



December 16, 2009

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President
Ruth E. Acker

Vice Presidents
Eva-Maria Tausig
Sharon Yakata
Barbara Zucker

Treasurer
Joan Fabio

Secretaries
Arden Down
Nada L. Westerman

Co-Counsel
Eleanor Jackson Piel, Esq.
Helen D. Reavis, Esq.

Honorary Directors
Susan Alt
Goldie R. Dumpson
Adele B. Filene
Edythe W. First
Margaret B. Howard
Nora Lavori
Blanche E. Lawton
Elizabeth Lubetkin Lipton
Phyllis Lusskin
Ethel S. Paley

Directors
Helen Aronstein
Pam Bayless
Gloria J. Browne-Marshall
Barbara Chocky
Annette Choolfaian
Elsie Diamond
Joan Freilich
Doris Hirsch
Marjorie Ives
Carol A. Leimas
Frances Levenson
Ann R. Loeb
Laura Ludwig
Anne-Sophie Martz
Mary C. Murphree
Elaine P. Osterman
Day Piercy
Geraldine E. Rhoads
Annette Y. Rosen
Mary Ellen Rudolph
Marjorie Kelleher Shea
Eleanor Stier
Jan Vinokour
Marilyn R. Wellemeyer
Dorothy Wilner
Blaikie F. Worth
Bernice Zimney

Hon. David Paterson, Governor
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Paterson:

The Women's City Club of New York urges you to approve revisions recently proposed by the Legal Aid Society and Coalition for the Homeless to 18 NYCRR 352.35 and 05 ADM 07, regarding shelter ejection and denial rules for homeless families and individuals. Unfortunately, this summer, New York State officials approved implementation of these Pataki-era rules, which emphasize a punitive and ineffective approach to homelessness.

Under these new rules, homeless children and adults will be ejected from shelter to the streets for a minimum of 30 days for a variety of bureaucratic reasons, including missing appointments, failing to pay shelter "rent," or having their welfare case suspended or closed—something which happens routinely due to bureaucratic error. The newly implemented rules are harmful and counterproductive to homeless families for many reasons:

1. Public assistance case closings and sanctions commonly occur as a result of bureaucratic error, placing families and children at risk of being ejected from shelter for mistakes beyond their control.
2. Even for the least serious violations, families are not offered a "cure provision" that would allow them to correct the violation and stay in shelter. Instead, they are given a mandatory 30-day "sentence" to the streets.
3. Perhaps most disturbingly, children are at risk of being placed in foster care if their families lose shelter, a violation of an existing law that prohibits children from being removed from families based on homelessness or poverty alone.
4. Furthermore, the rules do not adequately accommodate persons with disabilities or impairments, placing responsibility entirely upon them to document their impairment.



Revisions proposed by the Legal Aid Society and Coalition for the Homeless would modify the rules to achieve the following:

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President
Ruth E. Acker

Vice Presidents
Eva-Maria Tausig
Sharon Yakata
Barbara Zucker

Treasurer
Joan Fabio

Secretaries
Arden Down
Nada L. Westerman

Co-Counsel
Eleanor Jackson Piel, Esq.
Helen D. Reavis, Esq.

Honorary Directors
Susan Alt
Goldie R. Dumpson
Adele B. Filene
Edythe W. First
Margaret B. Howard
Nora Lavori
Blanche E. Lawton
Elizabeth Lubetkin Lipton
Phyllis Lusskin
Ethel S. Paley

Directors
Helen Aronstein
Pam Bayless
Gloria J. Browne-Marshall
Barbara Chocky
Annette Choolfaian
Elsie Diamond
Joan Freilich
Doris Hirsch
Marjorie Ives
Carol A. Leimas
Frances Levenson
Ann R. Loeb
Laura Ludwig
Anne-Sophie Martz
Mary C. Murphree
Elaine P. Osterman
Day Piercy
Geraldine E. Rhoads
Annette Y. Rosen
Mary Ellen Rudolph
Marjorie Kelleher Shea
Eleanor Stier
Jan Vinokour
Marilyn R. Wellemeyer
Dorothy Wilner
Blaikie F. Worth
Bernice Zimney

- o Eliminate the provision that would allow families to be ejected from shelter based on Public Assistance case closures or sanctions
- o Prevent re-applicant families whom the district erroneously claims have other suitable housing from being improperly denied "immediate needs" shelter
- o Give homeless families an opportunity to correct minor violations to avoid being ejected (aka "cure provision")
- o Protect children in sanctioned families from being separated from their parents based on homelessness or poverty alone
- o Protect homeless people with disabilities and impairments;

Again, we sincerely urge you to grant these changes to the current rules as written. The changes will afford protection to the record 10,000 homeless families in New York City, many of whom are entering the shelter system for the first time in response to the negative effects of the recession, including job loss, eviction and foreclosure.

In closing, we thank you for your ongoing efforts to protect homeless New Yorkers. Since its founding in 1915, the Women's City Club has worked to eradicate poverty and homelessness as part of our mission to improve the lives of all New Yorkers. As a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization, we shape public policy through education, issue analysis, advocacy and civic participation. We look forward to working with you over the coming months and years to advance the goal of reducing homelessness in New York City.

Sincerely,

Ruth E. Acker
President

Elizabeth Lubetkin Lipton
Poverty Task Force Chair