



Onondaga County Legislature

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Clerk

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Chairman

TAMMY BARBER
Deputy Clerk

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HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE MINUTES – AUGUST 16, 2022 **PEGGY CHASE, CHAIR**

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. Bush

ALSO ATTENDING: Mr. Ryan, also see attached

Chair Chase called the meeting to order at 10:36 a.m. *The minutes of the previous meeting have been distributed. There are no corrections to the minutes, and the minutes are approved.*

1. CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES: Damian Pratt, Director

a. 2022 Transfer Resolution (\$155,000)

- Budget transfer of \$155,000 to cover costs of resident food service
- Late in 2021, did RFP for food service contract, came back after county budget passed, came in higher than anticipated
- Older population (17 – 19 year olds), who tend to eat more, increase in costs, caloric intake; purpose behind request
- Increased costs will be factored into upcoming budget for current population of 35, but also anticipation of having census average 45 youth

A motion was made by Ms. Kuhn, seconded by Ms. Gunnip to approve this item. The resolution has been considered.

What is going on with Hillbrook:

- 35 residents; statewide deficiency in detention beds
- Inability to find detention space for youth charged with serious crime; problematic at state level
- Locally in excellent shape - 53% of youths are from Onondaga County, which is the lowest percentage of youth in Onondaga County, as well as fewest number of youth from the county in the last 3-4 years
- Other youths are from all over the state: contiguous counties, as well as (i.e.) Chemung, Nassau, Suffolk Counties; does not interfere with housing a local youth
- Housing 3 from Monroe County, who have own facility; they have been full at various times
- Tend to accept youths that are challenging for other facilities; able to do it safer
- Majority of residents are 17 and 18
- Piece of legislation passed last December (goes into effect this December) - youths under age of 13 will no longer qualify to be held in secure detention; currently there are none at Hillbrook 13 or under
- Justice Reform - youths under 13 not able to be detained, under 12 no longer able to be charged with act of juvenile delinquency
 - Could be negative if no alternative programming, planning to support youths at time of arrest
 - Came up with process/plan to support youth and families going through Children & Family Services (not Probation)
 - Any youth over the age of 8 is eligible to be detained, that is what changes in December
 - December - threshold changes to 13 and above, have not seen 11/12 yr. olds with firearms, not that it cannot happen
- Capacity prior to capital projects was 32; increased bed capacity to 50; have not exceeded 40 beds
- Going through minor projects to improve facility and grounds: lounge space has carpeting - flooring being replaced for sanitary reasons; dorms are bed with bunk, and will be installing desks and stools in all the rooms
- Could be at capacity every day with out of county, but 40 is good for now; 3-4 months from now, 45 will be the max
- Staffing rates are best in state, very infrequent mandates; no problem with staffing, but always looking for people

- No exact figures on overtime, but can provide; do not believe it to be excessive; Comptroller audit recently identified an individual, will use that to correct things; do not foresee something like that happening for foreseeable future
- Food Service RFP is next 3 years; only 1 vendor responded; benefit of costs going forward, challenge is there is not a big response

2. **DSS – ECONOMIC SECURITY:** Sara Merrick, Commissioner

a. **INFORMATIONAL: 2GEN Onondaga**

- Prior to COVID Pandemic, review of how to look at breaking the cycle of poverty in an innovative way
- Looking at models working across the county, all had a multi-generational component working with moms and children simultaneously, not individual program for mom or child



2Gen Onondaga

Onondaga County Department of Social
Services – Economic Security

Poverty Reduction Pilot
A Multigenerational Approach

J. Ryan McMahon II
County Executive

Sarah Merrick
Commissioner

Sarah Easterly
2Gen Onondaga
Director

2Gen Onondaga – Overview

Transition to working with the entire family unit, not just the individual applicant – let’s work to end poverty for parents and their children! People do not live in silos. This is a comprehensive two-generational approach to helping TA families.

Focus on sustainable change, not compliance – shift focus - 5 areas of family wellbeing including Health & Wellbeing, Economic Assets, Social Capital, Early Childhood Education & Postsecondary Education and Employment (adapted from Ascend at the Aspen Institute). Also, let’s engage non-custodial parents in new approach.

Long Term Engagement – aiming for a 2-to-3-year involvement period – allowing time for head of household to develop executive functioning skills, increase overall family health & wellbeing, and assist parents in entering and stabilizing a career pathway that will lead to economic mobility.

County Leadership Support

- ☑ J. Ryan McMahon II – Onondaga County Executive fully supports this initiative.
 - Support existed prior to the COVID pandemic
 - This support continued and grew deeper throughout the pandemic and to today
 - Monetary support created in the 2022 budget
- ☑ Onondaga County Legislature support as well
 - Budget passed!
- ☑ Full County investment – \$1 Million (annual commitment moving forward)
- ☑ In Process - Additional supports from private foundations

2Gen Onondaga – The Families

Target – parents
on TA under the
age of 26

Randomly select
pilot group

Randomly select
control group

Originally over
300 families in
2020

In early 2021 –
171 families

Pilot group –
start small 25
families

Pilot Group Demographics

- Ages: Head of Households Range from 17 – 25; Children Range from Infants to 9 (58 children)
- Ethnicity: 44% African American, 20% Hispanic, 13% White, 23% Other
- Zip Codes: 13208, 13204, 13205, 13206, 13224

What is happening with the investment?

- **Social Workers** – to provide intensive case management services (mobility mentoring and goal planning)
- **Earned incentives** (EMPath) for achieving goals
- **Financial Empowerment Counselor** – to provide support and guidance around money, banking, finances and budgeting
- **Benefits Cliff money** – to provide a SLOPE, not a cliff when parents start working and lose their TA benefit
- **Service Point** – a database to hold all case notes, data, records
- **Research** to support our work and efforts – Syracuse University Maxwell X Lab



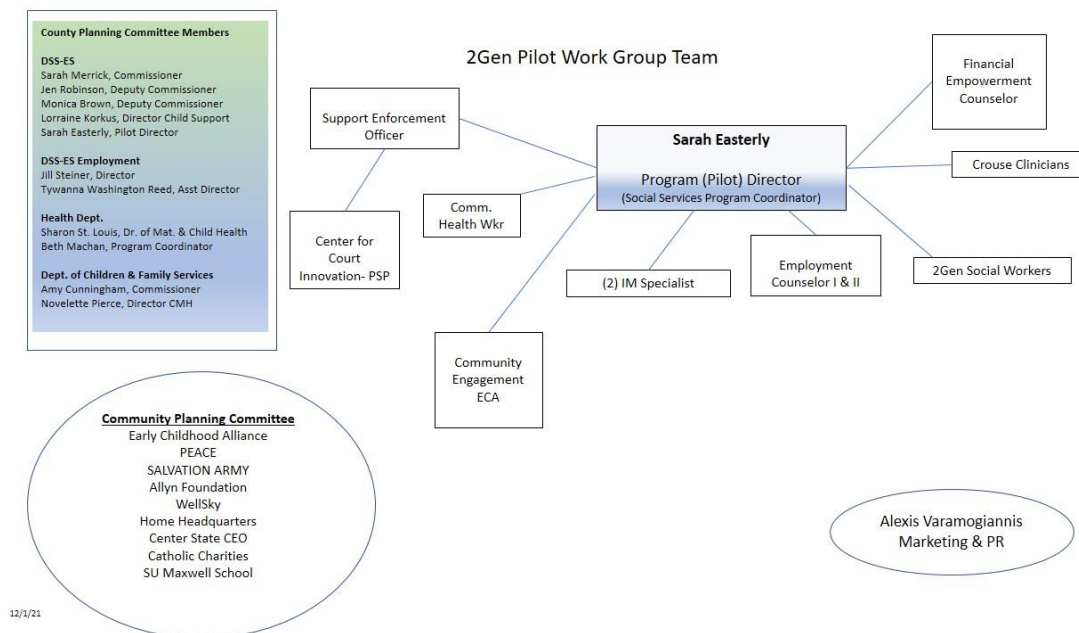
The Team

Creation of a new unit/team to provide intensive case management & mobility mentoring



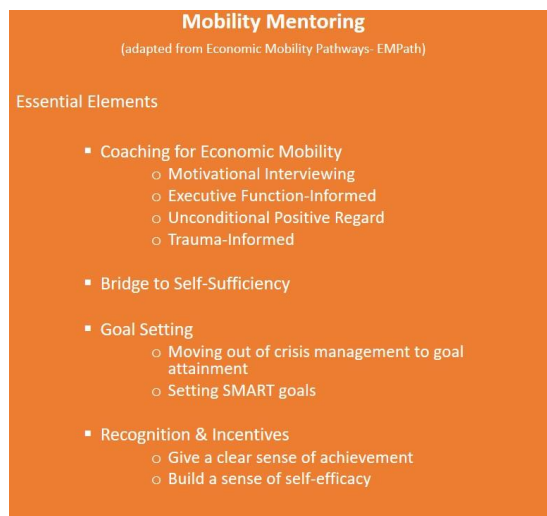
Team Members

- A dedicated Program Director
- Staff from Temporary Assistance Unit
 - Income Maintenance Staff
 - Employment Staff
- Child Support Staff – to engage non-custodial parents
 - Enforcement Officer
 - Parent Support Program – Center for Court Innovation
- 2 Social Workers
- Financial/Economic Support
 - 1 Financial Empowerment Counselor



2Gen Onondaga – Family Voice

- **Daily lives:** Busy, Days are organized around how long it takes to transport their families where they need to go, cost of transportation and bus routes are limiting
- **Personal Life:** Hopeless, Isolated, Fathers/Partners are absent or combative, mental health, Don't see a future, continuous issues with childcare
- **Transportation:** Up to 2 to 3 hours each day on bus
- **Services:** Want to feel respected, Found JOBSplus! and Healthy Families supportive, Temporary Assistance not supportive; too many different programs with different requirements – stressful
- **How they see themselves:** Want to be good parents, want to be better organized and meet goals they set



2Gen Onondaga – Tools for Engagement

2Gen Onondaga – Additional Tools

Let's Engage the Non-Custodial Parents

- Ideas - fatherhood programs/parenting skills, right-size support orders, and find a career path

Incentive Plan

- Comes from EMPATH's design, but created for our program
- Initial meeting, initial bridge assessment
- Step 1, 2, 3
- Flexible incentive money
- Money for non-custodial parents also

RSP – Rental Supplement Program

- Applied for and secured additional money specifically for these families

Benefit Promise

- Cases close when excess income
- Stay open in 2Gen –providing continuous case management support and services as well as additional benefit cliff money

Examples – Specific Goals within 5 Areas

Economic	Achieve income stability
Economic	Acquire subsidies allowing client to meet needs
Economic	Increase income above poverty level
Economic	Maintain income stability
Economic	Obtain access to benefits
Economic	Reduce client debt
Economic	Reduce impact of crisis-related expenses
Education	Enroll into classes
Education	Get GED
Education	Graduate College
Education	Obtain employable skills
Employment	Get A Job
Financial Stability	Gain Ability to Budget
Health	Increase prevention behaviors for those at risk for condition

Examples - Specific Goals within 5 Areas

Health	Maintain stable primary care provider
Health	Obtain ongoing care
Health	Obtain timely health services
Health Improvement	Gain Access to Regular Health Care
Housing	Achieve housing stability
Housing	Improve housing location
Housing	Maintain housing stability
Housing	Move to Permanent Housing
Mental Health Treatment	Eliminate Anxiety
Mental Health Treatment	Relieve Depression
Social development and relationships	Increase participation in spiritual, recreational, community and civic activities
Social development and relationships	Increase positive interactions among household members
Social development and relationships	Increase social and emotional support

2Gen Onondaga Record Keeping, Program Evaluation and Data

Worked out an agreement with WellSky Community Services & United Way of Central New York to use the Case Management System (Service Point) that the Homeless Housing Coalition (HHC) uses. Created specifically for 2Gen Onondaga.

This system will contain our data surround the entry (objective) assessment, the Bridge Assessment (subjective) and also progress surrounding goals within each domain.

Work closely with SU Maxwell X-Lab to develop appropriate assessment tools and methods to evaluate the impact of this multi-leveled intervention. Service Point should be able to produce the reports and data that we need to assess our success.

2Gen Onondaga - Working Towards Results

- **Short – term**

- Increased engagement
- Goals established and met
- Measure movement across the Bridge (5 Focus Areas)

- **Mid – term**

- Head of household earning income and on the pathway to earn more
- Father providing child support and engaged in Fatherhood program
- Children – Assessment show that they are prepared for kindergarten (utilization of quality child care)

2Gen Onondaga - Working Towards Results

- **Long – term**

- Reduce recidivism of head of household coming back on Public Assistance
- Head of household is making a livable wage
- Children succeeding in school
 - On grade level
 - Decrease in Public Assistance Caseload of 2 Gen population

2Gen Onondaga - Working Towards Results

Possible Systems Changes

- Participating in two national learning networks
 - ASPEN Institute, EMPATH Economic Mobility Pathways
 - Simplification of compliance activities
 - New client approach may transform how the eligibility and employment services are delivered throughout DSS-ES
 - Moving from compliance to mobility
 - Influence system changes at different levels
- Using all 10 families for a support system, support for each other - working with ECA, they have a parenting program to help develop a positive social network among them
 - Can be good support group, many issues that they collectively do not have the social or financial capital
 - ECA is trying to help with this project
 - Poverty - disruption in lives due to lack of housing stability; department helps with rent, but has the department given thought to providing a place that can be secure for 2 years that would help with social support?
 - Had conversations with nonprofits for safe places for coffee or to live; each situation is different
 - Make sure those that want to stay have financial stability; some want to move, helping to relocate
 - Ultimate goal, with help from financial empowerment counselor (embedded in Home Headquarters), is to work on establishing budget, working down debt and improving credit
 - Long term goal – if financially set, would consider homeownership, then would have control over housing situation and develop assets in their lives
 - 3 generations of poverty with no assets, only debt
 - Short term - figure out where they want to be, deal with crisis, work on stability, and work on longer term goals
 - October - ready to take on another cohort
 - If this is successful, would the department change the Income Maintenance Worker and Income Maintenance (IM) Specialist to Case Worker/Social Worker?
 - This will tell the department a lot; will tell eligibility staff and employment staff what they can and cannot do
 - May be changing of duties and augmenting with casework approach
 - Could be beginning of how to look at staffing in different way
 - Have 2 IM Specialists that have open mind; prove it can work, they can help colleagues to retrain with this approach
 - More satisfying job experience to be engaged with families
 - Helping clients in more effective way; much more satisfactory
 - Slope for Temporary Assistance (TA) is also a cliff for Medicaid, is that considered?
 - Looking at all the cliffs; losing TA is tolerable, but afraid to lose SNAP
 - Medicaid eligibility is 400 % federal poverty limit; have a lot of time with Medicaid, but not with TA and SNAP
 - Comparatives:
 - Maxwell very helpful; randomized selection of first cohort; got comparative cohort that is not getting any extra interventions; then next cohort will come online for another comparative
 - Want to know that it is working or not; will come to committee and say whether it is or is not working
 - Have to have someone outside (with no involvement with administration) objectively looking at data
 - Court Innovations is not-for-profit that runs child support project for DSS for 4 years; court refers a non-custodial parent to program to help them get employed, so they can start paying child support; been successful
 - Want to build on that concept; Court Innovations has satellite in county (based in NYC)
 - 2 years is minimum for program, but feel have to be with some parents much longer; hoping a year from now, can go to Executive and Legislature to say how long it will really take
 - Breaking the cycle would provide great benefits
 - (i.e.) Have 17 year old with 10th grade education, have to stay with her for longer than 2 years

- Onondaga County is the only one doing 2Gen in NYS
- Model designed and looked at across the country; Aspen research very helpful; looked at non-profits
- In NYS, nothing like this; Buffalo doing little bit of poverty reduction work with helping people start earning money and losing TA, but not comprehensive model
- County not only giving cash assistance, but also people support
- Is there a turn factor with this program and effectiveness?
 - Always have turn in TA
 - Situational poverty including refugees, stay on TA less months than people born and raised in Onondaga County
 - Generational poverty – seeing families staying in TA
 - Individuals opt in, not forced into doing this, building trust, they can opt out; so far no one has opted out
 - It is not as fast, and support is needed for the young children

JobsPlus

- Transition with JOBSplus people is going great, everyone pleased to come over and be part of county

Child Care Assistance

- Direction from County Executive - set parent share at 1% vs. state saying counties can set between 1-10%
- August 1st started new state eligibility requirements: households at 300% at family poverty level now eligible
- (i.e.) Household of 2 (mom and child) - max earned would be \$59,000 could earn; max to pay for one or more children a year is \$366 a year; for most families, infant care is \$14,000 out of pocket per year, per child
- Ongoing at this point; state not looking to rollback; plenty of money for 2 years; get word out to utilize this assistance
- Childcare providers are now guaranteed 99% of payment, should see uptick of providers that will accept this assistance
- County opted out of paying absences, at 35% parent share; per state regulation providers are guaranteed payment for 24 absences per child per year, which helps providers financially to stabilize operations and pay staff

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

The meeting was adjourned at 11:26 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



DEBBIE KAMINSKI, Assistant Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: **HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE**

DATE: **AUGUST 16, 2022**

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
Damian Poth	DCFS - Hillbrook
Sarah Merrick	DSS-ES
Teneshia Murphy	CE office
Jessica Allen	Finops
Rachel Burkhardt	INT-3