

Friday, October 8, 2010

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The Center for NYC Neighborhoods and NYC DCA Office of Financial Empowerment Receive \$848,384 for Expansion of Services to Homeowners At Risk of Foreclosure

The Center for New York City Neighborhoods (CNYCN) and the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs Office of Financial Empowerment (DCA's OFE) have been awarded \$848,384 by the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) to provide free financial counseling services and to extend CNYCN's Call Center operations for at-risk homeowners.

The funding will allow CNYCN to continue operating its foreclosure prevention hotline, which takes calls from New York City's 311 general information line, and also support the development of a new pilot program to place DCA's OFE's Financial Empowerment Center counselors within the CNYCN Network of housing counseling agencies. Thanks to this public funding, OFE financial counselors will work alongside HUD-certified housing and legal experts to provide comprehensive, wrap-around housing and financial counseling services to New York City homeowners in distress.

CNYCN Call Center

"Since its inception in early 2009, CNYCN's Call Center has communicated with over 10,000 homeowners through incoming calls, outreach calls and mailings, directing them to free housing counseling and legal services provided by over 70 organizations located in all five boroughs," said Michael Hickey, Executive Director of CNYCN. "DHCR's original support enabled the founding of our Call Center, and with this additional funding we will not only be able to continue this important consumer service, but extend even deeper supports to assist homeowners suffering from job loss and other economic pressures."

NYC Homeowners can be connected to the Call Center by simply dialing 311 and saying "foreclosure" to receive free services within the CNYCN network. DHCR had supported the initial development of the Call Center, and the new funding CNYCN will expand Call Center services so that operators can play a more active role in reaching and supporting homeowners fighting foreclosure.

CNYCN/OFE Pilot for Financial Counselor Outreach

The new initiative will help reach communities historically underserved by financial education providers, such as Staten Island, and communities with staggering rates of foreclosure and unemployment, including the North Bronx, northwestern Queens, Jamaica, and East New York.

"Homeowners in need are rarely struggling with their mortgages in isolation – consumer debt, household budgeting, identity theft, and other financial concerns can make an already overwhelming process feel impossible," said Jonathan Mintz, Commissioner of the Department of Consumer Affairs. "By providing New Yorkers with the "gold standard" of financial education – one on one financial counseling – in concert with the foreclosure prevention services already offered by CNYCN, we will be able to arm clients with the tools and resources necessary to address all components

of their financial picture.”

The Department of Consumer Affairs Office of Financial Empowerment (OFE) is the first local government initiative in the nation with a mission to educate, empower, and protect New Yorkers with low incomes so they can build assets and make the most of their financial resources. OFE is the first program to be implemented under the [Center for Economic Opportunity](#) as part of Mayor Bloomberg's aggressive efforts to fight poverty in New York City. The City's free [Financial Empowerment Centers](#) help New Yorkers take control of their debt, improve their credit, deal with debt collection, create a budget, open a bank account, and much more. One-on-one financial counseling is provided by professional counselors in person or by phone in English, Spanish, and Chinese.

The financial empowerment counselors will work alongside the CNYCN Network Partner counselors in assisting clients who have received trial mortgage modifications to achieve a level of financial planning that allows them to reduce debt and make timely payments thereby increasing their chances of obtaining a permanent modification. They will enable clients with high non-mortgage debt to qualify for government programs such as HAMP and the Mortgage Assistance Program (MAP), and ensure that clients accessing government programs remain current on their payments. They will also support clients with budgeting strategies that can reduce their debt and improve their ability to make housing-related payments.

The Center for NYC Neighborhoods was created in 2008 by Mayor Bloomberg, the New York City Council, foundations and corporate leaders to provide free housing counseling and legal services to New York City homeowners at risk of losing their homes to foreclosure. To date, CNYCN and its 28 non-profit Network Partners have assisted close to 10,000 homeowners throughout New York City neighborhoods hardest hit by foreclosures.

The Department of Consumer Affairs' Office of Financial Empowerment (OFE) is the first local government initiative in the nation expressly aimed at educating, empowering, and protecting those with low incomes, so they can build assets and make the most of their financial resources. OFE is the first program to be implemented under the Center for Economic Opportunity as part of Mayor Bloomberg's aggressive efforts to fight poverty in New York City. OFE experiments with local government's unique capacity to leverage strategic partnerships, implement innovative solutions, and target enforcement powers to strengthen the financial security of New Yorkers with low incomes.