

**NASSAU-SUFFOLK HIV HEALTH SERVICES PLANNING COUNCIL  
BOARD ROOM, UNITED WAY OF LONG ISLAND, DEER PARK, NY**

**May 13, 2020**  
**9:30 am – 11:30 am**  
**MINUTES**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Felix Ruiz, Chair  
Ilvan Arroyo  
Lisa Benz-Scott, PhD  
Tania Chiu  
William Doepper  
Nancy Duncan  
Lawrence Eisenstein, MD  
Juli Grey-Owens  
Kevin McHugh  
Cathy Martens  
Teresa Maestre  
Johnny Mora  
Victoria Osk, Esq.  
Angie Partap  
Joseph Pirone  
Erik Rios  
Anthony Santella, DrPH  
Katelin Thomas  
Gregson Pigott, MD

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Traci Shelton, Vice-Chair  
Arthur Brown  
James Colson  
Clara Crawford  
Martine Michel-Toure  
Rev. Loring Pasmore  
Jacqueline Ponce-Rivera  
June Tappan  
Jessica Totino  
John Van

**GUESTS**

Wendy Abt  
Eileen Bryant  
Angela Edwards  
Alison Karppi  
Blanca Nunez  
Claire Simon  
Kerry Thomas

**UWLI STAFF**

Georgette Beal  
JoAnn Henn  
Myra Alston  
Katie Ramirez  
Stephanie Moreau

**COUNTY STAFF (absent)**

Tavora Buchman, MD  
Nina Sculco

**I. Welcome and Moment of Silence**

Mr. Ruiz called the meeting to order at 10:06 am. He welcomed everyone and attendance was confirmed. There was a moment of silence to remember those we have lost and those who are struggling during this difficult time.

**II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**III. Approval of January 8, 2020 Minutes**

Mr. Arroyo made a motion to accept the minutes as read. This motion was seconded by Ms. Martens.  
12 Approved 7 Abstention 0 Opposed - Motion Carried

**IV. Administrative Update**

FY19-20 Closeout- Due to COVID-19, a thirty day extension was granted to complete FY 19-20 closeout process. There was a there was 3.3% decrease with this year's Part A/MAI award. Special COVID-19 Funds were awarded to the EMA to assist clients in need and deal with the effects of this pandemic.

Certain requirements of this grant will need to be met. Part A providers were surveyed on COVID-19 needs and the CIC and CQM Committees participated in discussions on best ways to use the funds. Consumers expressed concerns about access and availability of food resources. As a result, the Executive Committee approved plans to split funds between EFA and Food Bank including the purchase of PPE. The plan will be submitted to HRSA by this Friday.

#### **V. Committee Reports**

In the interest of time committee reports were not read. Copies of the committee reports were emailed to Planning Council members prior to the meeting.

#### **VI. HOPWA Update-**

An annual HOPWA (Housing Opportunities for persons Living with HIV/AIDS) update is usually presented at the March Planning Council meeting. Since the March meeting was cancelled due to COVID-19, this update was postponed until the May meeting. Ms. Karppi, Commissioner of Housing and Human Services, Town of Brookhaven, provided a one page HOPWA update that was shared by email with the Planning Council. This summary acknowledged that the Long Island region continues to have the highest number of cumulative cases of AIDS among all suburban metropolitan statistical areas. The Town of Brookhaven in conjunction with United Way of Long Island as our sponsor, has conducted a needs assessment of housing and support services for Long Island. Recent surveys and public hearings targeting HIV infected individuals have indicated that housing and transportation are the two most frequently cited problems for this population.

It has been determined that while funding for services is also not adequate to the need, the lack of actual housing is a problem that cannot be addressed with the available funds. Therefore, it was decided that the HOPWA funds in Nassau/Suffolk counties would be used only for “bricks and mortar” and that agencies accepted for funding would link their clients to services provided with other sources of funding.

The intention is to locate projects in municipalities not recently assisted with earlier funds and in communities not already highly impacted by other special needs housing. It was also discussed that independent living was a top priority. Since the town of Brookhaven was designated as the recipient for all program funds for the Nassau/Suffolk MSA in 2018, three vacant parcels have been identified, with one under construction.

The Town of Brookhaven requests that the Nassau/Suffolk HIV/Health Services Planning Council affirm this policy. There were questions from Planning Council members regarding the update and what is meant by the Planning Council affirmation of this policy; is there a deadline for this affirmation and would such a delay affect housing funding in the area? Many members were reticent to affirm policy until it was better understood. Ms. Karppi joined the meeting to address those questions and concerns.

To summarize, the Town of Brookhaven receives funding from the New York Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for PLWHA housing. HOPWA is a program that develops energy efficient housing units that provide safe, healthy, affordable, sustainable solutions for low-income HIV+ individuals and their families. It is permanent housing. Some existing buildings are refurbished, others are new construction.

HOPWA funding is not contingent upon a Planning Council vote to affirm. A vote will not affect funding of housing in the area. No vote was taken. The purpose of this document is to annually inform and update the Planning Council. Contact information was given, should other questions arise.

It was noted that there is no HOPWA representative on the Planning Council, despite efforts to fill that vacancy.

## **VII. Update on Ryan White Service Delivery during COVID-19**

Members were updated on service delivery changes/issues as follows: Access to food is a concern to many. Information was requested about food programs and pantries, as well as available transportation to get to these locations, which often are not along a bus route. Mr. Ruiz asked whether transportation funds were being utilized. Medical transportation utilization has decreased during COVID-19 since providers are offering telehealth visits in lieu of in-person visits. With respect to Planning Council operations, meetings are now being held virtually and special Covid-19 funds will be used to purchase tablets for Planning Council and committee members who are consumers to facilitate participation in the virtual meetings. Part A providers are following CDC guidelines and have instituted protocols to ensure that consumers have access to and receiving needed services.

Ms. Timour, NYSDOH AIDS Institute provided an update on ADAP (AIDS Drug Assistance Program). This program is for NYS residents and US citizenship is not required. Financial eligibility is based upon 500% of Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Necessary documentation for enrollment includes proof of residency, income verification and a medical application signed by a licensed medical professional verifying HIV status. The governor has extended ACA open enrollment to June 15, 2020.

The ADAP process can be challenging during COVID-19; the process has changed somewhat in response to the pandemic. FAXes are not accepted at this time since many employees are working remotely and are not in the office to receive the information. ADAP applications can be conducted over the phone and will be verbally confirmed. New enrollment counselors are available. A three-way call can be scheduled between client, case manager, and Albany office staff to complete the process. Pictures of the documentation can be taken with a phone and sent at a later date, when office staff is available to receive it. Cards are not being mailed out at this time. There is a hotline number -844-682-4058, operating Monday-Friday from 9am-5pm to answer questions and hopefully resolve issues. Three month medications are being prescribed to limit the number of required visits in regards to safety and convenience. Ms. Timour ended by providing contact information should any questions arise.

Ms. Chiu added that the state is updating all pending recertification through October.

Ms. Osk from Nassau-Suffolk Law Services spoke about legal changes due to COVID-19 that might affect consumers. She informed the committee the Medicaid benefits are being extended for six months and there are no terminations. Six-month extensions were also given for food stamps. Eligibility documentation for public assistance will be given verbally until actual documentation could be sent and received. Courts are currently closed. Continuing disability reviews are not being done at this time. Housing vouchers have been extended sixty days, only emergency inspections of Section 8 housing are being conducted, no evictions will be enforced until June 20, unless non-payment of rent is due in income to COVID-19 and client is eligible for unemployment. SSI recipients should be able to receive stimulus check. Ms. Osk, encouraged consumers to contact Nassau-Suffolk Law Services with any legal issues or concerns.

## **VIII. Increase Federal Poverty Level (FPL)**

A motion was made by Ms. Thomas and seconded by Mr. Doepper to increase the region's FPL to 500% to be consistent with New York state. All were in favor. Motion carried, Changes to eligibility guidelines will be sent to providers and FPL table will be updated.

**IX. Other Business/Announcements**

- Ms. Simon informed the committee that virtual Beyond ETE listening sessions for Nassau and Suffolk County are being scheduled.
- Mr. Arroyo encouraged the committee to check out CPHE trainings on the hivtrainingny.org website
- Ms. Benz-Scott offered the opportunity of student volunteers to assist remotely with needs assessment and data collection

**IX. Adjournment**

A motion was made by Ms. Martens and seconded by Mr. Doepper to adjourn the May 13, 2020 Planning Council meeting.

All in favor, Motion carried.