

Minutes of Meeting

SOCIAL & MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING Department of Social Services

March 26, 2012

Present: John Salka, Town of Brookfield
Lewis Carinci, City of Oneida
Roger Bradstreet, Town of Nelson
Alexander Stepanski, Town of Stockbridge
Michael Fitzgerald, Commissioner
Mark Scimone, Administrative Assistant to the Chairman

Mike began the meeting by distributing the 2011 DSS Annual Report. He wanted to give credit to the many staff members at DSS who wrote the various sections of the report and, of course, Linda Jackson, who puts it all together. Mike also gave accolades to Dick Spadafora in Central Services for going above the call of duty in getting the report printed and compiled. Mike asked the committee to review the document and let him know if there are questions or concerns. He is hopeful that it will be posted on the DSS website for access by other community groups.

Mike next presented the meeting minutes from February 27, 2012. They had previously been distributed and on a motion by Lewis and seconded by Roger, the meeting minutes as written were approved unanimously.

Mike reviewed the caseload and expenditures report. As the report only covers the first two months of the year, there were not many “trends.” Mike did distribute a food stamp chart that he has developed for NYPWA. On the chart is a ten-year span of time (2002 – 2012) with a line depicting food stamp caseloads and individuals. On top of those lines are policies passed down from the state that are believed to be at least partially responsible for the caseload increases. This is important since New York State does not contribute one dollar to either the program or administration of the program. NYPWA and the DSS commissioners are striving this year to bring home the message that the state cannot continue to drive caseload increases by enacting policy and have no “skin in the game.” If the Governor wants to ensure that children do not go to bed hungry, then he should provide something (anything) to see to that.

There were three resolutions before the committee:

- 1) Right of Entry for Time Warner Cable – Mike explained that Time Warner desires to come onto county property (DSS building) to install higher speed internet connectivity. Roger asked about Time Warner digging up county property and both Mike and Mark assured the committee that the proposed installation was “pulling cables” with no digging necessary. On a motion by Alex and seconded by Roger, the motion passed unanimously.
- 2) The Bonadio Group – Medicaid eligibility assessment – Mike explained that the proposal was for The Bonadio Group to review self-employed Medicaid cases. Mike discussed

that these cases are often complicated and require a certain level of expertise. Mike spoke about the test cases that Bonadio reviewed for the department. John asked about the number of cases that could be part of the reviews. Mike stated that since October, there have been over 60 self-employed applicants for Medicaid, averaging over 10 per month. The Bonadio review has a two-fold purpose – 1) to ferret out fraud and abuse and 2) to ensure that families who are eligible get the benefits that they deserve. The payment is based on two Bonadio “auditors” at \$150 each, three hours at a session, two sessions per month. Mike explained that the \$16,200 represents the upper limit and we could expect less costs – but it is still considerably less expensive than a single fraudulent case. On a motion by Roger and seconded by Alex, the resolution passed unanimously.

- 3) Budget Modification – Mike explained that the state allocated an additional \$4,250 in federal funds to Madison County after our budget was submitted. This modification adds this funding to the 2012 budget. On a motion by Roger and seconded by Lewis, the resolution passed unanimously.

Finally, Mike distributed a personnel action that would eliminate one title (Caseworker) and replace it with another (Welfare Employment Representative). Mike explained that the Caseworker position has been vacant since January when the previous home care Caseworker transferred to Child Protective Services. Realigning duties and looking at the future of managed long-term care, it was determined that coverage existed in the Adult Services Unit so that the Caseworker position could be eliminated. However, it is also clear that with the historic cash assistance caseload increases and the mounting pressure to place recipients in jobs or worksites, additional staffing was necessary in the DSS Employment Unit through an additional Welfare Employment Representative.

In the packet was an explanation of caseloads and participation rate comparisons – all pointing to the need for this position. Also included was a gross and local cost comparison. In sum, the new title will cost less and get higher reimbursement, generating an annualized savings of over \$6,500. As an added incentive, Mike remarked that the new title opens up promotional opportunities for some staff that would have been capped off. The committee members present expressed support for the elimination of the Caseworker title and the creation of the Welfare Employment Representative and the Committee Chairman, John Salka, signed the paperwork.

At this point, Dr. James Yonai, Director of the Mental Health Department, and Mike briefed the committee on a meeting both attended on Monday, March 19, in Syracuse. The meeting was hosted by the Community Health Foundation of Western and Central New York and was called to discuss the next phase of “health homes.” Dr. Yonai described the health home concept and how providers of services, including the Mental Health Department and Department of Social Services, would fit into this new delivery system. It was explained that Madison County is being “pulled” into a consortium of Oneida, Herkimer, and Lewis Counties under the lead agency of the Regional (Rochester) Primary Care Network, together with Upstate Cerebral Palsy under the Utica Community Health Center. Jim and Mike both agreed that this health home would likely be a good fit for the eastern half of the county. There are similar activities going on in Onondaga County (who has also joined together with Cayuga and Oswego Counties), although there appears to be no single lead entity. The western half of the county would presumably be better served under this health home. Dr. Yonai also mentioned upcoming meetings with St. Joseph’s Hospital representatives and services in Cazenovia. Meetings with the lead agencies have been

scheduled for early April (April 2 in Onondaga County and April 3 in Oneida County) where more detail will be flushed out. For the roughly 1,500 chronic diseased and/or mentally ill Medicaid recipients in Madison County who would be served under this model, it is an important topic. Eric Faisst, Public Health Director, also has a role in the health home discussion and together with Jim and Mike, will keep the committees informed.

There being no further discussion, the Mental Health Department continued its presentation.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael A. Fitzgerald
Commissioner

Approved by Committee Chairman: _____ Date: _____