

**OCCASIONAL
PER DIEM
SECRETARY'S
HANDBOOK**

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Colleague:

Welcome to the New York City public school system and your union, the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). As a UFT member covered by a solid collective bargaining agreement, you have strong contractual rights — and you are entitled to many union benefits. This brochure outlines some of your rights and benefits as an occasional per diem substitute secretary in the New York City schools. Chief among them are the union representatives who are here to help you and protect you in a wide variety of ways.

You are part of an organization with more than 140,000 members that also represents teachers, paraprofessionals, secretaries, guidance counselors, psychologists, social workers and other educators. We are affiliated with the 400,000-member New York State United Teachers and the 1 million-member American Federation of Teachers, which represents teachers nationwide. These affiliations give you collective power that works on your behalf at the Board of Education and City Council, in Albany and in Washington.

Although some per diems work for years as subs, many view this as a path to a full-time career. Whatever your choice, the UFT is here to help with our educational programs, career counseling and other assistance. The union exists to serve each and every one of its members. So don't hesitate to call on us with questions, concerns or problems. And be sure to get involved in your union. The UFT needs your ideas and support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randi Weingarten". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Randi Weingarten

President

Words in *italics* are defined in the glossary at the back of this booklet.

Although every effort has been taken to make this booklet as clear, accurate and complete as possible, conditions are subject to change through interpretation, grievances, court decisions, negotiations or legislation.

GETTING WORK

The work you do as an *occasional per diem substitute secretary* is very important to students, faculty and colleagues. But despite the key role you play, you might find the process of actually getting a job to be complicated and often frustrating. Don't despair. The union continues to work to simplify the process, and we're here to help.

You'll find the task of getting a job as a *per diem* secretary easier if you take a little time to get organized before you begin your search. A bit of planning early on will save you headaches later on.

The most important advice we can give you is to not start work as an occasional per diem secretary until you have been officially *nominated* by a community school district or high school superintendent and the central Board of Education has both accepted your nomination and approved your application to work. Sadly, some newcomers have eagerly gone to work with the assurance of school or district officials that they would take care of the necessary paperwork and processing — only to find out later that the board refused to pay them because it had not given its official seal of approval. Completing all of the necessary steps can take up to three months, so you'll have to be patient. Having all your paperwork in order before you go to the board will speed the process.

In every communication with the board, you should either deliver it in person or send it via overnight mail so you know it will arrive in the right office and won't be lost in a mailroom. Be sure to put the exact address and room number on the correspondence and keep a copy for your records.

Here are the steps to follow:

Step 1. You can plan on making at least two trips to Board of Education headquarters at 65 Court St. in

Brooklyn. In the first you should pick up an application kit that the board will give you in Room 102. Pay particular attention to two forms :

- An Application for Pedagogical License or Certificate.
- A medical examination form that you will have your personal physician complete.

Step 2. On this first visit, you also should find out when the board will give its next secretarial examination. (Once you apply, the board will notify you by mail about the times and sites for the tests, which generally are given once in the fall and once in the spring. The tests usually take place four to six weeks after the filing deadlines.)

You'll need to pass this exam before you can begin work, so take it as soon as you can. It has two parts:

- The essay measures competence in English and must be at least 250 words completed within one hour.
- The performance test covers basic secretarial skills, including dictation and the transcription of stenographic notes on a typewriter.

Step 3. Complete the application and medical forms and organize the required backup materials. You will need:

Proof of graduation. At minimum, you need to have graduated from a four-year high school or its equivalent by the date you file your application. You have the opportunity to earn a higher salary through a *differential* if you have certain higher education credentials as well (see below). Make sure that you present original high school diplomas or college transcripts.

Proof of identity. That can be a passport (either current or expired) or two of the following: an *original* birth certificate, a Social Security card or a photo ID such as a driver's license.

Proof that you have passed a Mantoux tuberculosis (TB) test. The board's Medical Division won't process your application unless you have this proof from your own doctor.

U.S. postal money orders to pay for fees because the board does not accept either cash, personal check or bank money orders. These are the fees as of January 1999:

- \$80 payable to the New York City *Board of Education* for fingerprinting.
- \$15 payable to ORPAL (the board's *Office of Recruitment, Personnel Assessment and Licensing*) for an application for an *occasional per diem certificate*.

- \$15 payable to the New York City *Board of Education* for processing your medical exam form.

Step 4. *Do not go back to the Board of Education yet!* Rather, you have to find a community school district or high school superintendency that is willing to hire you as an *occasional per diem substitute*. Perhaps the board's Office of Staffing Services at 65 Court St. knows if work is available. For elementary and junior high schools, phone (718) 935-2910; for high schools, phone (718) 935-2900.

Usually, however, this is not enough. Be prepared to beat the bushes. Phone or visit district offices and individual schools to speak with the district personnel director or the principal. You can find the names, addresses and phone numbers of schools in the blue pages of your phone book.

Step 5. Once you have a commitment from a district or high school for a job, you must be *nominated*, i.e., requested, to fill a position by a district or high school superintendent. That official's personnel manager will give you a *nomination* form — known as **Form 950** — requesting your services. **NOTE:** Once you are *nominated*, you can work in any school in the city that seeks your services. You are not restricted to the district or superintendency that nominates you.

Step 6. After you receive a *nomination* form, go back to the *Board of Education's* Office of Educational Staff Recruitment at 65 Court St., Room 102. This is the time when you file your Application for Pedagogical License or Certificate, your backup materials and your Form 950, as well as hand over your \$15 money order for the application fee.

Step 7. Then go to the fourth floor, Room 406, for fingerprinting by the Office of Investigation and give them the \$80 money order. You'll have to wait eight to twelve weeks for fingerprint clearance from the state's Department of Criminal Justice Services and the federal government before you can start work — unless you have found work and your superintendent writes that you are needed right away to expedite the process. If you have an arrest record be sure to disclose it fully on your job application even if it's a minor misdemeanor. Falsifying a job application is, in itself, a crime. Moreover, being caught lying could bar you from working for the school system. If you are concerned about what kinds of arrests might bar you from teaching, keep in mind that the board evaluates each case individually. It will take into consideration the nature of the arrest, your age when it happened and other relevant circumstances in deciding your fitness to work as a secretary.

Step 8: If you have had your physician complete the medical exam form and have brought proof that you have passed a Mantoux tuberculosis test, go to the board's Medical Division on the second floor to file them. It's OK if you do not file these forms at this time, but you must file them before you start work. Don't forget to bring the \$15 postal money order for the medical.

Step 9: Upon receiving satisfactory ratings on both parts of the board's secretarial exam and getting fingerprint clearance, the board will issue you an *occasional per diem certificate* and *file number* authorizing you to be employed on a per diem basis. *Do not start work without a file number* or you will not be paid.

Step 10: Alert the school or district that nominated you – as well as any others where you'd like to work — that you're available.

SALARY

As an *occasional per diem* employee you are paid a flat daily rate set by collective bargaining between the UFT and the *Board of Education*. The rates for secretaries are:

As of Oct. 16, 1998	\$77.88
As of April 16, 1999	\$79.44
As of Dec. 16, 1999	\$82.28

Rates after Nov. 15, 2000, are subject to negotiation in future UFT/Board of Education contracts.

Keep in mind that *occasional per diem subs* often are placed in long-term jobs. Once you pass 29 consecutive days covering full-time for the same staff member, you are entitled to be placed on "Z" status. A Z status sub is paid at a higher rate — a day rate of one two-hundredth of the salary step to which you are entitled, but no higher than step 4A of the salary schedule (see the schedule in the UFT school secretaries' contract). At that time consult your school payroll secretary to ensure you receive the proper pay. Your paycheck will be sent to your home once a month. If you are not put on payroll, call your UFT borough office.

Per diem secretaries who are covering a full-term, part-time position are called F status subs. They also are paid a day rate of one two-hundredth of the salary step to which you are entitled, but no higher than step 4A of the salary schedule.

DIFFERENTIALS

If you believe you qualify for F status or Z status and you have education beyond a high school degree, you may qualify for a *differential* that will raise your salary. Secretaries have two differentials, which can be obtained in any order:

- One is called the educational differential. You can earn it by having an associate's degree from a recognized two-year college; a bachelor's degree from a four-year college; or graduation from a four-year high school and 60 semester hours of courses that have been approved by the chancellor.
- The other is called the professional differential. Professional differentials are earned by submitting transcripts showing 90 college credits including 30 credits of approved courses in any combination of the following: accounting, bookkeeping and/or commercial arithmetic banking, budgeting and/or money, business administration, business English, finance, law, management, organization, statistics, writing, computer science or computer studies, office machines and/or office management or office practice, shorthand, speedwriting and/or stenotyping, typing, word processing and one foreign language (a minimum of six credits and a maximum of 12 credits in any one language may be offered toward this differential). If you qualify for either or both, ask any school secretary for an Application for Salary Differential. Send it and your original student transcripts to the Salary/Differential Unit, Board of Education of the City of New York, 65 Court Street, Brooklyn, New York 11201.

File that application immediately upon receiving your certificate to serve as an occasional sub. **In order to make that salary retroactive to the date of your certificate you must file within 90 days of that date.** Otherwise the higher salary will take effect on the first of the month after the date on which you file.

As with every communication with the board, you should either deliver it in person or send it via overnight mail to 65 Court St., Room 815, Brooklyn NY 11201 so you know it will arrive in the right office and won't be lost in a mailroom. Be sure to put the exact address and room number on the correspondence, and keep a copy for your records.

YOUR CONTRACTUAL RIGHTS ON THE JOB

- You'll work a seven hour day.
- As a substitute, you are to cover the same work assignment as the secretary for whom you are filling in.
- You will be paid a daily salary based on the UFT contract. Your principal cannot diminish it.
- You are entitled to a duty-free, uninterrupted lunch period equal to that of full-time secretaries.
- You will be reimbursed for reasonable medical expenses for injuries in the line of duty up to \$750. This limit is lifted if you are assaulted while on the job. In addition, you will be reimbursed for loss or damage of personal property up to \$100 in one school year.
- You have a right to grieve a complaint concerning any condition of employment within the authority of the *Board of Education* in accordance with the grievance procedure established by contract between the UFT and the board.
- You have a right to read, answer and reproduce any adverse material placed in your personnel file.
- You should have access to rest rooms.
- You should have a 10-minute relief period during the morning session and 10 minutes during the afternoon session each day.
- You cannot be required to perform secretarial work unrelated to the functioning of the school or the school system.
- You cannot be required to take custodial care of children.

DUE PROCESS PROTECTIONS

Contained in your contract are these provisions for resolving complaints and grievances, guaranteeing you fair and professional treatment:

- Due process procedures if your principal wants to place criticisms of your performance in your file.
- The right to UFT representation if you are summoned to a conference with the principal, community school district or high school superintendent or the *Board of*

Education's Division of Human Resources.

- An informal procedure for dealing with complaints made against you by principals. You are entitled to union representation by the UFT chapter leader at the school at which you work.
- A formal grievance procedure ending with an appeal to a grievance panel. You are entitled to union representation at each step of the procedure.
- A procedure to resolve any complaints of harassment or intimidation by administrators. The final step is fact finding and recommendation to the *Board of Education* by an impartial arbitrator.

All these items — and more — are contained in your contract. You should consult it to learn the details. You can get a copy of the contract from your UFT borough office (see page 9).

GETTING INVOLVED WITH YOUR UNION

We want your participation in the UFT and your support. We want to face the city and the *Board of Education* with the full backing of all of our occasional subs.

You can join by asking the UFT chapter leader in any school for a membership card. Dues are one percent of your gross earnings and are deducted each time you receive a paycheck. There also is a small affiliation charge for the American Federation of Teachers and New York State United Teachers, our affiliate unions at the national and state levels.

Ways to get involved:

- Participate in the activities of our committees for political action and other UFT groups.
- Vote in union elections.
- Participate in union-sponsored workshops and seminars for the school secretary.
- Attend chapter meetings in the school you work in most frequently.
- Periodically you will receive the *School Secretaries' Chapter Relay* on items specifically concerning school secretaries.
- Read UFT publications. You should be receiving the

New York Teacher, our bi-weekly newspaper. If you are not, look at the code letters next to “deductions” on your paycheck. If it says “U,” you are a member. Contact the UFT’s membership department at (212) 777-7500 to make sure we have your correct address. If it does not say “U,” the membership department will tell you how to join.

Among the many benefits available through your union are numerous low-cost courses the UFT offers. Many of these courses carry college credit. These courses — including professional or “P” courses and in-service courses offered by the UFT — can be credited toward differentials.

The union also sponsors consumer discounts, low-cost insurance, legal services and special discounts on vacations and travel.

Remember: some of these benefits are for *members only*. Be sure to sign a membership card. Otherwise, the board will deduct an agency fee that costs about the same as dues — and agency fee payers do not get the full privileges and benefits of membership, including the right to vote for union officers and union contract proposals. So it pays to be a member.

HOW TO GET HELP

Here’s whom to see when you need assistance:

In Schools

First and most important is the chapter leader, the UFT’s representative elected by members in the school. The chapter leader knows the school best and can answer most of your questions.

UFT Borough Offices

The union has five borough offices where trained staff is ready to help. Call your borough office Monday through Friday from 3:30 to 6 p.m. and ask for the people who specialize in matters affecting occasional per diem subs:

Brooklyn	(718) 852-4900
Bronx.....	(718) 379-6200
Manhattan	(212) 598-6800
Queens	(718) 275-4400
Staten Island	(718) 605-1400

The Board of Education

The *Board of Education* provides information about occasional per diem requirements, tests and other matters at (718) 935-5633. That number is staffed Monday through Friday from 9 to 11 a.m. and from 3 to 5 p.m. The board also provides information via a 24-hour automated telephone line. That number is (718) 935-2670.

GLOSSARY

Appointment; appointed secretary. Appointment is placement into a permanent secretarial position, subject to satisfactory evaluations, completion of license requirements and the continued availability of positions.

Board of Education. The New York City *Board of Education* oversees the entire public school system in the city and appoints the system's chief executive officer, known as the chancellor. The board is responsible for operating citywide special education programs for youngsters with severe handicaps; running the high schools, which are divided into five districts; and monitoring the operations of the 32 *community school districts*. The mayor appoints two members to the board and each of the five borough presidents appoints one.

Certificate. A document that the *Board of Education* issues regular substitutes and occasional per diem (day-to-day) substitutes that allows them to work.

Certified provisional secretary (CPS). A CPS is someone hired to fill a full-time vacancy who has not yet been appointed and holds a NYC regular license or NYC substitute license issued on or before June 30, 1969.

City license; licensed secretary the *Board of Education* issues licenses to secretaries who have passed a *Board of Education* secretarial examination and are eligible for appointment.

Community school district. The public school system has 32 community school districts that generally are responsible for the education of youngsters in elementary and middle schools. In this age of experimentation, some also have opened their own high schools. Each community school district has a nine-member board chosen in a public election.

Differentials. (Educational) This differential consists of 30 credits (above the 30 college credits required for your

license). These credits may be all in--service courses, all college courses or a combination of both.

(Professional) This differential consists of 30 credits in business courses (either in-service or college). Within these 30 credits you can substitute a minimum of 6 credits in one foreign language with a maximum of 12 credits in the same foreign language.

In-Service courses may be either “D” or “G” credit.

File number. Your official *Board of Education* identification number, which is given to you on your first certificate or license. It stays with you throughout your board career, regardless of what position you hold.

High school district. There are five centrally run high school districts, each run by a superintendent, which oversee city high schools. They are: Brooklyn (which covers most of the borough), BASIS (southwestern Brooklyn and Staten Island), Bronx, Manhattan and Queens.

License; licensed. See city license.

New York City license exam. See city license.

Nominate; nomination. The process by which a district tells the board that it wants to hire someone as a sub.

Occasional per diem certificate. See certificate.

Occasional per diem substitute. A substitute secretary who works on an occasional, day-to-day basis. As opposed to a regular substitute.

ORPAL. The *Board of Education's* Office of Recruitment, Personnel Assessment and Licensing oversees the staffing of the school system, assesses UFT member's records and administers the license examination, among other chores.

Placement center. This is a centralized job placement center from which the board makes appointments.

Preparatory provisional secretary (PPS). A PPS is someone hired to fill a long-term vacancy who has not yet completed the minimum requirements for a NYC license but possesses the minimum requirements to serve as a substitute.

Regular license. See city license.

Regular substitute. A generic term for a *pedagogue* who is working provisionally in a full-time position at the *Board of Education*. Regular subs fall into two categories, PPSs and CPSs.

UFT HELP AT HAND

- **UFT Headquarters**(212) 777-7500
- **UFT Hotline** Daily recorded announcements
on union issues and activities(212) 777-0190
or<http://www.uft.org/hotline.html>
- **UFT Borough Offices** For help with contractual
rights and benefits, salaries, grievances and pensions
Bronx(718) 379-6200
Brooklyn(718) 852-4900
Manhattan(212) 598-6800
Queens(718) 275-4400
Staten Island(718) 605-1400
- **UFT Online**<http://www.uft.org>
- **UFT Publications** For a list of UFT booklets
and order form (no phone orders)(212) 598-9523
- **UFT booklets online**<http://www.uft.org/publicat>
- **TeacherLine** Telephone help with certification and
licensure problems and other professional issues (Tue.-
Fri, 4-6 p.m.)(212) 598-7700
or e-mailtchrline@aol.com
- **Courses/Educational Programs** Affordable credit bear-
ing courses for salary differentials and other professional
growth.
- **Teacher Centers**(212) 475-3737