

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES**

MANUAL LETTER

DPSS OPERATIONS HANDBOOK

NUMBER 314	DATE 11/22/06
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- SUBJECT:** 23-810 DISTRICT ADVOCATE LIAISON SYSTEM
- PURPOSE:** This Manual Letter releases the revised OPS Section 23-810, District Advocate Liaison System. The policy outlined in the District Advocate Liaison System is released in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the County of Los Angeles and the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, dated April 12, 1991.
- CHANGES:** The District Advocate Liaison System guidelines have been converted to a Question and Answer format. These guidelines do not apply to telephone inquires from Community Advocates. District staff should continue to do business as usual on the telephone, with those Community advocates with who they have built working relationships, following existing protocols.
- STAFF AFFECTED:** District Directors, Deputy District Directors, Eligibility Supervisors, Eligibility Workers, Customer Service Representatives, Chief Clerks and Reception Supervisors.
- CANCELS:** This Manual Letter cancels revisions # 5110 through # 5113 released by Manual Letter No. 310, dated June 1, 2004.
- QUESTIONS:** District administrative staff may direct questions regarding this material to the designated Human Services Administrator I, General Relief & CAPI Programs Section.
- DISTRIBUTION:** Advance copies are being distributed to all BWS districts.



PHIL ANSELL, DIRECTOR
BUREAU OF PROGRAM AND POLICY

PA:JW
LL:LD:BH

CLEARANCE/APPROVAL:

BAS BSO BPP
 BWS BCTS

Attachment

**OPS 23-000 - MANAGEMENT AND OFFICE PROCEDURES
OPS 23-810 - ADVOCATE LIAISON SYSTEM**

**OPS 23-810.1 –
Overview**

What is the purpose of the District Advocate Liaison System?

The District Advocate Liaison System was initiated to provide the District Advocate Liaison and other staff with guidelines for interacting with Community Advocates. Incorporated into this process are the agreements provided for in the April 12, 1991 Memorandum of Understanding between the County of Los Angeles and the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA).

Who are Community Advocates?

Community Advocates include individuals or groups from LAFLA, Neighborhood Legal Services (NLS), Public Counsel, summer law students and other members of community organizations.

What activities are permitted?

Activities permitted by Community Advocates include, but are not limited to, representing applicants/participants in matters regarding DPSS programs, distributing legal information, taking declarations, conducting interviews, performing surveys and providing voter registration services.

Who in the district office will work with the Community Advocates?

Community Advocates will first work with the District Advocate Liaison/backup regarding an applicant/participant complaint. The District Advocate Liaison/backup has the authority to make case decisions based on current regulations, statutes and other written policies or procedures, such as those included in All County Letters, Administrative Directives, and Administrative Memoranda.

What are the rights of the Community Advocates within the district office?

Community Advocates, having the right to communicate with applicants/participants in the district reception areas **may, as a matter of courtesy:**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify themselves upon arrival in a district office. However, Advocates may begin advocacy, or other activities described above, without prior approval. • Provide the District Advocate Liaison/backup or Customer Service Representative with copies of fliers or leaflets they plan to distribute to applicants/participants. • Inform the District Director/Deputy-In-Charge that they will be conducting a survey. • Wear an identification badge to distinguish them from County employees.
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<p>OPS 23-810.1.1 – Advocate Liaison Responsibilities</p>	<p><u>What are the responsibilities of the District Advocate Liaison?</u></p> <p>The District Advocate Liaison responsibilities are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Relate to Community Advocates in a courteous and professional manner. b. Protect an applicant's/participant's right to confidentiality. An applicant/participant must provide authorization to have a Community Advocate represent him/her. Authorization may be verbal or in writing. Applicants/participants represented by Community Advocates maintain their right to confidentiality. <p>NOTE: This policy does not apply to telephone inquiries from Community Advocates. District staff should continue to do business as usual on the telephone, with those Community Advocates with whom they have built working relationships, following existing protocols.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> c. Ensure that Community Advocates are allowed to enter the interviewing areas when acting as authorized representatives of applicants/participants. An Advocate may enter other areas of the DPSS office when accompanied by a DPSS employee. d. Receive case complaints from Advocates and communicate with the appropriate Eligibility Supervisor, or other staff, to resolve the complaint.
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- e. Ensure that applicants/participants represented by Community Advocates are seen in a timely manner. Representation by an Advocate should neither expedite nor delay resolution of a complaint.
- f. Ensure that mentally disabled or ill applicants/participants are seen immediately.
- g. Ensure that expedited benefits such as emergency food, shelter, and transportation are issued to eligible applicants/participants.
- h. Ensure case inquiries/complaints are resolved within one half hour, if possible, or provide the Community Advocate with a status report within one half hour, including a report of any actions that will be completed by the end of the day and/or an estimated time that any remaining actions will be completed.
- i. Evaluate case resolutions disputed by Community Advocates and make case decisions based on current regulations/procedures.
- j. Ensure case resolutions and corrective actions (including reference materials, if necessary) are shared with the Eligibility Supervisor for documentation and Eligibility Worker training purposes.
- k. Ensure case corrective action taken as a result of a complaint is applied to future months in accordance with policy, if applicable.
- l. Communicate case resolutions him/herself to the Community Advocate. The backup may also provide resolutions. If this must be delegated to other than the District Advocate Liaison or the backup, the Community Advocate must be notified of the name of the person who will provide the resolution.
- m. Adhere to the Community Advocates' right to resolve case complaints through the Chain of Command.
- n. Forward copies of fliers/leaflets provided by Community Advocates to the District Director/Deputy-In-Charge, ensuring Safety Police/other employees do not interfere with the distribution of such fliers/leaflets. Approval is not required prior to

	<p>distribution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o. Forward to the District Director/Deputy-In-Charge for approval any document a Community Advocate wishes to post in the reception area prior to allowing the posting of such document. p. Complete a PA 373, "Record of Client/Advocacy Inquiry," for each complaint. <p>NOTE: When the complaint is resolved, a copy of the PA 373 is given to the Community Advocate, upon request. The original PA 373 is maintained in the district for two years for tracking and reporting purposes.</p>
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<p>OPS 23-810.1.2 – District Director/Deputy-In-Charge Responsibilities</p>	<p><u>What are the responsibilities of the District Director/Deputy-In-Charge?</u></p> <p>The District Director/Deputy-In-Charge ensures that the responsibilities outlined in this Section are carried out by doing the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Designating one or more staff at the level of Deputy District Director as the District Advocate Liaison. The District Advocate Liaison is selected based on experience, knowledge of policy and procedures, and public relations skills. b. Ensuring the District Advocate Liaison is permanently assigned this responsibility, so that a relationship with the Community Advocate is maintained. c. Designating a backup District Advocate Liaison to ensure sufficient coverage at all times. The backup District Advocate Liaison is selected based on experience, knowledge of policy and procedures, and public relations skills. d. Ensuring that the District Advocate Liaison/backup fully understands his/her responsibilities for interacting with Community Advocates. e. Ensuring that all public contact staff understands the established guidelines provided in this Section. f. Resolving case complaints that cannot be resolved with the District Advocate Liaison.
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="639 130 1438 205">g. Forwarding complaints to the Division Chief if they cannot be resolved at the district level.<li data-bbox="639 243 1438 424">h. Informing Community Advocates if information being distributed in fliers or leaflets is inaccurate or improper. However, disapproval of such information should not interfere with the distribution of fliers or leaflets.<li data-bbox="639 462 1438 604">i. Notifying and obtaining approval from the Division Chief (who will seek the Bureau Director's approval) on requests from Community Advocates wishing to post documents in district reception areas.<li data-bbox="639 642 1438 720">j. Monitoring Community Advocate activity in the district reception area for reporting purposes. |
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