

**HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2023  
3:30 P.M.**

PRESENT: Janet Sutherland, Chairwoman  
Michael Amo, Mike Anagnostakis, Genesis Ramos, Laurie R. Tautel, Peter V. Tuohy

ALSO

PRESENT: Katherine E. Bonelli, Chairwoman  
Betsy N. Abraham, Esq., Legislative Counsel  
Darcie Miller, Commissioner of Social Services and Mental Health  
Todd Craner, Fiscal Director, Department of Social Services  
Stephen Knob, Director, Employment and Training Administration

Ms. Sutherland opened the committee meeting at 3:31 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present with the exception of Legislator Ehlers, who was absent.

On the agenda was an update on the Orange County Job Fair.

Mr. Knob addressed the committee and provided a brief update on their recent job fair. He explained that a job fair was held at the Newburgh Mall in October 2022. They had 107 employers present and 450 job seekers and as they move past the COVID pandemic people are returning to the workforce and the numbers are starting to reflect that. Workforce participation has increased slightly and is currently above 62.3% and during the pandemic it was in the 50% range. The Hudson Valley unemployment rate in November was 2.5%, Orange County was at 2.6% and New York State was 3.8%. Career Centers are open, and assisting people in-person, virtually and on the phone. They are also retraining individuals in high demand occupations such as medical assistants, phlebotomist, EKG Technicians and CDL drivers. However, they are not seeing Certified Nursing Assistants. A job fair will be held on Thursday, January 19, 2023, from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at SUNY Orange, Kaplan Hall with 25 employers a lot from the medical profession due to the high demand in the healthcare sector. They attempt to conduct one job fair a month and alternate between Newburgh, Middletown and Port Jervis. They have a working list of between 350 and 400 employers they reach out to regularly and a table at the job fair costs \$75.00 per employer.

Mr. Tuohy asked if ResortS World Hudson Valley was at the job fair at the Newburgh Mall. Mr. Knob replied yes, with people lined up out the door for their table.

Mr. Tuohy asked if any additional job fairs were scheduled for the Newburgh Mall. Mr. Knob replied no, there will be one in the fall and one at the Middletown Galleria in the Spring.

Ms. Sutherland asked if a date was set for the job fair at the Galleria Mall. Mr. Knob responded no.

Ms. Sutherland asked how businesses are added to the list of employers. Mr. Knob replied that they can contact the Employment and Training Office.

Ms. Tautel requested that the flyer for Thursday's job fair be sent to legislators.

On the agenda were the highlighted important issues from the Department of Social Services monthly report from November.

Ms. Miller explained that Safety Net Assistance numbers for new cases has increased by 15.5%. SNAP continues to be a challenge with an average of 232 applications a week and staff working overtime to process applications. Their call center is receiving approximately 1,200 calls a day regarding SNAP and HEAP. The COVID emergency supplement for SNAP of \$95.00 a month will be discontinued in March 2023 and will negatively impact families. The Food Bank of the Hudson Valley is working with the last allotment of funds to ensure that food pantries have what they need, and families have that support. HEAP applications continue to come in with staff working diligently to handle the influx of applications. Emergency Housing placement numbers are returning to pre-pandemic numbers and New York State has required that single females be housed separately from families in shelters. HONOR will be making a change at Ecclesia House in Newburgh which houses ten women who will move to a new location. The Medicaid waiver will be ending at the end of February 2023. The New York State Office of Children and Family Services is promoting the Safe and Together model which is a best practice intervention for child welfare and domestic violence for counties that do not have co-location or do not use this model and will be in Orange County to reinforce the training with Orange County and FEARLESS. Raise the Lower Age was implemented on December 29, 2022. Foster Care numbers have decreased, and the addition of Adult Protective Services caseload numbers and monthly referral numbers will be added to the report shortly. Lastly, the Medicaid spenddown criteria has changed.

Ms. Sutherland asked how the food pantries were currently doing. Ms. Miller replied that as far as they know they are doing well. The additional funds they received have helped with supplies. They also know that they can contact her office with any concerns and the Food Bank of the Hudson Valley is in contact with her office regularly.

Ms. Tautel asked if smaller food pantries were notified of the change in SNAP benefits. Ms. Miller replied no, but they will. The New York State Public Welfare Association has requested that the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance consider putting up the old hotline number to help screen the expected calls. They have also requested that consumers be notified directly so they can better prepare; however, they have not had a response to that request.

Ms. Tautel asked if smaller food pantries are aware of the additional supplements available through the Food Bank of the Hudson Valley. Ms. Miller replied yes, if they receive their products from the Food Bank of the Hudson Valley.

Ms. Ramos asked about monitoring of food pantries to ensure they are aware of these changes. Ms. Miller replied that they do not directly monitor food pantries. However, they have contracted with the Food Bank of the Hudson Valley as a supplier for many pantries knowing that would be the best place to put their funds as they get \$10.00 of product for every dollar they invest.

Mr. Tuohy expressed concern with recent cold snaps in December and January and the affect it could have on HEAP. Ms. Miller replied that she would forward a graph to the committee that breaks down the spikes.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.