



ONONDAGA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES - ECONOMIC SECURITY

Guidelines on Photography and Video or Audio Recording

Section I. Policy

The taking of photographs, tape recordings and/or videos is not permitted within dedicated DSS-ES access areas and as otherwise stated in Section III.

In order to ensure the confidentiality of persons interacting with this county's local social services district under New York Social Services Law § 136 and 18 NYCRR Part 357, photography and video recording within all dedicated DSS-ES Customer Service and DSS-ES restricted areas (other than those areas for which New York State law or regulations have expressly provided for taking photographs, video or audio recording) are prohibited. Individuals found recording in a dedicated Customer Service of restricted area will be subject to investigation and possible arrest and seizure of photography and/or video recording equipment may occur pursuant to the arrest.

Other policies and provisions may apply to areas not dedicated to DSS-ES areas within County property and facilities, and the visitor to these buildings is responsible for compliance with this and any other guidelines issued by the County.

In emergency and/or special circumstances and where actions are deemed suspicious or inconsistent with this policy by observing/reporting persons, photographers and videographers may be approached and questioned to determine if further investigation or action is necessary.

Section II. Definitions

Commercial and Special Photography. Photography that requires explicit authorization from DSS-ES and includes engagements for commercial gain or profit such as, movie films, commercial television productions, and photography for commercial advertisements.

Dedicated Customer Service Area: A Dedicated Customer Service Area is any area that is posted with signage both on the first floor of the Civic Center at 421 Montgomery Street, Syracuse, NY and near each elevator on each floor that indicates it is a part of the County facility which is occupied by staff members serving in Social Services functions. Signage, building design and physical barriers, i.e. fencing, bollards, etc., may also distinguish a Dedicated Customer Service Area from a public area. Other locations not in the Civic Center may also be clearly posted as serving individuals on behalf of the Onondaga County Department of Social Services – Economic Security, and these areas are also considered Dedicated Customer Service Areas.

Photography. Photography shall mean the taking of moving and/or still images.

Public Area. An area open to general public access and occupancy that is not otherwise posted as serving a social services function or restricted by posted signs or locking devices. Signage, building design and physical barriers, i.e. fencing, bollards, etc., may also distinguish a public area from a restricted area or a Dedicated Customer Service area.

Restricted Area. A restricted area is any DSS-ES area not open to or occupied by the public, or is open to or occupied by the authorized visitors on a limited basis. Signage, building design and physical barriers, i.e. fencing, bollards, etc., may also distinguish a restricted area from a public area.

Restricted areas include but are not limited to the floors which do not permit access by non-County employees.

Section III. Exceptions

1. **Commercial and Special Photography.** Prior arrangements must be made with DSS-ES's Public Information Officer at (315) 435-2985 ext. 7116 for approval.
2. **News Photography.** Members of the news media are entitled to the same access for photography purposes as the general public. News media may request additional access by contacting the DSS-ES's Public Information Officer at (315) 435-2985 ext. 7116. DSS-ES recommends that members of the news media present valid press credentials when they film (print and video photography) in the public areas at DSS-ES's stations and strongly encourages the news media to DSS-ES's Public Information Officer in advance to facilitate and ensure appropriate access, particularly at major DSS-ES stations. As a courtesy, the DSS-ES Public Information Officer may issue a letter or accompany news media. It is understood that during breaking news events, advance contact with DSS-ES's Public Information Officer may not be possible.
3. **Other photography or video recording** not covered by this policy requires advance approval from the Office of the Onondaga County Executive.

Section IV. Law Enforcement

DSS-ES and/or Security personnel may approach photographers and videographers upon a complaint from a member of the public or DSS-ES personnel that the activity is suspicious in nature, or based upon their own observation that the activity is suspicious in nature or inconsistent with this policy.

1. DSS-ES and/or Security Personnel will advise the individual that an inquiry is being conducted for security purposes. DSS-ES and/or Security personnel will follow established departmental regulations in this area.
2. Nothing in this policy limits or expands the authority of security or County Facilities staff members to initiate and pursue investigations, perform a pat down or frisk based upon reasonable suspicion, and/or conduct searches based upon probable cause or any recognized exception to the probable cause requirement in accordance with all legal authority. But the taking of photographs and/or video may not, in and of itself, rise to the level of reasonable suspicion or probable cause.