



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DIVISION OF
COMMUNITY SERVICES/CSBG

Kathy Hochul, Governor
Robert J. Rodriguez, Secretary of State

Please practice social distancing and wear a mask whenever possible for your safety and the safety of others.

**The Division of Community Services wishes everyone
Happy Holidays and a Joyous New Year!**

Agency Highlight:

Economic Opportunity Program of Chemung and Schuyler Counties, Inc.

The ACCEL Clinic: Breaking Down Barriers to Healthcare for Chemung County

Chemung County has historically had some of the highest lead levels in New York State. In 2014, 11% of children were positive for lead, compared to 4% statewide. Many families are unaware of the damage lead can cause for children. It may lead to serious health issues, behavioral problems, learning challenges, and other difficulties. With early testing, many effects are reversible.

In 2017 and 2018, Economic Opportunity Program (EOP, Inc.) in Elmira, New York began working with Common Ground Health to address high lead levels in Chemung County.

Elizabeth Derr is EOP, Inc.'s Health Educator and Health Services Coordinator. She says, "Lead is a metal that can hurt children and adults. Children may not look or act sick, but a blood test could show they have lead poisoning. It can harm their growth, behavior, and ability to learn. Lead can also be a problem for adults as well; especially pregnant women and their babies."

What is the ACCEL Clinic?

ACCEL stands for Arnot Health, Chemung County Health Department, EOP, Inc., and LECOM. The clinic is underwritten by Excellus BlueCross BlueShield and represents a partnership to address social determinants of health.



Chemung County was already facing significant barriers to healthcare before COVID-19, including access to health screenings and finding transportation to appointments. Phase 1 was to offer free lead screening.

“The ACCEL Clinic is proof that there is nothing that cannot be accomplished when two or three community partners come together with a common vision and goal,” says Andrea Ogunwumi, CEO of EOP, Inc. “We are greater than the sum of our parts.”

The ACCEL Clinic Celebrates its 1-Year Anniversary

The ACCEL Clinic celebrated its first anniversary on November 2, 2022 and has completed a total of 106 lead screenings.



Informational Zoom meetings are made available to the general public. EOP, Inc. provides literature to those participating in its curbside feeding program, and uses Facebook to get the word out about the ACCEL Clinic.

The Future of the ACCEL Clinic

Dr. Richard Terry, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs at LECOM, is excited about the ACCEL Clinic’s future. Phase 2 includes blood pressure screenings for children and adults. Future phases will focus on mental health, diabetes screenings, and other tests.

The ACCEL team believes any organization in New York State can accomplish similar goals. LECOM students at the other 16 schools in the state are available to facilitate testing. “We have to break down all social and political barriers. Think in terms of, what would be best for the community? How can we work together? This could be done in other areas at an even larger scale. Collaboration needs to happen for the best outcomes for the community. That’s the key to this project. We’re all working together for the greater good.”



The ACCEL team is excited to serve Chemung County and welcomes interested organizations to contact them to learn more about how to begin the same initiatives for their communities.

Thank you to Andrea Ogunwumi, CEO of EOP, Inc. for sharing the article and pictures with us!

Division of Consumer Protection

THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER PROTECTION PROVIDES TIPS TO HELP CONSUMERS NAVIGATE THE HOLIDAY SHOPPING SEASON

Discover What to Look for When Reviewing Return and Refund Policies

The Division of Consumer Protection (DCP) reminds shoppers of New York State laws that protect consumers so they can make informed decisions about holiday purchases. To avoid surprises, DCP recommends that consumers carefully review and understand what to look for when reviewing return and refund policies.

Around the holidays, gift givers and receivers often change their minds. According to the National Retail Federation, retail returns increased significantly last year (16.6% in 2021 versus 10.6% in 2020) and this year they're expecting more. To help navigate the busy shopping season, DCP offers the following tips:

- **Pay Attention to Return Policies:** New York State law requires that retailers post their return and refund policies conspicuously to inform consumers before the transaction is completed. Retailers must provide a written copy of the store's return policies when requested.

New York State Law does not require retailers to accept returns, however, they must post a conspicuous notice visible to consumers before the point of sale advising that no returns will be accepted.

If the retailer does not post a return policy, the law requires the retailer to accept returns of unused, undamaged merchandise within 30 days of the purchase date, with proof of purchase, and provide a refund in the form — cash or a credit — of the consumer's preference

- **Understand the Refund Terms:** For retailers that allow returns, New York State law does not require refunds to be given in any specific manner. However, it does require the form of the refund — cash, credit, or exchange — be clearly disclosed in advance of purchase. Retailers must also disclose any fees associated with the return. If no fee is listed, shoppers should inquire whether the store imposes a restocking fee for returned merchandise and determine prior to purchase if the item can be returned for a refund or only store credit.

- **Retain Any Proof of Purchase:** Consumers should retain receipts in the event a product needs to be returned, and when purchasing gifts, ask if a gift receipt is available.

Consumers having trouble obtaining a store refund are encouraged to file a complaint with the New York State Division of Consumer Protection.

The New York State Division of Consumer Protection provides resources and education materials to consumers, 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.

For more consumer protection tips, follow the Division on social media at Twitter: @NYSConsumer and Facebook: www.facebook.com/nysconsumer

New York State Celebrates Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Paths to Change

January 16, 2023

Airing on PBS and Streaming at <https://empirestateplaza.ny.gov/nyking>

Office for New Americans (ONA)

ONA Expands Programming for Newly Arrived Immigrants to NYS and Highlights Services and Programs for Immigrant Victims of Crime

On November 30, 2022, Governor Kathy Hochul [announced](#) the launch of three new legal services grants, administered by the Office for New Americans (ONA), to assist the thousands of immigrants who have arrived in New York City this year. This new legal response initiative will supplement ONA's existing legal programs with these providers and immediately increase their capacity to support ongoing services, ensuring that new arrivals' legal needs are addressed and supported throughout the immigration process. Furthermore, these resources will help more immigrants with asylum applications and other immigration-related legal matters, including providing representation to recent arrivals more quickly.

Three of ONA's legal partners will lead this initiative - Catholic Charities Community Services (CCCS), the Archdiocese of New York, the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG), and the Immigrant Advocates Response Collaborative (I-ARC). These organizations have been on the ground since the beginning of the recent immigrant arrivals in New York City, providing expertise in the provision and coordination of legal services.

To connect with any of ONA's programs, including free legal services, call the New Americans Hotline at 1-800-566-7636.

On November 29, 2022, ONA hosted a webinar on "How to Support and Assist Immigrants Impacted by Crime." The presenters for this webinar were from the [New York State Office of Victim Services \(OVS\)](#), which provides critical services and support to crime victims and their families. The webinar's goal was to raise awareness of OVS's mission and how it can assist immigrant victims regardless of immigration status or English language proficiency.

Furthermore, the webinar provided participants with an understanding of services and programs such as the Victim Assistance Programs (VAPs), Domestic Violence shelters, including those that accept pets, the OVS website's Resource Connect tool, Human Trafficking assistance and training, and the Crime Victim Legal Network (CVLN).

If you would like to receive the recording and materials from this webinar, please contact us at NewAmericans@dos.ny.gov.

To access the recording of the webinar, please [CLICK HERE](#).

Office for New Americans (ONA) Ramirez June Initiative



The ONA Ramirez June Initiative held two presentations at the National Immigrant Inclusion Conference (NIIC) on December 13, 2022, in National Harbor, Maryland. The NIIC is the nation's largest gathering of the entire sector working to support our country's new Americans. Launched in 2008, the conference is a project of the National Partnership for New Americans (NPNA).

Cynthia Stewart, the Developmental Disabilities (DD) Navigator leading the ONA Ramirez June Initiative presented on a panel "Building Comprehensive & Accessible Systems & Communities of Care." The panel was part of the conference's Healthy Communities Track and its speakers shared strategies to remove barriers for new Americans to access healthcare and other vital services. During the panel, the DD Navigator explained how the Ramirez June Initiative is a navigator model, funded by the NYS Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DDPC), to build capacity in New York State to support new Americans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). The mission, structure, goals, and achievements of the Ramirez June Initiative were shared with attendees to encourage other states and U.S. territories to adopt a similar initiative to support their new American disability communities in overcoming barriers to access the services they need.

This year, the NIIC hosted a Language Access Convening for advocates, organizations, and local and state governments interested in language justice to gather, share strategies, and build relationships across their networks. During the Language Access Convening, the ONA DD Navigator led a session, "The Intersection of Language Access and Accessibility," to facilitate discussion among attendees about the language access and accessibility needs of new American disability communities. For instance, language access and accessibility needs are intertwined for Deaf new American communities. For communication to be effective, Deaf new Americans may indicate that they need interpreters who are proficient in sign languages from their countries of origin like Nepali Sign Language or Mexican Sign Language. Another example of the intersection of language access and accessibility that was discussed is the practice of providing written material in "plain language." Content is in plain language when it is written so that it is clear and concise and can easily be understood by readers. Plain language can support equal access to written information for individuals with disabilities and individuals with varying levels of reading comprehension including new Americans who are learning English as their second or third language. Additionally, plain language makes written material easier to translate into different languages which supports language access for individuals with limited proficiency in English. Integrating an understanding of the different ways in which language access and accessibility can intersect helps to support new American disability communities to access vital information.

Learn more about the National Immigrant Inclusion Conference: <https://niic.org/>

New York State Department of Labor

2023 New York State Minimum Wage

The minimum wage is again increasing for a portion of New York State (NYS) for calendar year 2023. Effective December 31, 2022, the minimum wage in NYS outside of New York City, Long Island, and Westchester County will increase to \$14.20/hour. Within New York City, Long Island, and Westchester County, the minimum wage will remain \$15.00/hour.

Additional minimum wage information can be found on the New York State Department of Labor website at <https://www.ny.gov/new-york-states-minimum-wage/new-york-states-minimum-wage> or by calling 888-469-7365.

Department of Public Service: Virtual Winter Workshop

The Department of Public Service is hosting “one-stop shopping” virtual workshop on **January 26, 2023, 1:00-2:30 pm** with presentations from the following state agencies:

- Department of Public Service
- Energy Research and Development Authority
- Housing and Community Renewal
- Office for the Aging
- Power Authority
- Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

Topics Include:

- Energy Affordability Programs
- Financial Assistance Programs
- Weatherization Programs
- Energy Efficiency
- Services for Older Adults

The Department of Public Service has a Winter Preparedness 2022-2023 webpage with additional resources: www.dps.ny.gov/winter



[Register Here](#)

Or Visit

WWW.WEBEX.COM/JOIN

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552 8230

Password: Jan26-
1pm

Phone-Only Access:

518-549-0500

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Community Action Partnership

Community Action 101 Webinar

Wednesday, February 22, at 2 PM ET

For more than 50 years, Community Action has served as a dynamic and community-based force in addressing the causes and conditions of poverty throughout the USA. Join the Partnership's CEO, Denise Harlow, as she grounds us in the history, model, and Promise of Community Action, and discusses current opportunities for the Community Action network.

[Click here](#) to register.

New York State Homes & Community Renewal

Grants Available for Home Repairs, Home Purchase Down Payment Assistance, Rental Assistance, Manufactured Home Replacement and Accessibility Modifications

New York State Homes and Community Renewal (HCR) recently awarded grant funds to not-for-profits and municipalities as part of its annual competitive funding round. Selected to serve as Local Program Administrators (LPAs) for a variety of housing activities, these organizations will make grants available to eligible low- and moderate-income applicants in the areas they serve.

The **Access to Home** program provides home modification support to low- and moderate-income homeowners or renters living with a disability. Access to Home for Medicaid Recipients provides targeted resources for individuals receiving Medicaid benefits and Access to Home for Heroes targets veterans with service-related injuries, age, or health related disabilities.

The **RESTORE** program assists senior citizen homeowners aged 60 and older, with the cost of emergency home repairs that eliminate hazardous conditions or code violations.

The **Mobile and Manufactured Home Replacement (MMHR)** program assists low- and moderate-income homeowners to replace dilapidated mobile or manufactured homes that are sited on land owned by the homeowner with a new manufactured, modular, or site-built home.

The **NYS HOME** program helps to expand the supply of decent, safe, and affordable housing using federal HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) funds allocated annually to New York State. Funds may be used for home repair, manufactured housing replacement, down payment assistance and rental assistance to low- and moderate-income households.

Local Program Administrators (LPAs) may be contacted for more information about the local programs or individuals may be referred directly for assistance in the service areas identified:

<https://hcr.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2022/12/nys-hcr-ocr-2022.pdf>

Division of Community Services Reminders:

CSBG Eligibility Guidelines

Be on the lookout for updated information regarding the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). The language in the current Continuing Resolution allows for the use of the 200% FPL CSBG Eligibility Guidelines until December 23, 2022.

Quarterly Reports are due January 2023

- Tuesday January 10, 2023: MWBE Form C and Form F
- Monday January 30, 2023: PPR and PPR Narratives; Fiscal and Program Attestation

Annual Compliance Review of Organizational Standards (ACROS) FFY 2023

Eligible Entities that do not have a TRACS in FFY 2023 will submit the Self-Assessment by Tuesday, January 31, 2023.

An email with submission information was sent October 19, 2022. If you have any questions, please contact your assigned Program Analyst.

Annual Report Modules due March 31

Eligible Entities were sent the FY 2022 and 2022 CARES Annual Report Modules and Instructions on December 13, 2022.

If there are any questions, please reach out to dosDCSInetInfo@dos.ny.gov and copy your Program Analyst.

Additional Resources for the CSBG Network

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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