

HEALTH, SOCIAL, EDUCATIONAL & ENVIRONMENTAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE
Held in Room 318
Putnam County Office Building
Carmel, New York 10512

(Chairman Oliverio, Legislators Othmer & Tamagna)

Tuesday January 10, 2012 6:30 P.M.

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 P.M. by Chairman Oliverio. Since no other member was in attendance, he requested Legislative Chairwoman Conklin sit in until someone arrived. He requested that she also lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call, Chairman Oliverio was in attendance. Legislator Tamagna was absent. Legislator Othmer arrived at 6:35 P.M.

Item #3 – Update/Status of ProAct Discount Prescription Card Program/County Executive was called first.

Legislator Dicarlo questioned that once the program was implemented would the Committee request monthly updates on the program.

Chairman Oliverio stated that he would request quarterly updates from ProAct to assess the effectiveness of the program.

Further discussion was postponed to the end of the meeting when the County Executive would be in attendance.

Items #4 and #5 – Updates/Commissioner of Social Services/Mental Health/Michael Piazza and Director of Health/Rebecca Wittenberg was next.

Chairman Oliverio stated that Commissioner Piazza's monthly updates last year were very helpful. The Legislature knew what to expect, especially during the budget process.

Commissioner Piazza stated that the Behavioral Health Organizations (BHO) went into effect on January 1, 2012. Community Cares, the BHO for the Hudson River region which is made up of 17 counties, was notified within 72 hours when Medicaid patients were admitted to a facility. Over time, Community Cares will be reviewing the cases and trying to reduce the number of days a patient spends in a facility. Rockland County will manage Putnam's state clinic which is located on Route 22 in Brewster.

Chairman Oliverio questioned if these changes meant reduced services.

Commissioner Piazza stated that it is not a matter of reducing care. It is a matter of reducing more expensive in-patient care and maximizing out-patient care. They need to make sure discharge plans are made so a person has a case manager when they go out in the community and they have a stable housing situation. The goal is to reduce re-admission to the hospital. The State has not yet increased community supports. We are supposed to get a few more beds. We are also getting one more case manager for the community. The Rose House is supposed to be available 24/7. Next year the BHO will be assuming the financial risk for mental health admissions.

Director of Health Wittenberg stated that the goal is to have a care coordinator who manages the patient's care throughout the process. The hope is that it will not be necessary to re-hospitalize.

Commissioner Piazza stated that there has been no budget decreases for group homes. Wassaic is scheduled to shut down even though there had been plans to have a crisis residence on their grounds. People with Developmental Disabilities will be sent to group homes. However, he had grave concerns for the mentally ill and what will happen to them. They have been meeting with law enforcement agencies because now they may become the initial interface with a mentally ill person.

Ms. Wittenberg stated that the State cut the County's Early Intervention funds by \$106,000. The County has cut the cost of transportation for this program dramatically. In 2010 one incident occurred where no one could be reached initially to drop off a child. This was the first case ever, in eleven years, and has not occurred since. There is no problem with parent availability or emergency contacts, and therefore, there is no additional County cost. In response to the one first case just mentioned, a policy was created to address what procedures should take place if it ever happened again. We are staying in budget for transportation so far. The transit company, First Transit, has been helpful.

Legislator DiCarlo questioned how aggressive the County has been in letting the parents know that they can be reimbursed if they drive their children for services rather than have the County provide transportation.

Ms. Wittenberg stated that parents are very aware. They had a big campaign to get as much parental participation as possible. Currently we have more parents providing the transportation than in the past. However, parents need to be reimbursed in a timely manner for the buy-in and to keep them in program. The State has a new computer system, the NYEIS system. This system provides the voucher that allows the parent to get paid. There is no problem in Putnam County with timely reimbursement for parents transporting their children to Center Based Programs. They are always paid in a timely fashion. Putnam County is currently not using the electronic billing portion of the NYEIS computer system that is causing problems for other counties. Some other counties are having issues with the system. Putnam County would like these issues resolved prior to going on to the electronic billing.

Ms. Wittenberg further stated that they anticipate intact funding for the POD's and the flu clinics. This past year the Health Department held flu clinics in the schools. The provider of the flu vaccine allows the County to return twenty-five percent of any unused vaccines for credit for next year. TB and STD clinics will be run from the Health Department's office as well as HIV testing. These are mandated clinics and they will be saving money by providing these clinics in-house. The Visiting Nurses Service of Westchester and Putnam program is going very well. They are bringing their Mental Health services to Putnam County. Dr. Nesheiwat will be providing some services to the Health Department as the Medical Consultant.

Legislator DiCarlo stated going back to the issue of transportation for the Early Intervention program, he questioned if we know the cost incurred when parents are not home or when there is not an emergency contact. It is the parent's responsibility to update the emergency contact information. In his opinion, it is parental neglect not to have a plan in an emergency situation.

County Executive Odell stated that if there is chronic abuse of a parent not being available and not have emergency contacts, there needs to be a mechanism for dealing with this situation. The

reimbursement issue for parents who drive their children must be addressed. She requested that Chairman Oliverio sign a letter with her to the State to ask that they make the timely reimbursement a priority so that parents will continue to drive their children. A copy of the letter should also be sent to our State representatives for their support.

County Executive Odell further stated that she had always been an advocate for a Public Health Director as opposed to a Commissioner of Health. In the past the County had the luxury of being able to fund a Commissioner of Health. The County posted for a position as Commissioner of Health but the response has not been great. This is basically a managerial position. The Administration may post for a Director of Health rather than a Commissioner of Health. She was looking for Legislative support. The County is in a different financial condition at this time. By New York State law, Putnam County does not need a Commissioner of Health. The Medical Consultant will not be offered a full benefit package.

Chairman Oliverio stated that he had never been in favor of a Commissioner of Health. He favored a Director of Health.

Commissioner Piazza stated that they have been notified that the state grant for the Child Fatality Review Team may be cut by 20%. They contract with a forensic pediatrician from Westchester and a health educator from the Health Department. They are making plans in case that cut is made.

Ms. Wittenberg stated that the Lead Grant and Lyme Disease Grant have been reduced. A recommendation by the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics is to lower the lead level from 10% to 5%. That will increase case loads. They are identifying more unusual sources of lead, especially in items that are manufactured in China. There will be at least one Hazardous Household Waste Day held this year. They will try to have a second one.

Legislator DiCarlo stated that he is appalled by the recent incidents of adults allowing alcohol to be served at their homes to under aged children. He hopes that the District Attorney would strongly prosecute these cases and set an example.

Item #6 – Other Business/Re-Appointments/Coordinating Council for People with Disabilities was next. Legislator Othmer made a motion to waive the rules and accept the additional materials submitted for the meeting; seconded by Chairman Oliverio.

Chairman Oliverio made a motion to re-appoint Diana Gulias, Frank Mastroianni, Mark Shisler and Jennifer Wiese to the Coordinating Council for People with Disabilities; seconded by Legislator Othmer. All in favor.

Item #3 – Update/ProAct Discount Drug Program/County Executive was next. County Executive Odell stated that she had signed the contract and forwarded it to the Law Department for their review. She will follow up again with the Law Department.

There being no further business, at 7:30 P.M. Chairman Oliverio made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Legislator Othmer. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted, Chris Marrone, Clerk.