

GENERAL INFORMATION SYSTEM
Center for Employment & Economic Supports

March 10, 2010

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TO: TA Directors, FS Directors, HEAP Directors, Staff Development Coordinators

FROM: Russell Sykes, Deputy Commissioner, Center for Employment and Economic Supports

SUBJECT: Availability of "Having a Voice and a Choice: New York State Handbook for Relatives Raising Children"

EFFECTIVE DATE: Immediately

CONTACT PERSON: Temporary Assistance Bureau at 1-800-343-8859; ext. 4-9344
Food Stamp Policy Bureau at 1-800-343-8859; ext. 3-1469
HEAP Policy Bureau at 1-800-343-8859; ext. 3-0332

The purpose of this GIS is to provide social services districts (districts) with information about an Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) / Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) jointly developed publication: **"Having a Voice and a Choice: New York State Handbook for Relatives Raising Children."**

OCFS released 09-OCFS-ADM-04 on February 9, 2009, describing the requirements for caseworkers to distribute this handbook to relatives considering caring for children who have been protectively removed, as well as in certain other circumstances. At the time of the release of the ADM, OCFS sent an estimated annual supply of the handbooks to the Child Protective Services unit of each district.

OTDA is not requiring that this handbook be given to non-parent caregivers (NPCs). However districts may benefit from making NPC's aware of the availability of this handbook and the information and resources it contains. It would also be beneficial for districts eligibility workers in TA, FS and HEAP to become familiar with the content of the book. The handbook is available in both English and Spanish and discusses the following subjects:

- how a child may come into a relative's care;
- the role of the local Department of Social Services;
- legal arrangements, such as informal care, direct placement, legal custody, temporary or permanent guardianship, foster care and adoption;
- the types of financial assistance available to relatives;
- health care provision and coverage for children in a relative's care;
- the child's education; and
- other resources, with many links for further information.

OTDA does not intend to print copies of this publication at this time. You may view the English version online at <http://www.otda.state.ny.us/main/publications/4957.pdf> and you may view the Spanish version online at <http://www.otda.state.ny.us/main/publications/4957-SP.pdf>.