

Shelter Accessibility Advisory Board 6.11.25

3:15 pm-5:00 pm via Zoom

Attendance: Jennifer Shaoul, Beth Diesch, Lisanne Anderson, Asa Johnson, Erica Strang, Mbacke Thiam, Charisma White

Absent: Crystal Rivera, Cynthia English

Follow-up items from last meeting:

- 1.) Discussion surrounding how to provide self-advocacy resources for individuals residing in shelter.
- 2.) Resume training modules and review of forms/notices.

Agenda (Asa and Cynthia)

- Future: How to partner with potential new NYC elected leadership to continue SDAB work
- Strategizing around “boots on the ground” approach to this board
 - In-shelter visits would require paperwork completed in advance, an identified purpose for the visit, and agreeing to rules/expectations of the program.
 - Potentially both formal meetings (like community meetings) and informal interviews 1:1 (potentially following group discussion); confirmation that IRB would not be required because it would be informational, not formal research
 - Idea for consideration: Potential use of quotes from shelter residents
 - Next: Identify a specific number of shelters, type of shelter, purpose of visit, and desired outcome (Who/what/when/where/why).
 - Jen acknowledges that everybody in the workgroup has either personal or professional experience being/working in shelters.
 - Erica proposes a potential shelter visit in lieu of one of these monthly meetings.
 - Potentially utilize satisfaction/services survey approach (Jen will check to see if something like this already exists, if the responses are available to this committee, and if this tool could be adapted specifically for these site visits).
- Frequency of meetings: Group is in agreement that once/month is adequate, but smaller workgroups will be created for smaller projects as needed.
- Updated minutes review process moving forward: For more consistency in the review process group decided that rather than providing comments between sessions, the minutes for the month prior would be reviewed/corrected live and approved for posting.
- Continuation of Training from Jennifer:
 - Mobility Disabilities; likening touching somebody’s wheelchair to touching somebody’s glasses; best practices with regard to body language/posture (not leaning over people, etc); case scenario discussion and possible accommodations.
 - Blindness and Low Vision; review of alternative formats available.
 - Service Animals and the ways service animals assist people with disabilities.
 - Resume on slide 53 at next review

General discussion

- Concerns related to shelter management being accessible to residents (information not trickling down/residents feeling uninformed about policy initiatives, etc).
- Question for future examination: What is the turnover at different levels of staff throughout DHS (management vs direct service vs maintenance)

Next steps:

- Review of meeting minutes: moving forward, we will review the prior team meeting minutes, confirm edits/corrections live, and approve.

- Next meeting Wednesday, 7/9, 3-5 via Zoom (Jen to send link).

Agenda for 7/9:

- Review of meeting minutes from 6/11 and implementation of any pertinent edits.
- Continued discussion on and planning as pertains to board members visiting shelters.
- Discussion on the minutes format—whether or not there is the potential of us also having audio-recorded minutes for our meetings.
- Examination of what information is available regarding shelter staff turnover rates at the various tiers of management.
- Discussion on the various modes/potential for self-advocacy and the best ways to implement strategies that help make this a goal within reach for individuals with disabilities who are navigating through the NYC shelter system. Is there literature or the appropriate signage posted in shelters and in shelter intake facilities that informs folks who may not necessarily be aware of their rights of what they are and what resources are available to them?
- Continued training module on Service Animals in shelter environments (slide 53) and subsequent training slides by Jennifer.
- Brief review of the minutes for the 7/9 meeting.