

**For Immediate Release  
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**HRA Commissioner Eggleston Secures State Agreement that Survivors of World Trade Center Attack & Families of Victims Will Not Be Asked To Pay Back Emergency Public Assistance Provided Following 9-11**

***Human Resources Administration Clients Receiving Benefits from Federal Victim Compensation Fund to be Exempt from Collection Efforts***

Human Resources Administration (HRA) Commissioner Verna Eggleston announced today that New Yorkers who received emergency public assistance and/or Medicaid from HRA to pay their rent, feed their families and obtain health care when their incomes were wiped out by the World Trade Center tragedy, and who subsequently receive payments from the Federal Victim Compensation Fund, will be exempt from liens and other collection efforts ordinarily mandated by New York State law.

Under normal circumstances, when New Yorkers accept public assistance and subsequently receive additional funds from third parties – in this case, the Federal government – recovery of the costs of public assistance is mandated. In order to exercise her administrative discretion so as not to further disadvantage victims who already had suffered massive losses, Commissioner Eggleston sought and secured written interpretations and clarifications of applicable law from Commissioner Brian Wing of the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, giving HRA the discretion not to impose liens on the benefits awarded to survivor families from the Federal Victim Compensation Fund.

Commissioner Eggleston also has secured a verbal interpretation from the New York State Department of Health allowing HRA to exempt recipients of Medicaid from collections. Both state agencies shared Commissioner Eggleston's concern about unfairly penalizing New Yorkers who had endured so much anguish and agreed that Commissioner Eggleston should use her discretion in regard to this and future cases.

Said Commissioner Eggleston, "In the aftermath of the World Trade Center attacks and the Flight 587 disaster, many New Yorkers were devastated by the loss of loved ones and the sudden inability to provide for their families. They turned to the City in their hour of need, and HRA provided them with emergency financial support, food stamps and access to medical care. Because many of these clients are eligible to receive additional aid --- in this case, from the Victim Compensation Fund --- they would have been subject to liens and other collection efforts mandated by New York State Social Services Law.

It is important that these New Yorkers, and any others, who find themselves in similar situations because of possible, future disasters, not be burdened with further distress. I will use my discretion when possible to waive such clients from collection efforts now and in the future because it is vital that we treat them with compassion as they move through difficult times."

Sections 104, 106 and 369 of the New York State Social Services Law requires that the City impose liens and provide for the recovery of the costs of public assistance and health care from those clients who receive third party funds. Sections 104 and 106 cover public assistance and care, while section 369 applies to medical assistance. In her role as Commissioner of HRA, Ms. Eggleston is charged with the administration of New York State Social Services law in New York City.

In this unprecedented situation, Commissioner Eggleston felt it would be inappropriate to be compelled to recover the costs of emergency public assistance granted due to the World Trade Center attack. She formally contacted Commissioner Brian Wing of the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, as well as officials at the State Department of Health, to request clarification of State social services and health laws and to obtain clearance to utilize her discretion in exempting September 11th-related clients from collection efforts. Both agreed that Commissioner Eggleston should use her discretion in regard to this and future cases.

Commissioner Eggleston noted that her efforts to waive liens in this instance were meant to ensure that all New Yorkers who legitimately turn to HRA for support and are subsequently found to be eligible to receive additional assistance be exempt from collection efforts. However, she cautioned that if anyone attempts to defraud the system, they would face all legal penalties.