90°F 40%	91°F 60%	81°F 50%

**Event Notices**  
 There are no event notifications at this time.

# New DOT Customer Signage Valued by DOT Staff

DOT Customer Service recently completed a project to revamp customer service signage (see before and after examples below). Although the unit set out to create a new look in signage for external customers to improve their access to and experience at DOT facilities, the signage improvement process revealed that professional looking

signs are also valued and meaningful to DOT staff.

The diverse teams of public service front line staff, operational managers, supervisors, graphic artists, and language bank volunteers who worked on the project all contributed in some way to produce the finished products by editing, proofing, creating,

following up, coordinating, and assessing field conditions.

As a result of these internal team efforts, DOT staff has a greater appreciation of the new signage as it helps them recognize the value of and pride they have in the service they provide to each other as well as to the public.

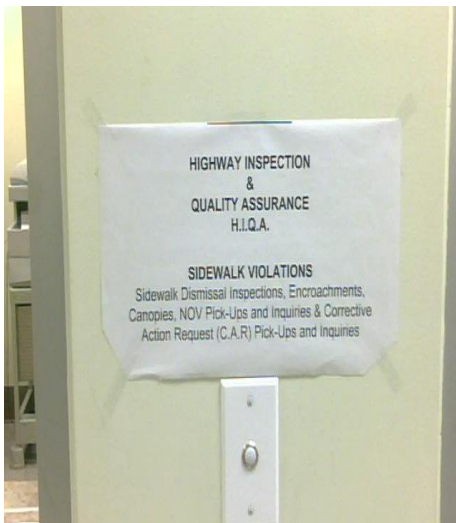
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Elizabeth Weinstein  
Director  
Office of Operations



Bronx HIQA Office Signage - Before



Bronx HIQA Office Signage - After



Queens Boro Hall Signage - Before



Queens Boro Hall Signage - After

### About the Customer Service Group

The Customer Service Group (CSG) was established by Mayor Bloomberg's Executive Order 115 to support and implement the mandates of the order. CSG is part of the Mayor's Office of Operations.