



# DISABILITY RIGHTS NEW YORK

**New York's Protection & Advocacy System and Client Assistance Program**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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***New Yorkers with Disabilities Seek Implementation of Text-to-911 Service for All***

**Brooklyn, NY, January 5, 2017** – Nick Dupree, a Queens County resident who cannot speak because he has a tracheotomy and uses a ventilator, and Deborah LoGerfo, a Suffolk County resident who has a hearing impairment, filed a complaint in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York against the City of New York, Nassau County and Suffolk County, seeking an order to compel these municipalities to provide text-to-911 services, which have been available since 2014. Their failure to act is in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504). The case has been assigned to Judge Joan M. Azrack and Magistrate Judge Anne Y. Shields.

Mr. Dupree is unable to make phone calls to 911 because he cannot speak. Mr. Dupree experienced several medical emergencies in 2015 and 2016 and was unable to contact 911 independently. Instead, he had to rely on other individuals to contact 911, rather than directly providing 911 with his assessment of the situation.

Ms. LoGerfo is unable to make phone calls to 911 because she cannot hear the 911 operator on the phone and therefore cannot understand the operator's questions or instructions. A few years ago, Ms. LoGerfo witnessed a car fire in Nassau County and called the 911 operator to report the fire. She was unable to hear the operator and therefore could not confirm whether the operator understood her report or answer questions asked by the operator.

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Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have disabilities that impair their speech and communication, cannot report crimes, fires, motor vehicle accidents, or medical emergencies via text, placing these individuals and others at grave risk by delaying their access to emergency services.

Text-to-911 service is currently available in Chemung, Livingston, Monroe, Montgomery, Oneida, Ontario, Onondaga, Oswego, Rockland, St. Lawrence and Steuben Counties in New York. People are also able to text 911 in Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Montana, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

“Seconds count in an emergency,” said Timothy A. Clune, Esq., DRNY Executive Director. “New York needs to lead by example. Text-to-911 service would promptly provide our clients and thousands of other New Yorkers with equal and immediate access to critical emergency services.”

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