

FAMILIES, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

October 30, 2007

Committee Members

In Attendance: Judy Myers, Chair, Kenneth Jenkins, Lois Bronz and William Burton.

In Attendance: CEO: William Randolph DSS: Diane Atkins, Robert Kuhn, Philippa Seltzer, Diane Stern DOH: Alyse Portesa BOL: Betsy Desoye, Louise Gantress, Neal Rentz, Larry Goldstein, Susan Kirkpatrick, Diana Toledo and Melanie Montalto; Guests: Carla Horton, Northern Westchester Shelter, Karen Cheeks-Lomax, My Sister's Place, Christine Fecko & Amy Siniscalchi, My Sister's Place, Kate Bombardi, NY Times.

Items Discussed: Agenda Items 77 & 79; domestic violence funding with regard to undocumented County residents.

Minutes

Chairwoman Myers called the meeting to order at 12:15 p.m.

The Committee discussed agenda item #77 an IMA with Suffolk and Rockland counties for the provision of alternative non-secure detention facilities and services for children referred to the counties from Westchester Department of Social Services from September 1, 2007 to August 31, 2008 in the amount not to exceed \$100,000.

Moved by Legislator Burton and seconded by Legislator Jenkins Agenda Item #77 passed with a vote of 4-0.

The Committee discussed agenda item #79 an agreement with the WCHCC where the WCHCC will provide hospital and x-ray services for the County Health Department tuberculosis clinic patients.

Moved by Legislator Burton and seconded by Legislator Bronz Agenda Item #79 passed with a vote of 4-0.

Karen Cheeks-Lomax, Executive Director of My Sister's Place and Carla Horton, Executive Director of the Northern Westchester Shelter discussed the financial problems their shelters are facing due to the lack of reimbursement by the State for services provided to undocumented victims of domestic violence.

Diane Atkins, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Social Services and Diane Stern also of Social Services stated that while the Department fully stands behind the shelters and agrees with their dilemma, they are bound by State regulations in terms of domestic violence funding. The Department is willing to find a way to pay for something else in order to help lessen the burden, if the shelters can find something for them to pay for.

A discussion ensued regarding how New York City is able to get around regulations and the question arose on how other states deal with this federal mandate. Diane Atkins stated that she has checked around New York and no other county has found a way to solve this problem.

The representatives from My Sister's Place and the Northern Westchester Shelter stated that they believe the problem lies in New York State's interpretation of the Federal regulations attached to this funding.

It was explained to the Committee that domestic violence shelters are reimbursed per person based on personal assistance applications from DSS, while residential shelters are reimbursed by DSS by occupied rooms not the individuals occupying them. This process follows state and federal regulations.

A discussion ensued regarding what the Board of Legislators and the County can do to help whether it is through the County Budget or by lobbying the State to reinterpret the regulations. The Committee and Deputy Commissioner Atkins agreed to, together, ask the County Law Department to review the federal regulations and determine if the state is correct in its interpretation, and if they are not, advise on our best course of action. The shelters agreed to look at their spending and see if there is a way to move things around and receive a different type of assistance from DSS. The Committee also agreed to consider the Shelters ask through the Women's Agenda for funding to supplement this crisis in the interim once the 2008 budget is released from the County Executive and the process begins.

Moved by Legislator Burton and seconded by Legislator Jenkins the minutes of October 16, 2007 passed with a vote of 4-0.

Moved by Legislator Bronz and seconded by Legislator Burton the Committee on Families, Health and Human Services adjourned at 1:25 p.m.

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