

**HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2018
3:30 P.M.**

PRESENT: Michael Amo, Chairman
Mike Anagnostakis, Katie Bonelli, Kevindaryán Luján, Janet Sutherland, Laurie R. Tautel,
Peter V. Tuohy

ALSO

PRESENT: L. Stephen Brescia, Chairman
Barry J. Cheney, Legislator
James D. O'Donnell, Legislator
Joel Sierra, Legislator
Kathy Stegenga, Legislator
John S. Vero, Legislator
Antoinette Reed, Legislative Counsel
Darcie Miller, Commissioner of Social Services and Mental Health
Todd Craner, Fiscal Director, Department of Social Services
Irina Gelman M.D., Commissioner of Health
Christopher Ericson, Deputy Commissioner of Health
Michael Ventre, Deputy Commissioner of Health
Laurence LaDue, Commissioner, Valley View Center
Donna Strecker, Director of Finance, Valley View Center
Colleen Grogan, Chief Budget Analyst

Mr. Amo opened the committee meeting at 3:32 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present.

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

Ms. Miller reported that Temporary Assistance, Family Assistance and Safety Net numbers continue to decline with SNAP seeing a slight decrease and Child Protective Services and Foster Care seeing an increase. The HEAP season will be opening on November 14, 2018 and there were no updates with respect to Long-Term Managed Care.

Ms. Tautel asked about the HEAP application process. Ms. Miller replied that applications have been sent to individuals receiving benefits, but anyone can request an application. However, applications will not be processed until November 14, 2018.

Mr. Amo asked about the increase in Foster Care numbers. Ms. Miller replied that the increase in Child Protective Service reports received and Foster Care are directly correlated to the opioid epidemic and parents that are unable to parent due to their addiction. This is the second year of a lean project that focuses on the time to permanency of children in order to meet federal standards. In 2016, the number for children in care was at approximately 190 days, 160 days in 2017 and 130 days in 2018. They have seen improvement in time to permanency and court times. These improvements have directed families by court order into services to improve their situation and/or to move toward termination of parental rights within twelve to fifteen months.

Mr. Amo asked about the termination of parental rights. Ms. Miller replied that the removal of a child is not the same as the terminating parental rights. Removing a child from parental custody is a last resort with the termination of parental rights happening down the road with federal standards dictating that children be placed in permanent homes within twelve to fifteen months after being removed. They are either returned to their home of origin, placed in a family home or adopted home, however; no one across the state meets that standard.

Ms. Miller added that they are using validated instruments that allow the family court system, behavioral health system and child welfare system to understand one another and assists in determining if they will need to move quickly toward terminating parental rights versus having the child returned home.

Mr. Amo asked if Ms. Miller anticipates the numbers for 2018 increasing over the 2017 numbers. Ms. Miller reiterated that they have an opioid crisis and addiction issue throughout the country and Orange County which has resulted in the increase of Foster Care numbers.

Mr. Amo emphasized the importance of this conversation as they enter the budget season and what kind of assistance they may be looking for from the Legislature.

Ms. Miller commented that the New York State Office of Children and Family Services has come out with an administrative directive that provides a specific pathway that must be taken when a child is born with a positive toxicology to a substance. A significant safety plan must be put in place for both the parent and child because a child is not always removed when they are born with a positive toxicology to a substance. They must connect the parent and follow through with preventive services and programming to ensure they are receiving treatment for their addiction.

Mr. Anagnostakis pointed out that the data for 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 shows an increase every month.

Mr. Craner added that New York State was at a much higher point in 2006 and by 2015 they had decreased but since that time the numbers have increased.

Ms. Tautel asked for clarification that if a child is born with a positive toxicology to a substance they are not removed from parental care. Ms. Miller replied that they are not.

Ms. Tautel expressed her concerns that the child would not be removed. Ms. Miller explained that in some cases the child is removed but those are extenuating circumstances. The WAVE data received from the New York State Office of Children and Family Services is a very detailed and extensive report and at the beginning of the lean project they were at 23% of children achieving permanency with 12 to 15 months. The most recent data from 2015 puts them at 24.6% but 2015 was the year they began working on the lean project and address the time to permanency that was implemented in 2016.

Ms. Tautel asked for the Orange County Department of Social Services data and their average. Ms. Miller replied that their data comes from the New York State data system which has its limits. They tried to recreate the WAVE data; however, it was impossible even with the states help. In addition, children that came into care whose disposition is adoption are not included in those

numbers as they have a longer time in care because to go from removal to adoption can take a significant amount of time.

Ms. Tautel asked if Orange County was lacking in Foster Care providers. Ms. Miller replied that Foster Care Providers are always needed and at last count they had 202 families providing foster care.

Ms. Sutherland asked for the protocol on abuse if a student attends school in Orange County but resides in another county and would those numbers factor into Orange County's numbers. Ms. Miller replied that it would depend on the circumstances, but they could have another county conduct an investigation and vice versa but typically the service and numbers would stay where the child resides.

On the agenda was a discussion on the Mount Saint Mary College Report on Homelessness.

Ms. Miller explained the former Commissioner Dave Jolly commissioned the report from Mount Saint Mary College in 2013 in response to their homeless needs and trends with some impact being made.

Ms. Miller provided a brief summary of the report. The report looked at homelessness from a cost perspective when it comes to medicaid expenditures, demographics, race and ethnicity, prospective of approximately 700 homeless individuals and their experience and what contributed to their homelessness and what they think would be helpful in having them housed. The report also looked at the provider prospective with a large percentage of the provider prospective coming from the Department of Social Services. The report offers an understanding of what they expected to see and that is that many homeless individuals struggle with addiction, mental health issues and physical health issues that are born out of the incredible expense for medicaid with the report indicating medicaid expenditures at \$3,784,393.28 for medical care, \$3,327,734.68 for drug and alcohol treatment and \$1,043,150.88 for psychiatric care.

Mr. Luján commented that as a former EMT in the city of Poughkeepsie he recognized that 75% of the cases admitted to the hospital do not belong there and are only there to get a warm bed and meal but are not getting the help they need. He questioned what they could do differently to help those in need because they have not addressed the millions spent annually nor those individuals in jail.

Mr. Amo asked if Ms. Miller had considered updating the report. Ms. Miller replied that a new report could be commissioned from Mount Saint Mary College.

Mr. Amo stated that after five or six years he would expect the data to be better.

Ms. Miller stated that they would find significant changes in medicaid redesign across New York State with funding for supported housing beds and coordinated care with Orange County supporting a single commissioner over the Departments of Social Services and Mental Health enabling integrated care response among the two departments. The Office of Temporary Assistance has put forth an administrative directive that requires them to continue to house individuals if they are identified with having a substance and/or mental health need or are involved in services despite

them not following all the rules of being temporarily housed. While their numbers in temporary housing

have increased it has allowed them to link them to services and support. This report is an academic report and not helpful in looking at what their numbers are across the system; however, she would consider talking to Mount Saint Mary College on another project, but it would have to be of value and meaningful to the work they do.

Mr. Craner added that they are looking at a somewhat different population as the temporary assistance rolls were much higher in 2013 due to the economy.

Mr. Amo suggested they ask for a barometer and not redo the report as it would be more useful to be working off current data.

Ms. Miller clarified that they were not working off this data, but they were also not surprised by the findings.

Mr. Luján asked for the location of the highest number of homeless in Orange County. Ms. Miller replied that she could look at zip code data but typically it would be within the cities.

Mr. Luján asked if any of the towns have high numbers of homelessness. Ms. Miller replied that there are issues with homelessness but not high homelessness. In addition, situational homelessness is different than chronic homelessness and it often depends on where people can afford to live prior to being homeless.

Mr. Amo asked what the next step would be in addressing homelessness in Orange County and would it be beneficial to have the representative from HONOR come before the committee with a presentation. Ms. Miller replied that Orange County has a Continuum of Care which is made up of stakeholders that provide housing services. HONOR's Executive Director Chris Molinelli is the president of the Continuum of Care and both the departments of Mental Health and Social Services are members in support. They have recently submitted an application to HUD for continued funding and additional supported funding specifically toward expanding supported housing and rapid rehousing programs. She would suggest having Mr. Molinelli come before the committee to explain how the system of providers works together to respond to this need.

Mr. Amo commented that he would be interested in hearing about their strengths and weaknesses and what they need to do.

Ms. Tautel asked if Ms. Miller believes there are a lot of individuals that are not in the system for various reasons. Ms. Miller replied yes, and they are at risk.

Ms. Tautel asked if Ms. Miller would run the data report based on zip code and forward it to the committee. Ms. Miller replied that she would investigate it, but she would have to ensure that no confidential information would be disclosed.

Mr. Luján reiterated the necessity of having the funding in place for housing advocates as there are numerous organizations that have done this because they need to focus on a solution for those families that are currently living in hotel/motels.

Ms. Miller explained that housing advocate support has increased through contracts and additional housing support at the housing resource center to meet with families. HONOR contracts with The Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) for outreach and they can receive up to \$300,000.00 for that contract. They have a great deal of money out in housing advocate resources, so she would be cautious before deciding that is the place that "we" need to be putting money in especially knowing that the community has applied for a single point of access coordinator through the HUD funding. In addition, they could potentially have the opportunity of additional Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) funds to expand the outreach workers and support.

Mr. Craner added that Continuum of Care is a workgroup and are advocates for those individuals.

Ms. Sutherland commented that as bad as the numbers are they are doing an amazing job, with the lack of affordable housing a huge issue.

Ms. Miller added that they were awarded \$80,000.00 from New York State for affordable housing.

Mr. Amo asked that for the November committee meeting Ms. Miller arrange for Chris Molinelli, President of Continuum of Care to come before the committee.

Mr. Luján stated that as a county they may need to think outside the box.

The meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.