



Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

SAMUEL D. ROBERTS
Commissioner

SHARON DEVINE
Executive Deputy Commissioner

January 31, 2016

Mr. Steven Banks
Commissioner/Administrator
NYC Human Resources Administration
Department of Social Services
150 Greenwich Street, 42nd Floor
New York, NY 10007

Dear Commissioner Banks:

The New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) has received a report of a stabbing on January 30, 2016 at the 53rd Street Men's Shelter administered by the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) located at 225 East 53rd Street. This is the second major incident in the last four days; the first of which ended the life of Deven Black at the Boulevard Shelter on the evening of January 27, 2016. Reports indicate that a shelter resident used a pocket knife to stab another resident. The trend of violence in shelters is disturbing and unacceptable.

In the case of serious health and safety violations in emergency shelters, regulations allow OTDA to impose immediate remediation measures, including requiring additional security. We believe such measures are warranted; and as such OTDA directs New York City to add additional security and law enforcement to this location immediately.

Further, OTDA must be immediately satisfied that all state laws and regulations are being followed in shelters administered by DHS, and that its residents are safe. To confirm compliance and obtain further information regarding this incident, OTDA directs DHS to take the following action within 24 hours:

- Conduct and provide to OTDA an assessment of the security protocols in place at the 53rd Street Men's Shelter and determine whether those protocols are adequate, generally, and whether they were adequate on January 30th, 2016. Explain why or why not. If inadequate, describe how these protocols will be improved. This assessment should include, but not be limited to, a determination of whether security officers properly searched all residents prior to entry into the facility, and whether metal detectors and common area cameras were functioning properly.
- Determine and report to OTDA the average ratio of security officer to resident per shift and the number, if any, of DHS Peace Officers who are present on each shift.
- Finally, please provide a copy of any incident, investigative or police reports prepared as a result of this incident within 24 hours, or as soon as such report(s) are made available.

Thank you for your cooperation in this very important matter.

Sincerely,

Sharon Devine
Executive Deputy Commissioner