

**HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE
MINUTES
(REMOTELY)**

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 18, 2022
4:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Peter V. Tuohy, Chairman
Michael Amo, Mike Anagnostakis, Glenn R. Ehlers, Thomas J. Faggione,
Kevindaryán Luján, Janet Sutherland, Laurie R. Tautel

ALSO

PRESENT: Katie Bonelli, Chairwoman
Leigh J. Benton, Legislator
Barry J. Cheney, Legislator
Genesis Ramos, Legislator
Robert C. Sassi, Legislator
Kathy Stegenga, Legislator
Betsy N. Abraham, Legislative Counsel
Harold J. Porr, III, Deputy County Executive
Dan Bloomer, Director of Operations & Cost Control
Darcie Miller, Commissioner of Social Services and Mental Health
Laurence LaDue, Commissioner, Valley View Center
Dr. Irina Gelman, Commissioner of Health
Christopher Ericson, Deputy Commissioner of Health
Erin Sztendor, Budget Analyst

Mr. Tuohy opened the committee meeting at 4:05 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present.

Ms. Sutherland moved request to accept and appropriate \$500,000.00 of the \$1,000,000 in funds awarded from the NYS Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther for year one of a two-year grant. The funding will be used for the services and expenses related to the expansion of crisis intervention and diversion programs. The three contract agencies involved are Independent Living, Inc., MHA of Orange County, and Access Supports for Living, seconded by Mr. Amo.

Ms. Miller explained that the funds will help them focus on four communities, cities of Middletown and Port Jervis and the Towns of Deerpark and Walkkill. They will be expanding their Crisis Continuum with Independent Living, Inc., MHA of Orange County, and Access Supports for Living. Meetings have been scheduled with all stakeholders to discuss implantation.

Motion carried. All in favor.

On the agenda was a Department Update from Darcie Miller, Commissioner of Social Services and Mental Health.

Ms. Miller addressed the committee and highlighted several key points in the update that was emailed to all legislators (see original minutes). They have received New York State Office of Mental Health funding of \$25,000.00 for the Children's Mental Health System of Care expansion working with the Departments of Social Services and Probation, and Community agencies and will focus on single point of access for youth and increase youth and family voices. The New York State Office of Mental Health is also offering school-based satellite startup grants for \$25,000.00. The Monroe-Woodbury School District has signed their Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with additional school districts looking to come on board. They continue to face challenges with workforce hiring and retention. All mental hygiene services continue to be actively providing services going back to in person sessions with a majority of services still being offered remotely/virtually.

Mr. Tuohy asked for an update on the survey that was distributed to local pediatricians. Ms. Miller replied that have received some results; however, she would be collaborating with Dr. Gelman to get a more comprehensive list. They have a follow-up meeting scheduled with their stakeholders in February with the intent to review the outcome of those surveys.

Mr. Tuohy commented that during the Human Services committee meeting Ms. Miller mentioned an issue with 3-1-1 in the Newburgh area. He asked Ms. Miller what that entailed and are they working to get that issue corrected. Ms. Miller replied that they recently apprised that some phone carries were not following through on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) they have with Orange County regarding 3-1-1. The agreement they have is that this three-digit number will respond into the ten-digit number. Brendan R. Casey, Commissioner of Emergency Services and his staff are in communication with the phone carriers to correct the issue.

Ms. Tautel moved request to accept and appropriate funds in the amount of \$26,560.00 from New York State Department of Health for the period of 7/1/21 – 6/30/22 for the Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program grant, seconded by Mr. Faggione.

Motion carried. All in favor.

On the agenda was a Department Update from Dr. Gelman, Commissioner of Health.

Dr. Gelman addressed the committee and highlighted several key points in the update that was emailed to all legislators (see original minutes). The department's Call Center continues to operate. Calls have increased due to changing events related to COVID-19 across the country and various Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and New York State Department of Health changes. Wastewater COVID-19 analysis project at six different wastewater treatment plants in Orange County continues with quantifiable results confirming the presence of high viral burden of SARS CoV-2, indicative of active transmission throughout the county. The Health Department continues to hold and schedule multiple COVID-19 POD's throughout the county to help support local efforts. Registration for those POD's is available on the county website along with a list of testing sites and pharmacies with antiviral prescription medication available. The Orange County Department of

Health has adopted the New York State Department of Health guidance regarding shortened isolation and quarantine for the general population on January 13, 2022. Residents can go to: <https://www.orangecountygov.com/1936/Coronavirus> to view Isolation and Quarantine Guidance. As of January 11th, Orange County has 95,647 cases since the beginning of the pandemic an increase of 33,452 cases since the last report on December 1st. Their 10-day rolling average as of December 1st was 169.8 cases per day an increase of 41.4% from the last report. The median age for COVID-19 cases for the month of December was 34 years of age. There were 42 deaths in December and the median age for those deaths was 77.5 years. Home tests have become significantly more popular in December and are not included in these totals.

Ms. Sutherland commended Dr. Gelman's office and the County Executive's office on the Points of Distribution (POD's) and how smooth and efficiently they are run.

Mr. Faggione asked if Dr. Gelman knows how many Orange County residents have passed from the Omicron variant. Dr. Gelman replied that that data is not sequenced as testing only happens for the presence of COVID-19. Every single case is not broken-down to determine if it is Omicron, Delta or any other emerging variant.

Mr. Faggione asked for the number of Orange County children under the age of 18 years that have passed away from COVID-19. Dr. Gelman replied that it was not many; however, she would have to consult with the Law Department if that information can be released.

Mr. Faggione commended all the county workers and volunteers that have participated in vaccine distribution, test kit distributions and PPE distribution. He suggested residents check the county website for distribution locations throughout the county.

Mr. Sassi asked if Dr. Gelman has heard anything from the federal and/or state government about possible treatments as opposed to just the number of cases. This is something that they will have to learn to live with because people need to know that there is hope on the horizon. Dr. Gelman replied that they are in a much better place than early on in the pandemic and while being fully vaccinated including the booster is still the primary means for preventing disease treatments are available. Monoclonal antibody therapies, plasma therapies and other therapies remain effective against COVID-19 with Sotrovimab being the most effective against Omicron; however, those are primarily provided in a hospital setting. Over the counter prescription treatments are Merck's emergency use authorization antiviral medication Monupiravir and Pfizer's emergency use authorization antiviral medication Paxlovid and are available at two pharmacies on Orange County.

Ms. Stegenga asked about having a more accurate number of the positive cases because at one point if a family member tested positive for COVID-19 it was assumed that the whole family was positive. Dr. Gelman agreed and with the current over abundance of other testing methods there is a much larger percentage of the County that is testing positive versus the numbers she is reporting as tested positive through provider administered test. They do not have an accurate count because those individuals that are told to isolate may not be tested and/or are using an at home test kit that may not be as accurate. They count that Orange County has only reflects provider administered tests which is currently 95,647.

Ms. Stegenga commented that since they have started at home testing and stopped contract tracing, they will not be able to account for people that have been exposed and should be

tested. Therefore, they will never going to have a true and accurate number of those that have tested positive for COVID-19.

Dr. Gelman agreed and that is partially why they deployed the Wastewater COVID-19 Analysis Project and enabled them to establish a baseline for their wastewater SARS CoV-2 surveillance testing. This allows them to gage a curve in their six most densely populated areas in Orange County and shows a much more accurate increase in transmission over time as opposed to the lab reported testing. In addition, John Hopkins University recently published a paper on wastewater surveillance testing and its accuracy.

Ms. Stegenga asked if the Orange County Health Department tracks the number of individuals that have tested positive for COVID-19 a second time. If so, can they determine if that person is testing positive for a second infection or are they still positive because the virus still lingers in their system. Dr. Gelman replied yes, however, with the recent surge of positive cases they have been prevented from going through data retroactively. However, once this surge subsides, they will once again go through that data. Before this daily high increase, they had close to 1,000 residents that have tested positive for the first, second, third and fourth time but they were all symptomatic. These individuals were not long haul COVID-19 cases and there is a separate designation for those individuals that continuously test positive for COVID-19.

Ms. Stegenga commented that this information shows that while they are looking for an end to COVID-19 there may never be an end as people can continually contract and transmit it to others.

Dr. Gelman agreed that it is here to stay. If 80% or more of the population nationwide were vaccinated, they would not be contending with this now; however, that is not their reality and realistically they will not get to the threshold necessary to stop propagation.

Mr. Tuohy thanked Dr. Gelman for the wealth of information she shares with the committee. He added that there would be a presentation on the Medical Examiner's Building by the consultants at the Physical Services Committee meeting on Monday, January 24, 2022, and urged his fellow Health and Mental Health committee members to attend.

Ms. Tautel moved request to accept and appropriate Provider Relief Funds in the amount of \$86,444.67. Funding awarded by the Department of Health and Human Services under the COVID-19 American Rescue Plan, seconded by Ms. Sutherland.

Motion carried. All in favor.

On the agenda was the monthly report on Valley View.

Mr. LaDue explained that IGT funding remains at \$5.796 million. Other revenues were at \$33.9 million, and emergency disaster assistance at \$86,445.00. On the personal services side, personal services were at \$21.1million, equipment at \$97,658.00, contractual was at \$10.4 million, employee benefits at \$16.2 million and serial bond interest at \$116,494.00. Their census for December was 70.38% and the average for the year was 74.80%. Their medicaid utilization was at 79.41.00%, medicaid (HMO) at 3.07%, medicare at 10.49% and private pay at 5%.

On the agenda was a Department Update from Laurence LaDue, Commissioner, Valley View Center.

Mr. LaDue addressed the committee and highlighted several key points in the update that was emailed to all legislators (see original minutes). Valley View's census on January 13, 2022, was 70% and they still have two units closed. They have not accepted any admissions for the last 3 weeks due to COVID-19 cases amongst staff. They currently have five COVID-19 positive residents and over the last 3 weeks they have had twenty-four residents test positive for COVID-19. They currently have forty-nine staff members that have tested positive COVID-19 and are out. Over the last three weeks eighty-six staff members have tested positive for COVID-19. 94% of their residents are vaccinated and 99% of staff. The majority of residents and staff that have tested positive had minor symptoms or were asymptomatic. Booster shots continue to be offered and administered to residents and staff. New York State has recently mandated booster shots for all healthcare staff. They received a Commissioner's Order from Dr. Gelman that has restricted visitation until January 21, 2022. Only compassionate care/end of life visitation is allowed at this time. Additionally, the New York State Department of Health issued updated visitation guidance. Valley View has received take home rapid COVID-19 tests that can be distributed to visitors before they come to visit. Lastly, they have not received any referrals for full-time staff from their Sign-On Bonus/Referral Bonus program.

The meeting adjourned at 5:13 p.m.