



Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

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Informational Letter

Section 1

Transmittal:	16-INF-06
To:	Local District Commissioners
Issuing Division/Office:	Division of Operations and Program Support (OPS)
Date:	February 16, 2016
Subject:	Local District Security Provisions for Hearing Officers
Suggested Distribution:	
Contact Person(s):	Chuck Latham, Bureau of Management Services, (518) 473-3099 Chuck.Latham@otda.ny.gov
Attachments:	None
Attachment Available Online:	<input type="checkbox"/>

Filing References

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	Dept. Regs.	Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref.	Manual Ref.	Misc. Ref.
09-INF-11			NYS Labor Law, Article 2, Section 27b	OTDA Workplace Violence Prevention Program	

Section 2

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Informational Letter (INF) is to provide Upstate local departments of social services (LDSS) with information about the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance's (OTDA) Workplace Violence Prevention Program, and the Program's findings related to OTDA staff working in local district offices. This INF also requests that LDSS' provide OTDA with a contact person(s) with whom OTDA can work to help mitigate the risk factors for violence for OTDA staff working in local district offices.

II. Background

OTDA, in accordance with the requirements of Section 27-b of Article 2 of the New York State Labor Law, published its Workplace Violence Prevention Program. The Law is designed to ensure that the risk of workplace assaults and homicides is regularly evaluated by public employers and that protection programs are implemented to minimize the hazard of workplace violence to employees.

Among the risk factors for workplace violence identified for OTDA employees is the conducting of hearings at local district social services offices. OTDA's Upstate Fair Hearings Office conducts administrative hearings at the fifty-seven local districts outside of New York City.

A security survey of the OTDA upstate hearing officers was completed as part of the Workplace Violence assessment process. Hearing Officers were asked to assess each local district's hearing procedure and to evaluate the safety and security of the parking arrangements, entrances, check-in and set-up of hearing rooms, noting the presence or absence of metal detectors, electronic access systems, video monitoring, police or security guards, and panic buttons in hearing rooms.

III. Program Implications

To help mitigate the risk factors identified for staff conducting hearings at local district offices, OTDA is requesting that local social services districts institute a number of personal safety protocols for our Hearing Officers:

- Provide the closest and safest available parking to OTDA Hearings staff;
- Accept a New York State Employee Identification Card for electronic access to the employee entrance, where available/programmable;
- Provide Hearings staff with telephone access and appropriate security/law enforcement contact numbers;
- Provide OTDA Hearings staff with copies of instructions to be followed in the event of a building evacuation and emergency situation;
- Wherever possible, provide a separate waiting area for Fair Hearing clients;
- Wherever possible, provide access to a duress alarm in the hearing room, with information on the expected response time and the availability of security or law enforcement personnel;

- Provide OTDA with a copy of the local district's Workplace Violence Prevention Program;
- Provide OTDA Hearings staff with an appropriate size Hearing room which is arranged to allow the Hearing officer with the quickest egress in case of potential violence;
- Wherever possible, provide a room with a visibility window in the door so staff are able to be seen during Hearings;
- Remove all extraneous items from the room to eliminate potential weapons.

The Bureau of Management Services (BMS) is the organization, within the OTDA Division of Operations and Program Support, which has responsibility for OTDA's facilities management, leases, space planning, health and safety and security provisions. BMS is planning to follow up on the concerns that were identified within a recent security survey of local districts for Upstate Fair Hearings, and will be working with the contact person(s) you designate toward improving security procedures and/or measures that will benefit both your district's staff and OTDA staff.

Please forward your contact name(s) to Chuck Latham, New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Bureau of Management Services, 40 North Pearl Street, Albany, New York 12243 or to Chuck.Latham@otda.ny.gov

Issued By

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