

**COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE
OCTOBER 20, 2009
3:00 P.M.**

CS Members

In Attendance: Judy Myers acting Chair, Vito Pinto

In Attendance: BOL: Melanie Montalto. Guests: Kathy Halas, Cora Greenberg, Karen Blumenthal, Charlotte Watt, Judy Ellison, Jan Fisher, Holly Edelstein, Diana Cohen, Donna Morrison, Polly Kerrigan, Meagan Flynn, Vicki Forbes.

Items Discussed: Presentation on the status of Early Step Forward

Minutes

Legislators Myers called the Community Services Committee meeting to order at 3:15 P.M. There was not enough Committee members present for a quorum.

Cora Greenberg, Executive Director of the Westchester Children's Association gave a history of the Early Step Forward program and how it is based on concerns regarding services with children with early detected mental, social and physical development issues. The Board of Legislators first funded this program in 2006 with \$250,000 to start the program. In 2007 and going forward the program has received \$500,000 in funding from the Board. The Early Step Forward program is now in 11 centers throughout the County.

The group explained that they work hard to maintain a database of the children, their developmental concerns, the services they receive, and their progress. They stated that they work hard to continue to study and evaluate the program without funding for an evaluation.

In 2009, \$634,000 in funding was used in 11 centers. The group stated they would love to see the funding sustained and grow if possible to cover more centers and maintain the evaluation component. Cora pointed out that there has been no increase in funding since 2007 while the costs are rising as the years pass.

The 11 centers are with WJCS in Mount Vernon and two Yonkers head start programs, with Family Services of Westchester in two Port Chester Head Start programs, and with the Guidance Center in Mount Vernon Head Start, Mount Vernon Westhelp, Whitney Young Head Start in Yonkers, Mount Vernon day care (not Head Start), Queens Daughters day care in Mount Vernon, and Peekskill day care. The programs serve children as young as 8 weeks up to age 5.

The representatives from WestCOP stated that they are no longer receiving phone calls from schools and day care centers saying, "help, get this kid out of my class", because the program has been successful in helping these students, and because the teachers know who to call when they notice a child in need of services.

The group stated that they will be submitting documented cost savings and analysis of the program to the Committee.

Moved by Legislator Pinto and seconded by Legislator Myers the Committee on Community Services adjourned at 4:22 p.m.

A complete audio recording of the meeting is available for review upon request.