

# CLIENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## Do you need help?

Families in temporary shelter have many options to get assistance. Here's who you can talk to:

- ◆ Shelter staff, including your case worker and housing specialist, can help you with any questions or concerns.
- ◆ DHS' Office of Client Advocacy can help your family overcome the barriers to getting permanent housing, and help to mediate conflicts between families and shelter staff. They can be reached at 1-800-994-6494, and their office is located at 33 Beaver Street, 20th Floor, in Manhattan. Please call to make an appointment.

## The Appeals Process:

DHS' and shelter staff's number one goal is to partner with you to help you transition from temporary shelter to permanent housing. However, if you are not willing to participate or if you engage in activities harmful to your family or others, you **may** be given a formal violation or have your shelter temporarily discontinued as a last resort. **Even in these cases, you have the right to appeal the decision through a State Fair Hearing and/or an Agency Conference.**

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## State Fair Hearing

- ◆ **You can file an appeal at a State Fair Hearing by mail, phone, fax, walk-in or online, if:**
  - You are given a First ILP Violation, or
  - If your shelter is going to be temporarily discontinued.
- ◆ **By mail:**

Office of Administrative Hearings  
New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance  
P.O. Box 1930  
Albany, New York 12201
- ◆ **By phone:** Call 1-800-342-3334.
- ◆ **By fax:** Send a fax to 518-473-6735.
- ◆ **By walk-in:** Bring a copy of your notice to one of the locations of the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance.
  - 14 Boerum Place, First Floor  
Brooklyn, New York 11201
  - 330 West 34th Street, Third Floor  
New York, NY 10001
- ◆ **Online:** Complete an online request form at <http://www.otda.state.ny.us/oah/forms.asp>.

## Agency Conference

- ◆ You also may appeal at a DHS Agency Conference to have the decision reviewed. To ask for an Agency Conference, call 212-361-8052.

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## Division of Family Services

33 Beaver Street, 16th Floor  
New York, NY 10004  
Phone: 212-361-0636  
Fax: 917-637-7340  
[www.nyc.gov/dhs](http://www.nyc.gov/dhs)



## A Client's Guide to Shelter



## ■ Responsibility

We all are responsible for something – taking care of kids, performing a job well, paying the bills. As you stay in temporary, emergency shelter, we believe you have a clear responsibility – to work hard with shelter staff so that you and your family can move back to the community and into permanent housing as quickly as possible. While in shelter, you also have rights. We will give you the support you need. Shelter is a short-term solution to an emergency or a crisis, but it is not a permanent place to live. Our goal is to assist you in stabilizing your family and moving into permanent housing.

### Temporary, emergency shelter has a structure that your family is expected to follow, including:

- ◆ Bringing only two bags of personal belongings per family member into the shelter
- ◆ Following a 10:00 pm curfew (9:00 pm for children)
- ◆ Having visitors only during permitted times, and never in your family's living unit
- ◆ Signing in and out with your children when entering and exiting the shelter (you may be required to leave your keys with shelter staff when leaving the shelter)

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### You have rights while you stay in shelter. You are entitled to:

- ◆ Receive fair and respectful treatment from shelter staff and DHS
- ◆ Exercise your civil rights
- ◆ Not be transferred or discharged except in accordance with DHS policy
- ◆ Present grievances without fear of retaliation and receive a timely response

### Here are some things you should do to help your family leave shelter as soon as possible:

- ◆ Seek and accept the first suitable housing offer
- ◆ Partner with shelter staff to develop your Independent Living Plan (ILP) so you can exit shelter as quickly as possible
- ◆ Attend housing, employment and other workshops
- ◆ Apply for and maintain all Public Assistance (PA) benefits and requirements
- ◆ Follow the *Statement of Client Rights and Client Code of Conduct*

### Shelter staff will assist your family by doing the following:

- ◆ Assist with housing searches, applications, interviews and appointments
- ◆ Help access appropriate housing, financial and employment resources

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- ◆ Help with PA applications and maintaining PA eligibility
- ◆ Explain the expectations of the *Statement of Client Rights and Client Code of Conduct*

### Be aware that you may have your shelter stay discontinued if you or your family:

- ◆ Engages in gross misconduct, such as violent or dangerous behavior, possession or sale of controlled substances or deadly weapons, or other **repeated** violations of the *Statement of Client Rights and Client Code of Conduct* which interfere with the orderly operations of the shelter; or
- ◆ Fails to seek and accept housing; or
- ◆ Repeatedly does not follow your Independent Living Plan (ILP); or
- ◆ Fails to open or maintain an active PA case.

Our goal is to help you become one of the thousands of families who benefited from shelter during a short-term emergency and then moved on to a stable life in safe and permanent housing in the community.

Remember, it will take a team effort from your family, shelter staff and DHS for you to move out of shelter and back to a life of independence. Working together, you can do it.

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## ■ Take Action!

- Did you read and sign the *Statement of Client Rights and Client Code of Conduct*?
- Have you applied for Public Assistance (PA), and are you meeting your PA requirements?
- Do you have your own ideas for how to exit shelter and return to a life of independence?
- Are you ready to work together with shelter staff to find permanent housing?



## ■ Remember...

- you have rights while you are in shelter
- you should receive courteous, fair and respectful treatment from DHS and shelter staff
- be sure to tell your case worker if you or a family member has any impairments that may affect your ability to follow your ILP
- you can discuss any grievance without fear of retaliation

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