



New York City Comptroller  
**Scott M. Stringer**

**NEWS**

PRESS RELEASE

PR16-01-002

January 7, 2016

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## **COMPTROLLER STRINGER AND HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION COMMISSIONER BANKS ANNOUNCE AN OVERHAUL OF CITY'S HIV/AIDS HOUSING**

*Comptroller Stringer's audit finds unreliable inspections, inaccurate database, inadequate oversight and a patchwork of inconsistent contracts*

*Commissioner Banks outlines plan to restructure HRA's oversight and management of vendors providing housing for the City's HIV/AIDS Services Administration*

**(New York, NY)** – In a joint announcement, New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer and New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) Commissioner Steven Banks unveiled today an overhaul of how the City manages and oversees vendors providing a range of housing services to HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) clients, following the release of an audit which found significant weaknesses in HRA's operations that potentially put vulnerable New Yorkers at risk.

“Over the past two decades, advocates have waged a long, hard fight to ensure that New Yorkers with HIV and AIDS get the support, services and housing they need,” commented Comptroller Stringer. “It is imperative that we continue to honor this commitment by ensuring the highest levels of quality in HASA housing. Today, I am proud to stand with Human Resources Administration Commissioner Steven Banks, who has acknowledged the serious issues we've identified in our audit and has taken steps to ensure that this program will receive greater oversight.”

“I too am proud to stand with Comptroller Scott Stringer to address these issues for our clients with HIV/AIDS. This is the way government should work, with the oversight agency and the program agency cooperating to ensure better services, provided more effectively and efficiently to benefit the people we serve. The findings of the Comptroller's audit complement the review we were conducting internally. As a result of all of these efforts, HRA is already implementing structural reforms in the way we contract for, provide and oversee services for our clients with HIV/AIDS. For example, we've moved oversight of these contracts to HRA's Program Accountability area to ensure quality management,” HRA Commissioner Banks said.

During the audit period, HASA was responsible for overseeing 61 vendors that provide over 5,600 permanent and emergency supportive housing units for clients with AIDS or clinically symptomatic HIV illness and their families. In addition, HRA has 43 Memoranda of Understanding with 32 vendors to provide an additional 1,459 units of emergency housing.

Audit findings include:

- **Inspections were not completed on time or consistently across all housing units**
  - HASA's goal is to inspect two-thirds of all permanent housing sites annually, but auditors found that 54 percent of sampled programs were not inspected yearly, and some hadn't been inspected for as many as six years.
  - For half of all sampled vendors, auditors found that when HASA did complete inspections, their reports indicated that they didn't cover all of the units.
  - HASA's procedures for inspection are confusing, inadequate and overly bureaucratic. The agency's questionnaires range in length from 14 pages and 308 questions to 18 pages and 448 questions. No guidance is given as to what areas should be prioritized and the questionnaires contain redundant questions, including 5 pertaining to kitchen floors and 5 related to closets.
  
- **Vendors were not audited to ensure fiscal accountability**
  - HASA did not review original supporting documentation for vendors' monthly invoices to determine if expenses are appropriate and justified.
  - Although HASA's stated intention was to audit every one of its vendors, as of September 8, 2015 only some audits had commenced, and by December 15, 2015, four of those had been finalized.
  
- **HASA's database of inspections was inaccurate and unreliable**
  - Auditors found evidence that supervisors had not adequately reviewed data entry, resulting in incorrect inspection information.
  - In one instance, for a vendor providing 75 units, HASA recorded that they had completed inspections of 102 units. HASA also failed to correctly record when some inspections had taken place.
  - In two instances, Inspection Status Reports changed without explanation: one report showed that inspections had occurred on a given day, but when auditors requested the exact same report from the HASA database again, the inspection results had changed. Another initially showed that no inspections had taken place, but the subsequent version of the same report showed that inspections had taken place.
  
- **HRA had poor contract management, allowing vendors to skirt compliance**
  - HRA does not monitor contract compliance effectively, which means that service providers are not held to uniform standards. Of 17 sampled contracts, some did not have the same basic provisions, such as:
    - Providing staff with first aid training or on site substance and alcohol abuse counselors;
    - Providing security at housing locations; and
    - Completing annual customer satisfaction surveys.
  
- **Vendors continued to be paid for clients who had passed away**

- According to records, HASA continued to make payments toward housing for 23 clients who were deceased. After learning of these overpayments, HASA said it would seek to recoup \$8,594 related to 15 of the overpayments.
- **HASA did not conduct client satisfaction surveys**
  - HASA clients received a “Client Bill of Rights” during intake, but that document provides no information on how to file a complaint.
  - Auditors found records of just three complaints for a three month period in 2014. HASA subsequently switched to a new system to track client satisfaction, but the database does not track whether complaints were resolved.

Comptroller Stringer made a series of recommendations that HRA agreed to implement. As part of his reform process, Commissioner Banks incorporated those recommendations into a Corrective Action Plan that provides time frames for implementing new and existing policies and makes structural reforms to address contracting and oversight issues, including:

- Establishing that every HASA housing vendor is reviewed at least every two years using an updated quality assurance tool that will ensure compliance with key contract provisions, including customer satisfaction surveys;
- Moving HASA’s contract monitoring to HRA’s Office of Program Accountability effective January 1, 2016, to provide much more thorough quality control;
- Reforming the way all of HASA’s emergency housing is procured by selecting a non-profit master contractor, which will then secure, manage and inspect housing through contracts with providers. This will ensure that all emergency housing is subject to the tighter oversight that comes from the contract process, replacing prior more informal agreements that have existed for many years;
- Creating a HASA work group that includes HRA leadership in regular meetings with advocates and providers, which has resulted in dozens of program and service improvements;
- Adding more resources to ensure the completion of all unfinished audits;
- Developing a new HASA client bill of rights with a clear method for making complaints to determine trends and patterns;
- Mandating that supervisors review inspection information, correct data issues related to inspections and document any alterations to its database; and
- Modifying inspection checklists and providing guidance to staff to ensure inspections are performed consistently.

To read the full audit, please click [here](#).

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