

IDNYC: A Barrier to Public Assistance and Housing | For Care For the Homeless

The Problem in One Sentence: IDNYC requires a photo ID to get a photo ID, unless you have a caretaker who can vouch for you. DHS case managers don't count as care takers.

Houseless individuals need a photo ID to apply for the 2010e supportive housing, to apply for HRA benefits and receive public assistance, to be eligible for CityFHEPS and SOTA (by receiving public assistance), and receive other critical services.

This impacts Runaway and Homeless Youth, victims of domestic violence, immigrants, houseless individuals who are victims of sweeps and evictions, youth in unstable living environments because they:

- They fled abuse with no ID
- Their ID was stolen
- They never had a state-issued photo ID
- DHS verified their identity for shelter, but IDNYC won't accept DHS as a caretaker

All of these populations are clientele of NYC Safe Havens like Breaking Ground

Further issues identified:

1. IDNYC requires documentation with a birthdate: a birth certificate, medicaid card, etc.
 - a. You cannot apply for a birth certificate without a photo ID unless you can physically go to a vital records office (may be born out of state, may still not accept this)
 - b. Undocumented clients cannot receive Medicaid unless it is emergency Medicaid provided at the hospital.
2. IDNYC only accepts original documents (original birth certificate, original social security card) - not copies. This is a major barrier if (1) you cannot reapply for original documents given the barriers defined above, or (2) are an immigrant and would need to contact your home country for an original document.

Two Administrative Fixes:

1. **Primary** Add DHS to caretaker list: DHS case managers can waive photo requirement for IDNYC - Unblocks housing for shelter clients.

Currently, IDNYC only accepts: NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), NYS Department of Health (DOH), NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH), NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)

2. **Back up** Accept physician statements: Physicians sign a statement verifying patient identity (This is currently accepted by the Social Security Administration as proof of identity when applying for SS card).

What We're Asking CFH To Do: Co-author a letter to Deputy Mayor, DSS, and MOIA requesting DHS be added as a caretaking agency. Potential partners with momentum and advocacy/policy teams: Safe Horizons, The Door

Reach out to eva@jacroux.com for contacts related to this issue.

My Clients' Stories (Examples)

1. My client who was adopted from Mongolia and became a German citizen, later married an American man and became an American citizen. This man withheld her documents as a form of abuse and eventually destroyed them altogether. She is essentially undocumented and is internally displaced, unable to apply for permanent housing or public assistance.
2. My elderly client from Appalachia who grew up in an unstable home was seemingly never issued a photo ID. He has early stage dementia and cannot remember where or when his parents would have kept a birth certificate, photo ID, or social security card. He has been chronically homeless his whole life. We recently got him Medicaid so he can now access healthcare but is still blocked from public assistance and permanent housing.
3. My client who has a traumatic brain injury and schizoaffective disorder cannot remember when or how he left his home. We recently recovered his social security number by tracing his hospitalization record. He has been chronically street homeless and does have a vague memory of being a victim of a sweep in which all his belongings were disposed of. This may have included any documentation we could use to get him identification. He is currently blocked from public assistance and permanent housing.

Essentially, the work around for client 2 and 3 is that I am applying for Access-A-Ride which provides government-issued photo IDs for their members. They qualify for Access-A-Ride because they are disabled. They also will be receiving medicaid cards that have their birthdates on it. There are many hurdles in this process - including if Access-A-Ride decides to decline them or change their policy and do not issue photo IDs anymore. Further, their housing processes have been delayed 3 months due to needing to apply for Access-A-Ride. My first client is not disabled and does not qualify for Access-A-Ride, and will not be able to receive an IDNYC.

Please reach out if you have further questions,

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