

**2015 Budget Hearing Statement**  
**Patricia Jackowiak, Director**  
**Department of Administrative Hearings**  
**Friday, October 31, 2014**

Good Morning, Chairman Austin and members of the City Council. Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today about the Department of Administrative Hearings (DOAH), what we have achieved this year, and what we plan to accomplish in 2015.

The mission of the DOAH is to provide quality administrative hearings for the City in a timely and efficient manner, with respect for the dignity of individuals and their due process rights. The DOAH is an independent entity that hears cases relating to violations of the Municipal Code, the Chicago Park District Code, and the Chicago Transit Authority Code.

The DOAH continues to maintain an exceptionally high level of service to the public. We have accomplished this through cross-training personnel and employing various efficiencies, which I will outline below.

The DOAH hires and trains outside attorneys to hear cases and act as administrative law judges. These administrative law judges preside over approximately 593,000 hearings per year. The Department hears cases that fall under four categories: buildings, municipal, environmental safety and consumer affairs, and vehicles.

The Department also remains committed to assisting *pro se*, or "self-represented," litigants to effectively navigate the administrative hearing process, and the number of litigants availing themselves of this assistance is growing. The help desk at the Central Hearing Facility, which is staffed and independently operated by attorneys from the Coordinated Advice & Referral Program for Legal Services--known as CARPLS--is open four days a week. CARPLS is a non-profit legal aid service that gives low-income clients direct access to experienced attorneys through legal aid hotlines and court-based help desks. The help desk provides support to *pro se* litigants by educating them about their legal rights and remedies, providing them with practical "how to" advice to present their evidence and their side of the case, and providing assistance in preparing motions. As CARPLS attorneys have become more experienced in a wider variety of municipal code violations, the services provided by the help desk have expanded to almost every type of violation adjudicated by the DOAH. The help desk, which is jointly funded by the City and the Chicago Bar Foundation, assisted 1,692 low-income respondents during CARPLS fiscal year, which was between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014. The number of clients served by the help desk has been steady over the last two years, and is about 23% more than the same period two years ago.

A second source of assistance for respondents continues to be provided by the Telephone Language Line Interpretation Service, known as "Language Line." This service is available for respondents whose first language is not English.

All the hearing rooms at the Central Hearing Facility and neighborhood hearing sites provide access to Language Line interpreters. This service enables respondents to understand and fully participate in the administrative hearing process by providing ready telephone access to interpreters who are skilled in more than 170 languages. The average time to connect to an interpreter is under one minute. This service promotes efficiency by eliminating the need for continuances caused by the absence of an interpreter. It also minimizes the inconvenience to non-English speaking respondents who frequently relied on the schedules of family members or friends to serve as interpreters.

The DOAH also makes the Language Line service available at the information counters at all of its facilities through the use of dual handset telephones. In this way, both our customer service staff and the non-English speaking respondents are able to more effectively communicate once they are connected to the interpreter. In 2013, there were 34,883 minutes of interpretation service, an increase of 15% from 2012. As of August 31, 2014, the DOAH has provided 21,202 minutes of this service.

Quality training for staff and administrative law judges continues to be a key component to our successful operation. Since 2007, the DOAH has been certified annually by the Illinois Supreme Court's Continuing Legal Education Board--known as the MCLE Board--to provide mandatory continuing legal education to hearing officers. Certification by the MCLE Board must be supported by a proven track record, and this certification validates the quality of the DOAH's past and present training program.

During 2014, the number of matters that are administratively adjudicated has continued to increase, both in the number of new case filings and the number of annual hearings. The DOAH has worked hard to efficiently handle the increases by balancing the workforce so that staff assignments are based upon workload. By the end of 2014, the DOAH anticipates that it will conduct 9,000 more hearings than in 2013. Through staffing efficiencies, such as balancing the workforce and ALJ cross-training, the DOAH is prepared to process the additional hearings this year.

The DOAH will continue to monitor case filings and workloads in its four operating divisions, and to reassign current staff members to ensure that citations, FOIAs, customer service, and telephone inquiries are handled in a timely manner among all divisions. To more expeditiously address customers waiting in line, the DOAH continues to utilize two "floater" positions in its Support Services Division who can be assigned to our three hearing locations to reduce wait times during peak periods at the Information Desk, or assigned among the various operating divisions depending upon respective caseloads on a daily basis. As part of the DOAH's ongoing initiative to enhance customer

service, we have trained all customer service staff who work in the Central Hearing Facility to handle Motions To Set Aside. This lowers wait times at the Information Desk during peak periods and improves customer service.

The DOAH has worked on several initiatives to be implemented and operational in 2015. On September 10, 2014, the City Council approved an intergovernmental agreement between the DOAH and the Chicago Housing Authority that will promote safe, decent and sanitary housing for Housing Authority tenants, as well as provide efficiencies for the DOAH by reducing case continuances. There are approximately 35,000 rent-subsidized properties in the Chicago Housing Authority's Housing Choice Voucher Program. This program, also known as Section 8 housing, provides subsidies to private landlords who rent to Housing Authority tenants. The intergovernmental agreement authorizes the DOAH to share certain case information with the Chicago Housing Authority so that Section 8 addresses can be compared and matched with properties that have building and sanitation violations pending at the DOAH. The Housing Authority's goal is to use this data to ensure that Section 8 landlords implement corrective measures, and comply with applicable building and sanitation ordinances. There will also be concomitant benefits to the DOAH by reducing the number of case continuances, improved efficiency by reducing the DOAH resources necessary to adjudicate these cases, and more timely final orders.

The DOAH has asked for an E-Request enhancement to the City's parking website that should go live in the first quarter of 2015. This is an upgrade that will provide respondents with a more convenient means to request an in-person hearing, and a more convenient way to submit documents in support of their contest-by-mail, or "CBM," hearings. Currently, respondents can only mail or personally deliver documentation in support of their CBM parking hearings. On average, the DOAH adjudicates 150,000 CBMs annually. Currently, all documents must be manually scanned by IBM, the City's parking vendor. E-Request will enhance customer service by allowing vehicle owners to scan, upload, and submit their supporting documents via the website. The E-Request enhancement will also increase City efficiencies and potentially decrease costs by substantially reducing the manual scanning of documents received by U.S. Mail.

Further, in-person hearing requests can now only be made by mail, via a phone call, or by personally delivering a written request to one of the payment or hearing locations. E-Request will allow vehicle owners the convenience of requesting an in-person hearing via the parking website.

Starting this summer, the DOAH partnered with the Chicago Police Department and the Department of Law to administer a process by which the City can monitor and track the participation of guardians of juveniles cited for curfew violations, which will be called the Curfew Violator Community Service Program. As part of this effort, the Chicago Police Department and the DOAH will work closely with Hartgrove Hospital, which provides parenting classes and counseling sessions for parents or guardians of juveniles

who are repeatedly cited for curfew violations. The goal is to help keep juveniles out of harm's way and, through the Program, give parents tips that will keep their child out of trouble with gangs, drugs, teen pregnancy, drinking and other violent crimes. The program also provides referral services to other social service agencies that engage the participants in workshops that focus on positive solutions. A few of those programs are the Chicago Police Department's peer jury and District explorers. Also, Hartgrove Hospital's counseling sessions seeks to bring about conversation and build better relationships between parent and child, while establishing values such as discipline, respect, and trust.

### **Goals for 2015**

We remain ready, willing and able to achieve the Department's core mission. This includes a commitment to:

- Maintain an exceptionally high level of courteous, respectful and prompt customer service for the public.
- Respond effectively to the needs of the enforcing departments to ensure that hearings are scheduled in a timely manner.
- Ensure that an adequate number of hearing rooms are open, staffed and available to meet existing and future enforcement initiatives.

Thank you.



# Department of Administrative Hearings

Mission is to provide fair and impartial administrative hearings for those cited with violations of the Municipal Code of Chicago

Forty-Two (42) budgeted positions



