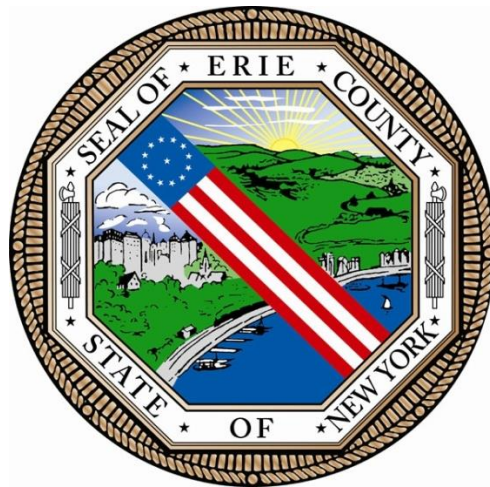


OCTOBER 2019

**ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
ASSESSMENT OF ERIE COUNTY EMERGENCY HOUSING FOR
TEMPORARILY HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES
JANUARY 1, 2016 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 8, 2019**



**STEFAN I. MYCHAJLIW
ERIE COUNTY COMPTROLLER**

**HON. STEFAN I. MYCHAJLIW
ERIE COUNTY COMPTROLLER'S OFFICE
DIVISION OF AUDIT & CONTROL
95 FRANKLIN STREET
BUFFALO, NEW YORK 14202**



October 30, 2019

Erie County Legislature
92 Franklin Street, 4th Floor
Buffalo, New York 14202

Dear Honorable Members:

The Erie County Comptroller's Office (Comptroller's Office) has completed an assessment and appraisal of the Department of Social Services (DSS) emergency housing provided for temporarily homeless individuals and families in Erie County. Currently there are nine hotels/motels in Erie County at which DSS places individuals and families on an emergency basis.

The assessment focuses on personal safety of the individuals and families at these shelters.

Our objectives were to:

- Evaluate and compile the type and number of sex offenders living at or within one mile of the hotel/motel shelters.
- Evaluate and assess the police activity reports provided to the Comptroller's Office, compiling how many calls and the type of calls at each hotel/motel shelter for the period January 1, 2016 through September 8, 2019.

We conducted our assessment from the following third party information sources:

- Sex offender name and addresses and sex offender type were obtained from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services database of registered sex offenders.
- Police activity reports detailing the date and call type for each hotel/motel shelter were received directly from the specific police agency responding to each complaint.

We believe the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our assessment and appraisal based on our objectives.

BACKGROUND

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is a federally funded assistance program. The TANF program, emphasizing the welfare-to-work principle, is a grant given to each state and designed to be temporary in nature. The TANF program assists families with children when the parents or other responsible relatives cannot provide for the family's basic needs. States have significant latitude as to how they implement TANF programs.

The Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) administers New York State's TANF program. The primary component of the program is the Family Assistance (FA) program. The FA program includes a component called Emergency Assistance to Needy Families (EAF). EAF provides assistance to meet the emergency needs of pregnant women and families with at least one child under age 18, or under age 19 and regularly attending full time secondary school, and other services to meet the emergency needs of a child or the household in which the child resides.

OTDA seeks to meet critical transitional housing needs of the State's homeless population – composed of families, couples, and single adults. OTDA certifies and directly oversees larger-scale shelter facilities and is responsible for inspecting them and ensuring that they meet certain standards. OTDA has delegated authority for oversight of smaller, uncertified shelters to county Departments of Social Services, at the local district level.

DSS offers payment for temporary housing for individuals and families in an emergency situation seeking shelter. Based on information received from DSS, there are nine hotel/motels in Erie County where families needing emergency shelter are placed.

SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENTS

- There are four sex offenders currently or recently living at DSS emergency hotels/motels. A total of 60 sex offenders currently live within 1 mile of the shelters.
- Police Activity calls totaled 1,703 for the period 1/1/2016 through 9/8/2019. Of the 1,703 calls police responded to at these hotels/motels, 891 were call types violent or harmful to residents.
- Since April 1, 2019, there has been approximately \$280,000 payment made to these shelters for housing homeless families and individuals.

RESEARCH

The Comptroller's Office compiled information for the following two inquests:

- 1) Are there level 2 and 3 sex offenders registered in the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services living either at or within ½ or 1 mile of each of the nine hotel/motel shelters as of August 1, 2019?
- 2) What type of police activity at these nine hotels/motel shelters is being called in and responded to by local police departments?

ASSESSMENTS

1) Sex offenders living at or near DSS referred emergency shelters

The New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services provides information on level 2 and 3 sex offenders in Erie County. Upon release to the community following a conviction for a registerable offense, a sex offender is required to register with the Division of Criminal Justice Services. Level 2 and Level 3 sex offenders are required to be registered for life. Level 2 Sex Offenders risk of re-offense is moderate while level 3 Sex Offenders have a high risk of re-offense.

The following table lists the nine hotels/motels for which Erie County provides payment for emergency shelter and the proximity of level 2 and 3 sex offenders living at or within ½ mile and 1 mile of each facility.

Hotel/Motel		New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services website WWW.criminaljustice.ny.gov August 1, 2019		
		Level 2 and 3 Sex Offenders living at Hotel/Motel	Level 2 and 3 Sex Offenders living within 1/2 mile of Hotel/Motel	Level 2 and 3 Sex Offenders living within 1 mile of Hotel/Motel
1	University Manor 3612 Main St., Buffalo, NY 14226	3	5	28
2	Stadium Inn 4414 Southwestern Blvd., Hamburg NY 14075	1	1	3
3	Boulevard Inn 785 N. Falls Blvd., Amherst, NY 14226	0	5	12
4	Rodeway Inn 1951 N. Falls Blvd., Amherst, NY 14228	0	2	3
5	Comfort Inn 1 Flint Rd., Amherst, NY 14226	0	0	3
6	Scottish Inn 1346 Sheridan Drive, Tonawanda, NY 14217	0	4	4
7	Economy Inn 40 Grand Island Blvd., Tonawanda, NY 14150	0	0	4
8	Knight's Inn 1970 N. Falls Blvd., Tonawanda, NY 14150	0	2	3
9	America's Best Value Inn & Suites 9370 Main Street, Clarence, NY 14031	0	0	0
Total		4	19	60

Sex offenders currently or recently living at DSS referred emergency Hotels/Motels shelters

University Manor - 3 Sex Offenders

Michael Abdallah (recently listed as resident)

- Risk Level 3
- Rape – Female, 13 years old
- Rape 2nd victim – 15 years old
- Patronizing, promoting prostitution

Michael Cotton (currently listed as resident)

- Risk level 3
- Sexual Abuse – Female, 12 years old

Grill Williams (currently listed as resident)

- Risk Level 2
- Sexual Contact – Female, 3 years old

Stadium Inn - 1 Sex Offender

Kenneth Weir (currently listed as resident)

- Risk Level 2
- Felony Sex Offense – Female, 10 years old
- Felony Sex Offense – Female, 12 years old

2) Police activity at the DSS referred emergency shelters

Police reports detailing the date and call type for each hotel/motel shelter were received directly from the specific police agency responding to each complaint. The complaint call types have been compiled for the following nine emergency shelters for the period 1/1/2016 through 9/8/2019. The total number of calls and total calls classified as violent or calls harmful to the safety of families, individuals and children are listed.

Call Type	Calls per Motel/Hotel Shelter from 1/1/2016 through 9/08/2019									Total
	UNIVERSITY MANOR	STADIUM VIEW INN	BOULEVARD INN	ROADWAY INN	COMFORT INN	SCOTTISH INN	ECONOMY INN	KNIGHT'S INN	AMERICA'S BEST VALUE INN & SUITES	
Assault	2		1	1		1		1		6
Rape	1									1
Kidnap			1							1
Robbery		1								1
Robbery - Armed	1									1
Robbery Strong Arm	4					2		1		7
Burglary	2	2					1			5
Prostitution	2		2	4		2	1			11
Narcotics, Overdose, Marijuana	17		12	5						34
Larceny	17	8	12	1	3	4	1	2		48
Weapon Offense	1									1
Weapon Possess									1	1
Sex Offender							1		1	2
Sex Offenses		1	1					1		3
Exposure							1			1
Exposure (Lewdness)			1							1
Harassment	5	2	5	6	1		1	1		21
Disturbance, Customer Trouble		26			3		1	1	7	38
Disturbance, Domestic Trouble	51	25	23	15						114
Unwelcome Guest	36	4	15	10	1		1	1	1	69
Suspicious Incident, Person, Veh.	32	20	11	11	4	1	1		5	85
Child Welfare						1				1
Criminal Mischief	1		1			1	1	1		5
Drugs		1								1
Drunk			1	6						7
Fight	4	1	1							6
Subject w/knife	1									1
Suicide or Attempt	1			2						3
Suicide or Attempt Drug Related									3	3
Threat				1					1	2
Peeping Tom	1									1
EMS	35	39	21	36	10	9	6	2		158
Fire Alarm, Other	5									5
Hit & Run		2	1		5					8
LL/Tenant, Neighbor Dispute		6								6
Marijuana					2					2
Missing Person		5		5		1	1			12
Child Protection Referral				1						1
Trespass	2		1							3
Unattended Death	2		1	1		2		1		7
Unknown Trouble	15	3	6	7			1			32
Warrant - Serve, Search	8	7	5	3		1	1			25
Welfare Check	32	32	43	36	6				2	151
Totals	278	185	165	151	35	25	19	12	21	891
All Other Calls	236	57	166	144	52	27	25	6	99	812
Grand Total Police Call Activity	514	242	331	295	87	52	44	18	120	1703

UNIVERSITY MANOR
3612 Main St. Buffalo, NY 14226

Amherst Police Department
Date Range: 1/1/16 - 5/31/2019

Call Type	Call Type Count
Assault	2
Rape	1
Burglary	2
Robbery - Armed	1
Robbery Strong Arm	4
Prostitution	2
Narcotics, Overdose, Marijuana	17
Larceny	17
Weapon Offense	1
Disturbance, Domestic Trouble	51
Unwelcome Guest	36
Suspicious Person/Vehicle	32
Fight	4
Subject w/knife	1
Trespass	2
Criminal Mischief	1
Harrassment	5
Unknown Trouble	15
Peeping Tom	1
Unattended Death	2
Suicide or Attempt	1
Fire Alarm, Other	5
EMS	35
Welfare Check	32
Warrant Serve, Search	8
Total	278
All Other Call Types	236
Grand Total - All Call Types	514

STADIUM VIEW INN	
4414 Southwestern Blvd. Hamburg, NY 14075	
Hamburg Police Department	
Date Range: 1/1/16 - 9/08/2019	
Call Type	Call Type Count
Sex Offenses	1
Burglary	2
Robbery	1
Larceny	8
Drugs	1
Missing Person	5
Disturbance, Domestic Trouble	25
Suspicious Person/Vehicle	20
Customer Trouble	26
Fight	1
Harassment	2
Hit & Run	2
LL/Tenant, Neighbor Dispute	6
Unknown Trouble	3
Unwelcome Guest	4
Welfare Check	32
EMS	39
Warrant Serve, Search	7
Total	185
All Other Call Types	57
Grand Total - All Call Types	242

BOULEVARD INN	
785 Niagara Falls Blvd. Amherst, NY 14226	
Amherst Police Department	
Date Range: 1/1/16 - 5/31/2019	
Call Type	Call Type Count
Assault	1
Kidnap	1
Sex Offenses	1
Exposure (Lewdness)	1
Prostitution	2
Narcotics, Overdose, Marijuana	12
Larceny	12
Harrassment	5
Suspicious Person/ Occurrence	11
Unwelcome Guest	15
Disturbance, Domestic Trouble	23
Criminal Mischief	1
Drunk	1
Hit & Run	1
Fight	1
Unknown Trouble	6
Unattended Death	1
EMS	21
Welfare Check	43
Warrant Serve, Search	5
Tresspass	1
Total	165
All Other Call Types	166
Grand Total - All Call Types	331

RODEWAY INN 1951 Niagara Falls Blvd. Amherst, NY 14228	
Amherst Police Department	
Date Range: 1/1/16 - 5/31/2019	
Call Type	Call Type Count
Assault	1
Threat	1
Larceny	1
Prostitution	4
Narcotics, Overdose, Marijuana	5
Drunk	6
Harrassment	6
Suspicious Person, Occurrence	11
Unwelcome Guest	10
Disturbance, Domestic Trouble	15
Unknown Trouble	7
Unattended Death	1
Missing Person	5
Suicide or Attempt	2
Child Protection Referral	1
EMS	36
Welfare Check	36
Warrant Serve, Search	3
Total	151
All Other Call Types	144
Grand Total - All Call Types	295

COMFORT INN	
1 Flint Rd. Amherst, NY 14226	
Amherst Police Department	
Date Range: 1/1/16 - 5/31/2019	
Call Type	Call Type Count
Larceny Other	3
Harrassment	1
Suspicious Person, Occurrence	4
Marijuana	2
Hit & Run	5
Unwelcome Guest	1
Disturbance, Customer Trouble	3
EMS	10
Welfare Check	6
Total	35
All Other Call Types	52
Grand Total - All Call Types	87

SCOTTISH INN
1346 Sheridan Drive Tonawanda, NY 14217

Town of Tonawanda Police Dept.
Date Range: 1/1/16 - 8/31/2019

Call Type	Call Type Count
Assault	1
Robbery Strong Arm	2
Prostitution	2
Larceny	4
Missing Person	1
Unattended Death	2
Suspicious Person	1
Criminal Mischief	1
EMS	9
Child Welfare	1
Warrant - Serve	1
Total	25
All Other Call Types	27
Grand Total - All Call Types	52

ECONOMY INN	
40 Grand Island Blvd. Tonawanda, NY 14150	
Town of Tonawanda Police Dept.	
Date Range: 1/1/16 - 8/31/2019	
Call Type	Call Type Count
Exposure	1
Sex Offender	1
Missing Person	1
Burglary	1
Prostitution	1
Larceny - Other	1
Suspicious Person	1
Unwelcome Guest	1
Criminal Mischief	1
Harrassment	1
Customer Trouble	1
Unknown Trouble	1
EMS	6
Warrant - Serve	1
Total	19
All Other Call Types	25
Grand Total - All Call Types	44

KNIGHT'S INN 1970 Niagara Falls Blvd.Tonawanda, NY 14150	
Town of Tonawanda Police Dept.	
Date Range: 1/1/16 - 8/31/2019	
Call Type	Call Type Count
Assault	1
Sex Offenses	1
Robbery Strong Arm	1
Larceny	2
Criminal Mischief	1
Harrassment	1
Unattended Death	1
Unwelcome Guest	1
EMS	2
Customer Trouble	1
Total	12
All Other Call Types	6
Grand Total - All Call Types	18

AMERICA'S BEST VALUE INN & SUITES	
9370 Main Street Clarence, NY 14031	
Erie County Sheriff	
Date Range: 1/1/16 - 8/17/2019	
Call Type	Call Type Count
Sex Offender	1
Weapon Possess	1
Threat	1
Suicide or Attempt Drug Related	3
Disturbance/ Customer Trouble	7
Suspicious Incident, Person	5
Unwelcome Guest	1
Welfare Check	2
Total	21
All Other Call Types	99
Grand Total - All Call Types	120

CONCLUSION

We were informed that the Department of Social Services uses nine hotels/motels for shelter placement. The hotels are used for a variety of programs, which may include TANF, Safety Net and others. A review of cancelled checks indicates that DSS continues to use at least 7 of these hotels.

An examination of police call records from January 1, 2016 through September 8, 2019 shows that law enforcement has been called to these locations 1,703 times during this time period. In addition, 61 registered level 2 or 3 sex offenders live within a mile of these locations, 19 within a half mile and 4 either are currently registered at or were recently registered at these locations.

The safety of DSS clients is paramount. It is important that safe facilities are provided to DSS clients and families during periods of emergency, temporary housing. As such:

WE RECOMMEND that DSS takes steps to ensure that hotels/motels provide a safe environment for clients before placement; and further,

WE RECOMMEND that DSS evaluates and periodically reviews each hotel/motel's safety standards before placing clients at the location; and further,

WE RECOMMEND that DSS consider other hotels or motels, where appropriate; and further,

WE RECOMMEND that DSS provides individuals and families with police report information prior to placement; and further,

WE RECOMMEND that DSS provides individuals and families with neighborhood sex offender information prior to placement; and further,

WE RECOMMEND that DSS provide information, training and/or counseling to individuals or families placed at hotels/motels regarding keeping safe during their temporary placement.

ERIE COUNTY COMPTROLLER'S OFFICE

Cc: Hon. Mark C. Poloncarz, County Executive
Marie Cannon, Commissioner Department of Social Services
Robert W. Keating, Director of Budget and Management
Erie County Fiscal Stability Authority