

Department of Human Services  
Office of Program Integrity and Accountability  
Information Bulletin

**To:** DDD Agency Providers, Distribution  
**From:** Lauri Woodward, Director, Office of Program Integrity and Accountability  
**Date:** April 1, 2016  
**Subject:** Unusual Incident Reporting – Operational Incidents

In response to provider inquiries related to unusual incident reporting and in an effort to clarify Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) provider agency responsibilities involving the reporting of **operational incidents** to the Department of Human Services (DHS), the Office of Program Integrity and Accountability (OPIA) is providing the following guidance:

An **unusual incident** is defined as an occurrence involving the care, supervision or actions of an individual served that is adverse in nature or has the potential to have an adverse impact on the health, safety and/or well-being of the individual served or others. Reporting unusual incidents ensures individual and systemic accountability, promotes transparency through documentation, and prompts action to address the event to prevent future recurrence. Incident reporting is an integral and important responsibility DHS shares with its agency partners for ensuring the health, safety and well-being of individuals.

**DHS Administrative Order 2:05 (A.O. 2:05)** and corresponding attachments outline the general policies and procedures for all agency program providers and DHS facilities in reporting unusual incidents to DHS.

To further outline incident reporting and management policies for DDD agency providers and facilities, DDD maintains **Division Circular #14 (DC#14)**. This document specifies timeframes for incident reporting and policies related to incident level, confidentiality, third-party notifications, investigations, follow-up reporting and subsequent closure.

Also within DC#14 are specific definitions for all incident categories, including those related to “operational” incidents. **Operational incidents** are generally defined as those that significantly impact or could potentially impact the health, safety and/or well-being of individuals served or impact on the daily operations of the facility, agency or program.

The following outlines examples of and clarifying definitions for operational incidents required to be reported:

**OP410- Operational** - is reportable if a minor fire occurs and is extinguished by staff. Tripped alarms, smoke detectors sounding, or alarm pulls are not reportable.

**OP510- Operational Breakdown** - is reportable when an outage or other disruption results in a threat to **health and safety** and/or impacts facility operations. Temporary outages, broken appliances, repairs pending for vehicles or equipment are not reportable.

**OP540 - Unexpected staff shortage** - is reportable if the shortage results in the inability for the individual(s) served to safely evacuate in the event of an emergency, as described in the evacuation plan; or if the level of supervision for the individual(s) served, as described in his/her service plan (e.g., 1:1, line of sight, close supervision), cannot be maintained.

**OP590 - Media Interest** - is reportable if media attention has been, or is likely to be, generated or intensified regarding any reportable incident. Social media references or stories, letters to government officials, or newspaper articles are not reportable unless an unusual incident is referenced that has not already been reported.

DC#14 provides additional codes and definitions for rare operational occurrences, such as mass disturbances, terroristic threats, environmental spills, hostage taking and natural disasters. These codes are applicable and reportable if a situation/incident occurs that specifically meets the corresponding definition.

**Criminal Activity** involving individuals served or staff (when applicable) is reportable when the event constitutes a crime in accordance with NJ criminal statutes and police take a report or file charges.

Agency providers are encouraged to refer to the aforementioned DHS policies and procedures for incident reporting and management. Regional DDD Unusual Incident Report (UIR) Coordinators, the DDD Office of Risk Management (ORM), and the OPIA Critical Incident Management Unit (CIMU) are available resources to agency providers to answer questions and offer assistance.