

AUDIT REPORT



CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER
BUREAU OF MANAGEMENT AUDIT
WILLIAM C. THOMPSON, JR., COMPTROLLER

Audit Report on the Monitoring of the Physical Conditions Of Senior Citizen Centers by the Department for the Aging

MD08-063A

June 30, 2008



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER
1 CENTRE STREET
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10007-2341

WILLIAM C. THOMPSON, JR.
COMPTROLLER

To the Citizens of the City of New York

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In accordance with the Comptroller's responsibilities contained in Chapter 5, §93, of the New York City Charter, my office has conducted an audit to determine whether the Department for the Aging (DFTA) properly monitors the physical conditions of senior centers.

DFTA plans, administers, and coordinates the provision of services that assist many of the City's 1.3 million elderly adults to participate in their communities and maintain their independence. DFTA contracts with 329 senior citizen centers throughout the City's five boroughs to provide services to the elderly. Audits such as this provide a means of ensuring that organizations under contract with the City comply with their contracts and are adequately monitored by City oversight agencies.

The results of our audit, which are presented in this report, have been discussed with DFTA officials, and their comments have been considered in the preparation of this report.

I trust that this report contains information that is of interest to you. If you have any questions concerning this report, please e-mail my audit bureau at audit@comptroller.nyc.gov or telephone my office at 212-669-3747.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William C. Thompson, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

William C. Thompson, Jr.

WCT/ec

Report: MD08-063A
Filed: June 30, 2008

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*The City of New York
Office of the Comptroller
Bureau of Management Audit*

**Audit Report on the Monitoring of the
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Department for the Aging**

MD08-063A

AUDIT REPORT IN BRIEF

The Department for the Aging (DFTA) plans, administers, and coordinates the provision of services that assist many of the City's 1.3 million elderly adults to participate in their communities and maintain their independence. DFTA contracts with 329 senior citizen centers throughout the City's five boroughs to provide services to the elderly. The audit determined whether DFTA properly monitors the physical conditions of its senior citizen centers.

Audit Findings and Conclusions

DFTA monitors the conditions of its senior citizen centers on a regular basis and uses methods for conducting and recording assessments that appear to be adequate. However, its monitoring needs to improve in the follow-up of identified problems and in the provision of assistance to the centers in correcting those problems. Certain conditions at the centers that we cite in this report were also cited by DFTA in its own 2007 and its 2008 assessments (the majority of which took place between January and March 2007 and between January and April 2008, respectively). However, there is limited evidence that DFTA followed up its findings or worked affirmatively and promptly with senior citizen center officials to ensure that conditions were corrected. Some of these conditions still existed at the time of our visits, which took place between October and December 2007.

Our visits to the 20 sampled senior centers provided evidence that the majority of the centers were accessible to the handicapped. In addition, the majority of the centers had evidence that fire drills were conducted and that written evacuation plans, diagrams, exits signs, and choking-victim signs were in place. All except one of the centers had at least two fire extinguishers, and all of them had first aid kits and defibrillators.

However, our visits to the 20 senior centers also provided evidence that the maintenance of these centers' safety, cleanliness, and physical conditions needs to be improved. There were fire and personal safety problems at many of the centers that we visited, as well as improper

conditions related to cleanliness and physical concerns in the bathrooms, kitchens, and throughout the centers. At eight centers, we found problems with no more than 25 percent of the areas tested. However, at five centers there were problems for at least 40 percent of the areas tested—at three centers, there were noticeable concerns regarding maintenance and physical conditions. Although DFTA was aware of the conditions at these centers, we were provided with little evidence of DFTA’s efforts to work with center management to have the conditions corrected.

Audit Recommendations

Based on our findings, we make 13 recommendations, 7 of which are listed below. DFTA should ensure that:

- The centers cited for problems with exit passageways immediately correct them.
- All senior citizen centers possess either current place-of-assembly permits, if required, or documentary evidence indicating that an annual fire inspection was conducted (or requested).
- All of its senior citizen centers conduct fire drills at least twice yearly and that they maintain complete documentary evidence of such drills.
- All senior citizen centers regularly inspect and document tests of their fire and safety systems.
- All of the centers fully comply with safety issues and concerns noted in this report.
- All of the bathrooms of the senior citizen centers are monitored on a regular basis, properly maintained, and repaired immediately when a problem is noticed.
- All senior citizen centers maintain safe and sanitary conditions in their kitchens, including maintaining a clean environment, ensuring that thermostats are placed in all freezers and refrigerators, and ensuring that all food is stored at proper temperatures.

DFTA Response

In their response, DFTA officials generally agreed with 12 audit recommendations and partially agreed with 1 recommendation.

INTRODUCTION

Background

The New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA) plans, administers, and coordinates the provision of services that assist many of the City's 1.3 million elderly adults to participate in their communities and maintain their independence. DFTA funds and administers a wide range of services for the elderly directly, as well as through contracts with community-based organizations. Services include congregate and home-delivered meals, transportation, case management, social services, legal assistance, and home care.

DFTA contracts with 329 senior citizen centers throughout the City's five boroughs to provide services to the elderly. As part of its oversight and monitoring of these centers, each year DFTA conducts a formal assessment survey of each senior center through inspections by a program officer and a nutritionist. The survey is primarily geared towards the evaluation of the center's social and nutritional programs; however, it also concerns the maintenance of the center. Centers that need improvement in service or maintenance are required to implement improvements by a specific date. Improvements in services are funded by the center, while improvements in maintenance can be funded by either the center or the building management.

A previous audit issued by our office, *Follow-up Audit Report on the Monitoring of Senior Citizen Center Conditions by the Department for the Aging* (#MG05-093F), issued June 17, 2005, found that the facilities were not properly maintained. Specifically, there were fire safety problems at many of the centers visited, and there were also problems concerning cleanliness, physical condition, and accessibility.

Objective

The objective of the audit was to determine whether DFTA properly monitors the physical conditions of its senior citizen centers.

Scope and Methodology

The scope of the audit was July 1, 2007, through February 15, 2008, the date of our last visit to the centers.

To gain an understanding of the controls and processes involved with DFTA's oversight and monitoring of the senior citizen centers, we interviewed the Director of Assessment and Data Management/Information Technology as well as officials from DFTA's Bureau of Senior Centers. We reviewed the DFTA *Contract Agency Program Management Manual* to determine the maintenance and performance standards that DFTA applies to senior citizen centers. We also reviewed the survey assessment tools used by DFTA program officers and nutritionists to monitor senior citizen center compliance with DFTA requirements.

To assess DFTA's monitoring of physical conditions of senior centers, we randomly selected a sample of 20 centers from across the five boroughs for observation from the population of 333 centers.¹ The centers included six centers in Manhattan, five in Brooklyn, four in the Bronx, three in Queens, and two in Staten Island. (The 20 centers that we visited are listed in Appendix I.) We did not evaluate the quality of services provided at any of these centers since our audit did not include this objective.

We developed an audit observation checklist modeled after the checklist used in the previous audit as well as the standards used by DFTA's assessment teams. In addition, we reviewed the *Building Code of the City of New York*, *The City of New York Fire Code*, and the federal *Americans with Disability Act Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities* for changes in standards since the previous audit that we could readily check at the centers.

We conducted our observations of the 20 senior centers from October 3, 2007, through February 15, 2008. Using the audit observation checklist, we recorded our observations of each center's safety, cleanliness, and physical conditions. We also obtained and reviewed documentation from the senior centers relating to evacuation plans, fire drills, safety inspections, incident reports, and Notices of Violation issued by City agencies.

To obtain an understanding of DFTA's own computerized assessment tool, the Program Assessment System (PAS), we met with DFTA officials, including the Director of Information Technology. Through our interview with the Director of Assessment and Data Management, we determined whether PAS allows formal survey dates to be recorded in the system and outstanding deficiencies cited during the formal surveys to be tracked. We also assessed the manual procedures in place to track formal survey dates and outstanding deficiencies.

We reviewed DFTA's Senior Center Record Review and Formal Observation Instrument completed for the 20 centers in our sample by its program officers during their visits at the beginning of calendar year 2007. This instrument included the corrective action plans submitted by the centers, follow-up action taken by DFTA program officers, and the final DFTA assessment reports given to each of the 20 sampled centers upon completion of the assessment. We also reviewed the initial assessments for 19 of the 20 sampled centers for calendar year 2008. The calendar year 2008 review for the remaining senior center (New York Chinatown Senior Center) had not yet been completed by DFTA at the time this report was written.

The results of the above tests, while not projected to their respective populations, provided us with a reasonable basis to determine whether DFTA properly maintains and monitors the conditions of its senior centers.

This audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards (GAGAS) and included tests of the records and other auditing procedures considered necessary. This audit was performed in accordance with the audit responsibilities of the Comptroller, as set forth in Chapter 5, §93, of the New York City Charter.

¹ At the start of our audit, DFTA provided us with a listing of 333 senior centers, and we selected our sample from that population. At the exit conference, DFTA officials told us that currently there are 329 centers.

Discussion of Audit Results

The matters covered in this report were discussed with DFTA officials during and at the conclusion of this audit. A preliminary draft report was sent to DFTA officials and discussed at an exit conference held on May 14, 2008. On May 30, 2008, we submitted a draft report to DFTA officials with a request for comments. We received a written response from DFTA officials on June 13, 2008. In their response, DFTA officials generally agreed with 12 audit recommendations and partially agreed with 1 recommendation concerning place-of-assembly permits, stating:

DFTA has visited each provider site included in this audit, and a significant number of issues have already been successfully addressed. Where immediate resolution was not possible due to various issues, including a landlord's control over the building, DFTA has continued to work with providers and their landlords to resolve all noted issues. Although DFTA's responses focus on the senior centers described in the audit, the Department is committed to ensuring all providers' compliance with all applicable laws, including safety and cleanliness, for its senior centers.

The full text of the DFTA response is included as an addendum to this report.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

DFTA monitors the conditions of its senior citizen centers on a regular basis and uses methods for conducting and recording assessments that appear to be adequate. However, its monitoring needs to improve in the follow-up of identified problems and in the provision of assistance to the centers in correcting those problems.

The monitoring methods used by DFTA include the contract compliance assessment instrument used during observations, which provides program officers and nutritionists with a comprehensive list of items to be aware of and to check during inspection of senior centers, including: maintenance and safety conditions; certain physical conditions; accessibility features; sanitary issues; and food preparation, handling and storage. Monitoring also includes entering the results of the initial senior center assessments in PAS within two weeks of inspections.

Nevertheless, the audit found that DFTA can improve its monitoring and follow-up efforts. As can be seen in sections of the report, certain conditions at the centers that we cite in this report were also cited by DFTA in its own 2007 and its 2008 assessments (the majority of which took place between January and March 2007 and between January and April 2008, respectively). However, there is limited evidence that DFTA followed up its findings or worked affirmatively and promptly with senior citizen center officials to ensure that conditions were corrected. Some of these conditions still existed at the time of our visits, which took place between October 2007 and February 2008.

In addition, it appears that in some instances DFTA accepted the center director's verbal statement that a requirement was met or condition corrected rather than performing an independent verification.

Our visits to the 20 sampled senior centers provided evidence that the majority of the centers were accessible to the handicapped. In addition, the majority of the centers had evidence that fire drills were conducted and that written evacuation plans, diagrams, exits signs, and choking-victim signs were in place. Furthermore, all except one of the centers had at least two fire extinguishers, and all of them had first aid kits and defibrillators.

However, our visits to the 20 senior centers also provided evidence that the maintenance of these centers' safety, cleanliness, and physical conditions needs to be improved. There were fire and personal safety problems at many of the centers that we visited, as well as improper conditions related to cleanliness and physical concerns in the bathrooms, kitchens, and throughout the centers. At eight centers, we found problems with no more than 25 percent of the areas tested. However, at five centers, there were problems for at least 40 percent of the areas tested—at three centers, there were noticeable concerns regarding maintenance and physical conditions. Although DFTA was aware of the conditions at these centers, we were provided with little evidence of DFTA's efforts to work with center management to get the conditions corrected.

These issues are discussed below in greater detail and are summarized in Appendix II of the report.

Fire and Personal Safety Problems and Concerns

There were fire and personal safety problems at many of the centers that we visited. These problems primarily related to exit passageways, place-of-assembly permits, fire drills, inspection of safety systems, blocked exits, evacuation signs and diagrams, and other, miscellaneous matters. The previous audit issued by our office, *Follow-up Audit Report on the Monitoring of Senior Citizen Center Conditions by the Department for the Aging*, also noted problems with exit passageways, place-of-assembly permits, inspection of safety systems, blocked exits and evacuation signs and diagrams, although a different sample of centers was selected for review.

Problems with Exit Passageways

During our visits to the centers, we noted problems at 12 of them concerning the seniors' safety and ability to exit in case of an emergency. They pertained to locked or obstructed exit doors, the lack of illuminated exit signs, and inadequate lighting in exit passageways.

Three centers had locked exit doors, and three centers had exits that were blocked and obstructed. DFTA's Senior Center Assessment requires that program participants, staff, and guests be able to exit through all exit doors during the hours of operation. In case of an emergency, it would be dangerous for seniors to have to wait while the emergency doors are opened. In addition, even the most minor obstacles would limit free movement through the designated exit passageways in the event of an emergency.

For example, the New York Chinatown Senior Center had an exit that was blocked with garbage bags. (See photograph No. 1 in Appendix III.) This situation was compounded by the fact that the center's place-of-assembly permit allowed 300 individuals to gather at the site, yet according to the daily roster, 324 seniors were present that day, in addition to numerous staff members who work at the center.

DFTA Response: "The audit . . . erroneously notes that NY Chinatown's permit allows only 300 individuals to gather at the site. There is a PA [place-of-assembly] permit allowing a maximum of 300 persons in the Dining Room, but the center has other rooms such as an Activity Room, Music Room, Offices and Conference/Classroom. The center's Certificate of Occupancy for the center allows a maximum of 565 persons to gather at that center."

Auditor Comment: On the day of our visit, there were no seniors in the Music Room, offices, or Conference room/Classroom, which were locked and had to be opened for us by the Center Director. Accordingly, more than 300 seniors, plus staff, were gathering in the dining room, since meals are served only in that room.

Another example, the Jackie Robinson Senior Center, attended by approximately 130 seniors daily, also had garbage bags placed in front of its emergency exit. Other than the front door, which would also be used as an exit by the other tenants residing in the multi-story

building, this emergency exit was the only other means of egress available to the seniors in the case of an emergency. The exit was at the end of a long flight of stairs, posing further difficulty for seniors with special needs. In addition, the hallway leading to the exit door was poorly lit, and the handrail by the stairs was broken.² (See photograph No. 2 in Appendix III.)

In case of an emergency, the exit passageways of all centers with locked or obstructed passageways pose a serious threat to the seniors' ability to exit from the center in a timely and safe manner.

Although all of the centers had at least two exit signs, 9 of the 20 centers had exit signs that were not illuminated. DFTA's Senior Center Assessment requires that DFTA staff check to make sure emergency exits at the centers have clearly visible and lighted exit signs. The lack of lighting within the sign is readily apparent without testing and should have been rectified as soon as the lights stopped working. In addition, two (RAIN and Jackie Robinson Senior Centers) of the nine centers did not have adequate lighting in the hallways leading towards the exits, also a condition that is readily apparent and that should have been remedied immediately. Illuminated exit signs and well-lit hallways are critical during emergency situations.

Table I, below, summarizes the conditions found at the 12 centers that had exit problems. The remaining eight centers had no problems in any of these areas.

Table I

Twelve Senior Centers with Problems with Exits and Passageways

Senior Center Name	Locked Exits	Blocked Exits	Exit Signs Not Illuminated	Inadequate Lighting in Hallways
Swinging Sixties	X			
Atlantic		X	X	
Roundtable			X	
Stapleton			X	
RAIN/Nereid			X	X
Glebe	X			
Borinquen Court			X	
New York Chinatown		X	X	
Jackie Robinson		X	X	X
Harlem Teams	X			
Kennedy/Central Harlem			X	
Carver			X	
TOTALS	3	3	9	2

² According to the director, she had reported the broken handrail to the center's housing unit, and after two weeks, on the day of our visit, two men from housing were there to fix the handrail.

While the conditions described above are dangerous for all individuals present at the centers in the event of an emergency, they are even more dangerous for seniors, many of whom have special needs and require extra assistance. DFTA needs to ensure that maintaining clear and illuminated exits signs, unobstructed and unlocked exits, and well-lit passageways at the centers is a top priority and concern.

During the exit conference, DFTA officials stated that immediately upon the receipt of our preliminary draft report, they had contacted the centers cited above and they instructed them to open the exit doors and remove anything blocking the passageways. DFTA officials also stated that they sent program officers to the sites to ensure that the exit signs were illuminated and that there was adequate lightening in the hallways. Since this was after the scope of our audit, we did not check whether the issues were resolved.

Recommendations

DFTA should ensure that:

1. The centers cited for problems with exit passageways immediately correct them.
2. All its senior citizen centers maintain unobstructed and well-lit exit passageways and that they provide adequately illuminated exit signs.

DFTA Response: With regard to recommendations 1 and 2, DFTA officials stated, “DFTA agrees that exit passageways need to be unobstructed and well lit. DFTA program staff have visited all of the provider sites reviewed in this audit. In a number of centers in this audit, various doors were mistakenly assumed to be exit doors. . . . Exit sign illuminations and other issues listed in this report have been corrected.”

Auditor Comment: We are pleased that DFTA has agreed to implement these recommendations. Nevertheless, DFTA’s statement that we mistakenly assumed various doors to be exit doors is incorrect. DFTA cites three centers (Swinging 60’s, Atlantic, and Harlem Teams Senior Center) as having doors that should not have been considered as exit doors. However, at each of these centers, the doors were indicated as being exit doors by the center directors, as well as by the exit signs placed directly above the doors. Moreover, in the case of the Swinging 60’s Senior Center, a large center that caters to more than 150 seniors, exit doors only at the front entrance would pose a serious risk in the event of an emergency. In the case of the Atlantic Senior Center, the area where the seniors congregate is closer to the back of the room. In case of an emergency, it would be easier for the seniors to exit through that doorway. With regard to the Harlem Teams Senior Center, the exit that we cited led to a courtyard and not, as claimed by DFTA, “to a building which is slated for demolition.” We cited two exit doors in the main dining room where the seniors gather. Without these two exit doors, the only other means of exit available to the seniors would be through the main exit, which is also used by all other tenants in the apartment building.

Lack of Place-of-Assembly Permits and Fire Inspections

DFTA did not ensure that all of the centers in our sample had either a place-of-assembly permit or an annual fire inspection certificate. Of the 20 sampled centers, only eight had the required permit or inspection certificate.

Centers that serve 75 or more seniors on site need a place-of-assembly permit that is issued by the Buildings Department, based on an annual inspection by the Fire Department. For those centers that serve fewer than 75 seniors, the DFTA program manual requires that the center request an annual fire inspection through the local firehouse. Regardless of the number of seniors served, an annual inspection is required.

Sixteen of the 20 Centers that we visited served 75 or more seniors on site. Six of these 16 centers had current place-of-assembly permits; however, 10 of these 16 centers did not have current place-of-assembly permits on the dates of our visits. Four of the 10 centers had no evidence of an annual fire inspection.

Four of the 20 Centers served fewer than 75 seniors, thus requiring only an annual fire inspection. One of the four centers had a fire inspection and one center had evidence that it had requested a fire inspection. However, there was no documentation of such inspections nor requests for such inspections at two of the four centers. (One of the two centers with a fire inspection certificate also had a place-of-assembly permit, although it was not required.)

Table II, following lists the centers that lacked place-of-assembly permits and fire inspections.

Table II
Senior Centers Lacking Place-of-Assembly Permits and Fire Inspections

Senior Center Name	Centers That Required but Lacked Place-of-Assembly Permits	Centers That Required but Lacked Place-of-Assembly Permits and Lacked Fire Inspections	Centers Not Requiring Place-of-Assembly Permits That Lacked Fire Inspections
Swinging Sixties	X		
Atlantic	X		
Roundtable	X		
Boulevard			X
Young Israel of Midwood	X		
Stapleton	X		
Borinquen Court	X	X	
Judith C. White	X	X	
Jackie Robinson	X	X	
Harlem Teams			X
Kennedy/Central Harlem	X	X	
Carver	X		
TOTALS	10	4	2

Directors in 8 of the 10 centers without the required place-of-assembly permits stated that the landlords or building managers were the ones responsible for obtaining the place-of-assembly permits. (None of the 20 centers in our sample owned the building they occupied.) The director of the Jackie Robinson Senior Center told us that she has been requesting one from the building manager for the last three years and has not been able to obtain it. The director of the Atlantic Senior Center showed us a letter that she sent to her landlord requesting the place-of-assembly permit. The last permit for that center was issued on November 28, 2003, and expired on April 16, 2004.

A place-of-assembly permit helps to ensure the safety of seniors in the event of a fire. Obtaining that permit involves ensuring that the premises are up to the standards and codes of the Buildings Department and Fire Department. The fact that 10 of 16 centers had no permit indicates the likelihood that certain building, safety, and fire issues were not satisfactorily addressed.

In early 2007, DFTA cited seven of the sampled centers for not having a current place-of-assembly permit. DFTA also cited both centers that were not required to have a place-of-assembly permit for not having an inspection from the Fire Department. Moreover, while DFTA did not cite the Judith C. White Senior Center or the Carver Senior Center for failure to obtain a place-of-assembly permit, both were cited for not maintaining evidence regarding the Fire Department inspections. As evidenced by findings we made nearly a year later, DFTA did not follow up with these centers to ensure that the premises were up to code and that they possessed a current place-of-assembly permit, if required, or that inspections from the Fire Department were performed. Often, DFTA simply accepted a letter of request for a place-of-assembly permit to the landlord instead of the permit itself as fulfillment of the permit requirement. In the case of inspections by the Fire Department, DFTA accepted as fact a claim that the Fire Department had been at the site, even though the center had no documents to support that assertion. Furthermore, in its 2008 assessments DFTA cited eight of the sampled centers that we had noted as not having a current place-of-assembly permit; DFTA also cited both of the centers not requiring the permits for not having had Fire Department inspections.

However, as part of its follow-up efforts, for those centers that cannot obtain actual permits DFTA should take a more active role in assisting the centers in correcting the conditions that prevent them from obtaining the permits. In addition, since fire inspections can be requested directly by a center, without the involvement of building management, DFTA should ensure that all centers have an annual fire inspection, or at the very least maintain evidence that a request for a fire inspection was made.

At the exit conference DFTA officials stated that place-of-assembly permits are required for centers that serve more than 75 seniors simultaneously in one room and that the Atlantic Senior Center, the Judith White Senior Center, and the Carver Senior Center were not required to have place-of-assembly permits. However, according to the Department of Buildings Web site, a place-of-assembly permit is required for premises where 75 or more members of the public gather indoors for recreational or social purposes or to consume food. DFTA officials claim that the Atlantic Senior Center has less than 75 seniors who attend, but according to the center's director, the center serves 85 individuals and the space is large enough to accommodate that

number. In addition, on August 24, 2007, the director sent a letter to the landlord stating, “We still do not have a current Place of Assembly Permit post for these premises; this places our program in direct jeopardy with our funding source NYC Department for the Aging.” Moreover, DFTA itself cited the center for not having a place-of-assembly permit in its 2007 and 2008 assessments.

Although DFTA officials acknowledged that the number of seniors enrolled at the Judith C. White Senior Center (97 seniors) and the Carver Senior Center (110 seniors) exceeded the number required for a place-of-assembly permit, they claimed that the dining rooms of both centers are too small to accommodate more than 75 seniors. Regardless of whether the dining rooms at these centers should accommodate fewer than 75 seniors, more than 75 seniors do attend; therefore, place-of-assembly permits are required. Further, in addition to not having the place-of-assembly permit, the Judith C. White Senior Center lacked evidence of inspections by the Fire Department.

DFTA Response: “PA permits are only required for individual rooms that can accommodate and are occupied simultaneously by 75 or more persons. As set forth in the below chart, seven (7) of the twenty (20) centers in the audit serve fewer than 75 persons per day, including programs cited as requiring PA’s – Atlantic, Roundtable, and Stapleton. The programs at Judith White and Carver, which serve more than 75 persons per day, serve senior meals in shifts because their Dining Rooms are too small to accommodate 75 or more persons.”

Auditor Comment: DFTA agrees that five of the 10 centers we cite as not having the permits should have had the permits and DFTA disagrees that the remaining five were required to have permits.

According to DFTA’s response, Atlantic, Roundtable, and Stapleton Senior Centers serve fewer than 75 seniors and were not required to obtain place-of-assembly permits. However, according to the director of the Atlantic Senior Center 85 seniors are enrolled at this center and the center had a permit that expired in 2004. Since that time the director, as stated previously, has contacted the landlord trying to obtain the permit, stating that without one, DFTA funding of the program was in jeopardy. In addition, information provided to us by DFTA for Roundtable and Stapleton indicates a maximum capacity of 120 and 190 seniors, respectively. The directors at all three of these centers indicated that more than 75 seniors attend. Moreover, DFTA cited Atlantic and Stapleton Senior Centers in its 2007 assessments and all three centers in its 2008 assessments for not having the required place-of-assembly permits.

As far as the Judith C. White and Carver Senior Centers are concerned, since there are more than 75 seniors in attendance at both of these centers, there is a strong possibility that more than 75 seniors will crowd into a small room at any time. Although DFTA claims that meals at these centers are served in shifts, this was not communicated to us when we visited these centers. Furthermore, we find it difficult to believe that the center would make the seniors wait to eat lunch an hour or more outside the dining room areas in the event that more than 75 seniors arrive at the same time. A more logical assumption

is that the seniors would pull up extra chairs and eat in a slightly more crowded room. Moreover, the dining room areas in both centers appeared large enough to accommodate 75 individuals. Further, as stated previously, the Judith C. White Senior Center, in addition to not having the place-of-assembly permit, also lacked evidence of inspections by the Fire Department.

Recommendations

DFTA should:

3. Ensure that all senior citizen centers possess either current place-of-assembly permits, if required, or documentary evidence indicating that an annual fire inspection was conducted (or requested).

DFTA Response: “DFTA providers need to maintain a current Place of Assembly (PA) permit as required by the City’s Building Code. . . . As part of its annual assessment, DFTA staff require providers to produce PA permits or written confirmation from the Fire Department indicating compliance with FDNY regulations.”

Auditor Comment: Although we acknowledge that it is part of DFTA’s requirement that providers need to maintain a place-of-assembly permit, that requirement is not always enforced, as evidenced by our findings. To provide for the safety of its seniors, DFTA must ensure that the senior centers cited above, and all of its other senior centers, possess either a current place-of-assembly permit or evidence indicating that an annual fire inspection was conducted.

4. Work together with the landlords or building managers for those centers having difficulties obtaining permits.

DFTA Comment: “DFTA is working with NYCHA to renew the existing PA permit for Jackie Robinson. DFTA will continue to work with the providers and their landlords at Swinging 60’s, Borinquen Court, Kennedy, and Young Israel Midwood to obtain PA’s.”

Auditor Comment: Each of these five senior centers was cited by DFTA in its 2007 and 2008 assessments for not having the required place-of-assembly permits. Nevertheless, the conditions that prevented the centers from obtaining the permits have been allowed to continue for two years. DFTA must take a more active role in assisting the centers in correcting those conditions and in obtaining the permits. In addition, DFTA should also assist the five remaining centers cited in the report for lack of place-of-assembly permits in obtaining them.

Lack of Records of Fire Drills

The results of our inspections of the senior centers found that 4 (RAIN Senior Center, Glebe Senior Center, Harlem Teams Senior Center, and BFFY Richmond Hill Senior Center) of the 20 centers did not maintain records or documentation to reflect that at least two fire drills had

been conducted within the year in compliance with DFTA standards. In addition, the director at one center (Stapleton Senior Center) took over in July 2007 and had no records of any drills conducted prior to that time. The director conducted her first fire drill the morning of our visit, November 7, 2007.

DFTA requires that senior centers conduct at least two fire drills each year and, according to DFTA's assessment tool, keep records to reflect this. DFTA program officers review these records as part of their annual assessment inspections of the senior centers.

The director at the BFFY Richmond Hill Senior Center stated that in the eight months, since he became director, no drills had been conducted. Moreover, the director was unable to provide documentation of any drills that may have been conducted prior to his tenure. Although the remaining three centers claimed to have conducted the fire drills twice a year, there was evidence indicating that drills were conducted only once a year.

In six instances, even when we were able to obtain evidence of conducted drills, it was not obtained through the senior citizen center, but rather through the day care centers that shared premises with the senior centers. In most instances, the senior center directors did not maintain evidence that fire drills were conducted and had to obtain this documentation from the day care centers, since the day care centers were the ones conducting the drills in conjunction with the senior centers. In its 2008 assessment, DFTA cited the Kennedy/Central Harlem Senior Center for not maintaining at its premises documentation of the joint fire drills and suggested that the center secure a copy of the documentation.

In addition, for three of the six senior centers housed in the same building as day care centers(Roundtable, Boulevard and Kennedy/Central Harlem Senior Centers), the fire drill logs refer only to the children present, but not to the seniors participating in the drills. It appears as if the drills were conducted for the benefit of the day care center, not the senior centers. In its 2008 assessment, DFTA cited the Roundtable Senior Center for fire drill logs that referred only to children present and not to seniors present during the fire drills.

Fire drills should be carried out to check that all staff and senior citizens understand the emergency fire action plan to ensure that they are familiar with operation of the emergency fire action plan, to evaluate effectiveness of the plan, and to identify any weakness in the evacuation strategy. Documenting the fire drills conducted is especially useful to those centers that are not the ones conducting the drills, but that follow the lead of day care centers or building managers; it allows officials to keep track of the drills already conducted and serves as a reminder of future drills. DFTA did not cite any of these centers for not conducting fire drills in its 2007 assessments; however, since DFTA conducted its assessments of these centers at the beginning of 2007, it is possible that these centers somehow satisfied DFTA that two fire drills were conducted in the previous year.

During the exit conference, DFTA officials stated that in the future, they will ensure that any fire drills conducted by lead agencies that occupy the building will include the seniors as well.

After the exit conference, DFTA officials provided us with evidence of fire drills for three of the four centers we cited. We received documentation that Richmond Hill Senior Center conducted a fire drill after our visit to the center; however, that was the only drill during the entire year. (At least two drills are required.) DFTA officials also provided us with an updated fire drill log from RAIN Senior Center to indicate that two drills were conducted during 2007. At the time of our site visit to the center, November 15, 2007, the most recent date recorded in the fire drill log was May 24, 2007 and at that time it was the only drill conducted by the center for 2007. The updated log indicates that the second fire drill conducted during 2007 was on November 1, 2007, 14 days prior to our visit to the center. Since that drill was not recorded at the time of our visit to the center, we question the validity of the updated log and do not accept it as evidence. The documentation that we received from DFTA for Harlem Teams Senior Center was for a drill conducted on March 11, 2008, after our visit and after the scope of our audit; therefore, it appears that the center conducted only one fire drill during 2007.

Recommendation

5. DFTA should ensure that all of its senior citizen centers conduct fire drills at least twice yearly and that they maintain complete documentary evidence of such drills.

DFTA Response: “As noted in DFTA’s Program Management Manual, the Department requires its providers to conduct evacuation/fire drills every six months and to keep documentation of those drills.”

Auditor Comment: Although we acknowledge that it is part of DFTA’s requirement that senior centers conduct fire drills every six months and that they maintain documentation of those drills, that requirement is not always enforced, as evidenced by our findings. DFTA must ensure that all senior centers adhere to its requirements regarding conducting and documenting the fire drills.

Lack of Inspection and Adequate Maintenance of Fire and Safety Systems

Our visits to the senior centers indicated the following weakness pertaining to the inspection and maintenance of its fire and safety systems, which are described in greater detail below. The inspections of the fire extinguishers, fire extinguisher training, and working emergency lights are requirements of DFTA for which the centers are responsible. The testing of smoke detectors is not required by DFTA’s assessment; nonetheless, we believe that smoke detectors should be tested to ensure the safety of the seniors.

Fire Extinguishers

Fire extinguishers are required to be inspected at least yearly. DFTA’s Senior Center Assessment requires all centers to have fire extinguishers, and the extinguishers are to have current inspection tags and be fully charged. The DFTA Senior Center Assessment also requires that all staff be trained on the use of fire extinguishers annually and that it be properly documented. One of the 20 centers, Harlem Teams Senior Center, did not have any fire

extinguishers at the time of our visit. The program coordinator stated that they may have been moved by the building management—the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). Another center, Kennedy/Central Harlem Senior Center, had an extinguisher in the sewing room that was tagged as last having been inspected in 2003. In its 2007 and 2008 assessments, DFTA cited the Harlem Teams Senior Center for not having fully charged fire extinguishers; however, DFTA did not cite the Kennedy/Central Harlem Senior Center for not having a currently inspected fire extinguisher in its 2007 or 2008 assessments.

In addition, 9 (including Harlem Teams and Kennedy/Central Harlem Senior Centers) of the 20 centers did not maintain evidence that all of its employees received training in the use of fire extinguishers. These nine centers were not cited by DFTA in the 2007 assessments. Two of these nine centers (Glebe and Jackie Robinson Senior Centers) maintained evidence that training was given in 2006, which may be the reason they were not cited by DFTA in its 2007 assessment; however, by the time of our visits, the training documentation was more than one year old. These two centers were cited by DFTA for not having evidence of training in the 2008 assessments, along with the Kennedy/Central Harlem Senior Center. A few months after our initial visit, we spoke with the director of the Boulevard Senior Center who informed us that after being with the center for seven years, DFTA officials had instructed her for the first time to take fire extinguisher training during their most recent assessment, which took place after our visit.

Emergency Lights

The DFTA Senior Center Assessment requires that all emergency lights at the program site are working. During our visits, we tested a total of 149 emergency light fixtures throughout the 20 centers and found that 16 of the emergency lights at nine centers were not working. At one of the centers, Kennedy/Central Harlem Senior Center, 5 of its 15 light fixtures were not working at the time of our visit. At another such center, Roundtable Senior Center, 4 of its 19 lights were not working. Our review of the 2007 and 2008 assessments did show instances in which DFTA cited centers for non-working emergency lights; however, this condition can change on a day-to-day basis, so it is possible that all emergency lights at the cited centers were working the day DFTA visited.

Smoke Detectors

Two centers had smoke detectors that were not working. One center (RAIN/Nereid Senior Center) occupied three floors of the building for its seniors, but had only two smoke detectors on the first floor. One of the two smoke detectors was not in working condition. The Jackie Robinson Center had only three detectors in the hallway and none in the rooms occupied by the seniors. One of the three smoke detectors was not in working condition. This situation poses a safety risk to the senior citizens.

Table III, following, shows the 17 sampled centers that lacked inspections and maintenance of some type of fire and safety systems. We did not find any problems at the remaining three centers.

Table III**Seventeen Senior Centers Lacking Evidence of Inspections of Fire and Safety Systems**

Senior Center Name	No Fire Extinguisher or Expired Tags on Extinguisher	No Evidence of Fire Extinguisher Training	Emergency Lights That Were Not Working	Smoke Detectors That Were Not Working
Swinging Sixties			X	
Atlantic			X	
Roundtable			X	
Boulevard		X		
Young Israel			X	
Stapleton		X		
SI JCC Senior Kosher Nutrition		X	X	
Riverdale			X	
RAIN/Nereid				X
Glebe		X		
Borinquen Court			X	
Jackie Robinson		X		X
Harlem Teams	No extinguishers	X		
Kennedy/Central Harlem	Expired Tags	X	X	
Carver		X		
BFFY Richmond Hill		X		
BFFY Dellamonica			X	
TOTALS	2	9	9	2

The centers have control over and should take responsibility for testing the fire and safety systems. Center Directors should periodically inspect the fire and safety systems to ensure that they are working properly. In addition, DFTA officials should ensure that this is a regular practice at all the centers. Such an approach would help to ensure greater center involvement in fire safety efforts and greater safety for senior citizens using the centers.

During the exit conference, DFTA officials stated that they had provided fire and safety training during 2003 and 2007, but that due to frequent employee turnover, they now realized that training should be offered on an annual basis. DFTA officials also stated that although the testing of smoke detectors is not currently a DFTA requirement, they will incorporate it as a requirement for their assessments in the future. They also told us that they had sent program officers to the centers to correct the problems with the fire extinguishers, emergency lights, and smoke detectors.

After the exit conference, DFTA officials provided us with evidence of fire extinguisher training for eight of the nine centers we cited. However, four of these centers (Kennedy/Central Harlem, Jackie Robinson, Carver, and Glebe Senior Centers) received the training in 2008, after our visits to the centers in 2007 and, in the case of the Glebe Senior Center, after the issuance of our preliminary draft report in April 2008. The employees at these centers had not been trained in the use of fire extinguishers since at least 2006.

DFTA provided us a Certificate of Attendance for a safety and fire prevention class offered by DFTA to the Boulevard Senior Center in May 2006. However, this training was given more than two years ago, and DFTA requires it be given at least annually.

The evidence DFTA gave us after the exit conference for the Richmond Hill Senior Center, the Stapleton Senior Center, and the Harlem Teams Senior Center indicated that fire extinguisher training was supposedly provided prior to our visits to these centers. However, we requested this documentation from the centers at the time of our visits and made several follow-up calls to the centers in an attempt to obtain the documents after our visits, without success. That being the case, we question the validity of the documents we received from DFTA for these three centers. We received no evidence of training for the SI JCC Senior Kosher Senior Center.

DFTA Response: “DFTA was . . . troubled about a statement in the report regarding the fire extinguisher training where ‘we question the validity of the documents we received from DFTA for these three centers.’ The Department is not in the business of manufacturing documents that are not reflective of actually completed activities. DFTA maintains its own records and expects its providers to do so as well.”

Auditor Comment: We received the documents in question from DFTA, which received them directly from the centers, as evidenced by the dates that the documents were faxed to DFTA: May 19 and May 20, 2008. While we do not question DFTA’s integrity, we do nevertheless question the validity of the documents that DFTA received from the senior centers. That being the case, we cannot accept them as valid evidence and urge DFTA to ensure that all centers conduct fire extinguisher training and that they maintain current, updated documents to reflect the training.

Recommendations

DFTA should ensure that:

6. All senior citizen centers regularly inspect and document tests of their fire and safety systems.
7. The testing of smoke detectors is included as part of its assessment reviews of the centers.

DFTA Response: With regard to recommendation 6 and 7, DFTA officials stated, “In accordance with the Department’s annual fire safety and prevention training, DFTA instructs its providers to annually coordinate regular testing of fire extinguishers as well as other fire safety devices and systems. The Department also requires that providers train staff annually to use the above equipment. Documentation of these trainings is to be kept on-site and is reviewed by DFTA during the annual assessment.”

Auditor Comment: We acknowledge that DFTA requires compliance with inspection and maintenance of the fire and safety systems at the centers; however, this requirement

is not always enforced, as evidenced by our findings in 17 of the 20 centers that we visited.

Miscellaneous Safety Issues and Concerns

Not all the centers had all of the safety measures required by DFTA in place, thereby posing hazards to its seniors. To protect its seniors on a day-to-day basis, centers are required to abide by certain practices. These include ensuring that: written evacuation plans and evacuation diagrams are displayed and easily visible in each room; choking-victim signs are posted in the dining rooms; individuals preparing the food have the necessary food handler permit displayed; and staff are trained in administering first aid. Fifteen of the sampled centers had miscellaneous safety issues and concerns and are shown in Table IV, following.

Table IV

Thirteen Centers with Miscellaneous Safety Issues and Concerns

Senior Center Name	Emergency Plan and Diagram Were Not as Required	Lack of Choking Victim Sign in Dining Room	Food Service Handler Permits Were Not Maintained/Displayed	Inadequate Documentation of Training in First Aid
Atlantic				X
Roundtable	No diagram			
Boulevard				X
Stapleton				X
SI JCC Senior Kosher Nutrition			X	X
RAIN/Nereid	Not displayed	X		
Borinquen Court			X	
New York Chinatown			X	
Judith C. White		X		X
Jackie Robinson	Diagram and Plan Only Displayed in hallway		X	
Harlem Teams	No diagram		X	
Carver	Plan Only Displayed in hallway		X	X
BFFY Dellamonica	Very small diagram			X
TOTALS	6	2	6	7

Two of the centers (Roundtable and Harlem Teams Senior Centers) that had problems with emergency plans and diagrams were so cited by DFTA for these problems in the 2007 and 2008 assessments. DFTA did not cite any of the other miscellaneous safety issues or concerns that we noted in its 2007 assessments even though these issues most likely existed at that time and should have been cited.

These safety procedures are set in place to protect the seniors and ensure their safety. Those centers not following the safety measures and procedures assume the risk that their seniors will not always receive an adequate degree of safety and protection. DFTA needs to ensure that its centers comply fully with all safety measures, including ensuring that: written evacuation

plans and evacuation diagrams are displayed and easily visible in each room; choking-victim signs are posted in the dining rooms; individuals preparing the food have the necessary food handler permits displayed; and at least some staff at each center are trained in administering first aid.

During the exit conference, DFTA officials stated that anyone, including volunteers, who touched food was required to have a food-handler permit. After the exit conference, DFTA officials provided us with copies of food-handler permits for four of the six centers cited above—they provided no food-handler documentation for the SI JCC Senior Kosher Senior Center and the Carver Senior Center.

Although DFTA provided us with the food-handler permits for employees at the Borinquen Senior Center, the Jackie Robinson Senior Center, and the Harlem Teams Senior Center, the permits were not posted in the food preparation area at the time of our visits to the centers, contrary to DFTA policy. DFTA requires that food-service handler permits be posted in the area the food is prepared.

In addition, there are seven cooks at the New York Chinatown Senior Center; DFTA provided us permits for just two cooks. The purpose of the permit is to ensure that the individuals preparing and handling food are properly trained so that they can supervise others. According to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the provider of these classes, individuals with these permits are required to be on the premises on every day. In the case of the New York Chinatown Senior Center, if both of the cooks are not at work, the remaining five cooks are left on their own without a trained supervisor.

Recommendation

8. DFTA should ensure that that all of the centers fully comply with safety issues and concerns noted in this report.

DFTA Response: “DFTA has met with all the providers cited in this audit and has visited the sites.”

Improper Maintenance within Centers

Our visits to the 20 centers raised concerns about the cleanliness and physical conditions of the bathrooms and kitchens at a number of centers. We also noted some problems with the general maintenance of the centers and rodent control. These issues are discussed in greater details below.

Bathroom Cleanliness and Maintenance

DFTA requires that all rooms of the center be clean and that paint, plaster, and flooring be in good condition. Fourteen of the 20 centers that we visited had problems in the men’s and women’s bathrooms, including: damaged or missing tiles; peeling paint; rust and mildew on the sides of the stalls, floors, and ceilings; dirty toilets and floors; and toilets, urinals, and sinks not

working properly. The problems varied in degree of severity. The women’s bathroom of one center also had a broken side of the stall that moved when leaned against, thereby posing a safety risk.

There were eight bathrooms whose toilets and urinals were not all operating properly: they were out of order, leaked when flushed, or very difficult to flush. Further, the water faucets in the bathrooms of seven centers were not all functioning properly (e.g. no hot or cold water, not enough water pressure). In addition, the bathrooms of three centers had no toilet paper.

Table V, below, lists the 14 centers that had some type of cleanliness or maintenance issues with their bathrooms. The remaining six centers did not have any problems in this area.

Table V

Fourteen Senior Centers with Bathroom Cleanliness and Maintenance Problems

Senior Center Name	Physical and Sanitary Concerns In Bathrooms	Toilets and Urinals Not Operating Properly	Faucets Not Working Properly	Miscellaneous Issues
Swinging Sixties	X		X	No toilet paper
Atlantic	X		X	
Roundtable	X	X		
Young Israel	X	X	X	
SI JCC Senior Kosher Nutrition	X	X	X	No toilet paper
Glebe		X		
Borinquen Court	X	X	X	No toilet paper
New York Chinatown		X		
Harlem Teams				No soap or paper towels
Judith C. White	X			
Kennedy/Central Harlem	X	X		
Carver	X			
BFFY Richmond Hill			X	
BFFY Dellamonica		X	X	
TOTALS	9	8	7	4

The Atlantic Senior Center was cited by DFTA in its 2007 and 2008 assessment for broken tiles at the entrance to and inside the women’s bathroom. None of the other centers were cited by DFTA in its 2007 assessments for any of the cleanliness or maintenance issues we observed, and only one center was cited in its 2008 assessments (Carver Senior Center). Although the cleanliness of the bathrooms and the operation of toilets and sinks may have changed between DFTA’s visit to the center and our observations, the physical conditions we noted existed and should have been noted.

Senior centers should provide seniors with clean, sanitary, and fully functioning bathrooms. This should be a priority at all centers, even in those centers that are not responsible for their own maintenance and rely on the building’s landlord for cleaning and maintenance. The

conditions of the bathrooms should be monitored by center officials on a regular basis, and repairs should be made at the first sign of a problem. In the event that the center is not responsible for maintenance, the center should document the problem and immediately notify building management.

Regular maintenance and upkeep is vital in providing seniors with a clean and sanitary environment. DFTA should work together with the centers and landlords to ensure that all seniors have acceptable bathroom conditions at their centers.

Recommendations

DFTA should ensure that:

9. The senior citizen centers take immediate action to correct the bathroom cleanliness and maintenance problems noted in this report.
10. All of the bathrooms of the senior citizen centers are monitored on a regular basis, properly maintained, and repaired immediately when a problem is noticed.
11. The senior citizen centers work together with their landlords in resolving these issues and in preventing them from recurring in the future.

DFTA Response: With regard to recommendations 9 through 11, DFTA officials stated, “DFTA has visited all provider sites cited in this report and required that all bathrooms be properly and thoroughly cleaned. DFTA then re-inspected the facilities and found them to be in compliance. . . . DFTA is aware that some providers are experiencing difficulties resolving maintenance issues. Therefore, DFTA has intervened with the provider landlords and continues to facilitate meetings between the landlord and the providers to mediate and resolve issues including inoperable toilets and faucet issues.”

Kitchen Cleanliness and Other Concerns

Nine of the 20 centers had cleanliness and other deficiencies in kitchens. Twelve of the 20 centers that we visited prepared food for the seniors on the premises. One center did not serve food to seniors. The remaining seven centers had pre-packaged meals delivered to the centers from other centers, caterers, or its sponsoring organization. Though these seven centers did not use ovens to prepare the food, they stored the food in refrigerators and freezers, and they used either the kitchen or another area within the center to unpack and prepare the food prior to serving it to the seniors. Most of the centers had more than one freezer and/or refrigerator. DFTA requires that all rooms used for the preparation, storage, and serving of food be maintained according to State Sanitary Code 14-1, which includes food protection, equipment cleaning, and sanitation requirements. The concerns noted below relate to the cleanliness of stoves, refrigerators, and freezers at three centers and lacking thermostats and/or inadequate temperatures in the refrigerators and freezers at eight centers.

During our visits to the centers, the stoves were filthy in 2 of the 12 centers that used their kitchens to prepare the food (Judith C. White Senior Center and Borinquen Senior Center). Section 14-1.110 of the State Sanitary Code states, “food contact surfaces of all cooking equipment are to be kept free of encrusted grease deposits and other accumulated soil.” While we acknowledged and took into consideration the fact that the stoves are used every day and that the food was therefore being prepared on the day of our visit, it was apparent from the condition of the stoves at these two center kitchens had not been cleaned in a long time. There was dried grease and grime splattered on the inside of the oven, on the range, and on the front of the stoves in both kitchens. (See photographs Nos. 4 and 5 in Appendix III.) In addition, the kitchen floor in the Judith C. White Senior Center appeared to be dirtier than it should have been after a normal day’s use of the kitchen. Individuals responsible for the maintenance of the centers should take care to clean up spills as soon as they occur. Unclean conditions where food is prepared is unacceptable and pose a health risk.

DFTA and the State Sanitary Code 14-1 require food temperatures to be at levels required to inhibit bacterial growth and keep the food safe for consumption. In addition, the State Sanitary Code requires that facilities storing food have thermometers in the warmest part of the refrigeration unit. By storing the food at temperatures above acceptable levels, senior citizen centers are placing the health of its seniors in jeopardy.

We also noted the following problems at eight centers:

- Dirty refrigerators and/or freezers at two centers: Borinquen and Boulevard.
- Lacking internal thermostats in refrigerators and/or freezers at five centers: Borinquen, Boulevard, Carver, Jackie Robinson, and Harlem Teams.
- Temperatures above the maximum in refrigerator (45 degrees Fahrenheit) or freezer (zero to minus 10 degrees Fahrenheit) at five centers: Carver, Borinquen, Stapleton, Riverdale, and RAIN

In its 2007 assessment, DFTA cited RAIN Senior Center for temperatures above the maximum in freezers. In its 2007 or 2008 assessments, DFTA cited none of the other centers for the conditions we observed; however, those conditions may not have existed at the time of DFTA’s visits.

During the exit conference, DFTA officials told us that their program officers had visited the centers and ensured that thermostats were placed where they were required and that the refrigerators and freezers were kept at the correct temperatures.

Recommendation

12. DFTA should ensure that all senior citizen centers maintain safe and sanitary conditions in their kitchens, including maintaining a clean environment, ensuring that thermostats are placed in all freezers and refrigerators, and ensuring that all food is stored at proper temperatures.

DFTA Response: “After completing visits to sites noted in the report, DFTA confirms that providers have properly cleaned all their kitchens. DFTA Nutritionists also checked freezers and refrigerators for proper temperature and made adjustments, as needed at the time of their site visits.”

Maintenance and Condition Problems throughout the Centers

During our visits to the 20 centers, we noted differences in the maintenance, upkeep, and physical conditions of the centers. Although we did not find any evidence of rodents, 7 of the 20 directors we interviewed complained to us about the severity of this problem. They stated that if they did not hire and pay for the exterminators on their own, the problems would be much worse, since the landlords and building managers were not inclined to do so. They felt that regardless of any restrictions in their budget, they had no choice but to take care of these matters on their own; otherwise, it would pose a major health risk to their seniors.

Some of the centers that we visited, such as Roundtable Senior Center³ and Riverdale Senior Center, appeared to be impeccably clean, well maintained, and generally inviting. The seniors at these centers voluntarily approached us with comments about how lucky they felt to be a part of such wonderful centers. Unfortunately, other centers that we visited did not appear to be as well maintained or as inviting. There were four centers with noticeable concerns—Kennedy/Central Harlem, Atlantic, Boulevard, and Harlem Teams Senior Centers. At the Kennedy/Central Harlem Senior Center, we observed damaged pipe insulation, which further investigation indicated may be asbestos. (See photograph No. 6 in Appendix III.) At the remaining three centers, there were various concerns at each for which we found minimal evidence of DFTA’s involvement in assisting the centers to correct the problems.

DFTA Response: “DFTA is coordinating inspection of damaged pipe lagging with the landlord and will remedy it as appropriate.”

Conditions Noted at Atlantic Senior Center

- The entrance had a raised plank that could easily trip seniors.
- Uneven and missing floor tiles in center of room.
- Cracked, broken, and boarded-up windows. (See photograph No. 7 in Appendix III.)
- Problems with rodents.
- Poor bathroom cleanliness and maintenance. (See photograph No. 8 in Appendix III.)

The director told us that she has complained to the landlord about these conditions on many occasions, but they have not been rectified. In fact, she provided us the most recent letter she wrote to the landlord two months previous to our visit. In that letter, she mentioned all of the same concerns that we had. At the time of our visit, the landlord had not responded to the

³ Although there were concerns with some of the eight bathrooms in the center, for the most part the center was clean.

director. However, as the director told us, nothing had been done in the past in response to her complaints, and conditions continued to deteriorate.

During its 2007 Senior Center Assessments, DFTA cited the Atlantic Senior Center for the poor conditions of its dining room floor as well as the conditions of the bathrooms. However, rather than taking action, DFTA wrote in its evaluation of the center that the director had sent letters (February 2, 2007, and March 22, 2007) to the landlord and was waiting for a response. By the time we visited the center in October 2007, the problems had not been resolved despite the fact that the director had by then sent a third letter to the landlord and conditions had deteriorated even further.

DFTA was fully aware of the difficulties that the center's director was having in obtaining a response and corrective action from her landlord. DFTA should have intervened and assisted the center in obtaining help. Instead, DFTA, aware that the landlord was not cooperating, cited the center, left the center to fend for itself, and continued to cite the center for these conditions in its 2008 assessment. DFTA officials stated that they are in the process of trying to find a new site for the Atlantic Senior Center. (DFTA did not provide us evidence of their efforts.)

DFTA Response: "DFTA continues to reach out to the landlord to cure physical defects regarding the toilet rooms and windows."

Conditions Noted at Boulevard Senior Center

- Hallway to director's office dimly lit.
- Vents and pipes covered in plastic directly overhead. (See photograph No. 9 in Appendix III.)
- Many jumbled, loose wires exposed on wall outside of director's office and outside seniors' main room. (See photograph No.10 in Appendix III.)
- No bathroom with handicapped access.
- Rodent problems.

Since the center is in a NYCHA building, the director took her concerns to management. She complained that she had to repeatedly contact NYCHA about maintenance problems that required attention. She gave us copies of a letter of complaint that she had sent in December 19, 2005, and then again in March 2006. The letters described three problems that needed to be resolved, and when they were not, she sent another letter in October 2006. When her request for help was ignored, she sent a fourth letter in February 2007. The most glaring complaint in all four letters was that the overhead tiles in the dining room needed to be replaced. The director stated that it seemed as if the tiles were about to fall. As a result she was not able to feed the senior citizens in that area. It took nearly a year for some of her concerns to be addressed; meanwhile, the list of problems increased. Despite the fact that DFTA was fully aware of the ongoing problems the director had with building management—DFTA was in possession of the letters—we found no evidence of DFTA intervening or offering to facilitate matters. According to DFTA's 2008 assessment, the dining room still had water-stained tiles and lacked some tiles;

the director stated that this was a matter that was being addressed by the building manager. However, this condition has continued to exist since 2005 and has yet to be adequately resolved.

During the exit conference, DFTA officials stated that they had never received any information from the center regarding the issues we cited. However, DFTA's 2007 assessment of the center referred to the letters sent by the director to the building manager; therefore, DFTA officials should have been aware of the ongoing problems faced by the center. DFTA officials also told us that since receiving our preliminary draft report, they have been working with NYCHA and have ensured that the box of wires, which they claim are phone wires, is now covered and is no longer exposed. In addition, they stated that they ensured that the wraps on the vents and pipes were removed and the light bulbs in the hallway were changed.

DFTA Response: "NYCHA has remedied the hallway lighting and exposed telephone wiring and has removed the plastic wrap on the pipes. Handicapped accessibility at this site and other centers has been and continues to be a capital request from the NYCHA budget."

Conditions Noted at Harlem Teams Senior Center

- Due to ongoing renovations over the last two years, seniors were not using their regular space, but were in a makeshift, cluttered room.
- Men and women had to share one bathroom.
- Corridor from main room to bathroom was filled with garbage bags, wires, debris, and all sorts of construction materials. (See photograph No. 11 in Appendix III.)
- Entrance steps to center were broken, cracked, and not accessible to the handicapped.
- Director's office was in need of paint and repair and lacked heat

The room the seniors occupied at the time of our visit was created to temporarily accommodate the seniors while renovations to the premises were underway. However, it had been more than two years since the renovations began, and the seniors still could not return to their own space, which had needed accommodations such as different rooms for varying activities and separate bathrooms for men and women.

The program coordinator did not know when she and the senior citizens could return to their regular space. She stated that DFTA was aware of this problem, but that it was not doing anything to facilitate matters. In fact, on January 24, 2007, DFTA cited the center for some of the issues that we had noticed, such as concerns about stairs in the entrance to the center, lack of an evacuation diagram, fire extinguishers that were not recharged, and poor conditions within the center. The response from building management to DFTA's Senior Center Assessment was that the building was undergoing renovations and that all of the problems would be resolved in a matter of a few weeks. DFTA management accepted this response to the findings. By the time we visited the center, one year later (January 9, 2008), we found that all of these conditions existed, except that they had been exacerbated by the passage of time. When we sought evidence of efforts to resolve the problems, we learned that DFTA had not checked to find out whether the seniors moved back to their own space, as promised by the building management.

During the exit conference, DFTA officials acknowledged that for some time, they have had problems with the building management with regard to the maintenance of the center. They stated that they will continue working with the building management to resolve the problems but had no time frame for concluding this task.

DFTA Response: “DFTA continues to work with the provider while renovations continue.”

For each of these three centers, as stated previously, DFTA was aware of the conditions at the centers and the difficulties the directors were having in obtaining any type of response or corrective action from the landlords. However, DFTA did not take enough action to assist these centers since the conditions still existed at the time of our visits. DFTA needs to take a more active role in assisting these centers in correcting the conditions cited.

DFTA Response: “The contract agencies are directly responsible for maintaining these sites and providing services. As such, the Department does not agree with statements . . . such as ‘DFTA did not take action to assist these centers . . . DFTA needs to take more active role in assisting these centers.’ . . . we are concerned about the lack of recognition in your audit report of the providers’ responsibility in maintaining physical conditions of senior centers.”

Auditor Comment: We realize that it is the providers’ responsibility to maintain the conditions of the senior centers. However, these centers do not own the space they occupy, and the assistance of the landlord is needed to correct the problems for many of the conditions we cite at these centers. The centers were unable to get the landlords to correct the conditions, but it was not for a lack of effort on their part. The Atlantic Senior Center sent three letters of complaint to the landlord, while the Boulevard Senior Center provided us four letters of complaint it had sent to its landlord. In addition, at the time of our visit, the Harlem Teams Senior Center had been undergoing renovations for more than two years. For each of these three centers, as stated previously, DFTA was aware of the conditions, the length of time the conditions had gone unresolved, and the difficulties the directors were having in obtaining any type of response or corrective action from the landlords. Since the centers’ numerous requests for assistance were ignored by the landlords and conditions were deteriorating, DFTA, aware of the circumstances, should have intervened and taken a more active role in assisting the centers to get the conditions remedied.

DFTA officials informed us that they try to mediate and facilitate negotiations between landlords and senior centers; however, we saw no evidence of this. If DFTA did mediate between the landlords and directors of these centers, then based on our observations, such efforts did not result in the correction of any of these conditions. DFTA should take a more active role in assisting senior centers when they are at a standstill in resolving problems with building management. If the landlords are not cooperating and the centers are having a difficult time in communicating with their landlords, the center directors should be able to contact DFTA for assistance. As stated previously, DFTA officials informed us that they are currently attempting to assist the Atlantic Senior Center to relocate. DFTA should take an affirmative and supportive

approach such as this to help resolve problems in all centers that are dealing with non-responsive landlords before conditions further deteriorate.

Recommendation

DFTA should:

13. Immediately investigate the concerns noted above and assist the centers in resolving those problems.

DFTA Response: “Clean well-maintained senior centers are important to DFTA. Per the DFTA Program Management Manual, contract agencies are responsible to provide such centers.”

Auditor Comment: Although we acknowledge that DFTA requires that senior centers are clean and well-maintained, as evidenced by our findings, centers do not always comply. Some of the conditions cited in our report have been allowed to continue for years. DFTA needs to take a more active role to ensure that all senior citizen centers are well maintained.

Listing of the 20 Senior Centers Visited by Auditors

#	NAME OF SENIOR CENTER	BOROUGH
1	Swinging Sixties Senior Center	Brooklyn
2	Atlantic Senior Center	Brooklyn
3	Roundtable Senior Center	Brooklyn
4	Boulevard Senior Center	Brooklyn
5	Young Israel of Midwood Senior Center	Brooklyn
6	Stapleton Senior Center	Staten Island
7	SI JCC Senior Kosher Nutrition Senior Center	Staten Island
8	Riverdale Senior Center	Bronx
9	RAIN/Nereid Senior Center	Bronx
10	Glebe Senior Center	Bronx
11	Borinquen Court Senior Center	Bronx
12	New York China Town Senior Center	Manhattan
13	Judith C. White Senior Center	Manhattan
14	Jackie Robinson Senior Center	Manhattan
15	Harlem Teams Senior Center	Manhattan
16	Kennedy/Central Harlem Senior Center	Manhattan
17	Carver Senior Center	Manhattan
18	BFFY Richmond Hill Senior Center	Queens
19	Snap Bell Park Senior Center	Queens
20	BFFY Dellamonica Senior Center	Queens

Appendix II

Summary of Conditions Found at Sampled Centers
Seventeen Problem Areas Tested

Name	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	Total	% of Issue Areas with Problems
Swinging Sixties	X				X				X						X			4	24%
Atlantic		X	X		X				X					X	X			6	35%
Roundtable			X		X				X		X				X			5	29%
Boulevard					X			X						X		X	X	5	29%
Young Israel					X				X						X			3	18%
Stapleton			X		X			X						X			X	5	29%
SI JCC								X	X				X	X	X			5	29%
Riverdale									X								X	2	12%
RAIN			X	X		X				X	X	X					X	7	41%
Glebe	X					X		X							X			4	24%
Borinquen			X		X				X				X		X	X	X	7	41%
NY Chinatown		X	X										X		X			4	24%
Judith White					X							X		X	X	X		5	29%
Jackie Robinson		X	X	X	X			X		X	X		X				X	9	53%
Harlem Teams	X				X	X	X	X			X		X		X		X	9	53%
Kennedy/Central Harlem			X		X		X	X	X						X			6	35%
Carver			X		X			X			X		X	X	X		X	8	47%
BFFY Richmond Hill						X		X							X			3	18%
Snap Bell Park																		0	0%
BFFY Dellamonica									X		X			X	X			4	24%
TOTALS	3	3	9	2	12	4	2	9	9	2	6	2	6	7	14	3	8	101	30%

A = Locked exits

B = Blocked exits

C = Exit Signs Not Illuminated

D = Inadequate lighting in Hallways

E = No Assembly Permit or Fire Inspection

F = No record of two fire drills

G = No fire extinguishers or expired tags

H = No evidence of fire extinguisher training

I = Emergency lights not working

J = Smoke detectors not working

K = Emergency plan and diagram not as required

L = Lack of choking-victim sign

M = Problems with Food Handler Permits

N = No documentation of first aid training

O = Bathroom cleanliness and maintenance problems

P = Dirty stove and/or refrigerator or freezer

Q = Lacking thermostat or temp. above max in refrig. or freezer

Photographs Taken during Visits to Senior Centers



Photograph No. 1. A partially blocked exit at the New York Chinatown Senior Center



Photograph No. 2. Poorly lit exit stairway with broken handrail at the Jackie Robinson Senior Center.



Photograph No. 3. Entrance to bathroom at Judith C. White Senior Center showing small pipes protruding from floor, possible tripping hazard



Photograph No. 4. Set grease and spatter on stove top and back at the Borinquen Senior Center



Photograph No. 5. The inside of an oven at the Judith C. White Senior Center



Photograph No. 6. Possible asbestos pipe insulation that appears to be damaged and friable at Kennedy/Central Harlem Senior Center.



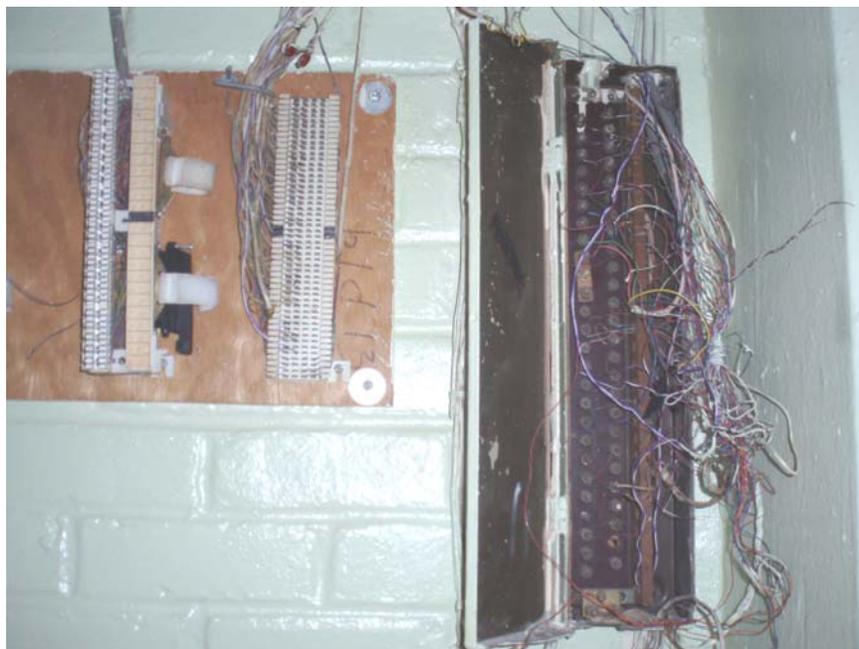
Photograph No. 7. Boarded up window at the Atlantic Senior Center



Photograph No. 8. Entrance to women's room at the Atlantic Senior Center



Photograph No. 9. Overhead pipes covered in red and green plastic; and exposed vents and wires at the Boulevard Senior Center.



Photograph No. 10. Exposed wires outside the seniors' main room at the Boulevard Senior Center.



Photograph No. 11. Corridor that seniors had to pass through from the main room to the bathroom at the Harlem Teams Senior Center.



DEPARTMENT FOR THE AGING

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Edwin Méndez-Santiago, LCSW
Commissioner

June 13, 2008

John Graham
Deputy Comptroller
Audits, Accountancy, & Contracts
Office of the Comptroller
1 Centre Street
New York, NY 10007-2341

Dear Mr. Graham:

Thank you for sharing your office's draft Audit Report on the Monitoring of the Physical Conditions of Senior Centers by the Department for the Aging (MD08-063A). DFTA appreciates the opportunity to provide comments and to share concerns. A more detailed response to the report's recommendations is attached.

DFTA contracts with non-profit organizations to provide safe and comfortable senior centers. These organizations are responsible for ensuring their sites are maintained according to DFTA program standards, as well as all applicable laws and regulations. DFTA conducts annual assessments of each of its providers and sites, as well as other site visits throughout the year. DFTA provides funds, oversight, and technical assistance to these providers. However, the contract agencies are directly responsible for maintaining these sites and providing services. As such, the Department does not agree with statements in the reports such as "DFTA did not take enough action to assist these centers...DFTA needs to take a more active role in assisting these centers."

The Department can and does conduct its required oversight and monitoring; it is our contracted service providers' responsibility to maintain safety and cleanliness in the first instance and to respond to the Department's monitoring findings. We will always work to support and follow through on their efforts, and ensure they meet their contractual obligations. In this vein, we are concerned about the lack of recognition in your audit report of the providers' responsibility in maintaining physical conditions of senior centers.

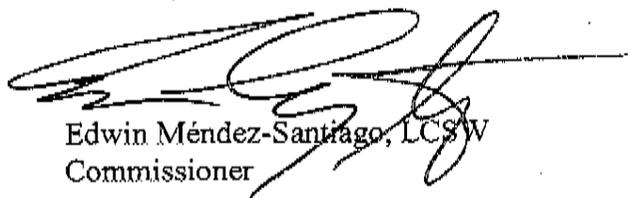
DFTA was also troubled about a statement in the report regarding the fire extinguisher training where "we question the validity of the documents we received from DFTA for these three centers." This is a serious allegation and is simply based on your own misunderstanding of the records we shared with you. The Department is not in the business of manufacturing documents that are not reflective of actually completed activities. DFTA maintains its own records and expects its providers to do so as

John Graham
June 13, 2008
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well. If the centers were not able to provide documentation, that issue must be addressed individually with those centers. This should not be construed as DFTA manufacturing records.

If you have any questions about this response, please contact Jorge Romero, Assistant Commissioner of the Bureau of Fiscal Management, at 212-442-2322.

Sincerely,



Edwin Méndez-Santiago, LCSW
Commissioner

The Department for the Aging's Response to the City Comptroller's Report on the Monitoring of the Physical Conditions of Senior Centers by the Department for the Aging (MD08-063A)

Overview

The Department for the Aging (DFTA) contracts with 131 providers to operate 329 senior centers throughout the five boroughs of New York City.¹ DFTA provides funding and oversight to organizations that are charged with providing quality services to older New Yorkers at these sites. Senior center providers must adhere to all applicable laws and regulations, as well as DFTA program standards. DFTA routinely monitors how providers maintain the physical conditions of senior centers through an annual assessment process, as well as throughout the year during scheduled and unannounced visits to the program sites. In addition to the annual assessment conducted by DFTA staff, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) conducts inspections of senior centers serving congregate meals throughout the year. DOHMH notifies DFTA of any health code violations. After receiving notification of a violation, DFTA Nutritionists make site visits within five business days to work with providers to correct the citations.

DFTA's annual assessment is conducted in two parts, one completed by a DFTA Nutritionist and the other by a DFTA Program Officer. Providers are assessed against all applicable laws and regulations, including the Fire Department of New York (Fire Department or FDNY) standards and DFTA program standards. DFTA requires non-compliance issues to be corrected within fifteen (15) days of the visit to the site. Programs are required to submit documentation verifying corrective action, or a follow-up site visit is made by DFTA staff to ensure violations have been corrected. If the non-compliant issues have not been rectified in the appropriate timeframe, the provider must work with the Program Officer to ensure that corrective action is taken, and the provider's assessment score is affected.

DFTA assists providers in correcting non-compliance issues, particularly if the issues are related to other City agencies or City-owned sites. DFTA will reach out to another City agency to assist with obtaining necessary inspections, approvals, or sign-offs. DFTA also works closely with the New York City Housing Authority, which houses almost one-third of the City's senior centers. For other sites, DFTA will assist providers in their negotiations with their landlords to correct unsafe conditions at senior centers. However, providers bear the responsibility for working with their landlords to correct physical plant issues.

DFTA has prepared a response to each recommendation section noted in the audit report.

¹ DFTA originally provided a list of 333 sites to the Comptroller's Office for this audit. However, DFTA contracts with 131 providers to operate 329 senior centers. The list provided to the Comptroller's Office inadvertently included 3 centers that are funded by Council discretionary funds (and not with a DFTA contract) and 1 Educational/Recreational program.

Fire and Personal Safety Problems and Concerns

Recommendations

DFTA should ensure that:

1. The centers cited for problems with exit passageways immediately correct them.
2. All its senior citizen centers maintain unobstructed and well-lit exit passageways and that they provide adequately illuminated exit signs.

DFTA Response

DFTA agrees that exit passageways need to be unobstructed and well-lit. DFTA program staff have visited all of the provider sites reviewed in this audit. In a number of centers in this audit, various doors were mistakenly assumed to be exit doors. Therefore, there are a disproportionate number of doors considered unmarked or non-compliant in this category. Exit sign illuminations and other issues listed in this report have been corrected. Please see the chart below.

Senior Center	Audit Finding(s)	Information
Swinging 60's	Locked Exits	Front doors constitute required means of egress. Those doors remain open during hours of operation. Rear doors lead to area that does not meet code for open exterior space and should not be considered means of egress.
Atlantic	Blocked Exits/Exit Signs Not Illuminated	Front doors constitute required means of egress. These doors are code-compliant with operable, illuminated signage leading directly to the street. These doors remain open during hours of operation. Rear doors lead to a backyard that is too narrow and that does not meet code for open exterior space and cannot therefore be considered means of egress in an emergency.
Roundtable	Exit Signs Not Illuminated	Bulbs had been replaced prior to DFTA's April 2008 site visit.
Stapleton	Exit Signs Not Illuminated	Bulbs replaced by NYCHA.
RAIN Nereid	Exit Signs Not Illuminated/Inadequate Hallway Lighting	Center replaced bulbs at exit lights and upgraded the lighting by adding one hallway fixture.
Borinquen Court	Exit Signs Not Illuminated	Bulbs have been changed.
NY Chinatown	Blocked Exits/Exit Signs Not Illuminated	No blocked exits at time of DFTA site visit but DFTA staff reiterated fire safety message of keeping exits pathways clear at all times. Bulbs had been changed.
Jackie Robinson	Blocked Exits/Exit Signs Not Illuminated/Inadequate Hallway Lighting	NYCHA has remedied all issues, including securely mounting the stair handrail.
Kennedy	Exit Signs Not Illuminated	Bulbs have been changed.
Carver	Exit Signs Not Illuminated	Bulbs have been changed.
Harlem Teams	Locked Exits	The exit cited is not an official exit. It leads to a building which is slated for demolition.

The DFTA Program Management Manual requires that all senior centers have exit doors and passageways that are accessible and well-lit, making it possible for all program participants, staff, and guests to enter and exit safely during the hours of program operation. DFTA requires that providers ensure that their centers properly illuminate exit signs, hallways, and stairwells, and the means of egress at the site. DFTA inspects these requirements during the annual programmatic assessment, described above, and also evaluates the requirements during regular visits made by the program officers to the site throughout the year. Upon non-compliance, providers are given fifteen (15) business days to correct the problem, after which time DFTA makes a site visit to the center to ensure that the issue has, indeed, been rectified.

Recommendations

DFTA should:

3. Ensure that all senior citizen centers possess either current place of assembly permits, if required, or documentary evidence indicating that an annual fire inspection was conducted (or requested).
4. Work together with the landlords or building managers for those centers having difficulties obtaining permits.

DFTA Response

DFTA providers need to maintain a current Place of Assembly (PA) permit as required by the City's Building Code. The Department would like to clarify the code requirements for a PA permit, which has been misinterpreted in the audit report. Per the Building Code definition in Subchapter 2 on page 2-8, a Place of Assembly is "An enclosed room or space in which seventy-five or more persons gather..." PA permits are only required for individual rooms that can accommodate and are occupied simultaneously by 75 or more persons. A senior center provider may serve more than 75 seniors in one day. However, the providers may be serving those seniors in different rooms throughout the center or they could serve meals in shifts. Therefore, providers may never have more than 75 seniors in one room at one time. In those scenarios, providers may not be required to have a PA permit.

As part of its annual assessment, DFTA staff require providers to produce PA permits or written confirmation from the Fire Department indicating compliance with FDNY regulations if the program has no rooms that hold more than 75 people. Specifically, providers must present DFTA with (i) copies of the newly obtained documentation, or evidence that they have initiated the permit process, and (ii) proof that they have a date for the inspection. This is followed by submission of a copy of the permit. All follow-up regarding compliance in this matter is done, as with other issues, within fifteen (15) business days.

As set forth in the below chart, seven (7) of the twenty (20) centers in the audit serve fewer than 75 persons per day, including programs cited as requiring PA's – Atlantic, Roundtable, and Stapleton. The programs at Judith White and Carver, which serve more than 75 persons per day, serve senior meals in shifts because their Dining Rooms are too small to accommodate 75 or more persons. The audit also erroneously notes that NY Chinatown's permit allows only 300 individuals to gather at the site. There is a PA permit allowing a maximum of 300 persons in the Dining Room, but the center has other rooms such as an Activity Room, Music Room, Offices,

and Conference/Classroom. The center's Certificate of Occupancy for the center allows a maximum of 565 persons to gather at that center.

DFTA is working with NYCHA to renew the existing PA permit for Jackie Robinson. DFTA will continue to work with the providers and their landlords at Swinging 60's, Borinquen Court, Kennedy, and Young Israel Midwood to obtain PA's. Providers have been advised to limit the number of seniors they serve in any one room to 74 or fewer persons until a permit is in place.

The chart summarizes DFTA's evaluation of the centers cited by the Comptroller's report as requiring, but lacking a PA permit:

Senior Center	# of Contracted Meals	Information
Swinging 60's	85	Center has no PA and limits Dining Room occupancy to 74 or fewer persons at a time.
Atlantic	45	PA is not required because less than 75 persons are being served.
Roundtable	74	Center limits occupancy of Dining Room to 74 or fewer persons simultaneously. Center occupies 3 floors under valid Certificate of Occupancy (C of O) permitting 330 persons maximum.
Y I Midwood	120	DFTA continues to urge the landlord to obtain PA permit. Center occupies two Dining Rooms under a valid C of O permitting 400 persons maximum.
Stapleton	50	PA is not required because less than 75 persons are being served. Center occupies multiple rooms under a valid C of O permitting 207 persons maximum.
Borinquen Court	131	DFTA continues to urge the landlord to obtain PA permit. Center occupies multiple rooms under a valid C of O permitting 331 persons maximum.
Judith White	97	Center's Dining Room holds fewer than 75 persons and seats lunches in shifts. Center occupies entire floor under a valid C of O permitting maximum occupancy of 100 persons.
Jackie Robinson	82	DFTA is working with NYCHA to renew PA.
Kennedy	95	DFTA is working with the landlord to obtain PA. Center occupies basement level with valid C of O for maximum of 214 persons.
Carver	110	Center's Dining Room holds a maximum of 44 persons. Center serves meals in shifts.

Recommendation

- DFTA should ensure that all of its senior centers conduct fire drills at least twice yearly and that they maintain complete documentary evidence of this.

DFTA Response

As noted in DFTA's Program Management Manual, the Department requires its providers to conduct evacuation/fire drills every six months and to keep documentation of those drills. At the time of DFTA's annual assessment, fire drill documentation is checked and verified to ensure that the drills have been conducted twice during that year. If the drills have not been documented

properly by the center staff, or if the fire drills have not been conducted, providers have fifteen (15) business days during which to conduct a drill and submit written documentation to DFTA. In addition, DFTA requires and provides annual safety and fire prevention training for senior center staff.

Recommendations

DFTA should ensure that:

6. All senior citizen centers regularly inspect and document tests of their fire and safety systems.
7. The testing of smoke detectors is included as part of its assessment reviews of the centers.

DFTA Response

In accordance with the Department's annual fire safety and prevention training, DFTA instructs its providers to annually coordinate regular testing of fire extinguishers as well as other fire safety devices and systems. The Department also requires that providers train staff annually to use the above equipment. Documentation of these trainings is to be kept on-site and is reviewed by DFTA during the annual assessment. Additionally, two senior center staff members are randomly selected during the audit to demonstrate their ability to properly use the fire extinguishers.

Recommendation

8. DFTA should ensure that all of the centers fully comply with safety issues and concerns noted in this report.

DFTA Response

DFTA has met with all the providers cited in this audit and has visited the sites. The correct information or corrective actions are noted in the two charts in this section.

Improper Maintenance within Centers

Recommendations

DFTA should ensure that:

9. The senior citizen centers take immediate action to correct the bathroom cleanliness and maintenance problems noted in this report.
10. All of the bathrooms of the senior citizen centers are monitored on a regular basis, properly maintained, and repaired immediately when a problem is noticed.
11. The senior citizen centers work together with their landlords in resolving these issues and in preventing them from occurring in the future.

DFTA Response

DFTA has visited all of provider sites cited in this report and required that all bathrooms be properly and thoroughly cleaned. DFTA then re-inspected the facilities and found them to be in compliance. Per the DFTA Program Management Manual, providers are expected to have a clean, well-maintained, pleasant, and comfortable facility. DFTA is aware that some providers are experiencing difficulties resolving maintenance issues. Therefore, DFTA has intervened with the provider landlords and continues to facilitate meetings between the landlord and the providers to mediate and resolve issues including inoperable toilet and faucet issues.

Recommendation

12. DFTA should ensure that all senior citizen centers maintain safe and sanitary conditions in their kitchens, including maintaining a clean environment, ensuring that thermostats are placed in all freezers and refrigerators, and ensuring that all food is stored at proper temperatures.

DFTA Response

After completing visits to sites noted in the report, DFTA confirms that providers have properly cleaned all their kitchens. DFTA Nutritionists also checked freezers and refrigerators for proper temperature and made any adjustments, as needed at the time of their site visits. All DFTA Senior Meal providers and programs are required to receive inspections by the DOHMH on a regular basis (as determined by DOHMH). DFTA Nutritionists follow up on any violations from these inspections throughout the year.

Recommendation

DFTA should:

13. Immediately investigate the concerns noted above and assist the centers in resolving these problems.

DFTA Response

Clean, well-maintained senior centers are important to DFTA. Per the DFTA Program Management Manual, contract agencies are responsible to provide such centers. Providers that serve meals on a daily basis are responsible for the cleanliness of their premises. DFTA reimburses providers for extermination services through their service contract. If senior center providers occupy a building with other tenants, DFTA works with the provider, the other tenants, and landlords to bolster extermination efforts.

DFTA sets for the below a chart that outlines issues specific to four senior centers cited in the audit:

Senior Center	Information
Atlantic	DFTA continues to reach out to the landlord to cure physical defects regarding the toilet rooms and windows.
Boulevard	NYCHA has remedied the hallway lighting and exposed telephone wiring and has removed the plastic wrap on the pipes. Handicapped accessibility at this site and other centers has been and continues to be a capital request from the NYCHA budget.
Kennedy	DFTA is coordinating inspection of damaged pipe lagging with the landlord and will remedy it as appropriate.
Harlem Teams	DFTA continues to work with the provider while renovations continue.

Summary

As previously described, DFTA has visited each provider site included in this audit, and a significant number of issues have already been successfully addressed. Where immediate resolution was not possible due to various issues, including a landlord's control over the

building, DFTA has continued efforts to work with providers and their landlords to resolve all noted issues. Although DFTA's responses focus on the senior centers described in the audit, the Department is committed to ensuring all providers' compliance with all applicable laws, including safety and cleanliness, for its senior centers.