

HRA's FIA Division of Food Stamp Services Receives Over 100,000 Online Applications

HRA's Family Independence Administration (FIA) Division of Food Stamp Services has received over 100,000 online applications for food stamp benefits. The program began accepting online applications through ACCESS NYC, the City's online social services portal, in late 2010. ACCESS NYC allows New York City residents to submit a food stamp application from any computer with an Internet connection. NYC residents can also submit a food stamp application through New York State's Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance myBenefits portal.

"HRA is committed to using the latest technology to improve access to our programs," said Assistant Deputy Commissioner Gary Jenkins of the Division of Food Stamp Services. "The online application is one of many alternate ways we have developed for New Yorkers to apply for Food Stamps, and is a demonstration of our commitment to providing this valued work support to New Yorkers in need. It's wonderful to see more people taking advantage of this convenient application method."

Once an online application is submitted through ACCESS NYC or myBenefits, an HRA staff member contacts the applicant and arranges for an interview either at an HRA center or by telephone. Currently, nearly 25 percent of applications received by the Food Stamp Program have been submitted through the on-line process, and that percentage is expected to grow.

Online applications and phone-based interviews make it easier for New Yorkers with jobs to apply for this vital work support, reducing the amount of time they may have to take off of work. These application methods also decrease the need to visit a Food Stamp Center, easing foot traffic at HRA offices. Advances like this are key to HRA's response to difficult economic times, helping more New Yorkers while keeping operating costs as low as possible.

In addition to applying online, New Yorkers can also apply for Food Stamps by mail, in person at an HRA center, or through one of 83 community-based organizations located throughout the five boroughs. These innovations have made accessing benefits easier for those in need. As Assistant Deputy Commissioner Jenkins said, "HRA is always committed to finding new and better ways to serve those in need and help them work toward self-sufficiency."