

MetroPlusHealth Teams Up With Community Groups To Gift 30,000 Backpacks To NYC Students

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In partnership with several other community organizations and elected officials, this effort aims to support families as they prepare for the school year ahead, reaching neighborhoods across all five **NYC** boroughs and ensuring students have the tools they need to start or continue their academic journey.

Students will benefit from this initiative during 25+ back-to-school and health outreach events through September 26, 2023. These events also serve as an opportunity for attendees to engage with local agencies, encouraging families to discover and access resources available to them throughout the year.

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“As we head into a new school year, NYC parents are facing a list of concerns including heightened costs for school supplies and increasing cases of COVID, RSV and flu. At MetroPlusHealth, we not only prioritize providing care in the case of health problems, but also preventing them in the first place,” said Erin M. Drinkwater, Chief of Government Relations & Strategic Partnerships. “We’re elated to assist these families in making sure their children have a strong and healthy start to the school year.”

The school bag giveaway program is just one part of MetroPlusHealth’s ongoing commitment to making New York students happier and healthier. As parents and kids across New York City get ready for the new school year, MetroPlusHealth has released a resource pamphlet reminding New Yorkers to follow tips for back-to-school health and to facilitate access to the plan’s low or no-cost coverage. With MetroPlusHealth’s Child Health Plus Plan, children under the age of 19 can receive care from the plan’s extensive network of 34,000+ of the City’s top doctors, 40+ hospitals including NYU Langone, Mount Sinai, and NY Health + Hospitals, as well as 110+ urgent care sites including CityMD locations.



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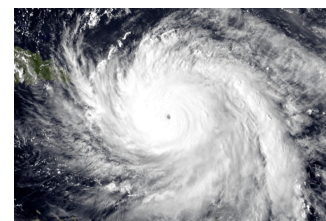
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Please see below for statements from New York City and State officials:

Iwen Chu, New York Senator for District 17: “I’m proud to host a back-to-school book bag and supply giveaway to children of all ages in southern Brooklyn. With school about to be in session, parents are working hard to set their child up for a strong year. I thank MetroPlusHealth for being a partner in distributing essential supplies to our students. The MetroPlusHealth bookbags were a big hit! It brought me so much joy to provide the tools of success to families.”

Cordell Cleare, New York Senator for District 30: “Going back to school should be an exciting time for our kids. But having the supplies that aid in their success is not as accessible as they should be for every child. Through their donation of backpacks and other resources, MetroPlusHealth continues to reaffirm a commitment and understanding of a holistic view of community engagement.”

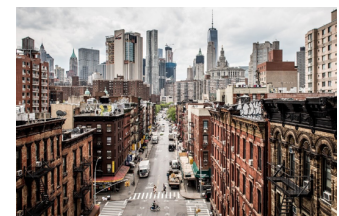
Kristen Gonzalez, New York Senator for District 59: “It’s been an honor to partner with MetroPlusHealth, our fellow electeds—AM Mamdani, AM Epstein, CM Caban and CM Won—and community organizations at Queensbridge Houses, Ravenswood Houses, Astoria Houses, and Strauss Houses to distribute hundreds of backpacks to students during this back-to-school season. Public education is only truly universal when all students have access to the tools they need to excel in our schools. Thanks to MetroPlusHealth for their tremendous contribution, and to the parents, families, and community members who participated in this mutual aid effort.”

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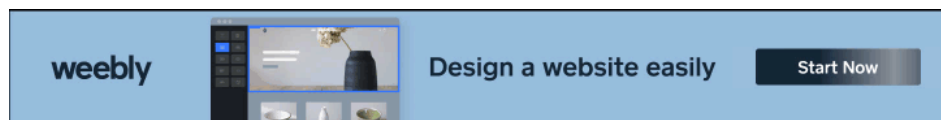
Robert Jackson, New York Senator for District 31:

“As a new school year dawns upon us, the hearts of NYC parents brim with concerns, burdened by rising expenses for scholastic essentials. In this crucial moment, I am proud to unite with MetroPlusHealth, weaving our efforts together to offer a helping hand to the families within my district. Our shared mission: to pave the path for their children’s academic journey, fortified not only with backpacks and supplies, but with the vitality of enduring health and wellness.”

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John Liu, New York Senator for District 16: “The increasingly high costs of school supplies can be a discouraging way for students and families to kick off what should otherwise be an exciting and optimistic time of year. Thank you to MetroPlusHealth for always making sure our school kids are equipped with everything they need to start off the new school year right without their parents having to worry about breaking the bank.”

Khaleel Anderson, Assembly Member for District 31: “A heartfelt thank you goes out to MetroPlusHealth for their generous contribution of school supplies! With their support, we will be able to provide 150 backpacks to students in Assembly District 31. Families heading back to schools this school year deserve to feel resourced and prepared to tackle this milestone.”



Emily Gallagher, Assembly Member for District

50: “With the cost of living a major ongoing challenge for so many working families, we’re so grateful for MetroPlusHealth stepping up to provide children in our district and around the city with free backpacks as they get ready for another school year. Public health is holistic and MetroPlusHealth is a fabulous partner for our communities!”

Jessica González-Rojas, Assembly Member for

District 34: “I’m so grateful to MetroPlusHealth for their generous backpack donations for children in my Assembly District. Many of the low-income families I represent are struggling to make ends meet, and these backpacks will help alleviate some of the financial pressure of preparing for the new school year. I look forward to working with MetroPlusHealth again to bring these vital resources to our communities.”

Zohran K. Mamdani, Assembly Member for

District 36: “As rents and the cost of living rise, I’m proud to be a part of this backpack giveaway initiative alongside MetroPlusHealth to make sure that no child is priced out of one of their most critical school supplies. As we continue to fight to make sure government can fully fund public goods and make it possible for all young New Yorkers to succeed, this initiative highlights our shared belief in the need for universal access to quality education.”

Steven Raga, Assembly Member for District 30:

“On behalf of our communities in the 30th Assembly District, I am deeply appreciative of MetroPlusHealth’s steadfast commitment to enriching the lives of our young students. These backpack giveaways, beyond their tangible

value, symbolize the unity and collaboration that drive our district forward. As we reflect on this year's events, we are inspired to continuously find innovative ways to serve and uplift our constituents together.”

David Weprin, Assembly Member for District 24:

“I want to thank MetroPlusHealth for their partnership in ensuring that every child who needs a backpack for school can have one. Being prepared on day one for school sets the tone for a successful academic year. I am excited to once again be part of the backpack giveaway to help families get ready for the upcoming school year.”

Tiffany Caban, Council Member for District 22:

“No NYC child or family should have to worry about going back to school without a backpack. Sadly, with the sky-high cost of rent, energy, and transit pushing New Yorkers to the breaking point, all too many of our neighbors are forced into this stressful situation. I'd like to extend my great appreciation to MetroPlusHealth for helping to alleviate this anxiety and make it possible for more of our youngest residents to look forward to, rather than fret about, the first day of school.”

Catalina Cruz, Assembly Member for District 39:

“Our collaboration with MetroPlusHealth embodies our joint dedication to the families of Queens. Each backpack distributed signifies our unwavering commitment to the education and well-being of our youth. Together, we have laid a foundation of support, ensuring that every child steps into the new school year with confidence and the tools they need to excel.”

Carmen De La Rosa, Council Member for District

10: “As we prepare for the upcoming school season, it is

important to show love and support to our students entering a new chapter in their educational journey. Our community Uptown is high need, and supplying families with resources ensures access to the necessities. Education is a stepping stone to new opportunities — that’s why we proudly partner with community organizations to bring resources directly to different corners of the district. Thank you, MetroPlusHealth, for partnering with us this year, and we look forward to future partnerships!”

Shahana Hanif, Council Member for District 39:

“Thanks to our friends at MetroPlusHealth, dozens of students will now be able to start school with the supplies they need. I want to extend my deepest gratitude to MetroPlusHealth, the Arab-American Family Support Center, and all our community partners for demonstrating to our youth that they will not be abandoned. Because of the community’s help and generosity, our students will be ready for success in the coming school year.”

Kamillah Hanks, Council Member for District 49:

“I was proud to partner with MetroPlusHealth to supply hundreds of backpacks to students in my district. As the new school year commences, my dedication remains steadfast in ensuring that students have the necessary tools for success. I extend my gratitude to MetroPlusHealth for joining me in this endeavor, and I wish all our students the best of luck in the upcoming school year!”

Sandy Nurse, Council Member for District 37: “We are grateful to MetroPlusHealth for supporting the communities here in the 37th Council District with backpacks and information about health care options. The health and well-being of our community requires strong

partnership across many organizations and agencies, and MetroPlusHealth has been one we can count on.”

Lincoln Restler, Council Member for District 33:

“Our office has distributed nearly 1,000 backpacks and school supplies to NYCHA families at Warren Street Houses, Gowanus Houses, Independence Towers, Taylor Wythe, Wyckoff Gardens, Berry – S. 9th, and Jonathan Williams Plaza. Every student deserves to start school with everything they need to succeed, and we thank MetroPlusHealth for their partnership and support!”

Carlina Rivera, Council Member for District 2:

“With the back-to-school season already upon us, I am proud my office partnered with MetroPlusHealth for backpack distributions this summer. Amid the rising cost of back-to-school shopping, these local partnerships are vital to supporting families in most need. Through these resource fairs, we can collectively ensure that no student is unprepared when starting school in the fall.”

Pierina Sanchez, Council Member for District 14:

“When our youth have the resources they need, thriving becomes that much easier. Thank you to MetroPlusHealth for their contributions to our district’s students. By working collaboratively to ease the burdens faced by our families, we ensure students have the essential tools to flourish academically. I wish them continued success this upcoming school year.”

Marjorie Velázquez, Council Member for District

13: “The beginning of the school year can be difficult for many families, especially those relying on a single income. By working with community partners like MetroPlusHealth, we are ensuring no student goes without

the tools to thrive throughout their scholastic year. Something as simple as a backpack can alleviate the financial burden of countless families across our communities. Our youth are our future, and initiatives like this empower them to reach for the stars and lead successful academic careers.”

Nantasha Williams, Council Member for District 27: “We were able to put dozens of smiles on the faces of local school children thanks to the partnership of MetroPlusHealth. Their donation of quality book bags and school supplies made students feel prepared and excited to begin the adventure of a new school year. It is a joy to work together to support these scholar’s journey.”

Sally Tallant, President and Executive Director of the Queens Museum: “The Queens Museum is honored to have partnered with MetroPlusHealth on such an important and joyous event, providing critical back-to-school resources to families across New York City.”

To learn more about MetroPlusHealth and its initiatives, visit <http://www.metroplus.org>.

Event dates and locations:

- **August 17:** Council Member Kevin Riley’s Back-to-School Family Fun Day
 - Location: Bridgefield Civic League, Bronx
- **August 18:** Back-to-School Event at Tompkinsville Park
 - Location: 206 Bay Street, Staten Island
- **August 19:** Council Member Lincoln Restler’s Back-to-School Event
 - Location: Brooklyn Community Office 2221, Brooklyn
- **August 20:** Assembly Member Emily Gallagher’s Family

Day Event

- Location: Berry S. 9th Street Houses, Brooklyn
- **August 23:** Council Member Kamillah Hanks' Back-to-School Event
 - Location: 130 Stuyvesant Place 6th Floor, Room 602, Staten Island
- **August 24:** Univision Back-to-School Event, Day 1
 - Location: Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Queens
- **August 24:** Gotham Health Cumberland Back-to-School Giveaway
 - Location: NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health, Cumberland, Brooklyn
- **August 25:** Univision Back-to-School Event, Day 2
 - Location: Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Queens
- **August 25:** Back-to-School Event with Senator Kristen Gonzalez
 - Location: Queensbridge Houses, Queens
- **August 26:** Against Da Grain Back-to-School Event, Tompkinsville Park
 - Location: 206 Bay Street, Staten Island
- **August 27:** Back-to-School Event with Council Member Sandy Nurse
 - Location: Highland Park, Brooklyn
- **August 30:** Assemblyman Khaleel Anderson's Healthy Minds & Bodies Back-to-School Event
 - Location: Channel View School, Rockaway Park, Queens
- **August 30:** Back-to-School Event with Senator Robert Jackson
 - Location: Riverside-Inwood Neighborhood Garden, Manhattan
- **August 31:** Back-to-School with Assembly Member Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas (JGR)
 - Location: Queens Museum, Queens

- **August 31:** Back-to-School with Council Member Carmen de la Rosa
 - Location: Dykman Houses, Manhattan
- **September 1:** Council Member Crystal Hudson's Back-to-School Event with NY Liberty
 - Location: Barclays Center, Brooklyn
- **September 3:** Assemblyman David Weprin's Back-to-School Event with MetroPlusHealth
 - Location: Smokey Park, Richmond Hill, Queens
- **September 3:** Back-to-School Event with Senator Cordell Cleare
 - Location: 104 Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard, **Harlem**
- **September 5:** Back-to-School with Assembly Member Catalina Cruz
 - Location: Queens Museum, Queens
- **September 6:** Council Member Lynn Schulman's Back-to-School Event
 - Location: Boys & Girls Club of Metro Queens, Queens
- **September 9:** Back-to-School Block Party
 - Location: 650 Hollywood Avenue, Bronx
- **September 9:** Assembly Member Catalina Cruz's Back-to-School Event
 - Location: Queens Museum, Queens
- **September 26:** Assembly Member Zohran Mamdani's Back-to-School Event
 - Location: Queens Museum, Queens

MetroPlusHealth

Since 1985, MetroPlusHealth has helped the people of **New York City** get quality health care at little to no cost. MetroPlusHealth is the plan of choice for over 700,000 New Yorkers, and its commercial and government-

sponsored plans meet the needs of individuals, families, and workforces. The MetroPlusHealth staff speaks more than 40 languages and is as diverse as the great City it serves. MetroPlusHealth is part of NYC Health + Hospitals, the nation’s largest public health system. For more information, visit metroplus.org. Join the conversation on social media at [@metroplushealth](https://twitter.com/metroplushealth).



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