

**NASSAU-SUFFOLK HIV HEALTH SERVICES PLANNING COUNCIL
UNITED WAY OF LONG ISLAND, DEER PARK, NY
November 8, 2023
10am – 12pm**

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Kerry Thomas, Vice-Chair
Susan Baldrige
Nancy Duncan
Eileen Bryant
Cathy Martens
Maria Mezzatesta
Victoria Osk, Esq.
AnuOlu Oyadiran
Colin Pearsall
Scott Petersen
Gregson Pigott, MD
Sofia Porres
Denise Ragsdale
Stephen Sebor
Claire Simon

MEMBERS ABSENT

Wendy Abt
Tyrone Banister
James Colson
Carmen Feliciano
Irina Gelman, DPM
Lance Marrow
Angie Partap
Scott Petersen
Joseph Pirone
Jacqueline Ponce-Rivera
Edward Soto
June Tappan
John Van

GUESTS

Vanessa Carolina
Allison Covino
Christine Fellini
Barbara Garrison
Josseline Hidalgo
Loreta Keller
Estefany Reyes
Vincent Rother

UWLI STAFF

Georgette Beal
Myra Alston
JoAnn Henn
Katie Ramirez

ABSENT COUNTY STAFF

Andrew Knecht, DO, NCDOH

I. Welcome, Moment of Silence, & Welcome

Mr. Thomas, Chair, began the meeting at 10:10 am and welcomed everyone. Introductions were made. Ms. Oyadiran was acknowledged as a new Planning Council member, filling the Medicaid Representative category. Mr. Thomas requested a moment of silence to remember all those infected and affected, those suffering from COVID, and anything else that is going on in the world.

II. Approval of September 13, 2023 Minutes

Ms. Baldrige made a motion to accept the meeting minutes as read. Ms. Martens seconded the motion.
13 Approved 2 Abstentions 0 Opposed

III. Committee Reports

Mr. Thomas reported on the **Executive Committee** which met on Monday, October 30, 2023. The committee approved the November Planning Council agenda with its focus on housing, as a continuation of the housing presentations that were held at the July Council meeting. A core services waiver was approved for the next fiscal year, which will allow for more flexibility for the region to allocate funds between core and support services. The Executive Committee is scheduled to meet in December to discuss and approve FY23 reallocations. Reallocation provides an opportunity for subrecipients to return funds, request additional one-time funds, and/or submit general budget modifications. Administrative updates

were provided on the status of the annual comprehensive and quality management site visits of funded subrecipients which are expected to be completed by the end of February. An update was also provided on the status of the bylaw reviews and current Planning Council membership. The next full meeting of the Executive Committee is scheduled for Monday, January 8, 2024.

Ms. Martens reported on the **Consumer Involvement Committee (CIC)** that met on Friday, October 13, 2023. Mr. Sebor gave an update on the NYS Peer Certification Program and shared that the upcoming graduation will be in-person and that many of the workshops are also returning to an in-person modality. Planning continues for the Council's Annual World AIDS Day event on December 1st at Captain Bill's in Bay Shore. Registration and sponsorship forms were sent out in October. Registrations are being accepted through November 10th and confirmations will be sent on the following Monday, November 13th.

Ms. Bryant reported that the **Strategic Assessment & Planning Committee (SAP)** meeting originally scheduled for Wednesday, November 1, 2023, was canceled because it conflicted with the HRSA listening sessions for our region. The next SAP meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 10, 2024.

Ms. Baldrige reported on the **Clinical Quality Management (COM) committee** that met on Thursday, October 26, 2023. The committee spent a good deal of time refining and amending the Medical Nutrition Therapy survey, a copy of which will be emailed to the committee for final review and approval. The committee discussed a timeline and process for distributing and collecting survey responses. The survey will be administered in English and Spanish and will be available electronically and in paper format.

Membership Sub-committee

One new Planning Council application was reviewed. However, it was deemed incomplete and could not be voted on at the October meeting. Staff will reach out to the applicant for the missing documentation. The next Membership meeting is scheduled for February 2024.

IV. Housing on Long Island

Ms. Loreta Keller from the Department of Social Services and Ms. Victoria Osk, from Nassau-Suffolk Law Services continued the regional discussion on housing that was started at the last Planning Council meeting. Mr. Thomas reminded the Council that this is a public meeting, providing general information. Individual concerns and questions should be addressed privately with the presenters.

In a PowerPoint presentation, Ms. Keller, part of the Policies and Procedures team at Suffolk County, explained the available housing programs:

Shelter Supplement Plan (SSP)-

This program supplements rental allowance. Receipt of temporary assistance is a requirement to be eligible to receive SSP. To qualify for assistance, a household's net monthly income is assessed against the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) standard of need. New applicants who are employed will receive a \$150 work deduction for their gross countable income. If the net income is greater than the OTDA standard of need, the household is ineligible for temporary assistance. If the net income is less than the standard of need, the household is eligible for Temporary Assistance (TA) and the earned income disregard of 62% is applied. The process for reapplicants is slightly different in that if the case was closed within the last 4 months, the reapplicant will first receive the earned income disregard of 62%, then the \$150 deduction. Household in receipt of TA and employed will receive the earned income disregard of 62% and then the \$159 work deduction.

Ms. Keller then presented a chart with the breakdown of the OTDA Monthly Standard of Need for Suffolk County. These amounts are set by the state. The chart is divided into **Type**, which includes Personal Needs and Utilities (Basic, Energy, and energy supplement); **Rent**, (Shelter with children and without children); and **Heat**, (Fuel oil, electric heat, other heat) compared to the household size. The grant range for a household of 1 is \$493-\$583. The amount is dependent upon the personal needs and utilities, rent, and heat that are being used. The grant range for a household of 4 is \$1,004-\$1,098; dependent on the same factors as previously mentioned.

Districts can request approval to operate a shelter supplement program. Suffolk County has developed a local plan which can supplement shelter costs. The Shelter Supplementation Plan is available to Temporary Assistance recipients who need the supplement to retain permanent housing or to relocate from emergency housing to permanent housing. SSP may be available for households with children, singles, and legally married childless couples. SSP for household with children allows for a net total rent that is 2.5x the standard and then an additional client contribution based on household size. The chart displayed total rent for household size of up to 7, in addition to the amounts for singles and childless couples. The applicant needs to be receiving temporary assistance to submit required SSP application.

Rent Arrears-

This program provides assistance to pay rent owed to prevent eviction and preserve housing. There are certain eligibility requirements that these programs share, although receiving temporary assistance is not one of them. There must be a threat of eviction, not necessarily legal or formal and households must demonstrate an ability to pay future shelter expense.

A quick summary of the three programs:

EAF-Emergency Assistance to Families

- There must be a child (under 18 or 18 in high school) or pregnant woman in the household.
- Available income cannot exceed 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).
- All available resources must be used.
- A recovery agreement must be signed. If temporary assistance is received in the future, the amount paid in excess of TA rent standard would be recouped back.

ESNA-Emergency Safety Net Assistance (For single individuals and childless couples).

- Monthly income cannot exceed 125% of the FPL.
- All available resources must be used.
- Must sign a repayment agreement and the amount paid would need to be repaid within 12 months.

EAA-Emergency Assistance to Adults

- Presence of someone in receipt of SSI in the household has the responsibility for the rent.
- No income tests.
- No Recovery Agreement or Repayment Agreement required.

ESNA and EAF dollar amounts according to size of households were shown.

Move to Permanent Housing-

DSS can assist with security, brokers fee, and moving expenses to secure permanent housing. The process includes submitting a completed color-coded housing package (Yellow for landlord, blue for broker, and pink for tenant), as well as a completed inspection. As for the moving expenses, three estimates are

needed. The proposed rent needs to be affordable. The move must be out of a shelter, due to an emergency, such as an eviction or health or safety. The move can be out of district if the reasons are to be closer to relatives, employment opportunities, safety, or health. For more information, housing packages, applications, and shelter arrears breakdown, go to www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/Social-Services/Applications-and-Forms.

The second presentation, titled *Low Income and Affordable Housing Options on Long Island*, was given by Ms. Osk, from Nassau-Suffolk Law Services.

Ms. Osk said that very few are waiting and basically everybody who doesn't have Section 8 should be applying, stressing the importance of being on a Section 8 wait list, even if the wait can be as long as five years. She stated that while other housing options may be taken away, permanent housing cannot, acknowledging that it can be an arduous process requiring diligence to keep checking for open waiting lists.

Ms. Osk then spoke on different housing options. E5 is the computer designation for emergency shelter allowance for people living with HIV/AIDS. The permanent housing program began in 1990, through DSS. Initially, to qualify for this program, people had to be receiving SSI benefits. Regulations have since changed. There is no longer the SSI requirement for eligibility. E5 does not require you to be eligible for public assistance, or to be disabled, and a small income from working is allowed. Current requirements for E5 Housing are that the individual is HIV+, homeless or facing homelessness and there is a threat of losing housing; unable to maintain current housing situation. The affordable housing must be reasonable, although DSS has its own formula as well as some discretion. If the cost of E5 housing is higher than Section 8, it may not be approved. With E5 you pay down to the basic needs which can be quite low, and you may have less money remaining than with other housing programs. There are some downsides to this program. It does affect food stamps. DSS counts the rent paid when working with an individual's budget, so how much you pay for rent is part of determining amount of food stamps. Also, if an individual is receiving social security benefits or any retroactive funds, and DSS has paid an E5 an amount which is more than normal rent, the money will come out of the retroactive funds. Although this is permanent housing, it may not be ideal situation to stay on indefinitely, often being used as survival mode, but it is better than no housing at all. DSS should advise as to which interest is in the best interest of the client. One of the frustrating aspects of E5 Housing is that few people are aware of the program, including DSS staff. Consider this, approximately 3 million people live on Long Island and approximately 5,000 are PLWH so the program is not familiar to many, however as you go up the line, supervisors are aware of the program.

Section 8 housing is subsidized rent, usually 30% (can go up to 40%) of a household's income. It is better than the paydown to basic needs as in the E5. The amounts allowed by Section 8 are determined by Washington. It involves vouchers and can be project-based or low-income tax credit housing. Applicants need to certify and show proof of income. The housing being offered needs to be inspected. Housing cannot be illegal due to safety codes or inadequate housing. The heartbeat rule, one person per room is often applied, not counting the kitchen which is not legal according to the fire code.

Affordable Housing Resource Guides for Nassau and Suffolk were shared. Most towns have their own housing authority, where you would receive the vouchers. Ms. Osk encouraged contacting the Community Development Corporation of Long Island (CDC) which provides vouchers throughout Nassau and Suffolk County. Low-income tax credit housing gives landlords a break on their taxes if they offer low-income housing. Many landlords and housing complex managers are unaware that it is illegal to discriminate against renters because of their source of income. If the rent is subsidized, the amount is guaranteed.

Sometimes it just takes a letter or phone call to inform them.

The Medicaid Redesign Team (MRT) Long-Term Rental Assistance and Housing Retention Services for High-Need Medicaid Beneficiaries Living with HIV/AIDS outside of NYC is designed for high users of Medicaid, who are homeless, unstably housed or at a high risk of becoming homeless. Stable housing helps health outcomes. This program offers rental assistance to pay for a portion of an eligible client's rent until the client develops the skills and stability needed to successfully achieve independent living. Independent living is defined as no longer needing help or assistance with the rent. Education services, coordination of services and case conferencing are offered to support clients to independent living.

Both presenters were thanked for sharing this important information. The resources, presentations, and other information discussed at this Council meeting were made available to the attendees.

V. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

VI. Other Business/ Announcements

The annual World AIDS Day event will be held on Friday evening, December 1, 2023, at Captain Bill's in Bay Shore, which is the actual date of the World AIDS Day observance. It will be the first in person event since 2019. The theme is *The Story of Us*. Sponsorships are available; there is still time to register for the event.

On behalf of Thursday's Child, Mr. Thomas informed the Council that there will be a brief ceremony at the Dennison Building in Hauppauge in recognition of World AIDS Day in Suffolk, on Friday, December 1 at 4pm. Last year, all eighteen Suffolk County legislators passed a proclamation to recognize World AIDS Day in Suffolk County. In acknowledgement, the building will be lit up in red, beginning at dusk. Ms. Bryant will also be honored during the ceremony.

Ms. Simon mentioned the ETE World AIDS Day Summit in Albany, November 28-30. The theme is *Family Reunion*. While scholarships are not available, she suggested that agencies funded by the AIDS Institute speak to the contract managers to determine if financial arrangements can be arranged for those interested in attending the summit.

The HIV Coordinating Planning Group meeting was attended by UWLI Staff and Mr. Thomas to review goals, strategies and how activities are aligned with the Integrated Plan (IP). A follow-up meeting will be scheduled for the new year, date to be determined.

Ms. Mezzatesta informed the Council that Sun River Health will begin a pilot project to provide services to those aging with HIV/AIDS in January. Additional staff will be needed. She is seeking to fill full-time or part-time positions for individuals over 50 with lived experience. If you are interested or know someone who may be interested in this opportunity, please contact Ms. Mezzatesta

VII. Adjournment

Ms. Duncan made a motion, which was seconded by Ms. Bryant to adjourn the November 8, 2023, Planning Council meeting. All in favor-Motion carried.