

# DISTRICT MANAGER'S REPORT

## FEBRUARY, 2021

### **DOHMH Reported on COVID-19 Helpful Online Links and Resources:**

Pharmacies are now beginning to receive the vaccine for distribution. Walgreens is now offering the Covid-19 vaccine locally and you can search for an appointment directly on their website. You will need to first create a Walgreens account at <https://www.walgreens.com/login.jsp> and then search for Covid-19 vaccine and follow prompts.

### **Seniors in need of rides to get a COVID-19 vaccine - Curb Powered Taxi Services**

Residents aged 65+ unable to travel for their vaccine are eligible for free vaccine transportation services to and from City vaccination sites with Curb-powered taxi services.

Call [877-VAX-4NYC](tel:877-VAX-4NYC) to make an appointment at a City-operated vaccination site or go check out [NYC COVID-19 Vaccine Finder](#). After making an appointment to get vaccinated, participants will be screened and directed to Curb's 24/7 call center to book their trips, Access-a-Ride, or ambulette services as appropriate.

[Covid-19 Vaccine Fact Sheet](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/covid/covid-19-vaccines-faq.pdf) <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/covid/covid-19-vaccines-faq.pdf>

[Vaccine Finder](https://vaccinefinder.nyc.gov/) <https://vaccinefinder.nyc.gov/>

**As of Monday, 2/15/21, people with the following underlying conditions are now eligible to receive vaccine:**

- Cancer (current or in remission)
- Chronic kidney disease
- Pulmonary disease, including but not limited to COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), asthma, pulmonary fibrosis, cystic fibrosis, and 9/11-related pulmonary diseases
- Intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Heart conditions, including but not limited to heart failure, coronary artery disease, cardiomyopathies and hypertension
- Immunocompromised state, including but not limited to solid organ transplant, blood or bone marrow transplant, immune deficiencies, HIV, use of corticosteroids, and use of other immune-weakening medicines
- Obesity (BMI of 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup> or higher)
- Pregnancy
- Sickle cell disease or thalassemia
- Type 1 or 2 diabetes mellitus

**The groups already eligible are:**

- Restaurant workers (including delivery workers)
- Taxi and for-hire vehicle drivers
- Residents and staff in developmental disability facilities
- People age 65+
- Public-facing grocery store workers
- First responders and support staff
- Correctional facility staff
- P-12 schools, college, and child care staff (including school bus drivers)
- Public transit employees (including airport and airline staff)
- People living, working, or volunteering in congregate homeless shelters
- Health care workers and public health professionals who see patients in person
- Home health aides
- Nursing home residents and staff
- Staff and residents in facilities run by various NYS health agencies (Offices for People With Developmental Disabilities, Mental Health, and Addiction Services)
- Medical examiners, coroners, and many funeral home workers
- Lab staff working with COVID-19 specimens or those administering vaccines
- Cerebrovascular disease
- Neurologic conditions, including but not limited to Alzheimer's disease or dementia
- Liver disease

**Federal COVID-19 Emergency Relief**

HRA/DSS have received updated information from the State OTDA regarding the consideration of Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation benefits and Economic Impact Payments on eligibility for benefits through HRA.

The Federal Emergency Relief Act passed by Congress in December extends the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation benefits (FPUC) providing a supplement of \$300 per week in federal assistance through March 14, 2021 to each individual receiving Unemployment Insurance Benefits (UIB) through the New York State Department of Labor. The legislation also extends unemployment benefits to self-employed individuals, gig workers and those that have exhausted their state benefits.

The bill provides individuals making up to \$75,000 a year with a stimulus payment of \$600, while couples making up to \$150,000 will receive \$1,200, in addition to \$600 per child. Further information regarding stimulus payment eligibility is available on our website.

The State OTDA has now clarified that these benefits are excluded from consideration as income for the purposes of calculating SNAP benefits, as previously reported, and this exclusion now includes Cash Assistance and HEAP benefits. All income received through FPUC and/or Economic Impact Payments are excluded as income and disregarded as a resource in eligibility determinations for SNAP, Cash Assistance and HEAP benefits. In addition, any lump sum

received under FPUC, if received retroactively, is excluded as income and therefore not subject to the lump sum provisions for these benefits.

For SNAP recipients, the legislation provides a fifteen percent increase in SNAP benefits for six months (through June 30, 2021) for all SNAP participants. This increase will be included in February SNAP benefits. The January increase will be included with the SNAP Emergency supplement for January.

### **Federal Emergency Relief Act – SNAP Student Eligibility**

The Federal Emergency Relief Act temporarily amends the SNAP student eligibility rules by amending the allowable exemptions to the work rule in two additional ways:

- A student is eligible if he or she is eligible to participate in state or federal work-study, regardless if the student is actively employed or participating in work-study; and,
- Any student that has an “expected family contribution” of \$0 may participate in SNAP if otherwise eligible.

These amended eligibility qualifications for students will be in effect until 30 days after the COVID–19 federal public health emergency is lifted.

Students granted eligibility under the amended qualifications will maintain student eligibility until the next recertification regardless of the emergency declaration being lifted at any time during the certification period.

### **Renewal of Determination of Public Health Emergency**

The federal government has announced an extension of the public health emergency through April 20, 2021. HRA/DSS does not have further information at this time regarding the extension of the waivers which they have obtained that may be granted as a result of this PHE extension. HRA/DSS are in contact with State oversight agencies regarding relevant waiver extensions and will share information when it is available.

### **Access-A-Ride updates**

MTA will resume fair collection for Access-A-Ride on January 19, 2021. Eligible Access-A-Ride customers are able to apply for the Fair Fares discount through ACCESS HRA.

The MTA has re-opened three of the six Access-A-Ride assessment centers that have been closed since the start of the pandemic. The open MTA Paratransit Assessment Centers are:

- New York Doctors Urgent Care – 65 West 13th Street, Manhattan
- Horizon Healthcare – 101 Ellis Street., Staten Island
- Excellence Physical Therapy - 1811 Hone Avenue, Bronx

### **Free COVID-19 Testing Sites**

Free testing continues to be available throughout the five boroughs. Getting frequent tests should be every New Yorker's goal. Don't stop at just one test. A schedule of mobile testing locations throughout the City as well as detailed information on locations and types of testing offered at regular testing sites (including rapid testing and antibody tests) can be found [here](#). These are no cost testing sites open to all New Yorkers.

The Test-and-Trace corps now offers the [COVID 19 Wait Times Dashboard](#). This dashboard displays estimated wait times for NYC Health + Hospitals COVID-19 testing locations. This wait time information is updated by site staff every two hours.

NYC Test & Trace Corps has created a folder of documents for public sharing, including flyers, palm cards, holiday guidance, travel guidelines, and more. The documents are [available online here](#).

### **Get The Good Stuff Now – Food Access**

The NYC Health Department is expanding its existing Get the Good Stuff program which provides a dollar for dollar match at 6 participating grocery stores to support SNAP recipients in accessing healthy foods (<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/about/press/pr2019/health-department-partners-with-supermarkets.page>). This expansion seeks to reach New Yorkers who do not participate in food assistance through SNAP. The new program, Get the Good Stuff Now, aims to increase equitable access to healthy food in communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The NYC Health Department is recruiting 5-7 community-based organizations such as food pantries, healthcare providers, social service agencies and faith-based organizations to promote the program and screen and enroll participants, prioritizing New Yorkers at risk for food insecurity who may not qualify for food assistance through SNAP. For more information please visit [https://mcusercontent.com/d6c5e89b761ea49c08cc7ec4d/files/611bb866-3cdc-4201-acc5-89392785f528/Get\\_the\\_Good\\_Stuff\\_Now\\_CBO\\_Application\\_Information.pdf](https://mcusercontent.com/d6c5e89b761ea49c08cc7ec4d/files/611bb866-3cdc-4201-acc5-89392785f528/Get_the_Good_Stuff_Now_CBO_Application_Information.pdf).

### **Emergency SNAP Allotments and Stimulus SNAP Temporary Increase**

As it has in prior months during the public health emergency, State OTDA is issuing an emergency SNAP supplement to households who were issued SNAP benefits for January 2021 and whose issuance was less than the maximum allotment for their household size. The amount of the supplement is the difference between the amount the household was issued and the maximum allotment.

As reported previously, the COVID-19 Emergency Relief Act includes a provision to increase SNAP benefits by fifteen percent for a limited time (through June 30, 2021). The increase for January benefits will be disbursed to all SNAP recipients with the distribution of the SNAP emergency supplement for January. The State has advised us that these supplements will be issued on January 15, 19-22 and 25-29, with benefits available the following day.

Further information regarding the emergency supplemental allotment of SNAP benefits is available [here](#).

### **Childcare**

Recipients of Cash Assistance who are participating in an approved education or training program outside of the home, or are employed, may be eligible for childcare assistance. These needs are assessed at application and recertification. Clients who become employed or engaged outside of the home in between recertifications can submit their employment or engagement information and need for child care through ACCESS HRA by submitting documentation and including a contact number. We will follow-up directly with the client on next steps. Clients requesting childcare often need to submit additional information, so it is important that clients provide a phone number where they can be reached and answer our call.

### **Regular HEAP Benefit**

In response to inquiries received last week, we are providing here the information we have included in our communications in previous weeks and which is now available each week on the [DSS COVID-19 Community Updates page](#).

The regular HEAP benefit season opened on November 2, 2020 and will operate through March 15, 2021. Recipients of HEAP benefits may receive one regular HEAP benefit per program year to help pay for heating costs. Eligibility and benefits are based on income, household size, the primary heating source, and the presence of a household member who is under age 6, is age 60 or older or has a permanent disability. Regular benefits for households that pay directly for heat based on actual usage are paid directly to the vendor that supplies the household's primary source of heat. HEAP recipients can use HEAP approval letters as documentation to support Con Ed reduced rate programs and Verizon Lifeline.

In accordance with the State's HEAP Plan, a household may be eligible for a regular benefit if:

- Clients and/or household members are United States Citizens or qualified immigrants and
- The household's gross monthly income is at or below the current income guidelines or
- The applicant is
  - in receipt of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits or
  - in receipt of Temporary Assistance or
  - in receipt of Code A Supplemental Security Income (SSI Living Alone)

To apply, please contact 212-331-3126 or visit the ACCESS HRA website for instructions [here](#). HEAP applications are available for download [here](#). Please note, the HEAP application cannot be submitted through ACCESS HRA at this time. All HEAP applications need to be completed, signed by the applicant or their authorized representative and returned by mail or dropped off at a designated HEAP assistance location. There is no need to come in to an HRA Center. The completed application can be mailed back to HRA at:

NYC DSS/HRA/HEAP  
PO Box 1401  
Church Street Station  
New York, NY 10008

**George Bruce Library Reported:** The NYPL is extending our suspension of overdue fines for any physical material currently checked out. Fines will not accrue until at least June 30, 2021. Additionally, patrons with library cards set to expire will not have to renew their cards until at least June 30, 2021.

**Library Resources for Teens: Tuesdays, February 2, 9, 16, at 4 pm and February 23rd @3 pm.**

Teens in need of help using NYPL databases for their homework? Can make an appointment for 30 minutes to speak with a YA librarian on Google Meet. Pre-registration is required. Students will need a valid library card and PIN. Registration is open to teens 13-18 years old. All meetings will be held using Google Meet. To register, go to the following link: <https://www.nypl.org/events/programs/2021/02/02/help-library-resources-teens>.

## **UPCOMING VIRTUAL EVENTS @ GEORGE BRUCE**

### **For Adults:**

[Online Book Discussion: Open Book Hour](#) *Wednesday, February 10, 12:30 pm*

Join George Bruce staff to discuss new and noteworthy books, swap recommendations, and more. All formats welcome, including e-books and audiobooks.

### **For Teens:**

[Teen Open Book Discussion](#)

*Thursday, February 25 at 4 pm.*

Please join us for a teen open book discussion. It's not about a specific book. Bring whatever you are reading. All meetings will be held using Google Meet. To register, go to the link above

[Black History Month Celebration with Poetry](#)

*Tuesday, February 23 at 4 pm*

Read aloud selected poems from African-American poets of choice. For Ages 13-18.

The meeting will be held using Google Meet. To register, go to the link above

**MTA REPORTED:**

MTA New York City Transit today announced that it has completed the installation of protective polycarbonate sliders on all 4,800 local buses across all boroughs thanks to Department of Buses Engineering personnel who worked with manufacturers to complete the process at an accelerated pace, overcoming the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The barriers installed by the bus operator's compartment add an extra layer of protection for employees and customers and allow more space for social distancing.

Over the summer, the Department of Buses started the process of installing innovative barriers across the entire fleet. As a temporary measure, some buses were equipped with vinyl curtains. Those curtains have now been fully replaced with the polycarbonate sliders.

Installations were coordinated and performed across 28 bus depots and three overhaul facilities with more than 17,000 hours of work going into installation, design, procurement and fabrication.

“Our frontline heroes continue moving New York City during this pandemic and we are collaborating with our union partners to continue protecting both our employees and customers who are our first priority,” **said Craig Cipriano, President of the MTA Bus Company and Senior Vice President for Buses of New York City Transit.** “We are thankful to our internal workforce, including Buses Engineering, who designed and installed these barriers and understood the importance and need to work efficiently to make sure all of our 4,800 local buses got the polycarbonate sliders.”

“This is a significant accomplishment and a step in the right direction,” **said Tony Utano, President of Transport Workers Union Local 100.** “These barriers offer better protection for our Bus Operators. There's still more work to be done and we will keep pushing forward.”

All 1,000 express buses have a full-length vinyl curtain to isolate the bus operator when passengers board that can move forward and backward in place. The two front rows of seats on express buses remain blocked off to maintain social distancing between the bus operator and passengers. Additionally, the Authority is currently in the development and early pilot stages to create a more permanent barrier for express buses – with installations expected to begin in the coming months.

Additionally, as part of the Authority's unprecedented cleaning and disinfecting efforts, to date buses have gone through more than one million cleaning cycles.

Since the resumption of front-door boarding in August, buses have up to 40 percent more space on them, allowing for social distancing. The white line on the bus floor, behind which riders are expected to stand, continues to remain pushed back, allowing for more social distancing from the bus operator. Customers must wear a mask while on public transit. As part of a pilot, the MTA



has completed installation of mask dispensers on 600 buses on 31 routes across all five boroughs. The dispensers are refilled daily.

With slightly less than one million customers a day, bus ridership is approximately 50 percent of normal pre-pandemic ridership levels. For more information about daily ridership, visit [new.mta.info/coronavirus/ridership](https://new.mta.info/coronavirus/ridership).

Passengers are encouraged to use the capacity tracking feature on the MYmta app that allows customers to track the number of passengers on arriving buses and how long the bus will take to get to their stop. The real-time data collection is done via Automated Passenger Counter (APC) sensors available on buses in all five boroughs, covering 40% of the bus fleet with plans to expand.

Across agencies to date, the MTA has distributed to the workforce 14.3 million masks, 16.4 million pairs of gloves, 99,000 gallons of hand sanitizer, 240,000 7oz and 2oz bottles of hand sanitizer, 11.2 million individual sanitizing cleaning wipes, 237,000 gallons of cleaning solution and 16,000 face shields. Additionally, the Authority has acquired for distribution to customers 6.8 million masks and 750,000 2oz bottles of hand sanitizer.

**DA's Office Reported:** MCB9 is collaborating with the Manhattan DA's Office to host a "Gun Buy Back" event within West Harlem; event is tentatively scheduled for Early Spring-2021.

**DEP Reported:** NYC DEP is offering their 2021 Valentine's Day Digester Egg Tour in collaboration with Open House New York. This virtual tour will take place on **Sunday, February 17, at 5:30 pm**. Please see link below to register and learn more about this special event.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/valentines-day-virtual-tour-newtown-creek-wastewater-facility-tickets-138957520685>.

Respectfully Submitted by,

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District Manager