



Onondaga County Legislature

JAMIE McNAMARA
Clerk

JAMES J. ROWLEY
Chairman

MELANIE VILARDI
Deputy Clerk

401 Montgomery Street • Court House • Room 407 • Syracuse, New York 13202
Phone: 315.435.2070 • Fax: 315.435.8434 • www.ongov.net/legislature

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE MINUTES – FEBRUARY 15, 2022 PEGGY CHASE, CHAIR

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Kuhn, Ms. Gunnip, Ms. Cody, Mr. Bush

ALSO ATTENDING: Mr. Rowley, Mrs. Ervin, Mr. Yaus, Ms. Allen, Ms. Loughlin, Dr. Gupta, Ms. Mignano, Mr. Smorol, Ms. Cunningham, Mr. Gasiorowski, Mr. Buff, Mr. Hummel, Ms. Murphy, Ms. Miller-Martens, Mr. Kelly, Mr. Hall, Ms. Lesniak, Ms. Vilardi, Mr. DeSantis, Ryan Frantzis

Chair Chase called the meeting to order at 10:33 a.m. *A motion was made by Ms. Kuhn, seconded by Mr. Bush to waive the reading and approve the minutes. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.*

1. **HEALTH DEPARTMENT:** Dr. Indu Gupta, Commissioner
 - a. Providing for Various Personnel Changes

Dr. Gupta:

- Public health fellowship program \$5.8m came about a few months ago – provided by NYS Department of Health for ongoing COVID 19 – allows for a new public health workforce to encourage folks to go into the field – it is a fellowship not an internship – hoping within a year or two when funding goes away they will move into positions and are already trained – saves a lot in the long run – seeking creation of 12 public health fellowships according to the resolution – different qualifications from Fellow I to III – the grade 7 will support these positions – there will not be 36 positions – looking for a maximum of 12 at this point – don't know how many will be interested – if a miracle and all are filled then will come back to the Legislature for additional positions
- Public health I requires an associate degree – level II is a graduate fellow with a master's degree and level III requires a doctorate – these may work in any of the departments
- Every three years a community assessment is prepared – seeing another epidemic for STDs – will allow to help staff and give us bigger picture
- 100% grant funded – no civil service – if grant goes away these positions will not exist
- Answered Dr. Chase's question regarding time to fill slots - applications are given to NYS Department of Health who are handling the application process for the entire state – match geographic area – have already sent many resumes – will have to find out who is still available
- Two year cycle has already started – they may apply for other positions – still would provide us with a good public health workforce – when you have the skill sets any department throughout Onondaga County (“OC”) could use these people

Ms. Gunnip:

- How does the salary compare with other positions within the department and does the funding include benefits

Dr. Gupta:

- Fellow III is almost to director level – not sure how many doctorate fellows we will get – State funding provides for all the benefits to make this program successful including computers and rent

Ms. Kuhn:

- You talked about not using all the money – does grant money run out?

Dr. Gupta:

- Cannot create 36 positions – restricted funds and if need it we will ask the State to use it
- Can be used for other areas like the lead program and cancer services – State asks that COVID 19 is included for education and outreach

Mr. Rowley:

- Normally there a clause added that would terminate positions when grant ends

Dr. Chase:

- Always willing to take money from anyone that will give us money – during pandemic State and Federal governments have been more generous than in the past

Mr. Yaus:

- Intent was to eliminate positions after funding goes away

Mr. Hummel:

- These positions will be treated as only filled for 18 months – term specified by civil service law – if funding reoccurs you couldn't have them in for longer than 18 months – Personnel tracks all this
- Clarified in an email dated February 15, 2022 to committee members - They are technically in the competitive class but we do not have to test them if the position is for 18 months or less. That is a local decision so we do not have to notify the state or have the jurisdictional class changed.

Dr. Gupta:

- Answered Mr. Bush's question regarding how many positions - only filling 12 positions – could be at any level – would like a combination to have a better balance
- Agreed to send to Mr. Bush the job descriptions – attached below

A motion was made by Ms. Kuhn, seconded by Ms. Cody to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED

2. SOCIAL SERVICES: Ann Rooney, Deputy County Executive/Human Services

a. 2021 Transfer Resolution (\$768,000)

Ms. Rooney:

- Enhance the technology portfolio in two areas - great relationship with Ventech– \$96k is the first part working with staff to see what could be done to work better and faster – assigning of work which is a back office function which is critical to maintaining confidentiality – \$672k is the second part is the case management system - relationship with contracting jobs plus which is really OCC – still using an access database that was created by an employee that is potentially retiring
- Answered Ms. Gunnip's question – not sure if Ventech will be doing the case management system as well – will ask Sara and let her know
- Answered Dr. Chase's question – Ventech takes the data from the State and makes it user friendly and more efficient for employees

A motion was made by Ms. Gunnip, seconded by Ms. Kuhn to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED

3. CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES: Richard Gasiorowski, Commissioner
a. INFORMATIONAL: Foster Care Update

Ms. Cunningham:

- Last presented to the committee five or six months into COVID – starting to get back to normal
- February 2020 there were 509 children in foster care – today 512 – didn't have movement because courts were closed – numbers are evening out
- Family First Preventative Services Act (“FFPSA”) enacted to have goals to keep kids at home or with kin – stuff that OC had already been working towards
- In 2020 129 children were placed with kin – currently 145 which means about 35% are staying with family – goal is 50% so will continue to work towards goal
- February 2020 86 children were in residential care - today 68 in residential care which is 28% - goal is 10% so constantly working toward goal
- Through COVID – visitation services have struggled with transportation and working with partners to provide services
- Answered Dr. Chase's question that only 2 were out of state in residential care – some are in Rochester, Binghamton and Oneonta - currently a challenge with high level children – it is a nationwide crisis – State is working on cross system collaborations – willing to work with agencies – as of now no kids are in limbo
- 512 children (not families) in foster care – some families have more than child
- Could not find a funding structure to purchase the Salina Street house – no structure for a county to run a house in NYS
- Working closely with agencies to get services to the families - clinicians are hard to find
- Answered Dr. Chase's question regarding families feeling like they are on their own – continue to work with Hillside to find foster families – case workers do a great job connection with families – in 2020 had 26 adoptions and 34 in 2021
- Answered Mr. Bush's question regarding case workers – currently have 18 vacancies which is better because a year ago had 36 - lost 42 and have hired 25 since last Spring – 4 starting in a few weeks – normally 150 people take the exam and this year that number is down – takes up to six months of training before a new employee is able to take on a case – cases aren't increasing – have enough staff but waiting on ample training
- Prior test was only given once a year – now it is given twice a year
- OC pays substantially more than other counties
- Answered Ms. Kuhn's question about the fluctuation concern when school reopened – there was the general trend but no different than was predicted – CCSI is still operational and works with school districts to prevent children from going into foster care

Ms. Rooney:

- Answered Ms. Cody's question about the Sycamore house - OC went around and around with the State and NYS didn't approve the plan to have a county run residential facility – they had to get more integrated on the State level to connect different agencies
- If a child goes through mental case system funding may come from various sources – State loved the idea but could not figure out how to get approvals across the many State departments – they were going to get back to us but March 2020 came and it is a mute issue
- If we could get to 10% in residential care that would be phenomenal – larger goal is to keep every kid out of residential care

Ms. Cunningham:

- Answered Dr. Chase's question as to what could be done to help - we have some good plans which we will implement – will recruit using the lists from January and there will be another test in July

Ms. Rooney:

- Answered Dr. Chase’s question about settlement money - this isn’t in the realm of child welfare – OC will get settlement funds – mental health and addiction services – will use a lot on prevention side and school education – very detailed as to what the funds will be used for and are still waiting to get the money – part of 2022 budget process we did include details and they are very specific as to what it could be used for

Ms. Cunningham:

- Answered Mr. Bush’s question about qualifications – a bachelor’s degree is required

Mr. Ryan:

- Doesn’t specifically say use for opioids

Ms. Rooney:

- Answered Mr. Ryan’s question about the settlement being used for just opioids - not just one category – there isn’t a catch all – all details are laid out and that’s how it was budgeted
- Answered Mr. Ryan’s statement that other municipalities like Monroe County are using it for different uses – will provide Ben Yaus with a copy of the details

A motion was made by Ms. Cody, seconded by Ms. Kuhn to adjourn the meeting. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.



ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: **HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE**
 DATE: **FEBRUARY 15, 2022**

Respectfully submitted,

MELANIE VILARDI, Deputy Clerk
 Onondaga County Legislature

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
Ben Yaus	Law
Jessica Allen	Finance
Annabeth Light	Debt/Court
Indu Gupta	Health Dept
Michelle Mignano	OCHD
Steve Smoral	Fin Ops
Amy Cunningham	DCFS
Rick Casibon	DCFS
Steve Buff	Fin Ops
Carl Hammel	Personnel
Teneshia Murphy	CE Office
Sandy Miller-Martens	Fin Ops
Brian	Publics
Dale	Publics
Kevin Haer	Publics