



# PANDEMIC RESPONSE PROGRAMS







Since the first known case of COVID-19 on March 1, 2020, New York State has prioritized State and Federal funding sources and mounted extraordinary efforts to protect New Yorkers in the face of this unprecedented pandemic. Throughout 2021, New York State built upon the response infrastructure assembled in 2020 with actions including:

Beginning in December 2020 and continuing during 2021, New York State implemented and rapidly scaled up statewide distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine that to-date has reached 95 percent of adult New Yorkers, and 83.4 percent of all New Yorkers, with at least one dose of the vaccine.

New York State pioneered the use of digital proof of vaccination/proof of negative testing software with integrated and holistic program, data, and communications/marketing management of Excelsior Pass & Excelsior Pass Plus, with over 9 million passes issued to date.

Throughout 2020 and continuing in 2021, New York State established and scaled up a critical COVID-19 testing infrastructure, with over 87 million test results reported to New York State since the pandemic began. As new ways of testing emerged, including rapid and over-the-counter at-home tests, New York State procurement and distribution efforts have provided millions of free test kits to local health departments, schools, and healthcare providers statewide. This includes the distribution of more than 10 million at-home tests to keep schools open and assist county health departments in responding to the winter COVID-19 surge.

## EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS

New York State's COVID-19 response and recovery efforts have included mass testing and vaccination efforts providing direct support to all New Yorkers while prioritizing those with the greatest need. New York State's efforts also extend beyond these efforts, leveraging State and Federal funding to provide support for education, Medicaid, emergency rental assistance, home energy assistance, childcare, and other services.

Through the creation of new programs, as well as the expansion of existing programs, the FY 2023 Executive Budget will work to support a strong and equitable recovery for New York State, particularly for those communities that have been historically disadvantaged. Those efforts include:

**\$10 billion healthcare investment.** To build the healthcare system of tomorrow and restore a depleted healthcare workforce, Governor Hochul will make a more-than-\$10 billion, multi-year investment in healthcare, including more than \$4 billion to support wages and bonuses for healthcare workers.

**\$2 Billion to Protect Renters.** The Executive Budget continues support for the federally funded Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP). In 2021, ERAP paid or obligated more than \$2 billion for rental arrears, temporary rental assistance, and utility arrears, and the State continues to request additional federal funds to support this program. Additionally, OTDA is administering State-funded programs totaling \$250 million for renters who do not meet the income criteria of ERAP and landlords whose tenants have left their rental property or who are unwilling to apply for ERAP.

**Homeowner Assistance Fund (HAF).** The Executive Budget continues support for the \$540 million federally funded program that provides direct financial support to homeowners at risk of default, foreclosure, or displacement as a result of a financial hardship caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Invest in Worker Protections and Strengthen Workers' Rights.** To support New York State's workforce, the Executive Budget invests \$12.4 million in the Department of Labor's (DOL) enforcement of worker protections, including those protections enacted through recent legislation related to elevator safety, airborne diseases, and prevailing wage. Legislation submitted with the Executive Budget also bans agreements that limit workers' ability to move and work freely by eliminating non-compete agreements for workers making below the median wage in New York State and to explicitly ban all "no-poach" agreements under State antitrust law. Additional legislation increases criminal penalties for employers who knowingly or intentionally commit wage theft violations to more closely align with penalties for other forms of theft.

## EQUITABLE VACCINE DISTRIBUTION

In accordance with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) guidance, New York State uses the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) to analyze and report on the demographics of those seeking vaccination, while helping to determine where the greatest need for support for at-risk communities exists. As determined by

the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), SVI values contain four points of evaluation: socioeconomic status, household composition and disability, minority status and language, and housing type and transportation.

Through calculation of SVI values and the evaluation of accessible vaccination venues, New York State has been able to focus the use of FEMA funding on the highest-risk communities and underserved populations.

To help ensure equitable access to vaccination sites and vaccine information, persistent community outreach and engagement at both the State and local levels has occurred. The State has also targeted outreach at public housing complexes, religious institutions, and cultural centers.

An example of one of the State's targeted approaches to assist underserved populations with vaccination site accessibility includes the New York State Homebound Vaccination Program. The program allows individuals that need an in-home vaccination to schedule one with their county designated point of contact for the program. Another targeted approach is the MTA's Access-a-Ride paratransit system in New York City. The program provides accessible transportation to vaccination sites for individuals 65 or older.