




PROCEDURE NUMBER 15-007

<b>Subject:</b> DHS Response to Workplace Violence Following an Assault of a Staff Member	<b>Applicable To:</b> All DHS Directly Operated or Funded Congregate Facilities/ Programs Serving Homeless Families and Individuals	<b>Effective Date:</b> May 29, 2015
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<b>Administered By:</b> DHS Executive Office	<b>Approved By:</b>  Gilbert Taylor, Commissioner
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## PURPOSE

Staff at the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) and its funded provider agencies may encounter workplace violence perpetrated by current clients and/or former clients. This document provides a structured response for how DHS and their Provider Agencies shall address the aftermath of such violence; it must be followed in addition to DHS policies and procedures already in place.

## INTRODUCTION

DHS appreciates that a traumatic death or assault can raise a number of complex issues for the surviving staff. “The grief response is often intensified since there is little to no opportunity to prepare for the loss, say good-bye, finish unfinished business or prepare for bereavement. Families, friends, colleagues are suddenly forced to face the loss of a loved one instantaneously and without warning. This type of loss can generate intense grief responses such as shock, anger, guilt, sudden depression, despair and hopelessness” (*see [www.journeyofhearts.org/grief/accident2html](http://www.journeyofhearts.org/grief/accident2html)*). Staff and clients may experience a greater sense of vulnerability, heightened anxiety and fear following a traumatic incident and need structured assistance in coping with their experiences.

DHS has an established Incident Report Procedure (DHS 15-004) to report critical events, a Workplace Violence Prevention Program Policy Statement and a Workplace Violence

Prevention Reporting Procedure (12-270). The DHS Response to Workplace Violence Following an Assault of a Staff Member is an effort to create a streamlined response to such events, where and when appropriate, after the emergency responders report the premises are secure and safe, and, the injured parties have received medical care.

## **PROCESS**

- I. The levels of communication are determined by the type of event and the actions taken by emergency responders.
  - A. Staff Assault by a Client not resulting in physical harm or arrest: Following documentation of the incident in CARES, the Facility Director must work with the affected staff member, the provider agency liaison, and the DHS Program Administrator, where applicable, or the appropriate Assistant or Deputy Commissioner, to identify safety measures for the staff and the identified client.
  - B. Staff Assault by a Client resulting in physical harm and arrest: Following documentation of the incident in CARES, the Facility Director must work with the affected staff member and the DHS Program Administrator, where applicable, or the appropriate Assistant or Deputy Commissioner, to identify safety measures for staff and the identified client. Program Administrators (or the appropriate Assistant or Deputy Commissioner) shall communicate with the provider agency liaison and DHS Executive and Senior staff about the event and necessary follow-up. When the victim is a DHS staff member DHS Executive and Senior staff shall reach out to the staff member and/or his or her family. When the victim is from a provider agency, DHS Executive and Senior staff shall contact the provider agency liaison for guidance. Representatives from DHS Executive and Senior staff need to go to the facility within twenty-four (24) hours to lend a hand, give comfort and offer support.
  - C. Staff Assault by a Client resulting in the staff member's death: Following documentation of the incident in CARES, the Facility Director must work with the DHS Program Administrator, where applicable or the appropriate Assistant or Deputy Commissioner to identify safety measures for staff and the identified client. Program Administrators (or the appropriate Assistant or Deputy Commissioner) shall communicate with the provider agency liaison and DHS Executive and Senior staff about the event and necessary follow-up. When the victim is a DHS staff member, the DHS Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, Executive and Senior staff shall reach out to the victim's family. When the victim is from a provider agency, the DHS Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner and Program Administrator, shall contact the provider agency liaison for guidance. The DHS Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, Executive and Senior Staff need to go to the facility within six (6) hours to lend a hand, give comfort and offer support.

## II. Addressing Grief Responses

- A. Traumatic events may be difficult to recover from quickly, if at all, depending on the nature of the tragedy.
- B. Response needs to be immediate.
  - 1. Immediately following the incident, clear, accurate and immediate communications and alerts will be sent to all staff. For example, “This message is to inform you a traumatic event has occurred, we are in the process of addressing and assessing the incident, as soon as we have more information we will get back to you.”
  - 2. As soon as possible (within 6 hrs) a statement shall be issued by the appropriate level of DHS or provider leadership that will make staff aware that the leaders in their organizations know the event occurred, care about the victim(s) and the collateral victims, and are making plans to ensure they are safe in their workplace. (In instances of assault resulting in physical harm, a statement should come from the relevant DHS Deputy Commissioner as well as the Executive Staff of the contracted agency, where appropriate. In instances of assault resulting in death or serious physical harm with or aggravated acts of violence, a statement should come from the DHS Commissioner’s office.)
  - 3. Agency leadership, (Deputy Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners and Program Administrators, with the assistance of the contracted agency liaison) will create a safe place for staff to share their experiences. This may be dedicated office space, a house meeting, or other appropriate space. If possible, trained counselors shall be available to facilitate conversation.
- C. Following the incident, DHS shall implement a process for learning from the tragedy and make appropriate changes to practice and procedures.

## III. Trauma Services Resources

- A. NYC Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- B. New York City schools of social work
- C. DHS Licensed Clinical Social Workers
- D. NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
- E. NYC unions