

**HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 2019
3:30 P.M.**

PRESENT: Rob Sassi, Chairman
Michael Amo, Mike Anagnostakis, James D. O'Donnell, Janet Sutherland,
Laurie R. Tautel

ALSO

PRESENT: L. Stephen Brescia, Chairman
Katie Bonelli, Majority Leader
Barry J. Cheney, Legislator
Antoinette Reed, Legislative Counsel
Irene Kurlander, Deputy Commissioner of Social Services
Terri Torchio, Director of Economic Independence, Department of Social Services
Irina Gelman M.D., Commissioner of Health
Christopher Ericson, Deputy Commissioner of Health
Robert Dietrich, Director, Community Health Outreach
Karin Hablow, Commissioner of Finance
Kerry Gallagher, Deputy Commissioner of Finance
Colleen Grogan, Chief Budget Analyst
Gretchen Riordan, Budget Analyst

Mr. Sassi opened the committee meeting at 3:33 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present with the exception of Legislator Tuohy who was absent.

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

Ms. Kurlander explained that there were no significant increases or decreases in Medicaid or SNAP; however, there was a slight increase in Child Protective Services. The HEAP season ends on April 26, 2019 and they anticipate the numbers being similar to last year.

Mr. Amo asked if secondhand smoke would be considered, endangering the health of a child. Ms. Kurlander replied that efforts have been made to educate people on this issue.

Mr. Amo asked if it was more an educational component as opposed to enforcement. Ms. Kurlander replied yes.

Mr. O'Donnell noted that the enforcement piece would be if the child developed asthma and the parent was aware of the condition and continued to smoke around them. A criminal case could be formed if they had prior knowledge of the condition.

Ms. Kurlander added that they are more of a civil educational component. If a physician files a hotline report to the state's central register and provides them with credible evidence that the parent was acting in that manner, they could possibly substantiate those claims.

Mr. Sassi addressed his recent visit to HONOR and meeting with Executive Director, Chris Molinelli and Darcie Miller, Commissioner and Social Services and Mental Health. He had the pleasure of meeting several residents and hearing their stories. The homeless epidemic is nationwide. He has spoken to a developer who built intergenerational housing in the Town of Wallkill. The governor has increased the budget for intergenerational housing; however, many people in this county still cannot find housing.

Mr. Amo added that Mr. Molinelli recently came before the committee and while they are doing as much as they can to fill the need today, what are they doing to get to the root cause.

Ms. Torchio emphasized that the root cause is the lack of affordable housing. Many people in shelters and hotels are employed but if they are only making \$11.00 per hour that will not get them into an average one and/or two-bedroom apartment at \$1,300.00 a month because the numbers do not add up. While they do need temporary housing, the solution has to be true affordable housing. Many of the housing options in Orange County that were supposed to be low income housing have come with caveats such as evictions, minimum incomes and felonies.

Ms. Sutherland asked if Orange County was in desperate need of child care services like Ulster and Sullivan counties are. Ms. Kurlander replied that they are constantly recruiting for new homes and monthly orientations are held with prospective foster parents with many completing the mandatory training. They are fortunate in Orange County as many relatives step up for family members with kinship homes. However, with as many homes that they open a percentage will close mainly because many of their homes are dually certified as foster/adoptive.

Ms. Tautel asked how they were handling the increase in Family Assessment Response (FAR) with respect to staffing. Ms. Kurlander replied that staffing has been a challenge due to several vacancies that they are actively seeking to fill and several members of the team out on medical leave. They have been working with their parent agency Office of Children and Family Services to closeout older cases and to help with triage and to assign new cases. While it has been difficult, they been managing with a great deal of overtime and a very dedicated staff.

Ms. Tautel asked for the average caseload number per caseworker. Ms. Kurlander replied that they strive for no more than six new cases a month and fifteen total; however, they are currently running at approximately seventeen. They had requested to refund positions in the 2019 budget, and they are examining if they need to move forward with that but at the present time it is prudent to fill their current vacancies.

Mr. Amo commented that the February Raise the Age numbers have increased and do they see a trend. Ms. Kurlander replied that this is the only significant trend since Raise the Age was implemented in October 2018 and they will continue to monitor the number.

Mr. Amo asked how it comes to other counties our size. Ms. Kurlander replied that she was unsure as many of the counties surrounding them have not gotten their Raise the Age plans approved by the state.

On the agenda was an update on homelessness.

Mr. Sassi stated that Chris Molinelli, Executive Director of HONOR would be at the May committee.

Ms. Sutherland added that they attended the warming stations end of year dinner and they could not speak more highly of Mr. Molinelli and on what HONOR is doing.

Ms. Kurlander presented the committee with a copy of the Homeless Services Plan (see original minutes). She explained that the plan was required by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and encompasses the period of October 2018 through September 2020. A great deal of the plan are projections based on assistance from the state and numbers that they suggested.

Ms. Torchio explained that they work closely with Continuum of Care (CoC) and HONOR and the plan was developed with their assistance. A lot of work has been done in the county to address the homeless issue and she is proud of the work the Orange County Housing Consortium and county have done. They are very forward thinking on how they can use outreach services, reach people before they are homeless, talking to school district personnel on how to identify if a child's family is homeless or about to lose their housing with many different initiatives being put in place. While they cannot get to every case before something bad happens, they try hard to do so. On April 1st the Coordinated Entry System was put in place and relies on extensive outreach to identify and provide services to youths, adults and families living on the streets and utilizes the local 211 system. The 211 call center is staffed with trauma informed clinicians to provide direct entry to services for those in need.

Mr. Sassi asked if they try to work with landlords before eviction. Ms. Torchio replied that Rapid Rehousing Program funding would also be through the Coordinated Entry System because anything that is HUD funded would now go through the Coordinated Entry System which a HUD rule.

Mr. Sassi asked about the possibility of additional funding from HUD or New York State. Ms. Torchio replied that they have been meeting with Community Development Director, Nicole Andersen to try and access any available funding.

The meeting adjourned at 3:55 p.m.