

NEWS FROM NYC MAYOR'S OFFICE OF OPERATIONS

NYC Customer Service Newsletter

Volume 6 issue 2 - April 2014

Department of Education Assigns Language Access Coordinators to Schools

All of New York City's customers, regardless of their ability to speak English, should be able to receive the same services as English speakers. Executive Order 120 and Chancellor's Regulation A-663 were promulgated to ensure that all New York City agencies provide interpretation services and translated documents for their limited-English proficient (LEP) customers.

The NYC public school system includes over 1,600 schools, with 1.1 million students. Parents and their children within the school system speak approximately 180 languages. LEP parents make up almost 40% of the entire parent population. Because one of the goals of the Department of Education (DOE) is to encourage parental engagement, all parents, regardless of what language they speak, should have the opportunity to participate in their child's education.

This school year, principals were asked to designate a Language Access Coordinator (LAC) to be the point person responsible for coordinating language assistance services. There are a total of 1,630 non-charter schools throughout the city. All NYC public schools have a LAC.

The DOE's Translation & Interpretation Unit is working with its network leaders to identify and train the additional 30 LACs in the process of training all coordinators. From November 2013 to March 2014, the DOE's Translation and Interpretation Unit conducted 22 training sessions for staff in all five boroughs. In the trainings sessions, LACs learned about their roles, were made aware of the importance of providing interpretation and translation services to limited-English proficient parents, and became familiar with the resources for providing language access services to parents.



Department of Education Language Access Coordinator Training Session

Specifically, LACs have been tasked to:

1. Know and track the language preferences of all parents in their school community
2. Assist in the development of a school-based language access plan
3. Work with the principal to allocate funding to address language assistance needs
4. Work with school staff to create an environment in which parents are aware of and understand how to access language assistance services
5. Provide direct outreach to parents about their rights to language assistance services
6. Notify the school community of their obligations with respect to language access and how to assist limited-English proficient parents
7. Support school staff in providing written translation and interpretation services

Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications Addresses Digital Divide

The NYC Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications implements a variety of programs to address the digital divide, with a focus on the City's highest poverty neighborhoods. One of these programs, called NYC Connected Communities, expands the availability of public computer centers and classes in libraries, public housing facilities, senior centers, and community centers in neighborhoods across the five boroughs. Additionally, the program offers an array of new resources for digital literacy, employment support, and other critical services.



Student Using a Computer Provided through NYC Connected

Initially funded by the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP), NYC Connected Communities has received city funding to continue its efforts to increase broadband adoption and provide public computer resources across all five boroughs of New York City. The program's 100 centers, with 1,738 workstations, have offered more than 3 million user sessions.

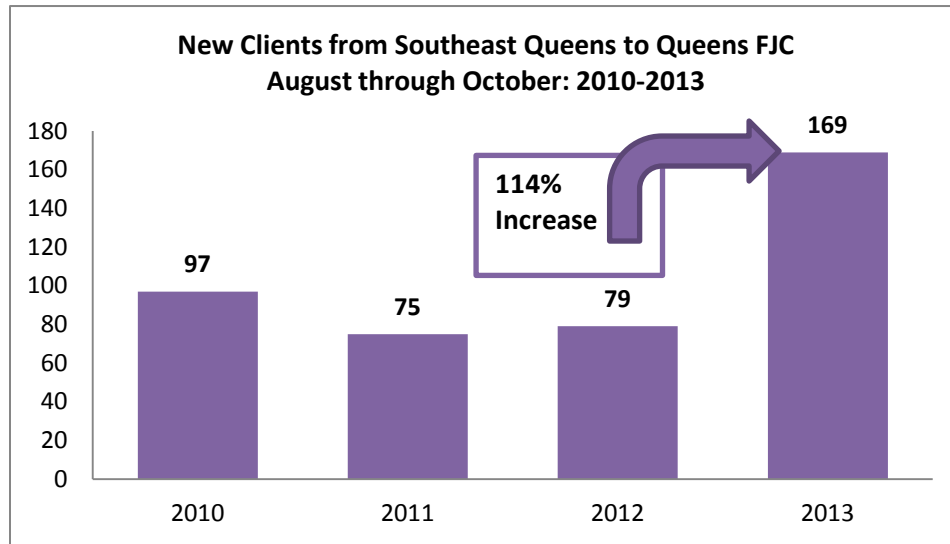
Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence: Connecting Victims to Services in Southeast Queens

The Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence (OCDV) is an innovative agency that, through public-private partnerships, oversees the citywide delivery of domestic violence services, develops policies and programs, and works with diverse communities to increase awareness of domestic violence. OCDV's premier initiative is the New York City Family Justice Centers (FJC). FJCs provide comprehensive legal, counseling and supportive services for victims of domestic violence, elder abuse and sex trafficking. There are currently four Family Justice Centers located in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens; a fifth, in Staten Island, is in the planning stages and is expected to open in early 2015.

Data analysis is critical to OCDV's marshaling its resources and targeting outreach and services where they are most needed. For example, domestic violence incident data provided by the New York City Police Department (NYPD) enables OCDV to determine how many FJC clients reside in neighborhoods with the highest frequency of domestic violence, and which of those neighborhoods appear to be underserved at the FJCs. In 2012, this analysis revealed that there was a need to increase awareness of the Queens FJC in Southeast Queens to enhance utilization of the FJC by residents of that area. The three precincts that serve the communities of Southeast Queens, the 103rd, 105th, and 113th account for almost 30% of all domestic violence incidents the NYPD responds to every year, but only 8% of Queens FJC clients come from those precincts.

To raise awareness and increase the number of clients from Southeast Queens accessing services at the Queens FJC, we created a multi-level outreach plan in collaboration with the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, the Department of Health and Mental

Hygiene (DOHMH), the NYPD, the Queens Public Library, and various other community-based organizations. This three-month effort, from August through October 2012, increased the number of new clients from these neighborhoods visiting the Queens FJC by 114 percent compared to the same period the previous year.



The activities undertaken through this initiative included:

- **Business Outreach:**
 - Visited salons throughout the community to distribute domestic violence prevention palm cards and posters, as well as lip balm, compacts and hand sanitizer.
 - Partnered with the Sutphin Boulevard Business Improvement District (BID) and the 180th Street and 165th Street BIDs to distribute posters to area merchants.
 - Distributed material at the local farmers markets.
- **Medical Provider Training:**
 - Partnered with DOHMH to train medical staff at Joseph P. Addabbo Medical Clinics, the Community Health Network's Family Clinic and Jamaica Hospital.
 - Distributed public education material at mammography events at the Community Health Network's Family Clinic.
- **Library Outreach:**
 - Provided basic domestic violence awareness training to library staff.
 - Participated in the Women's Health Forum and distributed public education materials to all library locations.
 - Presented to the Library's Bengali sewing circle and distributed Bengali language materials.
- **Youth and Family Outreach:**
 - Presented at the ACS Community Partnership meeting, Families Building Communities, in Jamaica.
 - The Department of Parks and Recreation and the New York City Housing Authority displayed OCDV public education posters in their recreation centers.
 - Participated in a healthy relationship fair at York College and distributed our materials.

- **That's Abuse:**
 - This citywide public education campaign, *That's Abuse*, was launched in fall 2013 to raise awareness of available domestic violence services. The campaign appeared in bus shelters and subway locations in target areas including Southeast Queens. In addition, C-Town Supermarkets included a *That's Abuse* advertisement in their weekly circular.



“That’s Abuse” Bus Shelter Poster

Under the leadership of new Commissioner Rose Pierre-Louis, OCDV is building upon the Southeast Queens initiative by expanding collaborative efforts to additional neighborhoods throughout NYC. OCDV is linking with community-based, religious and immigrant organizations to extend its reach and link domestic violence survivors to appropriate services in every borough. OVDV will be providing information to communities about the locations and services available at the Family Justice Centers in Brooklyn, the Bronx, Manhattan and Queens; in Staten Island, OCDV will be focusing outreach efforts on raising awareness about the opening of the Staten Island FJC next year.

Administration for Children's Services Initiatives Increase Access to Services

The Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) is committed to ensuring that children and families in New York City have meaningful access to child welfare, juvenile justice, and early care and education services, regardless of immigration status or level of English proficiency. Initiatives at ACS that support this mission include:

- **Language Access Services**

Under ACS’s Language Access Plan, all Limited English Proficient (LEP) clients who choose to communicate with ACS staff in a language other than English must be provided with an in-person or telephonic interpreter. In 2012, ACS provided interpretation services for 65,989 requests. Additionally, key ACS forms, notices, and outreach materials have been translated into nine priority languages – Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Haitian Creole, Arabic, Korean, Bengali, Urdu, and French. In addition, many commonly requested informational materials are available in translation on the ACS website

(http://www.nyc.gov/html/acs/html/translation/translated_documents.shtml). To support ACS staff efforts in serving LEP clients, ACS created best practices for working with interpreters. These are available on [YouTube](#).

- **Community Partnerships and Culturally Competent Preventive Services**

By engaging community partners in areas of New York City with large foreign-born populations, ACS is better able to connect with immigrant youth and families, provide them with education about local child welfare laws, and share information about available ACS resources such as child care and preventive services. In addition to these outreach initiatives, ACS contracts with preventive services agencies that offer unique cultural and linguistic capacity.

Preventive providers with specialized cultural and linguistic expertise include the Arab American Family Support Center (AAFSC). AAFSC has been a leader in providing culturally-sensitive services to meet the needs of Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim and South Asian (AMEMSA) immigrants in New York City. They serve nearly 6,000 low-income people annually through seven major programs: Adult Education & Literacy Program, the Youth Program, Anti-Violence Program, Preventive Service Program, Health Program, Legal Services Program and the Disaster Relief Program.



Arab American Family Support Center (AAFSC) Staff

Additional examples of preventive providers with cultural and linguistic expertise include the Chinatown YMCA, Chinese American Planning Council, Hellenic American Neighborhood Action Committee, Ohel Children's Home and Family Services, Puerto Rican Family Institute, and Sauti Yetu.

- **Immigration Services for Youth in Foster Care and Victims of Violence and Human Trafficking**

In 2013, ACS finalized its *Policy and Procedure on Special Immigrant Juvenile Status and Immigration Services*. Recognizing that the lack of immigration status may be a major barrier to housing, employment, medical care, education, and other critical elements of a youth's well-being, this policy is designed to ensure that children in NYC foster care who need immigration legal services are identified and connected with those services before they leave care. Since 2011, more than 125 children have obtained green cards under this policy and the related initiatives that preceded it. The ACS U Visa

Certification Program and Safe Harbor Initiatives also assist victims of crimes such as domestic violence, sexual abuse, and human trafficking.

- **Racial Equity and Cultural Competence Committee**

Through this committee, made up of cross-divisional staff and external stakeholders including community based organizations like Children’s Village and Brooklyn Perinatal Network, as well as academics from Yeshiva University and the Fordham Graduate School of Social Work, ACS works to address issues of systemic racial disproportionality and structural racism in the child welfare context. A goal of the committee is to develop and implement specific actions that promote equitable child welfare outcomes for immigrant and non-immigrant children and families of color.

Department of Consumer Affairs Opens the Ventanilla de Asesoría Financiera at the Mexican Consulate to Provide Financial Empowerment Services to the Mexican Community

This month, the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) opened the Ventanilla de Asesoría Financiera (Financial Counseling Window) at the Mexican Consulate of New York. The Ventanilla, which launched as part of the Consulate's Financial Empowerment Week, is a partnership between DCA’s Office of Financial Empowerment, the Consulate General of Mexico, and two nonprofits—ARIVA and Qualitas of Life Foundation—and offers one-on-one financial counseling to Mexican nationals in a setting where they can feel comfortable and not worry about how their immigration status might affect them.

The Ventanilla is modeled after the Consulate's successful [Ventanilla de Salud](#) (Public Health Window) and is a result of DCA's [Immigrant Financial Services Study](#). The study, which was released last year and was the first study to take a closer look at the financial behaviors of specific immigrant populations in New York City, surveyed more than 1,300 immigrants from China, Ecuador, and Mexico. The study found that 57 percent of Mexican immigrants surveyed are unbanked, higher than the Ecuadorian and Chinese populations. Many immigrants surveyed expressed misconceptions about the process of opening a banking account, the ability to open an account, identification requirements, and language barriers that the Ventanilla de Asesoría Financiera will seek to address and overcome.



Billy Garcia, Tara Brown and Awilda Velez welcome visitors to the new Ventanilla de Asesoría Financiera (Financial Counseling Window) at the Mexican Consulate of New York

The program, which is made possible through generous support from Citi Community Development, is built on the proven success of the City's Financial Empowerment Centers but tailored specifically to the needs of Mexican New Yorkers. This access to information and one-on-one counseling, combined with the connection to the broad network of services at the Consulate, will help Mexican nationals and families living in New York City participate in the American financial system and achieve greater financial security.

Visitors can get free, confidential advice and support about budgeting, managing money, accessing safe and affordable banking products, building savings, filing taxes for free, improving credit, and reducing debt. New Yorkers can visit the Ventanilla de Asesoría Financiera without an appointment Monday through Friday on the second floor of the Mexican Consulate (27 East 39th Street, Manhattan). Free, professional one-on-one financial counseling is also available at the City's network of nearly 30 Financial Empowerment Centers. Call 311 to make an appointment at a Financial Empowerment Center or visit nyc.gov/ProtectYourMoney for more information.

Office of Emergency Management Produces Emergency Preparedness Episode for We Are New York Television Series in Various Languages

In partnership with City University of New York and the NYC Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, the NYC Office of Emergency Management's (OEM) NYC Citizen Corps has produced a 25-minute episode as part of the Emmy Award-winning "We Are New York" series geared towards English-language learners. The DVD is available with English, Chinese, Arabic, Bangla, Russian, and Spanish subtitles. English subtitles assist English language learners in improving both written and verbal communication.

The We Are New York (WANY) Project brings together community based organizations and volunteers to offer free conversation groups to adult immigrants at various locations all over New York City. WANY

provides training for volunteers and uses a CUNY-developed curriculum to help adult immigrants practice their English.

The episode produced by NYC Citizen Corps, called "[The Storm](#)," focuses on emergency preparedness and access to City resources during emergencies. The episode is accompanied by various learning materials for beginner and intermediate English-language learners, including a toolkit developed by OEM for use in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classrooms and informal conversation groups and by community leaders and community-based organizations.

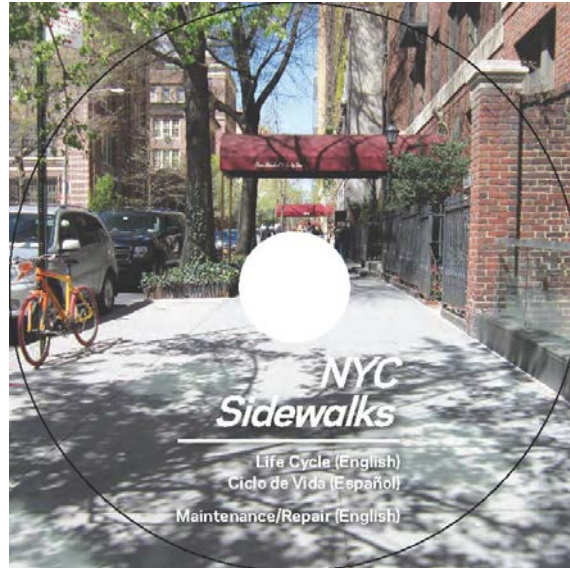


The Storm/We are New York Marketing Posters

New York City has always thrived because of its vibrant and diverse immigrant communities. In the face of adversity, it is crucial that all of the city's people and communities, especially the newest of immigrants, are prepared. The NYC Office of Emergency Management continues its mission of informing all New Yorkers about the best ways to be prepared for emergencies.

Department of Transportation Produces Spanish Version of Sidewalk Safety Video

The Department of Transportation (DOT) has produced a Spanish version of "The Life Cycle of a Sidewalk" video, which has already been posted in English on the agency's website. The purpose of the video is to instill the importance of maintaining sidewalks safe for pedestrians. The message is clear - property owners are responsible for maintaining and repairing their sidewalks.



New Spanish Language DVD Jacket

DVD copies were made for distribution to Limited English Proficient (LEP) residents by DOT's community outreach efforts. The video will soon be posted on the DOT website along with the already-posted English version. Because Spanish is the most common foreign language spoken in the City, DOT chose to translate this video into Spanish first, but is planning to produce the video in other frequently accessed languages.

Mayor's Office of Operations (OPS)

Mindy Tarlow, Director

Emily Newman, First Deputy Director

América Cañas, Senior Policy Advisor

Editor

Francisco Navarro, OPS

Contributors

Alane Ruchman, ACS

Abigail Lootens, DCA

Katherine Vera, DCA

Amina Huda, DOE

Lara Torvi, DOITT

Eleanor DiPalma, DOT

Desiree Maple, DOT

Ed Hill, MOCDV

Florence Hutner, MOCDV

Tracy Weber, MOCDV

Emily Accamando, OEM

If you would like to subscribe to this newsletter, please send an email to customerservice@cityhall.nyc.gov. Enter "Subscribe" in the subject field.

To view prior issues of the newsletter, click [here](#).