HSC Launches Human Services Recovery Task Force

With the sector’s future at risk, task force will produce recommendations for the next mayor

Orgs face threat of closure from COVID-19 & fiscal crisis, but human services are essential to NY’s recovery

NEW YORK – The Human Services Council (HSC) today launched the Human Services Recovery Task Force to study the human services sector’s response to COVID-19, the “new normal” that providers face, and the steps that government must take to keep the sector afloat and help New York recover from the pandemic.

New York’s human services sector has played a critical role on the front lines of the COVID-19 response, delivering critical services for New Yorkers, including distributing technology to homebound students, feeding those struggling with food insecurity, and keeping open facilities like homeless and domestic violence shelters.

Despite losing significant revenue, these organizations have adapted to meet increased and changing needs, and they will remain the recovery mechanism for New York as need grows for employment and job training for displaced workers, eviction prevention for those unable to make rent, and after-school and tutoring to get children back on track along with childcare to get parents back to work.

Even as the state’s largest private employer, the nonprofit sector has been excluded from planning around New York’s health and economic recovery. Estimates suggest that the sector could see 1800 nonprofit closures, with New York as the 10th-most impacted state by nonprofit closures in the country. The human services sector could face at least 14,000 layoffs – providers are already laying off staff.

“Human services have been and will continue to be absolutely essential to New York’s recovery from this crisis,” said Michelle Jackson, Executive Director of the Human Services Council (HSC). “The sector has stepped up for New Yorkers in a time of crisis, and we will be there to help turn things around. We look forward to putting forward a very clear agenda for our partners in City Hall and Albany so we can work together to craft a smart and effective strategy to stem the tide of this virus and keep New York strong.”

“Since day one of this pandemic, human services providers like Urban Pathways and our workers have been on the front lines, transforming their organizations and risking their health to serve New Yorkers, and we know as well as anyone what it will take to get New York moving
again,” said Fred Shack, CEO of Urban Pathways and Co-Chair of the Human Services Recovery Task Force. “Turning the corner on COVID-19 must be our city and state’s first priority, and it will require a responsive and collaborative government willing to work with those of us who know firsthand what this virus has done and how we can overcome it, and this task force is ready to take on those major issues.”

“We are ready to chart a new path for a sector that has been at the center of New York's COVID-19 response and will be essential to the city and state’s recovery,” said Jamie Rubin, CEO of Meridiam NA and Co-Chair of the Human Services Recovery Task Force. “New York can only move forward with a robust human services sector working closely with their government partners to ensure that New Yorkers have the services they need in this new normal, and our goal is to provide the roadmap to get there.”

“The human services sector has been on the ground since the first day of the pandemic,” said Jeremy Kohomban, President and CEO of the Children’s Village and Board Chair of the Human Services Council (HSC). “Our organizations pivoted, and we committed to be there for our people, embedded among them in the spaces and communities hardest hit by COVID. In those dark days of March and April, we kept them safe as best we could and did so all without the support we needed from our government partners. This process will help our partners understand exactly what they can do to help keep our sector strong for New Yorkers for a long time to come.”

The task force, led by co-chairs Meridiam NA CEO Jamie Rubin and Urban Pathways CEO Fred Shack, will begin its work this month and take place over the following six months. The process will conclude in April 2021 with a final report and recommendations as well as a forum of mayoral candidates addressing critical issues like the city’s COVID-19 recovery and the future of the human services sector.

The task force will take on three major areas:

- The impact of COVID-19 on the human services sector
- The “new normal” for providers in the wake of COVID-19
- Recommendations for government to support human services workers, strategically fund the sector, and hold a seat at the table on budgetary and programmatic issues

New York’s human services organizations are funded primarily through government contracts and provide needed, and often legally mandated, services across the city. Prior to COVID-19, these contracts underfunded by 20% the direct costs of implementing contracted programs; this summer, the City also cut funding set aside for indirect costs associated with these programs.

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About HSC
The Human Services Council of New York, a leading advocate for nonprofits providing human services, works to strengthen the ability of nonprofit agencies to maximize human potential in