

Health & Social Services Committee Minutes
August 7, 2019 – 4:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman Dick Lucia; Committee Members Tara Gaston, Darren O'Connor, Dan Pemrick, Jon Schopf, Sandra Winney, Tom Wood; Supervisors Phil Barrett, Tom Richardson; Chad Cooke, County Administrator; Steve Dorsey, County Attorney; Michael Prezioso, Mental Health & Addiction; J. Wes Carr, Youth Bureau; Cathy Duncan, Public Health; .

Chairman Lucia called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance.

On a motion made by Mr. Wood, seconded by Mr. Pemrick, the minutes of the July 3, 2019 meeting were approved unanimously.

A motion was made by Ms. Gaston, seconded by Mr. O'Connor, to authorize the acceptance of additional state aid in the form of COLAs for Direct Care and Direct Support Professional initiatives in the amount of \$14,352 in the Mental Health Department and amending the budget in relation thereto. Unanimous.

Mr. Prezioso said that this is a housekeeping item and provides for a cost of living increase.

A motion was made by Ms. Gaston, seconded by Mrs. Winney, to authorize the acceptance of \$1,000 from the Saratoga County Citizens Committee for Mental Health and amending the budget in relation thereto. Unanimous.

Mr. Prezioso said that the funds will be used to purchase supplies to be used during the course of therapy.

A motion was made by Mr. Wood, seconded by Mr. Pemrick, to authorize the Youth Bureau's 2019 Funding Applications and Contracts. Unanimous.

Mr. Carr said that this is an annual item. The information was previously sent out via email to the committee members. The resource allocation plan was approved by the Advisory Youth Board on July 29 and the programs and agencies that receive funding through the Youth Bureau work toward the goals, objectives and outcomes specified in the Children and Family Services plan. Funding is included in the 2019 budget.

A motion was made by Ms. Gaston, seconded by Mr. Wood, to authorize a nursing services rate for the Preschool Special Education Program. Unanimous.

Mr. Carr said that Saratoga County sets the rate for preschool education related services which includes speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy and psychological counseling. In the past 24 years, Saratoga County has needed nursing services only once for a preschooler who required a nurse on the bus. As a result, reimbursement was claimed through transportation. Currently they have preschooler with a tracheotomy who will require an RN in a preschool program 2.5 hours day, 3 days a week. In order to be eligible for state ed. reimbursement, the

maximum rate must be set. After researching nursing rates with several counties in the state, Mr. Carr is recommending a rate of \$45 per half hour.

A motion was made by Ms. Gaston, seconded by Mr. Pemrick, to authorize a contract with Cross Country Staffing to provide nursing services for the Preschool Special Education program at a rate of \$76 per hour. Unanimous.

Mr. Carr said that he solicited quotes from three nursing agencies. Cross Country Staffing also provides nursing services at the County Jail.

Mr. Carr said that the committee was addressed in April regarding preschool special education related services rates. A handout was distributed listing the individual and group rates for Saratoga County and also several surrounding counties. Saratoga County's rate for individual sessions is \$45 per half hour and group is \$35 per half hour and these rates were set by resolution 181-2014 which went into effect at the commencement of the 2015-2016 school year on July 1, 2015. Mr. Carr said that the related services are a component of the NYS mandated special education program. The overall budget for this program in 2018 was approximately \$11.6M with a County share of \$5.4M. The related services component of the program for 2018 was approximately \$1.5M. Some of the issues that they run into is the geographic disparity within the County. The majority of the preschool students live in the 3 biggest districts in the County, Shen, Ballston Spa, and Saratoga Springs, and the majority of therapists only travel to these districts, therefore it can sometimes be difficult to get providers out to the remote areas of the County. Mr. Carr said that the rate increase in 2015 did not do much to address the problem. Mr. Carr said that one of the things they are looking into is seeing if they can set different rates in different parts of the county to entice the therapists to travel to the outlying areas. These areas include Galway, Day, Northumberland, Corinth, Hadley. Mr. Carr said that State Ed. oversees the program and he believes that they would need make the decision to set different rates. Mr. Carr said that they are contacting other counties to see if they have different rates. If it can be done, they would need to determine the fairness of particular rates for particular areas. Supervisor Barrett said that raising the rate could help the situation, Saratoga County's rate is currently lower than neighboring counties and has not been raised for 5 years. Previously the book keeping was done by the County and now that task has been placed on the providers. Mr. Richardson said that his daughter is a speech pathologist and she has clients with Saratoga County. Mr. Richardson said that the rate was raised 5 years ago and prior to that the professionals did not have a raise in 20 years. Mr. Richardson said that the State pays \$65/session for ages 0-3, if a child is over the age of 3, they opt out of that program and the County pays \$45/session for 3-5 year olds. Mr. Richardson said that they are self-employed and the \$45/session is not covering their budget needs. In the past, data entry was done by the County however now the professionals now need to complete the paperwork. Mr. Richardson said that occasionally when children transition to the 3-5 year old program, they may not have access to services. Mr. Carr said that his is very few and far between and they eventually get the child connected with a provider. Mr. Barrett pointed that several neighboring counties have higher rates than Saratoga. Albany \$55, Columbia \$50, Schenectady \$50, Warren \$67. Mr. Barrett believes that a \$5 increase would make sense at this time to have less of a discrepancy between counties and to ensure the children get full service. Mr. Barrett distributed a handout to show the economic impact of a rate increase. Ms. Gaston asked if there was any data on the services and the difficulties of accessing providers in the surrounding counties. Ms. Gaston

questioned if \$50 would be sufficient to solve the current problem or if \$55 makes more sense. Mr. Schopf questioned if the group rate would also need to be raised. Mr. Pemrick asked if a decision would need to be made today. Mr. Carr said that a change would require a resolution which has not been prepared at this time. Mr. Carr said that he would need to check with State Ed. regarding instituting a rate change. The 19/20 school year began on July 1 and if they were to raise the rate, the change may not take effect until next year. Mr. Schopf questioned if the agreements with each of the providers could mandate that a certain amount of services be provided in the outlying areas as a condition of their contract with the County. Mr. Schopf said that the providers could continue to limit their services to the Northway corridor towns and yet get the benefit of the higher rate. Ms. Gaston suggested that perhaps tele provision could also be used as an option for certain services. Mr. Pemrick requested data on how many children there are that the providers are reluctant to drive to. Mr. Carr said that he would get that information. **Mr. Wood made a motion, seconded by Ms. Gaston to table this issue for additional consideration until next month. Unanimous**

A motion was made by Ms. Gaston, seconded by Mrs. Winney, to authorize an agreement with Health Research, Inc. to accept a New York State Department of Health Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program Grant. Unanimous.

Mrs. Duncan said that this is an annual grant. It runs from 7/1/2019 – 6/30/2020. The grant amount is \$384,972, however \$200K of this is set aside to be used in the event of a public health emergency.

Mrs. Duncan gave a few brief updates. Cyclosporiasis outbreak is still being handled. This was a food borne intestinal illness that began May 1. This was transmitted by basil from Mexico and the CDC has since pulled the basil. Mrs. Duncan also brought attention to tick prevention. There was one powassen case in Ulster County this year. Mrs. Duncan said that the non-medical exemption law that went into place as a result of the measles outbreak has ramped up the back to school immunizations considerably. School nurses are on board with this and they will be meeting with school nurses and providers at the beginning of the school year to answer any questions they may have. Children must have at least the first vaccine received by the first 14 days of the beginning of school and show good faith with appointments for the follow up vaccines. Mrs. Duncan said that the flu season begins to ramp up by the beginning of October and suggested waiting until then for flu shots.

Ms. Gaston said that she placed packets from Healing Springs in each of the Supervisor's mailboxes. The packet contains information regarding narcan training and an invitation to a day of remembrance event for overdose deaths which will be held on the evening of August 29.

On a motion made by Mr. Schopf, seconded by Mr. Wood, the meeting was adjourned unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Therese Connolly
Deputy Clerk of the Board