



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
INDEPENDENT BUDGET OFFICE
110 WILLIAM STREET, 14TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10038
www.ibo.nyc.gov · iboenews@ibo.nyc.gov

VIA EMAIL

May 7, 2024

Julie Menin, Council Member
New York City Council
JMenin@council.nyc.gov

Dear Council Member Menin,

At your request, in light of the recent creation of the Office of Healthcare Accountability by Local Law 78 of 2023, the Independent Budget Office (IBO) has conducted research into a number of other New York City government offices and agencies that were created to resolve specific issues in the City. IBO examined staffing for these governmental units focusing on the first three years of operation, the circumstances which prompted their creation, and what these units accomplished in relation to their stated goals.

Our research included queries into the City Human Resource Management System to identify staffing levels in the first three years, and a review of reports and articles published about the offices of interest. Additionally, IBO conducted interviews with founding Directors and Chiefs of Staff, and policymakers who sponsored the legislation for the creation of these units. These conversations revealed that prioritization of the specific policy area, particularly across mayoral administrations, or external pressure from New York State or other stakeholders, was critical for their success.

The attached memorandum contextualizes the establishment of the following offices and agencies, though it should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list of City offices created in recent decades:

- The Division of AIDS Services (1987)
- The Department of Homeless Services (1993)
- The Mayor's Office of Health Insurance Access (2000)
- The Office of the Food Policy Coordinator (2007)
- The Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence (2011)
- The Office of Nightlife (2018)

If you have any questions, please contact me at louisac@ibo.nyc.ny.us or Cassandra Stuart, who conducted the analysis, at cassandras@ibo.nyc.ny.us.

Sincerely,

Louisa Chafee
Director

MEMORANDUM

To: Council Member Julie Menin
From: Louisa Chafee, Director
Date: May 7, 2024
Subject: Recounting the Creation of New York City Offices

At the request of Council Member Julie Menin, the sponsor of Local Law 78 of 2023, creating the Office of Healthcare Accountability, IBO conducted research on how specific policy issues in the City's history have been addressed through the creation of targeted single purpose government offices. This research covers the impetus for each office's creation and early accomplishments that each office achieved. Where possible, this memorandum provides the initial headcount of the offices; in some cases, the offices operated with fewer than 10 employees, while in other cases the staff count was in the hundreds. Budget information is not provided because five of the six units were not given a separate budget, only staff positions within existing agency budgets. The six offices included in this analysis serve a variety of functions and span the past 40 years. IBO also noted key accomplishments, as self-identified by individuals central to the creation of each office, for context about how efficacy can be measured. The objective was to identify how each entity was structured and operated for success. The six offices are:

- The Division of AIDS Services (1987)
- The Department of Homeless Services (1993)
- The Mayor's Office of Health Insurance Access (2000)
- The Office of the Food Policy Coordinator (2007)
- The Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence (2011)
- The Office of Nightlife (2018)

The Division of AIDS Services (DAS), Established 1987 Now the HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA)

About the Office

New York City health officials first began to report what later became known as acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) in 1981, though the disease had been spreading in the population prior to that time.¹ According to data from the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, AIDS diagnoses in New York City thereafter increased rapidly year over year, in some cases doubling between one year and the next.² By 1987, the count of cumulative AIDS diagnoses in the City was almost 16,000 and the populations most at-risk for infection —men having sex with men and intravenous drug users— were facing immense discrimination and had difficulty accessing medical care and finding housing. There was, therefore, great need for a coordinated response effort.

DAS was created to assist individuals living with AIDS in accessing public benefits and services provided by the Human Resources Administration (HRA). It was a later iteration of the AIDS Case Management Unit that was started in 1985 by HRA within the Crisis Intervention Services division.³ At the time of the office's creation, there were not enough dedicated staff to serve the volume of individuals requesting social services and one of the primary goals of DAS was to reduce the existing backlog across multiple social services including housing, food, access to medical treatment, and more. Further, the office sought to put clients in touch with case workers, provide housing, and provide medical services by way of enrolling individuals in Medicaid.

DAS served as a novel and focused response approach to an unprecedented crisis. By creating a new office with a specific focus, the City was better able to streamline client processing, though this work was not

without its challenges. Office staff experienced emotional distress from the loss of clients and fellow staff alike as they succumbed to the disease. DAS helped to connect surviving relatives with public services that could support them, and worked with relatives, partners, and friends of the deceased to coordinate burial services.

Created By: Mayor Edward Koch

Context: Rising public outrage about the response to the AIDS crisis and advocacy from groups such as ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power).

Staffing

At the end of its first year of operation, headcount at DAS was 208. By the third year of operation, this count had grown to 571, a 175% increase in staffing.

Fiscal Year	1987	1988	1989
Headcount	208	228	571

SOURCE: City Human Resource Management System. Headcount is counted as of June 30 of each year
NOTE: Because of union negotiations which prohibited City employees from being assigned to DAS, employees had to volunteer to work there.

Accomplishments

In 1986, DAS helped to establish Bailey House, the first congregate facility for people living with AIDS. Congregate facilities are those in which each tenant has their own room or apartment in a single building.⁴ DAS also established scattered site housing which allowed for clients to receive services and meet with case workers on site, though these were primarily single room occupancy residences because there was difficulty securing other housing options. These efforts changed the culture of government caring for AIDS patients as allies began to advocate for housing for those living with AIDS based on the precedent set in New York.⁵

Interview: Gordon Campbell, founding Director of DAS.

The Department of Homeless Services (DHS), Established 1993

About the Agency

IBO notes that DHS is quite different from other offices included in this analysis, with a much larger scale as a full agency (although it has since been reincorporated under HRA). Regardless, DHS remains an example of a unit created with a specific policy purpose.

The 1981 Callahan v. Carey consent decree and the 1986 McCain v. Koch ruling established New Yorkers' right to shelter. Over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, a myriad of factors—including the shuttering of psychiatric facilities and changes in tax benefits, the housing supply, and employment availability — compounded together to increase the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in New York City. More specifically, tax incentives were put in place for the conversion of single room occupancy residences (SROs) and rooming houses into rental apartments; these converted SROs would have otherwise housed low-income persons.⁶ The closure of State-run psychiatric hospitals was not accompanied by adequate discharge planning for housing and resulted in an increase in individuals living in shelters.⁷ At the federal level, there was a slowdown in the construction of subsidized housing and reductions in funding diminished subsidized public service employment programs.⁸ These parallel occurrences resulted in a deeply stressed shelter system.

A Mayoral Commission on the Homeless, sometimes referred to as the Cuomo Commission after Andrew Cuomo who led it, was convened in 1991 to examine the issue in New York City and give guidance on improvements that could be made to the existing system. The following year, the commission recommended that the City invest in rental subsidies; nonprofit groups be contracted to operate shelters and offer specialized social services to the City's homeless population; and a City agency be created, independent of HRA, through which these efforts could be managed.⁹ The Department of Homeless Services (DHS) was carved out of HRA and established as a free-standing agency on July 1, 1993.

DHS sought to improve the way homeless services in New York City were delivered, with the ultimate goal of eliminating homelessness. Other goals of the agency included achieving a decline in the daily shelter census, contracting out to non-profits to make shelters more service-oriented, and increasing the supply of supportive housing.

Created by: Mayor David Dinkins

Context: Increasing evidence of street homelessness; ongoing litigation; pressure mounting from advocates and from the administration of Governor Mario Cuomo.

Staffing

DHS headcount ranged between approximately 2,400 and 3,000 in the first three years of operation.

Fiscal Year	1994	1995	1996
Headcount	3,095	2,740	2,433

SOURCE: City Human Resource Management System. Headcount is counted as of June 30 of each year
 NOTE: All PS and OTPS expenses were paid directly by the City. Initially, 50% of single adult expenses were reimbursed by the State, 75% of family expenses were reimbursed (50% by the Feds, 25% by the State), with an allocation formula established for administrative overhead. However, cost-sharing formulas have changed over time and the City's share of total costs has increased.

Accomplishments

In the first five years of operation, DHS maintained direct control of 15 shelters and increased the number of privately operated shelters from fewer than five to 110.¹⁰ The agency was able to improve the quality of services offered to persons in shelters by establishing performance criteria for contracted providers and incentivizing satisfactory service delivery. Today, DHS oversees over 300 shelters throughout the City, the majority of which are operated by non-profit contractors. DHS directly runs 10 shelters.¹¹

Interview: Muzzy Rosenblatt, the first Chief of Staff at DHS.

**The Mayor's Office of Health Insurance Access (MOHIA), Established 2000
 Now the Office of Citywide Health Insurance Access (OCHIA)**

About the Office

The Mayor's Office of Health Insurance Access (MOHIA) was established by the Mayor in April 2000 with the goal of significantly increasing enrollment in public health insurance programs such as Medicaid, Child Health Plus, and Family Health Plus.¹² Early efforts of the office were focused on increasing awareness of the available programs and conducting referrals, providing outreach specifically to families with uninsured children. Another goal of the office was to increase private health insurance options for small businesses.

MOHIA coordinated its efforts to enroll New Yorkers in health insurance plans via its HealthStat initiative. Through this initiative, MOHIA trained employees from multiple City agencies on outreach, identification, and enrollment of eligible persons. These City employees, in turn, trained others at their respective agencies. Each involved agency had monthly targets for enrollment and a point person who was responsible for delivering weekly reports on the agency's progress to the Office of Emergency Management. The Director of the office then reported on each agency's progress at monthly cabinet meetings.

Created by: Mayor Rudy Giuliani

Context: The HealthStat initiative was implemented shortly after, and partly due to, the Mayor's diagnosis of prostate cancer.

Staffing

IBO could not determine headcount for this office because it was situated within the Mayor's Office during its beginning years.

Accomplishments

At the time of the office's creation, the City estimated that approximately 1.5 million low-income New Yorkers did not have health insurance coverage, and that at least 900,000 of them may have been eligible for federal or state plans.¹³ In the first year of the program, the City attributed 100,000 enrollments in public health insurance programs to HealthStat. Within another four months, the city attributed an additional 50,000 enrollments to HealthStat. With regard to uninsured children, the City also reported that in the first year of the program the number of children enrolled in a public insurance plan increased by 126,000.

Interview: Anne Heller, founding Director of MOHIA.

The Office of the Food Policy Coordinator, Established 2007 Now the Mayor's Office of Food Policy (MOFP)

About the Office

New York City's first Food Policy Coordinator (FPC) was appointed in 2007, and the position was formalized by a Mayoral Executive Order in 2008.¹⁴ The FPC was responsible for coordinating efforts across City agencies to increase access to healthy foods. The three overarching goals of the FPC were to improve access to food support programs such as food stamps and school meals, have City agencies and their contractors serve healthier meals, and promote retail access to and demand for healthy food.¹⁵ At the time that the FPC was instated, there was a shortage of grocery stores and supermarkets in low-income neighborhoods and, thus, a lack of access to healthy food options for those communities. Additionally, over 200 million meals and snacks were being served annually by the City through schools, hospitals, jails, and various food programs, all of varying nutritional value and quality. City agencies serving healthier food options would, therefore, have a far-reaching impact. The FPC also chaired a food policy task force with representatives from various City agencies and coordinated three working groups, one dedicated to each of the three aforementioned goals.

The current iteration of this office is the Mayor's Office of Food Policy (MOFP) which was codified into the City Charter in 2020. MOFP works to develop food policy across City agencies and support environmental sustainability in the food system. The office continues to prioritize increasing food security and access to healthy foods while producing a 10-year food policy plan for New York City.

Created by: Mayor Michael Bloomberg and New York City Council

Context: Lack of access to healthy food options, particularly for low-income neighborhoods.

Staffing

In the first three years, the only position in this office was that of the Food Policy Coordinator, who was situated in the Mayor's Office.

Accomplishments

A food policy task force convened by the FPC established nutritional standards for all food served or purchased by City agencies and their contractors. For example, agencies that served three meals daily were required to provide at least five servings of fruits and vegetables, and an appropriate range of calories, salt, and fiber was required for all meals. The FPC worked jointly with the Department of Education to increase the number of meals provided to low-income students, including expanded access to summer meals. As a result of these efforts, there were an additional 364,000 meals served in the summer of 2008 compared with the previous summer.

Interview: Ben Thomases, New York City's first Food Policy Coordinator.

Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence (CIDI), Established 2011

About the Office

The Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence (CIDI), created in 2011, is a research center within the Mayor's Office that uses data to ensure that City agencies have the best information for decision making and filling gaps in services. Specifically, CIDI aims to support services provided in the health and human services sectors of New York City government. CIDI accomplishes this work through legal agreements that allow for data sharing between City agencies and the office.

The typical research process for CIDI includes the convening of a work group that develops questions or develops a plan for approaching a question that has been posed. These work groups, consisting of representatives from multiple agencies, allow CIDI to determine the questions that can be best answered by the administrative data. This collaborative approach to research helps agencies to better understand the trajectories of various populations through the human services sector. One example of this is populations that move from corrections to homeless services.

Created by: Mayor Michael Bloomberg

Context: Lack of data sharing among City agencies.

Staffing

Staffing at CIDI has been relatively constant since the office's inception. CIDI had six employees in its first year and five employees in the subsequent two years.

Fiscal Year	2012	2013	2014
Headcount	6	5	5

SOURCE: City Human Resource Management System. Headcount is counted as of June 30 of each year
NOTE: The Director is a City Hall appointed position while the other members of staff are funded through the HRA budget.

Accomplishments

CIDI has conducted numerous studies which exemplify its stated goal. For example, the Disparity Report, published every five years in collaboration with New York City's Young Men's Initiative, helps to highlight trends in racial disparities in the context of education, economic security and mobility, health and wellbeing, and youth justice.

Interview: *Maryanne Schretzman, founding Director of CIDI.*

Office of Nightlife (ONL), Established 2018

About the Office

Legislation to create the New York City Office of Nightlife (ONL) was signed in September 2017, and the office was launched in 2018. The founding goal of ONL was to manage the unique issues that the more than 25,000 New York City nightlife establishments face in terms of operations, regulations, and relationships with patrons, workers, and surrounding communities.¹⁶ ONL seeks to support the City's nightlife and coordinate solutions to some of these issues by connecting nightlife entities with City agencies.

Created by: Adoption of Local Law 178 of 2017.

Context: Advocacy from nightlife workers and establishments who felt like they were being over-regulated while facing issues like rising rents, fines, complaints, bureaucracy, and an overall lack of support from City agencies.

Staffing

Fiscal Year	2018	2019	2020
Headcount	5	5	5

SOURCE: IBO communications with former Council Member Rafael Espinal

NOTE: The five positions in this office were that of the Director and a staff team of four. IBO could not determine headcount for this office through the City Human Resource Management System because it was situated within the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment in its initial years.

Accomplishments

During its first three years of operation, ONL implemented several programs and initiatives which align with its goal of facilitating a better relationship between nightlife entities, the City, and New Yorkers. For example, ONL created Mediating Establishment and Neighborhood Disputes (MEND NYC), a mediation service designed to resolve disputes between nightlife venues and neighbors.¹⁷ This program is administered in collaboration with the Center for Creative Conflict Resolution at the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings.¹⁸ ONL also collaborated with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and nightlife stakeholders to create overdose prevention and harm reduction educational materials.

Interview: Former New York City Council Member Rafael Espinal, sponsor of the bill that led to ONL's creation.

Conclusions

Certain policy challenges can effectively be addressed by the creation of new, targeted policy offices or agencies. The true measure of success for these governmental units is the ability to traverse administrations, and the solutions that they offered for solving unique policy issues came from many stakeholders. As evidenced by these and other City divisions, this tool of creating issue-focused units can be an efficient way to coordinate operations across City agencies.

Endnotes

¹ HIV.gov, "[Timeline of The HIV and AIDS Epidemic](#)"

²See: City of New York, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, "[AIDS Diagnoses and Persons Living with HIV/AIDS by Year, pre-1981 to 2014, New York City](#)," January 2016; City of New York, The Council of the City of New York, "[Transitional and Emergency AIDS Housing: In Urgent Need of Repair](#)," June 2004.

³See: Independent Budget Office, "[Will the Mayor Still Be Looking for Savings?: Growth in AIDS Caseload Slows and Spending Per Case Eases Downward](#)," November 2011; Wolfgang Saxon, "[Robert Jorgen, 72: Worked to Find Shelter for New York's Homeless](#)," The New York Times, February 23, 1988; Anita Vitale, "[The New York City Division of AIDS Services](#)" in *A History of AIDS Social Work in Hospitals* (pp. 71-81), Routledge, 2003.

⁴City of New York, Human Resources Administration, "[Supportive and Affordable Housing Services](#)"

⁵The Supportive Housing Network of New York, "[Bailey-Holt House – The first supportive housing for those living with HIV/AIDS](#)," September 28, 2018.

⁶Marian Moser Jones, "Creating a science of homelessness during the Reagan era," The Milbank quarterly, 93(1), 139–178. (2015) <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0009.12108>

⁷The City of New York, "Our Homelessness Crisis: The Case for Change," January 2020

⁸See: John Herbers, "[Mobility for the Poor Sought in Housing Plan](#)," The New York Times, June 1, 1985; Ronald Smothers, "[CETA Cutback Leaving Thousands Unemployed; The Budget Targets Last of eight articles on key programs the President wants to cut](#)." The New York Times, April 11, 1981.

⁹Institute for Children, Poverty & Homelessness, "[Family Homelessness in New York City: What the Adams Administration Can Learn from Previous Mayoralties](#)," March 2022.

¹⁰City of New York, "[Mayor's Management Report Summary](#)," September 1998.

¹¹Office of the New York City Comptroller, "[Review of the New York City Department of Homeless Services' Programs and Services](#)," August 21, 2023.

¹²City of New York, "[Mayor's Management Report: Fiscal 2000 Summary Volume](#)," 2000.

¹³City of New York, "[Mayor's Management Report Fiscal 2001 Supplement](#)," 2001.

¹⁴City of New York, "[Executive Order No. 122](#)," September 19, 2008.

¹⁵City of New York, Center for Economic Opportunity, "[Office of the Food Policy Coordinator \(FPC\), A Program of the Deputy Mayor for Health & Human Services \(DMHHS\), CEO Internal Program Review Summary](#)"

¹⁶City of New York, Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment, "[NYC's Nightlife Economy](#)" Impact, Assets, and Opportunities," 2018.

¹⁷City of New York, NYC Office of Nightlife, "[Report: 2018 – 2021](#)," June 2021.

¹⁸City of New York, "[Mediating Establishment and Neighbor Disputes \(MEND\)](#)" NYC · NYC311