

## **Minutes of Meeting**

### **SOCIAL & MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING Department of Social Services**

April 22, 2013

Present: John Salka, Town of Brookfield  
Alexander Stepanski, Town of Stockbridge  
Lewis Carinci, City of Oneida  
Michael Fitzgerald, Commissioner  
Mark Scimone, County Administrator

John opened the meeting by ensuring that the meeting minutes of March 25, 2013, had been distributed and read by all members present. On a motion by Alex and seconded by Lewis, the meeting minutes were approved as written.

Mike next discussed the caseload and expenditures report. He noted that the foster care line that had been running at or over budget for the first several months of the year seemed to have “leveled out” in March, allowing a little more optimism that DSS would finish the year with sufficient funding. Mike cautioned that the report is only 25 percent of the year and that as quickly as we appear under, we could just as quickly be hit with high-cost placements. It only takes one or two to have a significant impact on our budget when we are running so close with expenses and allocations.

Mike presented one resolution to continue funding for the Community Action Program (CAP) paid mentoring program. Mike gave an overview of the program, which included that it is funded with 100 percent federal funding and that the contract is being presented as a “no increase.” Mike also reviewed that the program has pretty high outcome standards, but that the program has been able to reach them. On a motion by Alex and seconded by Lewis, the resolution passed unanimously.

Mike updated the committee on a project that DSS was involved in with Colgate students. One of the goals Mike has had is more outreach to landlords and apartment managers. For several years, finding safe, affordable housing for low-income tenants has been increasingly more difficult. One of the factors has been the perception of renting to low-income families and the myths of dealing with DSS. The Colgate students developed a handbook that landlords can use to find out information. The handbook is also posted on the DSS website. The project has also led to one meeting between DSS and a group of landlords to present some common questions and answers. Mike was very pleased with the project and the handbook the students developed.

Finally, as Mike had promised, he updated the committee on the Medicaid enrollment center. Mike reported that for counties not in the enrollment center, they will be required to “live in two worlds – Medicaid and MAGI.” The assurances from the State Health Department that the local DSS would have no responsibility for the MAGI populations has proven to be untrue as the health department has determined that they will be incapable of taking applications AND doing the renewals; and since the application process is federally required, they are concentrating there.

That leaves a substantial amount of work for the districts to do with little-to-no system support (computer applications) to do it. That is a major problem and one, thankfully, that Madison County avoided by getting involved in the enrollment center when we did. Mike has also discussed with Eileen Zehr the new roles and responsibilities of “Application Counselors,” which the DSS staff will be considered in the new Affordable Care Act world. The Application Counselor would actually possess less skill than current DSS positions; however, they would also be required to submit to “identity proofing,” which is a security standard not currently required. As more information becomes available, Mike will continue to discuss and share with those needing to be involved.

There being no further action necessary for DSS, the Mental Health Department began its presentation.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael A. Fitzgerald  
Commissioner

Approved by Committee Chairman: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_