

NYC Department of Juvenile Justice



Resident Advocacy Program Overview July 1, 2008

Resident Advocacy Program

The Resident Advocacy Program (RAP) is intended to advocate for the rights of detained youth by monitoring the overall living conditions within the Department of Juvenile Justice's (DJJ) secure detention facilities and the quality of care in accordance with the Department's policies and procedures.

- Pursuant to the powers in Chapter 28 of the City Charter, the Agency Head of the Department of Juvenile Justice may implement such programs.
- Provide an outlet for residents to bring forth their complaints and concerns confidentially and without prejudice.

Program Goals

Institutionalizing the Resident Advocacy Program will enhance the program's ability to:

- Enhance the Resident Advocacy Program's Accountability and Effectiveness
- Protect Resident Confidentiality
- Improve Data Quality and Trend Responsiveness

Enhanced Accountability & Effectiveness

Accountability: Bolstering Program Process

The Agency Head, Resident Advocacy Program Committee, Executive Directors and the three Ombudsman will meet monthly to review, discuss and provide conclusions to unresolved complaints.

- Complaints have a system for timely action, response and conclusion including by the Agency Head.
- Ombudsman must complete an ‘Ombudsman Investigative Report’ for all received complaints.
- Executive Directors must provide responses in writing for unresolved facility level complaints.
- All information received for a specific complaint (e.g. Executive Director’s written response, Agency Head final determination) shall be attached to the ‘Ombudsman Investigative Report’ for the complaint and filed accordingly.

Enhanced Accountability & Effectiveness

Effectiveness: Strengthening the Role of the Ombudsman

- Child-friendly forms developed to make the RAP more accessible and understandable to youth.
- The Ombudsman has the authority to convene ad hoc meetings with the Executive Director and facility-level staff to seek resolutions to complaints.
- Ombudsman's investigative powers strengthened in accordance with Agency's Standard of Conduct (B.1.6 – Official Investigations/Proceedings).
- Bi-weekly meetings with Ombudsman and facility Executive Directors to review, discuss and resolve resident complaints.
- Quarterly meetings between Ombudsman and the Agency's Office of Disciplinary Affairs to jointly follow-up on child abuse allegations.

Protect Resident Confidentiality

Resident Confidentiality: Ensuring Privacy

- Residents may request to remain anonymous when filing a complaint unless the received information is of a emergency or critical nature, at which point a name may be forwarded to the facility's Executive Director.
- The 'Resident Request for Ombudsman Services Form' does not require youth to provide details of a complaint, allowing for such information to be communicated personally to the Ombudsman.
- The 'Ombudsman Investigative Report' completed by the Ombudsman will provide the nature and details of resident complaints.
- A centrally located box will be provided for residents to deposit their complaints confidentially, preventing potential reluctance or scrutiny of submitting complaints on dorm/hall.

Improving Data Quality & Trend Responsiveness

Data Quality: Increasing Accuracy and Problem-Solving Ability

- Creates a uniform system of reporting and maintaining records with the implementation of six forms. They include the:
 - Resident Request for Ombudsman Services Form
 - Ombudsman Investigative Report
 - Room Confinement Form
 - Facility Census Report
 - Ombudsman Complaint Form
 - Ombudsman Child Abuse Allegation Form
- Data will be forwarded to the Agency's Office of Strategic Planning monthly for review, analysis and validation.
- Data collection and analysis will enhance the program's identification and response to trends.