



Robert V. Hess
Commissioner

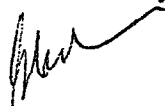
June 30, 2009

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TO: All DHS Contract and Directly Operated Providers
FROM: George Nashak 
SUBJECT: Housing Placement Guidance

I have attached a revision to the Housing Placement Guidance memo issued on 12/18/2007. The New York City Fire Department has recently added to its website a registry of buildings they have vacated and so we have added this registry to the list we require you to check prior to a client exiting your program. DHS instructs homeless service providers in contract with DHS that they may not refer clients to live in buildings that appear on this registry or any of the registries identified in the memo. The remainder of the guidance provided in the December 2007 memo remains in effect.

I know we share a deep concern for the well-being of our clients and trust that you will implement this new safeguard immediately. Thank you for your cooperation.

cc: Sarah Freeman
Frances Lockhart
Tina Alzadon
Marya Kuklick



**Department of
Homeless Services**

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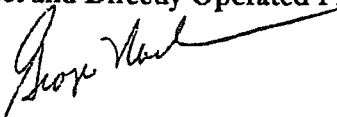
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It is the mission of the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) to prevent homelessness where possible and, in instances where homelessness is unavoidable, to make that episode of homelessness as brief as possible. Emergency shelter offers a temporary response to a housing crisis in a homeless client's life. It is the goal of DHS and its provider partners to assist clients who enter a shelter to return to permanent housing in the community as rapidly as possible.

Because each client's situation is unique, it is not possible to develop a universal procedure for matching clients to housing options. This must be a process conducted on a case-by-case basis through sound case management practice. This memo is intended to provide guidance to staff as they help clients in their search for appropriate permanent housing options.

Homeless clients return to permanent housing in the community in a variety of ways. DHS expects its staff and its providers to assist clients to make this transition successfully. Many clients can make this transition with minimal assistance. Some need guidance and help in their housing search from a case worker and/or housing specialist. Others, who may be living with significant disabilities like serious and persistent mental illness, may require significant case work assistance to return permanently to the community. In these cases, the help offered by DHS and its providers may include staff completing housing applications and escorting clients to interviews. DHS expects its staff and providers to assess each client's needs and to offer an appropriate level of assistance that will expedite his or her return to permanency.

For clients who are unable to live independently without support services, shelter staff should assist them to move into supportive housing, residential treatment facilities or other residential programs that provide or are linked with appropriate services. These housing options include programs licensed by or in contract with governmental entities such as the New York State Department of Health; the New York State Office of Mental Health; the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services; the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; the New York City Human Resources Administration; and, the New York City Department of Homeless Services. The license or contract held by the provider ensures oversight of the housing by the issuing agency. In these cases, and shelter

staff may rely on the government entity responsible for overseeing or inspecting the housing unit to guarantee the safety and appropriateness of the unit. New York/New York supportive housing is an example.

Some clients will exit shelter through a government-funded rent subsidy (e.g., Work Advantage or Fixed Income Advantage) in which a government agency inspects the apartment to ensure quality at the time of occupancy. In these instances, shelter staff may rely on the government entity responsible for overseeing or inspecting the housing unit to guarantee the safety and appropriateness of the unit at the time of move-out.

Many clients exit shelter to other settings (e.g., find apartments on their own, return to live with family members, rent rooms in apartments.) DHS does not inspect these living arrangements. In these instances, the client uses his or her own resources to pay for the housing; there is no DHS subsidy involved. In making their own arrangements, our clients make judgments regarding the housing in which they will live.

In all cases, DHS expects the staff at directly operated and contract programs to advise and educate clients to make good housing choices. DHS expects its staff and providers to use the following guidelines when assisting clients in their search for a permanent housing option in the community:

1. DHS directly operated or contracted programs may not refer clients to housing that appears on the New York State Department of Health ("DOH") Referral Suspension List or on the DOH Uncertified Facilities List. Both of these lists are available at the following web address: http://www.health.state.ny.us/facilities/adult_care/memorandum.htm. These lists change frequently. Providers must regularly visit this website to ensure that referrals comply with the guidance from DOH. Shelter providers who refer a client to a facility on one of these registries will not receive a placement credit.
2. DHS directly operated or contracted programs may not refer clients to housing in a building in which the New York City Department of Buildings (DOB), the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and/or the New York City Fire Department (FDNY) has issued a vacate order. Properties for which DOB has issued a vacate order are listed in the following registry: <http://a810-bisweb.nyc.gov/bisweb/bispi00.jsp>. Properties for which HPD has issued a vacate order are listed in a registry accessible from HPD's home page: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/hpd/html/home/home.shtml>. Properties for which FDNY has issued a vacate order are listed in the following registry: http://www.ci.nyc.ny.us/html/fdny/html/units/fire_prevention/vacate_status_list.shtml. Shelter providers who refer a client to a building on one of these registries will not receive a placement credit.
3. DHS directly operated or contracted programs may not refer clients to housing in a building in which HPD has initiated litigation against the landlord/owner for failing to maintain the building in good repair. Buildings in litigation with HPD are identified in the HPD registry under the "Litigation" tab. The registry can be found at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/hpd/html/home/home.shtml>. Staff of directly operated and contracted programs are instructed to refrain from referring clients to any address that

appears on the litigation list at the time of the referral. Shelter providers who refer a client to a building on this registry will not receive a placement credit.

4. It is the program's responsibility to ensure that buildings to which they refer clients do not appear on these registries *at the time of the referral and occupancy of the unit.*
5. Many clients living with mental illness, chronic medical conditions or chemical dependency disorders are able to live successfully in the community in independent housing without on-site supportive services. DHS expects shelter staff to make informed judgments, with input from the client, about the client's need for community-based services (e.g., an outpatient clinic or sobriety support service) that will assist the client to remain permanently housed. Shelter staff should link clients to the services they need.
6. Clients should be provided with the opportunity to view any housing unit to which they are being referred prior to occupying that unit.
7. DHS has developed a "Tenant Rights" guide to educate clients leaving shelter regarding their rights and responsibilities as tenants, their landlord's rights and responsibilities, and the mechanisms for addressing complaints about safety or maintenance that clients have not been able to resolve with their landlords. Shelter providers are required to provide every client leaving shelter with this guide and they should take reasonable steps to ensure that clients understand its contents.

A shelter provider cannot stop a client from choosing to exit shelter to housing that fails to meet these guidelines. Should a client make such a choice, the shelter staff should inform the client that the housing option they have chosen fails to meet the minimum standards outlined by DHS. Shelter staff must document this conversation in the client's case record.

If a provider has questions about any of these issues or would like further guidance, they should contact their Program Administrator.

cc: Sarah Freeman
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Marya Kuklick