

## WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

**COMMITTEE:** SOCIAL SERVICES

**DATE:** AUGUST 23, 2012

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**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

SUPERVISORS LOEB  
KENNY  
BENTLEY  
STRAINER  
WOOD  
SOKOL

**COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:**

SUPERVISOR WESTCOTT

**REPRESENTING THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES:**

SUZANNE WHEELER, ACTING COMMISSIONER  
MAUREEN SCHMIDT, ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER  
DORIS GONNELLY, PRINCIPAL ACCOUNT CLERK  
ANDREA CORBIN, CASEWORKER  
JAMIE BROCHU, PRINCIPAL SOCIAL WELFARE EXAMINER  
KAREN WHITTED, PRINCIPAL SOCIAL WELFARE EXAMINER  
DANIEL G. STEC, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD  
PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR  
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD  
SUPERVISORS MASON  
TAYLOR  
THOMAS  
ROBERT IUSI, DIRECTOR OF PROBATION  
STEVE BAYLE, JUVENILE PROBATION SUPERVISOR  
DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*  
JOANNE COLLINS, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

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Mr. Loeb called the meeting of the Social Services Committee to order at 9:32 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Strainer, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Suzanne Wheeler, Acting Commissioner of the Department of Social Services (DSS), who announced that Doris Gonnely, Principal Account Clerk, and Andrea Corbin, Caseworker in the Child Protective Services Unit, were named Team Leader and Team Player for the month of August, respectively. The announcement was followed by a round of applause from the Committee members.

Mrs. Wheeler advised that Committee approval was required to authorize the Chairman to execute the Supervision and Treatment Services for Juveniles Program (STSJP) Annual Plan (Plan). She advised the Plan included in the agenda reflected the prior year figures and minor adjustments would be made for the current year. She stated that Robert Iusi, Director of Probation; Steve Bayle, Supervisor of Juvenile Probation; and Maureen Schmidt, Acting Deputy Social Services Commissioner, were present today to provide information relative to County services included in the Plan. Mr. Loeb noted the broad range of services offered by the DSS which interfaced with many other County Departments making their successes interdependent. He pointed out a significant drop in detention home admissions (79%) over the last three years.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Mr. Iusi who emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts between the DSS and Juvenile Justice systems. He said the funding stream which was made accessible to his Department through the DSS, paid for 62% of the cost of a Probation Officer for the Glens Falls City School District, to handle Persons In Need of Supervision (PINS) cases, which far exceeded the State's reimbursement rate of 12%. Mr. Iusi stated that work was underway with the State Legislature to obtain funding for Probation in a more efficient and direct manner. He explained that the Juvenile Justice Unit was located in the DSS in close proximity to the Preventive Services and Child Protective Services Units. Quite often, Mr. Iusi stated, clients required the

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services of more than one department or unit; thereby making the office locations in the Human Services Building optimum. In terms of placements and detention, Mr. Iusi stated that the Department had demonstrated low placement and detention levels over several years, significantly reducing or avoiding expenditures for same. He advised of the uncompromising goals to protect the community and to serve youth in a manner consistent with the containment or reduction in expenses. Interdepartmental collaboration, he said, which included the relocation of various offices, had proven instrumental to overall success.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Mr. Bayle who advised the Plan included guidelines for the utilization of funds for detention services, with a focus on alternatives to detention. He said changes in PINS program laws several years ago had necessitated a shift in focus from diversion and PINS to Juvenile Delinquent (JD)/Community funded programs. Mr. Bayle further stated that the State based funding on previous actual detention enrollment figures making future funding dependent upon program outcomes, and he noted Warren County's detention enrollment numbers were low compared to other counties. Mr. Bayle summarized the Annual Plan's description of services and funded programs, a copy of which is on file with the minutes. He said the Plan included new programs such as electronic monitoring, which he noted was court ordered with services provided by a local vendor who had added curfew checks for PINS and JD cases. Another development, he said, was the Captains program which provided respite for PINS cases and he noted Wait House (Warren Washington Counties Homeless Youth Coalition, Inc.) funds were predominantly earmarked for PINS respite. Mr. Bayle added that other programming included interim probation supervision where Probation Officers were involved in cases prior to their disposition in Family Court. He further noted that Warren County was one of very few counties in Upstate New York which provided Probation Officers in the schools, and he said although it was not highlighted in the Plan, the services were critical in helping youth in the early stages of problematic behavior. In closing, Mr. Bayle said a collaborative effort with the DSS has been in place for several years and although directives from the State had necessitated change, the Department would continue to quantify results in an effort to ensure continued funding.

Mr. Loeb noted that the number of youth in detention had decreased significantly over the past five years from forty-two youth in 2007 to less than nine in 2012. Mr. Bayle explained there were two scenarios for detention, one was through the PINS program as directed by Family Court (non-secured detention only), and the other was JD which could be secured or non-secured. He said the detention facility near the Municipal Center was operated by Berkshire Farms Detention Home where the majority of PINS cases were referred. JD cases (youth under the age of 16 which included possible criminal behavior), he said, were referred to the Capital District Detention Center in Albany, NY, which provided varying levels of secured detention. He asserted the number of youth in detention had decreased due to the use of alternatives, such as electronic monitoring, and more awareness on the part of the judiciary.

Mr. Iusi emphasized the effectiveness of Probation Officers located in the schools whose efforts have been proven successful in preventing the need for court involvement. Although preventive work was not clearly measurable, he said, there were direct and observable outcomes which resulted from early intervention and he noted research clearly indicated the younger the age of the child at the outset of intervention, the greater the results. In closing, he stated the Glens Falls and Queensbury school districts each had one full-time Officer, as well as several other part-time Officers throughout the north country.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Ms. Schmidt who acknowledged the effectiveness of an

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interdisciplinary approach which included collaboration among the DSS, Probation Department, Probation Officers, Preventive workers, and parents/families, in order to achieve optimum results in the best interest of youth and families. Keeping youth at home, she said, was the ongoing goal and had been proven to be the best outcome. She advised that the number of CPS cases had increased in the Towns of Warrensburg and Lake Luzerne where preventive workers were subsequently assigned. She affirmed the effective working relationship established by the Social Services and Probation Departments. Ms. Schmidt pointed out that schools paid a portion of the cost for caseworkers.

Returning to her agenda review, Ms. Wheeler addressed the New York Public Welfare Association (NYPWA) Medicaid Statement of Interest Survey. She explained the State had canvassed counties for their feedback on specific services relative to the Medicaid Takeover Plan.

Paul Dusek, County Administrator, explained the State had implemented a 3% cap on funding for the Medicaid program, with subsequent decreases to the cap by 1% per year until flat. Additionally, he said, the State's takeover of Medicaid operations would continue until operations were completely handled by the State (2018), with no expense to counties. Mr. Dusek said the early stages of the takeover had begun and the State had sought input from the Counties for several specific services, which may be in the County's best interest to continue to provide. Mr. Dusek noted the survey may or may not effect the final decision made by the State whose actions would be influenced by multiple factors including the Federal Affordable Care Act for which specific goals could only be accomplished on a State-wide level.

Ms. Wheeler introduced Jamie Brochu and Karen Whitted, Principal Welfare Examiners in the Medicaid Unit, who could answer questions about the State's Medicaid Takeover initiative. Ms. Brochu informed that Medicaid Managed Care services would be effective October 1, 2012, with the addition of broker services provided by Maximus, Inc., who would begin working in the Department at that time. She explained that Maximus, Inc. (a brokerage/consulting firm which provided program management and consulting services for government entities), would begin to process all mandatory managed care cases on October 1, 2012 for enrollments effective November 1, 2012 including customer service for Fidelis and United Health Care clients where the majority of Medicaid clients would be required to enroll. She advised that Medicaid would pay the monthly managed care rate which would result in cost savings for the County. She further stated that although there was no cost to the County for the services provided by Maximus, Inc., there would be increased demands placed on the current staff. Ms. Brochu added that Maximus, Inc. provided the necessary training and education and most other counties used their services. She noted that Washington County, who had used Maximus, Inc. for three years, reported only positive feedback regarding their services.

Pertaining to the Statement of Interest Survey which included seven functional areas for discussion, Mr. Dusek noted the survey was one method by which the State would attempt to control healthcare costs and prepare for the full takeover of the Medicaid program, which he said was inevitable. Ms. Wheeler referred to the New York State Medicaid Expenditures and Utilization Report, a copy of which is on file with the minutes. She noted it reflected total Medicaid expenses and pertinent details for the years 2008 through 2010. Ms. Wheeler reported that Warren County paid \$85 million in Medicaid expenditures in 2010, which would be reduced significantly by the implementation of managed care services.

Prefacing Committee review of the services addressed in the survey, Mr. Dusek stated a number of

functions were in the process of being centralized by the State by 2018, with no County option to continue to perform them beyond 2018. He summarized the functions which the State intended to centralize without a County contracting options as follows:

- ▶ *Eligibility determinations for Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) applications;*
- ▶ *Transportation Management;*
- ▶ *Assessment for Managed Long-Term Care Services;*
- ▶ *Medicare Savings Program application/renewal processing;*
- ▶ *Family Planning Benefit Program application processing for applications submitted by family planning provider and renewal processing; and*
- ▶ *Third Party Health Insurance.*

Mr. Dusek read the following functions the counties would continue to perform long-term:

- ▶ *Provide assistance with medicaid eligibility for those who walk in to apply for other social services programs or who have a medical emergency;*
- ▶ *Assisting individuals to obtain health care in emergency situations;*
- ▶ *Medicaid eligibility for individuals with a spend-down; and*
- ▶ *Provide legal assistance with recoveries.*

The third category, Mr. Dusek advised, included seven functional areas in which the State sought input from the counties (Statement of Interest Survey). He pointed out that the absence of a response would be interpreted by the State as a recommendation for the State to take over the function as soon as possible. Mr. Dusek enumerated the seven functional areas as follows:

1. *Conduct MAGI renewals until the State can fully centralize.*
2. *Provide in-person application assistance to MAGI applicants/enrollees.*
3. *Process applications and renewals for aged, blind or disabled individuals excluding automated renewals.*
4. *Process chronic care (nursing home) and alternate levels of care eligibility determinations and renewals.*
5. *Process applications and renewals for the Medicaid Buy-In for the Working Persons with Disabilities program.*
6. *Conduct disability determinations.*
7. *Process SSI cases, including separate determinations when an individual loses receipt of SSI.*

With regard to Survey Items 1 and 2, Ms. Brochu explained that determining Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) for Medicaid cases was a complex procedure and she noted the Federal program had consolidated sixteen eligibility categories into three which included age, status and income level. The MAGI applications, she said, were processed online, mailed or handled in person. She advised of a back-log of re-certifications in the State's enrollment center located in Syracuse, NY, which had negative results for the County. She explained that as a result of back-log, the State had extended coverage on a month to month basis, where actual eligibility, including any errors, would ultimately be the responsibility of the County. With regard to in-person application assistance, Ms. Brochu noted that routine services of this nature were inevitable at the local level and assistance would continue to be provided by DSS staff. Mr. Dusek stated that although details were not yet established, a contract with the State would be necessary for functions carried out by the County to include specific performance requirements for compliance.

Ms. Whitted addressed Survey Item 3, the processing of applications for the aged, blind and disabled, excluding automated renewals. She pointed out that many applicants lacked computer

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availability and their disabilities were prohibitive to all application processing scenarios. She said the citizens of Warren County would not be served in an optimum manner if the process were moved to the State level.

Survey Item 4, Ms. Whitted stated, was the processing of chronic care eligibility determinations which often included multiple bank accounts, investments and spend-downs, and she noted taxpayers would be better served if the function remained with the County. Ms. Brochu added that account scrutiny by the County was essential in such cases to prevent the occurrence of inappropriate withdrawals.

Ms. Whitted stated that Survey Item 5 pertained to the processing of applications and renewals for the Medicaid Buy-In for Working Persons with Disabilities through electronic, phone and mail-in processing methods. Mrs. Wood noted a lack of computer access in northern towns; thereby increasing the need for printed copies. Ms. Whitted advised the County would continue to provide some services and to incur some expenditures for the function. Mr. Kenny noted the minimal population for this category which he felt made it feasible for the County to retain. Mr. Sokol opined that although the seven functions should remain with the County, he felt the survey results would have no impact.

Survey Item 6, Ms. Whitted advised, was disability determinations for those disabled a minimum of one year and not receiving SSI, who were subsequently referred to the Disability Unit. A physician, she said, conducted the final review and determination on a bi-monthly basis. Ms. Whitted informed that Washington County sent applications to the State who had a ninety day wait period for determinations as compared to two weeks in the Warren County DSS. She noted it was in the best interest of the client to minimize processing time for eligibility determinations, especially for seriously ill applicants, such as those with terminal cancer, who could not access healthcare services without a determination.

The final survey item presented by Ms. Whitted addressed the processing of SSI cases and she advised that she had not anticipated problems with the full State takeover.

It was the consensus of the Committee that the seven functions included in the NYPWA Medicaid Statement of Interest Survey as outlined above, continue to be handled by the Warren County DSS until the State's Medicaid Takeover Initiative was completed.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mrs. Wood and carried unanimously to ratify the actions of the Chairman in executing the New York State Department of Health Medicaid Statement of Interest Survey. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Motion was made by Mrs. Wood, seconded by Mr. Sokol and carried unanimously to authorize the Chairman of the Board to execute the Annual Plan - Supervision and Treatment Services for Juveniles Program (STSJP), which provides services for at risk youth to divert the need for detention or residential care, and the necessary resolution was authorized for the September 21, 2012 Board Meeting. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Wheeler presented a request to abolish the vacant position of Account Clerk and create and fill the position of Keyboard Specialist #5, base salary of \$24,215, Grade 3, effective September 24, 2012. She noted the changes resulted in a savings of \$1,200.

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Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mrs. Wood and carried unanimously to approve the request to abolish the position of Account Clerk and create the position of Keyboard Specialist; thereby amending the Department's Table of Organization and to refer same to the Personnel Committee. *A copy of the request to Create New Position is on file with the minutes.*

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mrs. Wood and carried unanimously to approve the request to fill the vacant position of Keyboard Specialist, due to creation, as outlined above and to refer same to the Personnel Committee. *A copy of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Wheeler presented a request to fill the vacant position of Social Welfare Examiner #31, base salary of \$30,230, Employee No. 10540, due to resignation.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mrs. Wood and carried unanimously to approve the request to fill the vacant position of Social Welfare Examiner #31 as outlined above and to refer same to the Personnel Committee. *A copy of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position is on file with the minutes.*

The final action item presented by Ms. Wheeler was a request for a transfer of funds in the amount of \$1,758 from Code A.6010 470, Social Services - Contract, to Code No. A.6140.0175 470, Home Relief - Homeless Prevention Housing Contract, for reimbursement of State grant funds for ineligible clients.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Sokol and carried unanimously to approve the request for a transfer of funds as outlined above and to refer same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the request for Transfer of Funds is on file with the minutes.*

With regard to the Budget Analysis report through July 2012, Ms. Wheeler advised there were no significant changes and a copy of the report was included in the agenda packets.

There being no further business to come before the Social Services Committee, on motion made by Mr. Strainer and seconded by Mrs. Wood, Mr. Loeb adjourned the meeting at 10:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Joanne Collins. Legislative Office Specialist