



Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

DANIEL W. TIETZ
Commissioner

BARBARA C. GUINN
Executive Deputy Commissioner

December 30, 2022

Sheila Harrigan
Executive Director
New York Public Welfare Association
130 Washington, Avenue
Albany, New York 12210

Dear Executive Director Harrigan:

The Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) received New York Public Welfare Association's (NYPWA's) November 4, 2022, correspondence highlighting the five main issues raised by Local District Commissioners during the Commissioners Convening held in Lake George from October 25, 2022, through October 27, 2022. Those issues highlighted include workforce, SNAP, streamlining administration, substance abuse sanction policies, and strategies for providing access to housing. OTDA appreciated the opportunity to collaborate and discuss these topics with Local District Commissioners at the Convening. We look forward to further discussions and have outlined initial responses to each topic below.

- 1. Workforce:** We appreciated the robust conversation at the Convening and remain committed to pursuing the options discussed with the NYS Department of Civil Service. We are grateful that representatives from Civil Service attended and were able to hear firsthand the workforce challenges faced by the local districts. Since the Convening, we have been collecting title information from districts in pursuit of the non-competitive option discussed. We are also prepared to keep all other options on the table, including expanding the use of Training and Experience exams, continuous recruitment, and decentralization of examinations. We will lead efforts to work through these options with Civil Service.
- 2. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP):** SNAP is a federal program overseen by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) under administration of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Eligibility standards for SNAP are set by federal law with some flexibilities afforded through program implementation. New York State is committed to reducing barriers and improving program access to benefits for low-income households, including ways to streamline SNAP processes. Since the Convening, OTDA has implemented a series of small workgroup meetings with various local district staff to discuss best practices with administering SNAP and solutions to streamlining processes and removing and mitigating barriers to program implementation. OTDA anticipates this workgroup will continue meeting on a regular basis and will result in recommendations that will benefit SNAP applicants, recipients, and local district staff.

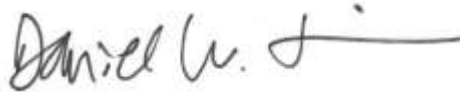
3. **Streamlining Administration:** OTDA will be reviewing its internal processes in an effort to streamline administrative procedures. As discussed at the Convening, we are reviewing existing waiver options, including those outlined in 11-INF-07 *District Policy Options*, to determine which waiver options may be converted to permanent policy changes for all districts without legislative changes.

OTDA appreciates the feedback Commissioners provided regarding the plan approval process for the Rental Supplement Program (RSP). The RSP is a newly developed program, and OTDA acknowledges the initial plan approval process was cumbersome. As a result, we are modifying OTDA's internal approval process to streamline future plan approvals.

4. **Substance Abuse and Sanctions:** OTDA is still considering changes to substance abuse screening and related sanctions policy. We are concerned the current policy is depriving individuals of basic support vital to their recovery. Proposed changes will be shared at the appropriate time.
5. **Providing access for everyone to have housing:** The lack of available affordable housing is a crisis and affects many households throughout the entire State. OTDA will continue to pursue federal and State policy changes that will support and further promote affordable housing for New York's most vulnerable populations.

OTDA appreciates the collaboration experienced at the Commissioners Convening and thanks you for the extraordinary work NYPWA continues to provide in support of State policymakers and Local District Administrators across the State.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Daniel W. Tietz", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Daniel W. Tietz
Commissioner