



U.S. Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRESS RELEASE

**UNITED STATES ENTERS INTO CONSENT JUDGMENT WITH NEW YORK CITY
TO ENSURE THAT INDIVIDUALS IN THE CITY'S HOMELESS FAMILY SHELTER
SYSTEM WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING RECEIVE NECESSARY AIDS
AND SERVICES**

Robert L. Capers, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, today announced the filing of a Complaint and Consent Judgment in *United States v. City of New York*, Civil Action No. CV-15-5986 to settle violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 12134-34 (the ADA), in the City's homeless shelter system.

In its complaint, the United States alleges that the City of New York denied sign language interpreters and other auxiliary aids and services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals in its homeless shelter system. The complaint alleges that workers at DHS' homeless family shelter intake facility often attempted to communicate through the use of handwritten notes or by relying on family members to provide sign language interpretation. In one case, workers at the City's family shelter intake facility relied on the four year-old daughter of RK¹, a deaf single mother, to interpret. The complaint also alleges that the failure to provide necessary auxiliary aids and services, including visual doorbells and fire alarms, endangered the lives of hearing-impaired individuals and denied them the services provided to other shelter residents, such as job and housing placement assistance.

Under the terms of the settlement, the City has agreed to take appropriate steps to ensure effective communication with applicants for family shelter who are deaf or hard of hearing, including providing qualified sign language interpretation services. The City has also agreed to retrofit at least 10 dwelling units for families with children, six units for adult families, 200 beds for single men, and 100 beds for single women with accessible features, including visual alarms and doorbells. Employees within the homeless shelter system who interact regularly with residents or applicants for shelter will receive training in effective communication. The City will pay RK \$2,500.00.

¹ RK is identified by initials only to protect her confidentiality.

“The ADA requires the City to communicate effectively and provide auxiliary aids and services to the deaf or hard of hearing,” stated U.S. Attorney Capers. “This settlement ensures that vulnerable residents in the City’s homeless shelter system receive appropriate City services.”

The United States’ action was filed contemporaneously with settlement of *Ihetu et al. v. City of New York et al.*, Civil Action No. CV-13-01732 (MKB/VMS), in which a mother who is deaf and her three children alleged similar ADA violations against the City and homeless family shelter operators.

The United States’ claims were litigated by Assistant United States Attorneys Kelly Horan Florio and Michael J. Goldberger.