Secretary Robert J. Rodriguez Recognizes the Community Action Network

On May 19, 2022, Robert J. Rodriguez, New York State Secretary of State, issued proclamations recognizing the New York State Community Action (CAA) Network and the New York State Community Action Association, Inc. (NYSCAA) as part of Community Action Recognition Month. The Secretary commended NYSCAA and the CAA network for their extraordinary commitment to providing services to the people of New York throughout the COVID-19 pandemic despite pandemic related difficulties. The NYS Community Action Network continues to work to alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty in their communities, addressing the needs of low-income individuals, including children, the homeless, senior citizens, refugees, and immigrants. Through steadfast commitment of the CAAs and their dedicated employees, New York State has been able to strengthen families, increase opportunities for financial independence, and providing increased access to education and employment opportunities. Lives were positively impacted, and New York State is well on its way to recovery. All 47 of New York’s Community Action Agencies will receive proclamations acknowledging their perseverance and dedication to serving individuals, families, and respective communities. The Division of Community Services (DCS) looks forward to its continued partnership with the Community Action Network in its efforts to alleviate poverty in New York State.
Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. Looks Forward to Women’s Shelter

Funding for a women’s shelter in the City of Jamestown has been awarded to Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. (COI) to address a long-identified need. Construction is slated to begin in Fall of 2022, with an anticipated opening in June of 2023. The facility will be located at 303 Lafayette Street and will shelter up to 18 women. The shelter will be used as short-term housing and will be part of a program aiming to women transition to sustainable independent living situation. Education will play a key role in helping participating women transition. Services provided will include budget and credit counseling provided by COI, and health care and employment assistance provided by referral.

The first floor of the building, formerly a laundromat, will be community space. A secure entrance will lead into a lobby with a computer lab that women can use to look for housing and employment options. There will also be a laundry facility, storage facility, and office space for COI staff to work with the women while they’re in shelter. The second and the third floors will have fully customizable units. The building will be secured through a fob entry system at the main entrance and at each individual unit. A Housing Support Services employee will be on site at the facility 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

This $2.49 million dollar project is made possible by funding provided by the State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) through a Homeless Housing Assistance Program grant. The City of Jamestown has also committed to leveraging $110,000 of its Community Development Block Grant funds for lead reduction activities.

Josiah Lamp, COI’s Director for Housing and Community Development, notes that operating funds will come from per diem allocations through the Chautauqua County Department of Health and Human Services, as well as state grant funding aimed at serving the homeless population.

The project addresses a long-overlooked need for emergency shelter in Chautauqua County, particularly for single female households. During 2020, there were 93 single women in need of emergency shelter who were placed in motels by the Chautauqua County Department of Health and Human Services due to a lack of shelter options. The county Homeless coalition, which serves as the Continuum of Care (CoC) has been working for the past few years to find a suitable location for the development of a shelter to serve single women, either with children or without. The project is a more cost-effective alternative to placement in motels and residents will receive supportive services to prevent recurrences of homelessness.

New Workforce Development Initiative for Service Members

Governor Hochul announced that the Department of the Army has approved the Veteran Semiconductor Training and Experience Program, or VET S.T.E.P., as an official Career Skills Program, part of the Department of Defense SkillBridge network. These programs assist service members, from all branches nationwide, as they transition out of the military and into civilian careers. This program focuses on providing industry-specific training, internships and other work experience. VET S.T.E.P.’s outreach to military installations will serve to educate service members about the employment opportunities available, demonstrate the transferability of military training and discipline to the microelectronics manufacturing field, and provide them with industry-specific onboarding to give participants the skills they need to land the job.

If interested in participating in VET S.T.E.P., please contact Kate Alcott at alcottk@sunypoly.edu or visit https://ny-creates.org/vet-s-t-e-p-semiconductor-training-experience-program/ for more information.
New Americans, Your Neighbors, Your Community

An ONA Ramirez June Initiative workshop, New Americans, Your Neighbors, Your Community, was held on Thursday, May 26, from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m., in collaboration with the Early Care and Learning Council’s Learning Café. This workshop spoke about new Americans in your community. Hear the story of Olivier Mandevu, Program Analyst at the NYS Office for New Americans (ONA). Olivier came to New York State from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in 2007 for safety from persecution and for opportunities to build a better life. Olivier shared the challenges he's faced integrating into a new culture, raising his family, and how he’s overcome barriers and worked to heal from the traumatic experiences he endured in his country of origin. Olivier hopes that by sharing his story, he can help to build a welcoming community that fosters a sense of belonging for new Americans.

Trauma-Informed Care for Immigrant Service Providers and Legal Advocates

On May 24, 2022, the New York State Office for New Americans (ONA) hosted a webinar in recognition of May as Mental Health Awareness Month, on the topic of “Trauma-Informed Care for Immigrant Service Providers and Legal Advocates.”

This webinar featured two presenters. The first presenter was Deb Salamone, Senior Consultant at Coordinated Care Services, Inc., provided an overview of trauma and the essential elements of trauma-informed care. The Adverse Childhood Experiences study was discussed. Participants explored how trauma may be at the center of an individual’s work and/or personal problems, mental health challenges, substance use, physical health issues and/or criminal justice involvement. A short overview of the impact of stress and exposure to trauma on selves including burnout, secondary traumatic stress, and vicarious trauma.

The second presenter, Keighly Rector, Supervising Attorney of the Pro Bono Project at Catholic Charities. Ms. Rector’s presentation built on the shared language around trauma and the physiology of traumatic responses to develop an understanding of how trauma manifests in legal cases. This extended into how attorneys and legal advocates can incorporate trauma-informed care into their practice, why this makes us more effective advocates, and how we can engage in self-care that is meaningful but also reflects the realities of a demanding profession.

Participants in this webinar were able to:

- Obtain a common language for understanding trauma and its effects
- Learn about the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study and its influence
- Understand the human stress response and the spectrum of the helpers' experience
- Identify the ways trauma may show up in legal cases
- Learn to incorporate tenants of trauma-informed care into the attorney-client relationship
- Understand why trauma-informed lawyering makes us more effective advocates
- Develop practical self-care tools

If you would like to receive a recording of this webinar, or if you would like to sign up for future ONA webinars, please contact NewAmericans@dos.ny.gov

Additionally, the New York State Office of Mental Health has the following resources for those in need:

- **NY Project Hope Emotional Support Helpline:** 1-844-863-9314
- **NYS Domestic Violence Hotline:** 1-800-942-6906
- **Crisis Text Line:** Text “Got5” to 741-741
Summer Safety Tips from Division of Consumer Protection

Warmer temperatures and the end of the school year mean more families will be outdoors. New Yorkers can reduce outdoor risks by taking simple precautions to keep their loved ones safe. The New York State Division of Consumer Protection (DCP) offers New Yorkers tips to keep children safe this summer.

**Playground Safety.** Every year, over 200,000 children ages 14 and younger go to U.S. hospital emergency departments with injuries associated with playground equipment, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). Prevent playground injuries by using these tips:

- **Avoid burns** from hot playground equipment by touching the plastic or metal surfaces yourself before kids begin playing.
- **To prevent strangulation**, never attach jump ropes or pet leashes to equipment, and make sure that there are no drawstrings on children’s clothing.
- **Ensure there is a shock-absorbing surface to play on.** Surfaces underneath and around playgrounds should have a 9- to 12-inch-deep layer of wood chips, mulch, sand, pea gravel or mats made of safety-tested rubber to help protect kids if they fall.
- **Check for playground hazards**, especially anything that could cause children to trip and fall, and report any hazards seen. Look out for sharp points and edges on playground equipment.
- **Supervise children** while they play at all times.

**Water Safety Tips.** Drowning remains the leading cause of accidental death in children between ages 1 and 4. Drowning deaths increase during the warm weather months as people spend more time in pools. Keep these tips in mind while having fun in the water:

- **Always supervise children** when in or around water. Designate a Water Watcher and eliminate distractions such as books and electronic devices.
- **Teach essential swimming skills**, such as floating, breathing techniques and treading water. These will help children have more confidence in the water.
- **Pools should be enclosed in a barrier** with self-closing and self-latching gates. The fence should separate the house and the pool area.
- **Learn CPR and other lifesaving skills** so that you know how to react in an emergency.
- **Always use life jackets** around natural bodies of water, even if you know how to swim.

**Trampoline Safety.** Using trampolines can easily lead to injury due to collisions and falls. Take these precautions when using a trampoline:

- **Only one jumper should be allowed at a time.** The CPSC reports that many trampoline-related injuries occur due to jumpers colliding with one another.
- **Always supervise children** when using trampolines. Set ground rules and don’t allow tricks like somersaults or flips, which can lead to paralysis if the jumper lands on their head or neck.
- **Trampolines should have shock-absorbing pads** that completely cover its springs, hooks, and the frame of the structure.
- **Keep the trampoline enclosed in a net and away from external hazards** such as surrounding trees.

The New York State Division of Consumer Protection provides resources and education materials to consumers on product safety, as well as voluntary mediation services between consumers and businesses. The Consumer Assistance Helpline 1-800-697-1220 is available Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 4:30pm, excluding State Holidays, and consumer complaints can be filed at any time at [www.dos.ny.gov/consumer-protection](http://www.dos.ny.gov/consumer-protection).
Guidance to Parents During the Baby Formula Shortage

The New York State Division of Consumer Protection warns New Yorkers to be aware of unscrupulous practices from individuals who are using the baby formula shortages to scam desperate parents. These scams are typically rooted in online sales, and private sellers who are marketing cans for double the price knowing that big retailers have empty shelves and little information about when they may receive the next shipment. Here are some important tips to help consumers make informed decisions:

- **Safety check the product:** Make sure the formula you are buying is not subject to a recall. Information on recent formula recalls can be found on the FDA website. Confirm the formula is new and still sealed in a tamper proof container. Check the expiration date and be certain the product won’t expire before you are able to use it all.

- **Beware of social media:** In the era of social media marketing, sham businesses and scam artists can easily contact unwitting consumers. According to the Federal Trade Commission, more than one in four people who reported losing money to fraud in 2021 said it started on social media with an ad, a post, or a message. If you receive a direct message with an offer to sell you formula or if you see formula for sale on an online marketplace, be especially cautious. Try to arrange for an in-person meeting, so you can be sure you receive the products you’re buying.

- **Use caution when shopping online:** Shop on trusted sites with retailers known to you. Do your research if you want to try a new site or retailer. Performing a broad internet search will provide you with important feedback from other customers. Are there any reviews? How is the company responding to its customers? Read the comments within any social media advertisements. This will help you assess what to expect if something goes wrong, and if the comments are turned off, that’s a big red flag.

- **Beware of Fake Websites:** Fraudsters continue to advance in sophistication to perpetuate scams, fake websites resemble legitimate sites, with very credible-looking logos, pictures, and payment options. If the website is advertising unusually low prices, consumers should be wary and diligently verify the legitimacy of the seller. Consumers should review the copyright date and domain creation date, as recently created sites are a tell-tale sign of scam sites, and typos on the web site are a red flag that it may not be legitimate.

- **Beware of third-party vendors:** If redirected from a trusted site to a third-party site. Read the sellers policies, review ratings, and consumer comments, and most importantly, do a broad internet search before making your purchase. Trusted retailers who host third party sellers do not warranty their sales, thus you could get a substandard product or no product at all when you take the risk and purchase from an unknown third-party vendor.

- **Read the product specifications:** Online marketing is geared to get you to buy so it is important to understand the product you are purchasing and the terms of the sale to ensure you are getting what you want. Is the brand and type of formula being sold what you are looking for? Is the size of the product you are buying the same as what you are expecting?

- **Use a Credit Card:** For online purchases, be sure to use a credit card rather than a debit card. If the item that arrives is different than what you ordered or you don’t receive the item at all, dispute the charge with your credit card provider.

- **Know Your Rights:** The Federal Mail, Internet, or Telephone Order Merchandise Rule (the Mail Order Rule) of 1975, updated in 2014 to include online orders, applies to merchandise sold to consumers online, by mail or by phone. It states that your order must be delivered within 30 days unless otherwise stated. If there is a delay, you must be notified. If the company cannot reach you to obtain your consent to the delay, they must, without being asked, promptly refund all the money you paid for the unshipped merchandise.

The New York State Division of Consumer Protection provides voluntary mediation between a consumer and a business when a consumer has been unsuccessful at reaching a resolution on their own. The Consumer Assistance Helpline 1-800-697-1220 is available Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 4:30pm, excluding State Holidays, and consumer complaints can be filed at any time at www.dos.ny.gov/consumerprotection.
$2 Billion in Child Care Subsidies to Support Low-Income and Working Families

New York State will be distributed—$2 billion to increase the number of families receiving childcare financial assistance and the amount childcare providers are paid for their essential services. The $2 billion in childcare subsidies includes $894 million in New York State Child Care Block Grant new funding passed in the recent State Budget, more than $500 million in funds previously allocated to local departments of social services districts that remains unspent, and more than $600 million in existing COVID-19 pandemic funding. As part of the Governor's unprecedented commitment of $7 billion to childcare over the next four years, these investments provide families with much-needed support, while also furthering New York's economic recovery.

The funding, managed by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), will expand the initial eligibility levels for families in August 2022 to up to 300% of the federal poverty level ($83,250 for a family of four), up from 200%, extending eligibility to hundreds of thousands of young children in New York.

For additional information on this funding or the Child Care Assistance Program, families and providers should contact their local department of social services.

Additional Resources for the CSBG Network

The Affordable Connectivity Program is a Federal Communications Commission program that helps connect families and households struggling to afford internet service. This new benefit provides a discount of up to $30 per month toward broadband service for eligible households and up to $75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands. Eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to $100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers.

Eligible households can enroll through a participating broadband provider or directly with the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) using an online or mail in application.

You can learn more about the benefit, including eligibility and enrollment information, by visiting www.fcc.gov/ACP, or by calling 877-384-2575.

Resources for Responding to COVID-19

Community Action Partnership: COVID-19 Community Needs Assessment
CAPLAW: Coronavirus Updates for the Community Action Network
NASCSP Coronavirus Resources
NYSCAA Coronavirus (COVID-19) Resources
Food Pantries across New York State
New York State Department of Health

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