

**HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2021  
3:30 P.M.**

PRESENT: Rob Sassi, Chairman  
James D. O'Donnell, Janet Sutherland, Laurie R. Tautel, Peter V. Tuohy

ALSO

PRESENT: L. Stephen Brescia, Chairman  
Katie Bonelli, Majority Leader  
John S. Vero, Legislator  
Betsy N. Abraham, Legislative Counsel  
Darcie Miller, Commissioner of Social Services and Mental Health  
Todd Craner, Fiscal Director, Department of Social Services  
Kevin Monaghan, Nutrition Program Director, Office for the Aging  
Liz Delaney, Budget Analyst

Mr. Sassi opened the committee meeting at 3:32 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present with the exception of Legislators Amo and Anagnostakis who were absent.

Ms. Tautel moved request to accept and appropriate federal revenue in support of the COVID-19 ADRC Vaccine Access Program, \$24,533.00, seconded by Ms. Sutherland.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Ms. Tautel moved request to accept and appropriate federal revenue in support of the Expanding Access to COVID-19 Vaccines, \$39,249.00, seconded by Mr. O'Donnell.

Motion carried. All in favor.

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

Ms. Miller reported that Temporary Assistance and Family Assistance numbers continue to decline. They are waiting to see the outcome as she was recently notified that 17,000 people came off unemployment in September and they are anxiously waiting to see if any individuals will be applying to the Department of Social Services for assistance. SNAP numbers continue to increase, and their caseloads are consistent at about 15,500. That would be more in line to what they were seeing prior to COVID-19. HEAP season will begin October 1, 2021, with their staff and the Office for the Aging assisting with HEAP applications. In addition to the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) there is approximately \$54 million that would be coming in to assist those with only utility arrears in the amount of \$10,000.00 per household. Emergency housing placements remain lower with hotel/motels in July having seven singles and that was due to COVID-19 and the need for

separation. HONOR is located in a county-owned building and in 2008 they received a Homeless Housing and Assistance Program (HHAP) award of \$2.6 million for upgrades to the building and they are close to seeing that project progress. They are anticipating an increase in Child Protective Services caseloads with school back in session. On September 29, 2021, Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) goes into effect and is one the most significant pieces of legislation impacting child welfare services in decades. Raise Age numbers remain low. At the last meeting she mentioned that New York State had received a great deal of criticism over their handling of the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) because there was a great deal money available that had not been dispersed into the community. However, they are now second across the country in having the largest amount of funds dispersed into their communities. Currently 2,212 applications have been submitted for Orange County for rental arrears, the additional three months, and utility arrears. Terri Torchio, Director of Economic Independence, Department of Social Services and their team of partners are working diligently to prevent evictions by going to the courts, libraries, community events and utilizing 3-1-1 to assist people with applications. In addition, New York State has increased the median income from 80% to 120%. They are also now allowing landlords to apply without the cooperation of the tenant and/or having a current tenant living in the rental; however, that application is not yet available.

Ms. Tautel asked that the application link be emailed to her once it becomes available as she has several desperate landlords in her district. Ms. Miller suggested they go to the current application and begin the process if the tenant is still residing in the property. If the tenant refuses to participate that would be when her staff comes in because while the tenant may not be willing to communicate with the landlord, they have been communicating with them. They should have landlords call 3-1-1 who will connect them with one of the advocates to assist with the application and process.

Mr. Sassi asked about the increase in Home Care. Ms. Miller replied that a regulation change in New York State increased their responsibility for assessment, evaluation and approval of modification of equipment for those with special needs.

Mr. Sassi commented on the great work of Christopher Molinelli, Executive Director of HONOR and his staff. Ms. Miller agreed, and they have been waiting for this agreement to come through between Orange County, New York State and all the players involved over the years. Many repairs have been done to the building and what was intended for the building in 2008 will be much different in 2021.

Ms. Sutherland added that HONOR is still accepting donations for art supplies and school supplies.

Ms. Sutherland addressed an issue with a constituent whose mother was recently discharged from the hospital and in need of physical therapy and occupational therapy; however, the only available facility was two hours away. They chose to bring her home, but they are finding it difficult to get her at home services and asked if Ms. Miller had any suggestions. Ms. Miller asked that Ms. Sutherland speak to her after the meeting to get more information on the specifics of the situation.

The meeting adjourned at 3:48 p.m.