

**HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2018  
3:30 P.M.**

PRESENT: Katie Bonelli, Acting Chairwoman  
Mike Anagnostakis, Kevindaryán Luján, Janet Sutherland, Laurie R. Tautel,  
Peter V. Tuohy

ALSO

PRESENT: L. Stephen Brescia, Chairman  
Michael D. Paduch, Minority Leader  
Leigh J. Benton, Legislator  
Barry J. Cheney, Legislator  
Thomas J. Faggione, Legislator  
James M. Kulisek, Legislator  
James D. O'Donnell, Legislator  
Rob Sassi, Legislator  
Kathy Stegenga, Legislator  
Antoinette Reed, Legislative Counsel  
Wayne C. Booth, Deputy County Executive  
Darcie Miller, Commissioner of Social Services and Mental Health  
Todd Craner, Fiscal Director, Department of Social Services  
Michael Ventre, Budget Analyst

Ms. Bonelli opened the committee meeting at 3:35 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present with the exception of Legislator Amo who was absent.

Ms. Miller introduced herself to the new committee members and provided a brief background her various positions within the county over her tenure.

On the agenda were the highlighted important issues from the Department of Social Services monthly reports for November and December.

Ms. Miller explained that they continue to see a decrease in Temporary Assistance, Family Assistance, SNAP, Safety Net numbers and Employment and Training is continuing to work toward getting people employed. Emergency Housing Placement and all services within the homeless service system have increased significantly, specifically in hotel/motels. In addition, the HEAP season will be starting shortly.

Ms. Miller presented the committee with a brief description of the programs and services provided by the Department of Social Services (see original minutes). Temporary Assistance (TA), commonly called cash assistance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), typically coincides with Temporary Assistance and supplements low-income households; Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), helps supplement low-income households with heat-related services; Medicaid provides medical assistance for uninsured and underinsured persons and families; Day Care is a federally funded service providing care for children; Child Support is mandated by New York State to assist in locating absent parents and establishing support obligations; Adult Home Care and

Protective Services for Adults (PSA), They are required by law to establish and maintain a local Child Protective Services (CPS) unit which is responsible for receiving and investigating all reports of child abuse and neglect, Preventive Services for Children is a program that serves families with severe multiple problems and are at risk of foster care placement; Adoption Caseworkers provide counseling to both children, birth parents, foster and adoptive parents throughout the adoption process; Foster Care (FC), the program purpose is to ensure that the right of a child to a permanent and secure home is realized; Detention Services for Youth and Housing Services they have contracted with an existing runaway/homeless shelter to provide respite services for Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS); however, it is not a shelter for detention. Housing Services is a collaborative undertaking between the Department of Social Services and multiple service providers to address the issues of homelessness. One in five children go to bed hungry and with the support of County Executive Neuhaus and the Department of Social Services they began the Orange Cares Program and expanded the backpack programming with schools. This allows eligible children and youth to go home with a backpack of food for the weekend. They work diligently to ensure that people are connected to services so that no child goes to bed hungry.

Ms. Tautel added that in the Highland Falls community they have expanded the backpack program to the Highland Falls Recreation Department.

Mr. Tuohy asked if the "one in five" was the average in Orange County. Ms. Miller replied yes, as well as nationwide.

Mr. Paduch asked about possible vendor complaints with respect to the HEAP program. His understanding was that a vendor they had issues with in the past has been put back on as a vendor. He has been contacted by many of his constituents because during the last cold spell many fuel companies were leaving their phones off the hook and were charging \$300.00 for an emergency fuel visit which HEAP does not pay for. Ms. Miller replied that she has not received any complaints and she receives a weekly report from the HEAP staff. The report shows how many applications are received and what is pending but she would inquire. Her Deputy Commissioner has been meeting with some of the companies and during the HEAP season they meet with all the stakeholders monthly.

Mr. Paduch commented that Ms. Miller is not receiving the calls because they are calling the fuel companies.

Ms. Miller explained if they were not getting fuel delivered, either her department or the County Executive's office would typically receive those calls.

Mr. O'Donnell asked if the county has any authority to regulate how much a fuel company can charge for an emergency visit and how are vendors chosen. Ms. Miller replied that she was unsure as this has not been brought to her attention during her time with the department.

Mr. Craner explained that they apply through New York State with the bulk of the payments conducted through the New York State Comptroller's office.

Mr. O'Donnell asked if the state decides what they would be paid. Ms. Miller stated that the vendor process is done on the state level but she would inquire on the process criteria and if a limit is set per gallon, per tank and on an emergency fee.

Mr. O'Donnell suggested they consult with Charles Mitchell, Commissioner of Consumer Affairs and Weights and Measures.

Ms. Miller noted that if someone is not complying and making deliveries because they are not getting the emergency it should be reported to the state.

Mr. Paduch asked they receive a report from the HEAP providers. Ms. Miller replied that they receive a report from the state indicating the number of payments that have been distributed but she has not seen a list that breaks it out by provider.

Ms. Miller addressed emergency housing placements. Annually a point-in-time count is conducted to determine the number of homeless in the community. At one point in the county they had over 550 people identified as homeless in Orange County. In 2017, their point-in-time count showed them to be at approximately 351 and at that time they were housing 350 people. They are managing to meet the need of those in need of temporary housing as there are many programs in place to assist them with that need. All of their shelters are full and they are currently using 50 motel rooms to house 148 individuals. The challenge they face is with accessing permanent housing as they need affordable housing here in Orange County. They recently received word from HUD that all but one of their projects were accepted and granted. They did ask for additional funds for the Housing First program which has been very successful; however, they did not receive those funds. They will be meeting with all of their housing providers in the first quarter of 2018 in order to collaborate in supporting these families and get them out of hotel/motels and into permanent housing. They are currently under code blue regulations which is when the temperature falls below 32 degrees; they applied for code blue funds from New York State in the amount of approximately \$250,000.00 which helps to support community wide warming centers. They are required under New York State's Rules and Regulations, that the Department of Social Services is required to house homeless individuals where found with local warming centers housing between 70 and 90 people a night.

**Mr. Luján asked about homeless youth** as there are many that do not have shelter or a permanent home who are sleeping on someone's couch. In the city of Newburgh, child poverty is at 43% which is 10% worse than any other city with the exception of the city of Poughkeepsie. Ms. Miller replied that federal HUD standards in the point-in-time count does not include those youth. If they were to go to a school district and ask what their homeless numbers are, they would be different than the numbers they are working with. Even though they may be sleeping on friends couches it does not mean that they are not in need of permanent housing options.

Mr. Tuohy asked if there was a number or percentage on the number of recipients that were placed into permanent housing. Ms. Miller replied that she has requested a length of stay report in order to address this issue.

**Mr. Luján asked if there were** any particular regions that could use more affordable housing. Ms. Miller replied everywhere in Orange County.

Ms. Sutherland added that parents want their children in the school district that they came from.

Ms. Miller explained that with New York State taking over the processing of medicaid they have seen a significant decrease in their caseloads. However, in Child Protective Services they

would be adding two additional staff members to accommodate the increase in caseloads. While there are many reasons, one would be the opioid epidemic and the impact it has on a parent(s) and their ability to parent.

Ms. Tautel commented that at the recent Child Care Council forum the largest complaint was that if someone were approved for daycare and then gets a job two weeks later the facility will have had the child for one month but will only be paid for two weeks. She understands that there is a way to verify medicaid eligibility but is there a way to verify daycare eligibility. Ms. Miller replied that they met with the Child Care Council and Orange County is currently at 150% of the poverty level for daycare eligibility. They have many legitimate concerns and there is a set amount of funds with daycare being very costly and reimbursement limited to the federal and state funds allotted.

Ms. Tautel clarified that they were not talking about reimbursement but a way in which to move the verification process up as opposed to waiting four to six weeks for recertification. Ms. Miller replied that New York State has a waiver on the federal changes that went into effect in 2016. They are trying to sort out how they will meet the federal requirements because so many less children will be eligible for daycare due to the increased cost but it would fix the issue that Ms. Tautel has noted today. The federal changes state that if a child is registered for twenty hours, they would be registered for twenty hours for a full year whether the parent works zero hours or 10 hours the daycare would still receive 20 hours for the full year.

Ms. Tautel explained that another county has a system in place that updates much quicker than here in Orange County.

The meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.