

**HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, APRIL 19, 2022  
4:00 P.M.**

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

ALSO

PRESENT: Katie Bonelli, Chairwoman  
Kevin W. Hines, Legislator  
Joseph J. Minuta, Legislator  
James D. O'Donnell, Legislator  
Kathy Stegenga, Legislator  
Betsy N. Abraham, Legislative Counsel  
Langdon Chapman, Commissioner, Human Resources  
Dr. Irina Gelman, Commissioner of Health  
Darcie Miller, Commissioner of Social Services and Mental Health  
Laurence LaDue, Commissioner, Valley View Center  
Donna Strecker, Director of Finance, Valley View Center  
Erin Sztendor, Budget Analyst

Mr. Tuohy opened the committee meeting at 4:12 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present with the exception of Mr. Amo who was absent.

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). Impacted New York State budget items to the Mental Hygiene System are as follows: CR-SRO and SP-SRO net rates include increases for the 5.4% COLA and stipend investments effective April 1, 2022, increased State Aid funding to Support Substance Use Disorder (SUD) and Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) in County Jails of an additional \$15M was not accepted; however, the final budget includes \$8.81M, 5.4% COLA and bonus payments for the Mental Hygiene Workforce was accepted, funding for the 988 Crisis Prevention and Behavioral Health Crisis Act was accepted, extension and expansion of Kendra's Law including the New York City amendment to section 9.60 of the Mental Hygiene Law was accepted, 5 yr. extension of APG Rate Methodology Extension was accepted and expansion of the Joseph P. Dwyer Program Funding was accepted. The OD map trend shows that from January to April 2021, 48 deaths were reported and for the same period in 2022, 12 deaths were reported. A zero to five age committee has been created to acknowledge that prevention starts early with SAMSA and Georgetown providing them with a facilitator to conduct a strategic planning model. Lastly, school-based satellites are offering \$25,000.00 startup grants available through the New York State Office of Mental Health and they have applied for the Monroe-Woodbury School District. They will continue to apply for funds as **additional school districts come on board.**

Mr. Tuohy asked if the 311 service issues in the Newburgh area was fixed.

Ms. Miller replied that it continues to be an issue and they are advertising both the 311 number and ten-digit number to ensure that no one falls through the cracks. The 988-crisis number will be marketed for not only suicide prevention but to support individuals and families that are struggling with mental health issues, substance abuse and intellectual disabilities.

Ms. Sutherland asked if the Special Assistance Trauma Unit (SATU) was still active.

Ms. Miller replied yes, it is part of their Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) and supports the Child Advocacy Center.

Ms. Sutherland asked if the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) helps other counties that may not have a team. Ms. Miller replied that Sullivan County does not have a team and they have an MOU with them that permits them to use Orange County's Child Advocacy Center for medical examines; however, they would not use their resources.

Mr. Tuohy asked if the \$25,000.00 startup grants were always in existence. Ms. Miller replied no.

Ms. Tautel moved request to accept funds from the New York State Department of Health for the Healthy Neighborhoods Program grant for a 5-year period and to appropriate year one funds in the amount of \$275,000.00 for the period 4/1/2022 – 3/31/2023 into the operating budget, seconded by Ms. Sutherland.

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). They have seen an increase in calls coming into the department's Call Center related to COVID-19. As they move into spring, applications for seasonal operations such as children's camps, pools and water parks have increased. Wastewater COVID-19 analysis project at six different wastewater treatment plants in Orange County continues. Quantifiable results show an increase over the last month that are in correlation with the increase they have seen in residents in the county. The increase in wastewater sampling for the week of April 7<sup>th</sup> for the serving population was 21% in Newburgh, 40% in Harriman, 6% in Warwick, 45% in Goshen, 33% in the city of Port Jervis and 16% in the city of Middletown. If trends persist, the Department of Health will notify municipalities and vulnerable congregate settings in those areas. The Orange County Department of Health is holding COVID-19 vaccinations by appointment only in their Newburgh and Middletown Offices and they are working with interested school districts on vaccinations for students. They are in the process of putting together the Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) with documents being completed by December 2022. Listening sessions with residents about their health concerns and needs have been held in the cities of Port Jervis and Middletown with more scheduled for the

upcoming weeks. They have hired eight Public Health Fellows (nine by the end of April) through the New York State Public Health Corps Workforce Grant. Vaccinations among school age children is down significantly in New York State and they are working closely with local organizations and medical providers to ensure that parents are catching up on age-appropriate vaccinations. Lastly, they will be submitting research for publication regarding the novice strain of syphilis that has been identified in Orange County.

Mr. Tuohy asked if they were correlating the wastewater analysis with cases in the municipality. Dr. Gelman replied yes.

Mr. Luján referred to the Wastewater sampling increase in Newburgh and was it for the town or city. Dr. Gelman replied that it should be for the city, but she would clarify that information and get back to the committee.

Ms. Tautel moved requesting approval of a 10% increase for all Valley View Certified Home Health Agency (CHHA) consultants. This increase would be for Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Speech Therapists, Registered Nurses, Physical Therapy Assistants and Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants. This increase will allow Valley View's rates to remain competitive among other CHHA's in Orange County, seconded by Ms. Sutherland.

Mr. LaDue addressed an issue with the rate schedule that was included with the legislative request. He explained that some of the figures were incorrect and should only reflect the 10% increase and a corrected rate sheet was forthcoming.

Motion carried. All in favor.

On the agenda was the monthly report on Valley View.

Ms. Strecker explained that IGT funding was at \$2.1 million and other revenues at \$8.5 million, personal services were at \$4.6 million, equipment at \$524.00, contractual at \$1.7 million, employee benefits at \$4.8 million and serial bond interest at \$17,157.00. Census for March was 69.39% and their year-to-date average was 68.81%. Medicaid utilization was at 81.59%, medicaid (HMO) at 1.59%, medicare at 10.42% and private pay at 6.19%. Valley View has received a \$3.216 million payment from the federal government (Phase 4 of Provider Relief Fund) which will be included in next month's financials. In addition, they continue to be affected by census and their inability to recruit staff with two and half units and/or 75 beds closed.

Mr. Anagnostakis commented that census is down by approximately 25% and those units would account for that decrease and asked for the number of full-time employees at the end of 2019. He explained that he was trying to determine how many people are still working at Valley View, outside of the ones that have departed due to the pandemic. That would be overhead that is not producing revenue at this point. Mr. LaDue replied that he did not have that information with him but would get it to the committee.

Ms. Strecker stated that if they look at their personal service performance in 2021, they came in significantly under budget on their personal service expense (payroll) which is a component of the numerous vacant positions at Valley View throughout the year.

Mr. Anagnostakis added that they budgeted 90% census for 2022 but they will not be coming anywhere near that. Other than census everything is still inline with where they used to be with census truly destroying them. There does not seem to be away to change that unless they can get staff to open those units because the demand is still there.

Ms. Strecker added that it was a great strategy for Mr. LaDue to close those units because if they had continued to fill those beds, they would not be able to meet the new mandated New York State Minimum Staffing requirements.

Mr. Tuohy asked if their private pay rates were comparable to other facilities. Mr. LaDue replied that the rate is increased annually, and they increase is determined by surveying other facilities in the county and they are right in the middle.

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

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 April 18, 2022, was 68.30%. Two units remain closed, but they are accepting short-term admissions (only up to 12 on one unit). Two employees tested positive for COVID-19 over the weekend, and they currently have six residents that have tested positive for COVID-19. No units are currently on precautions and visitation is still allowed. They are reviewing all residents that may be eligible for the second booster shot. The New York State Minimum Staffing law for nursing homes is now in effect. They are monitoring this closely and are meeting the minimum requirements currently. LeadingAgeNY is filing a lawsuit against the New York State Department of Health to overturn this law. He would forward LeadingAgeNY recap of the budget to all legislators. The Valley ViewCHHA census was at twelve with three admissions scheduled for Tuesday. Lastly, installation of the new call bell system in the Couser building has been completed.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked if the CHHA was profitable. Ms. Strecker replied that she would provide that information to the committee next month. The CHHA's operation did not begin until March 2021. The financial model developed was for Valley View to be a feeder source for the CHHA; however, with the pandemic and lack of census they are scrambling to continue this service. The CHHA's deputy commissioner has a great rapport with local hospitals, and she has been able to bring in referrals. Their census is currently twelve; however, before they were running 60 beds at 85% to 87% occupancy. This is yet another part of their operations that are being impacted by the lower census and if they could get back to a realm of normalcy the CHHA would be profitable.

Mr. Anagnostakis reiterated that the key issue is getting additional employees at Valley View to open up the other seventy-five beds.

Mr. LaDue explained in two months they have received two LPN resumes and one RN resume because the people are not there for the healthcare system. The need for graduating LPN's and/or RN's was there before the pandemic; however, the pandemic has only exacerbated the issue.

New York State could have addressed this in the budget by allowing LPN's and RN's from other states to transfer their licenses over to New York State but for some reason they chose not to do that.

Ms. Sutherland added that students who want to enter nursing programs do not want to work with senior citizens and/or the elderly, they want to work with babies or be in the emergency room.

Mr. Luján moved resolution of the Orange County Legislature recognizing "National Skilled Nursing Care Week May 8 - May 14, 2022," seconded by Ms. Tautel.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Ms. Tautel moved resolution of the Orange County Legislature recognizing May 2022 as "Lyme Disease Awareness Month," seconded by Mr. Luján.

Motion carried. All in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 5:08 p.m.