

# HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES Transcript

## 9/29/2021

### **SPEAKERS**

Steve Bulger, Darren O'Connor, Tara Gaston, Phil Barrett, Sandra Winney, John Lant, Michael Hartnett, Joe Grasso, Daniel Kuhles, Michael Prezioso, Several Supervisors, Therese Connolly, Tom Wood, Eric Connolly

### **Darren O'Connor**

Alright, welcome everybody to the Health and Human Services Committee meeting for September 29. Therese, I think we have attendance taken? I think Supervisor Connolly will be here in a few minutes, hopefully. Right?

### **Therese Connolly**

Yes.

### **Darren O'Connor**

Okay. Do we have a motion to approve the minutes of August 31?

### **Tom Wood**

So moved Supervisor Wood.

### **Sandra Winney**

And I'll second it Supervisor Winnie.

### **Darren O'Connor**

Thank you. discussion. All in favor?

### **Several Supervisors**

Aye.

### **Darren O'Connor**

Opposed? Carried. Okay, the next item on the agenda is the acceptance of a donation to the Saratoga County Suicide Prevention Coalition. Dr. Prezioso.

### **Michael Prezioso**

Mr. Chairman, Supervisors, this is a request to accept a \$1,200 donation made to the Suicide Prevention Coalition for Saratoga County. Our Department worked in concert with Metabolic Meltdown Fitness and Clifton Park to raise these funds and we had about 40 people, a little bit more than 40 people show up to a charity workout event. And then additionally, members of the community just made

contributions. So the funds will be used for education training and paying for speakers to provide education for the community.

**Darren O'Connor**

Sounds great. Do we have motion to accept that donation?

**Sandra Winney**

I'll make that motion Supervisor Winney.

**Darren O'Connor**

Supervisor Winnie. Do I have a second?

**Phil Barrett**

Second.

**Darren O'Connor**

Supervisor Barrett. Discussion? All in favor?

**Several Supervisors**

Aye.

**Darren O'Connor**

Opposed? Carried. Thank you. And Dr. Prezioso. I think we have a second one for Crisis Intervention Team Program Development.

**Michael Prezioso**

Yeah, Mr. Chairman, thank you. This is an extension of work that was done by the EO203 Compliance Group. Many of the recommendations revolved around additional training and support for law enforcement when it comes to people who are experiencing behavioral health crises. So this is a State operated program. In conjunction with Captain Morley at the Sheriff's office. We put together a proposal (microphone technical difficulties) The proposals with an agency that operates kind of on behalf of the State Office of Mental Health, what's going to be provided is something called Sequential Intercept Mapping, which involves identifying different points in the process of someone's contact with the criminal justice system with law enforcement and ways to intervene to make sure that what we can do is target the right type of intervention for the person based on what they need. And obviously, not for everyone who's suffering a mental health crisis is incarceration or things of that nature, the appropriate way to go. So there will be a sequential intercept mapping process. And then there will be 40 hours of training for Deputies who are selected into the program, their criteria for that. And additionally, there'll be \$1500 per Deputy in the program to offset the cost of the overtime because the duration of the program itself. So we're looking forward to that. There'll be a kickoff in Albany, although that date hasn't been scheduled yet. And it also emphasizes a lot of communication and collaboration with community-based agencies and private members of the community as well.

**Darren O'Connor**

Yeah, I mean, I can say being on the 203 Committee that that was a huge topic of conversation, not only in Saratoga County, but in police department examinations across the state. So that's a terrific development, and it could help the process along. So thank you. Do we have a motion to? We need a motion on that. Right. Steve? Do you think so? Do we need a motion? Or is that just a discussion?

**Michael Prezioso**

I defer to the County Attorney. This is really just informational.

**Darren O'Connor**

Yeah, we're good on that. Is this going over to Public Safety also? John, is this are you guys going to consider this also?

**Michael Hartnett**

Yeah.

**John Lant**

First I heard about it.

**Darren O'Connor**

Okay.

**John Lant**

I hope it does.

**Darren O'Connor**

Alright, sounds good.

**Michael Prezioso**

Thank you.

**Darren O'Connor**

Any other comments, questions for Dr. Prezioso? Okay, I like this idea. Okay, next Dr. Kuhles. This is acceptance of an Early Intervention Administration grant. Dr. Kuhles?

**Daniel Kuhles**

Yes, this is an annual housekeeping, request for resolution to accept a little over \$125,000 per year from the State to offset our salary and fringe and other than personnel services for our Early Intervention Program, and the funds will include the period October 1 2021, through September 30, 2026.

**Darren O'Connor**

Sounds good. Do we have a motion to authorize the acceptance of that?

**John Lant**

I'll make that motion to accept it.

**Tom Wood**

Second Supervisor Wood.

**Darren O'Connor**

Second Supervisor Wood. Discussion? All in favor?

**Several Supervisors**

Aye.

**Darren O'Connor**

Opposed, carried. The other one is accepting funding for lead poisoning prevention program.

**Phil Barrett**

Yes, similar to the previous request, this is to accept funding to offset our salary, fringe and other in personnel costs for our Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program. Due to COVID, these are usually five year grants, and this one has been split. This first request is to cover the period October 1 2020 through September 30 2021. There's an additional request for a longer period of time. It's just how the federal and state government work together during COVID.

**Darren O'Connor**

Thanks, Mike, can we do this in one motion? Or do we need two?

**Michael Hartnett**

One is fine.

**Darren O'Connor**

Okay, do we have a motion to for both these resolutions?

**John Lant**

I'll make that motion.

**Sandra Winney**

Supervisor Winney, I'll make the motion.

**Darren O'Connor**

Okay. Got that Therese?

**Therese Connolly**

Yes.

**Darren O'Connor**

Discussion? All in favor?

**Several Supervisors**

Aye

**Darren O'Connor**

Opposed? Carried. Next one, Dr. Kuhles is the acceptance of Year eight Local Health Department Performance Incentive?

**Daniel Kuhles**

Yes, thank you. This is an annual award from State Health Departments, to Local Health Departments for achieving each year they may have a different project or priority they work on where they incentivize local Health Department performance. So during last year, because of COVID, they considered COVID to be kind of the performance So everybody received money. In this case we are offered \$21,893 for the year and these funds can be spent on any work that's eligible for State aid. In this case, we're going to buy a number of items that will help facilitate the work for the staff, equipment, some things to help out with our vaccination program and some educational materials for our epidemiology staff.

**Darren O'Connor**

Thank you. Okay. Do we have a motion to accept that award?

**Joe Grasso**

So moved.

**Phil Barrett**

Second.

**Darren O'Connor**

Discussion? All in favor?

**Several Supervisors**

Aye.

**Darren O'Connor**

Opposed? Carried. The next one, Dr. Kuhles is COVID-19 vaccine response contract funding?

**Daniel Kuhles**

Yes, this is an award, ultimately Federal dollars that pass through to the State in the amount of \$645,000 to support COVID-19 vaccinations and also routine vaccinations from January 1 2021, through June 30 2024.

**Darren O'Connor**

Do we have a motion to accept that contract funding?

**Sandra Winney**

I'll make that motion.

**Tom Wood**

Second Supervisor Wood.

**Sandra Winney**

And this is from the federal government?

**Daniel Kuhles**

The funds go from the federal government to the state but our award will come from the State. The origin of the funds are (illegible)

**Sandra Winney**

Is this part of the funding that President Biden puts through or?

**Daniel Kuhles**

I'm not sure of the ultimate source of whether this is from President Biden or not. There's so many different buckets

**Sandra Winney**

Yes, I know there are so many out there.

**Daniel Kuhles**

Yeah. I could track that down through the State, if that's helpful.

**Sandra Winney**

Well, I was just wondering, because there's so much money going out because of this funding for this COVID thing? I just thought maybe it was part of it. And it shouldn't be. But if you could find out, that would be great.

**Daniel Kuhles**

Yep. It's certainly, you know, monies that were made available through the legislative process, whether they were part of the President's proposals or plan or had another source, I can certainly investigate.

**Sandra Winney**

Okay. Thank you.

**Darren O'Connor**

Any other questions or discussion?

**Steve Bulger**

Governor Hochul announced recently, that there was 65 million in federal funding that she was targeting towards the booster shot effort. This 645,000 is Saratoga County share of that. It's going to go

a long way towards if not entirely, but certainly a long way, towards covering the costs We are in good shape with the COVID funds, especially with this additional money through the end of the year, and talking with Doc for covering the ramp up of our booster shot program. It's a big effort that his team is ramping up, and the County is ramping up. So we're hopeful that this will cover most of the booster shot costs, at least through the end of the year. We'll see what it looks like for next year.

**Sandra Winney**

Okay, thank you, Steve. That was great.

**Darren O'Connor**

Thanks, Steve. So Sandra, we're good on that then for Dr. Kuhles.

**Sandra Winney**

Yes.

**Darren O'Connor**

Okay. Any other discussion?

**Joe Grasso**

Mr. Chairman? If I could just ask a question. Dr. Kuhles, thanks always for being here. And the description of the agenda items. I had a question about, or I've received questions about the booster shot, and the outreach efforts to our residents that may become eligible. What criteria is the County using to do those notifications? Is it age based or a combination of age and when they got their vaccine, or other health criteria?

**Daniel Kuhles**

So the overall eligibility, I'm going to just talk at the global level, overall eligibility are individuals who've received the Pfizer vaccine, and that their second dose was at least six months ago. So individuals that received Moderna or J&J are not yet eligible. Those two companies are submitting data to the FDA and who will opine on it and if they approve it, it'll go to CDC for a recommendation. So right now, it's limited to Pfizer, six months between it, you know, since their second dose, and terms of the recommended groups for it, there are three broad categories. The first is an age based category, those are individuals 65 and older. The second category are individuals 18 and over with certain medical conditions, that increased risk of diabetes, obesity are a couple examples of that. And the third group are ones that are based on a risk of exposure or transmission. So these would be healthcare workers, first responders, law enforcement, people in congregate settings, whether they're nursing home employees or residents, but also groups like teachers and critical infrastructure, you may recall the term essential workers, so that's kind of that that construct.

**Joe Grasso**

So will the County be using the age based and risk pool as part of their assessment as to who to notify?

**Daniel Kuhles**

So we are only able, we've gone ahead and created, our epidemiologists have created a database of all individuals that through the State immunization registry. And unfortunately, that database only contains information on age, it doesn't say I'm a diabetic, or I work here or there. So we are mailing, we have separated these individuals into groups as they hit their six month mark for Pfizer, and we'll be sending a postcard to every one of them as they become eligible. That postcard will contain information on how they can either register online or use a phone number to have somebody register for them. Unlike earlier in this year, the vaccine supplies are plentiful. And so we'll be able to either facilitate them going to a pharmacy or another vaccinator, they can certainly come to our clinics. So there's a host of options that are available to them. Our goal is to get them vaccinated as soon as they are eligible and if they're willing for the vaccine.

**Joe Grasso**

Alright, thanks, Doctor.

**Daniel Kuhles**

We'll also be, I should also note, you know, for other categories, we'll be doing a variety of working with Christine Rush and others and a variety of outreach efforts.

**Joe Grasso**

Okay, thanks, Mr. Chairman I'm all set.

**Darren O'Connor**

Thanks Supervisor. Any other questions for Dr. Kuhles?

**Sandra Winney**

Yeah, I have one. And this is just his opinion. There's so much controversy about this booster shot. And I'm getting a lot of flack about it. Because these people are saying, Well, if you get the two shots, you're all set. Now they're coming out with this booster shot. What can we trust in your estimation? I mean, the most of the people that are getting COVID, again, have been vaccinated twice, that I've talked to in town here. Is this going to be an every year thing like the flu vaccine? In your opinion? And I know you've been around it. So maybe.

**Daniel Kuhles**

I mean, I think I try to, you know, I don't think at this point, it's good public health practice to try to predict what will happen with COVID. I think when people say things, and then the data turns the other way, people lose faith in public health. And I don't want to do this. I can tell you that I am urging my loved ones that are eligible, my mother, to get a booster. And I will get a booster when I'm eligible. So those are the actions that I'm taking, but you know.

**Sandra Winney**

A lot of them doctor don't want to take, and these are nurses in the profession. That said they're not putting that in their body because they know it's not strictly a vaccine. You know, what they put together there is not a vaccine. And so I'm confused when they ask me and I don't know enough about it.



**Daniel Kuhles**

I'd be happy to talk to you at length. I'm not sure that I, maybe it's because you're on the phone and I'm a little bit hard of hearing, The statement that it's not a vaccine?

**Sandra Winney**

Well, they says something about they have an HID, the serum in this with it, for little kids there concerned about the fertility of the children, if they get it. So this is their big concern.

**Daniel Kuhles**

Yes, yes, I know there are a lot of people with concerns about the vaccine and you know, what I can do is to, again, point individuals to the really robust surveillance that is taking part on individuals that have received the vaccine. I think the federal government and not just in this country, but in the European Union and Israel and elsewhere, are making a very comprehensive effort, that when there is any potential signal in the data, that they pause. For example, the issue of myocarditis, in young adults, or males, pausing, looking at the data, taking more time, getting additional data. To date I am not aware of any data linking a MRNA based vaccine, which would be the Pfizer and Moderna to infertility.

**Phil Barrett**

Mr. Chairman? Yeah, we could go on this topic for hours. I don't think it's anything that's going to be solved here.

**Sandra Winney**

No, I agree with you Phil.

**Phil Barrett**

Doctor, just a couple of quick things. One, Pfizer is the only one that has a booster shot. Is that correct?

**Daniel Kuhles**

Right now, Pfizer is the only vaccine in the United States that's authorized for a booster.

**Phil Barrett**

So if you want a booster shot, and you got Moderna or Johnson & Johnson, you can't get a booster shot? Is that correct?

**Daniel Kuhles**

That is not recommended. The recommendation is to wait, these additional, Moderna will be probably a couple weeks. Johnson and Johnson is maybe a little, a few more weeks behind that. The recommendation is to remain with the same manufacturer of vaccine that you got.

**Phil Barrett**

Ok. Thanks.

**Sandra Winney**

Thank you Doctor.

**Darren O'Connor**

Any other questions or discussion on this motion? All in favor?

**Several Supervisors**

Aye.

**Darren O'Connor**

Opposed. Carried. In the other business section, we're also going to touch on any items related to COVID that we didn't just talk about, particularly, we just talked about the booster shot. Dr. we communicated a little while before about impact on Saratoga County of the new regulations on healthcare workers and possible staffing shortages and emergency order that might be coming from the Governor, etc. So I guess the question is, how is Saratoga doing on that front?

**Daniel Kuhles**

Saratoga is doing quite well. In general, the capital region has the highest vaccination coverage among health care workers that are subject to this mandate. This data maybe if they are too old, because so many people got vaccinated recently. But Saratoga Hospital, for example, has at least 94% of their health care workers are vaccinated. And we've been in touch with them and they do not anticipate any issues whatsoever with the services that they provide to our community.

**Darren O'Connor**

And our hospitalization in Saratoga County is still looking fairly good I take it?

**Daniel Kuhles**

It does. We have I think it's 22 hospitalized as of this morning. And again, those individuals, whether they're vaccinated, fully vaccinated or not, for the most part are older and have co-morbidities. Again, back to your question about eligibility. And our pediatric I think we've only, let me take a peek here just a moment, since July 1, we've only had six hospitalizations in children less than 18 years old. For COVID related hospitalizations. One of those, I can say that one of those hospitalizations, COVID was not the cause of the hospitalization but because there has to be a uniform a way to collect the data and compare it across the state in the nation, it counts as a COVID hospitalization but in fact, it was not for COVID.

**Sandra Winney**

But something else. Okay.

**Darren O'Connor**

Thank you Any other discussion questions about COVID in general?

**Sandra Winney**

There's too many to put forth in the committee.

**Darren O'Connor**

Yeah, right. Good point.

**Daniel Kuhles**

There are indeed and to Supervisor Barrett's comment about not being able to resolve you know, anything here, I'm always happy to talk to folks at length and again, I think humility is the key word here. And being respectful of one another's choices that they make, and I think that can go a long way.

**Darren O'Connor**

Sounds good. Okay. Yes?

**Eric Connolly**

Just curious, Dr. Kuhles, the machine that we authorized, the Board of Supervisors early on for rapid testing. What type of impact did it end up having? And does it continue to have?

**Daniel Kuhles**

I'm thankful that this came before my time, I am extremely thankful to have this available to us and to our community. The only place that I'm aware of that has their home, or have their own PCR was either the Wadsworth laboratory or the New York City Department of Health. And so this has allowed us, when there are particularly I want to go back to the Thanksgiving winter, New Year's Christmas season, you remember, we were tracking every day, the turnaround time for PCR results, when they were getting up into five, six days. We're able to triage and take the cases that are suspected cases that are most critical to protecting health and safety and expedite that result. I think it made a tremendous difference. I am incredibly thankful to have this, and I think it will continue to pay dividends. You may be aware that students in pre K to 12 schools who develop symptoms, and go to the nurse may be subject to having a PCR result in order to return in certain situations. And we've worked very, very closely with all of our schools in the County to strengthen those relationships. And when there is a need to get that child a PCR test or staff member, where they may have barriers and not be able to do it, we can do it like that, and get that kid back to school. Because when kids are in school five days a week, society is better. That may be the only place they get food, you know this better than I as a teacher, for their mental, social, emotional health or learning. For their parents who may not have childcare, our society functions better when schools are working the way they should. So all of our energies are focused on that for families and that PCR machine is going to pay dividends.

**Eric Connolly**

Thank you.

**Sandra Winney**

I have one more question. My granddaughter had a cold. They kept her home for a couple days, the schools suggested she get the test. So they took her down and got her the rapid test. The school wouldn't acknowledge it, she had to go get a full test. So she lost pretty near a whole week being home. She proved negative. But Broadalbin School did not accept the speed test.

**Daniel Kuhles**

Yep, so you're probably referring to an antigen test or a rapid test. And there is a requirement, the State Health Commissioner issued a determination under an emergency regulation that requires schools to only accept a PCR result, except for very limited circumstances. And I know I've explored what

flexibility, local flexibility they may be with the County Attorney, and essentially there's not very much whatsoever.

**Sandra Winney**

Okay.

**Daniel Kuhles**

I can tell you though, that we are working through a variety of mechanisms, including the New York State Association of County and Health Officials to get the State to reconsider this. There is a new State Health Commissioner that was announced today. Commissioner Bassett, who formerly headed the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and I am hopeful that this issue can be revisited for the reasons previously discussed. We cannot create unnecessary barriers for our families and for our schools. If a rapid test is, if it's appropriate. You know, there are times when to use a rapid and times when to use a PCR. I think we need flexibility, and we need to look at the big picture here on how it's affecting our families. We can never, it's very hard to get to zero risk. Right? We want low but not zero risk. We need to balance things.

**Sandra Winney**

Thank you.

**Darren O'Connor**

Thank you.

**Tara Gaston**

Chairman?

**Darren O'Connor**

Go ahead, who was that?

**Tara Gaston**

Supervisor Gaston, switching gears a little bit, I tried to chime in to ask a question about the CIT is Dr. Prezioso still around?

**Darren O'Connor**

Yes.

**Tara Gaston**

From the reading it looks. What was that?

**Michael Prezioso**

I'm here Supervisor.

**Tara Gaston**

Okay. So from the reading, it looks like this is something that we applied for, and we're accepted. Do we know how many communities in the State are taking part in this program?

**Michael Prezioso**

I'm sorry, I'm having a little bit of trouble understanding you. Is it something that we What was that?

**Darren O'Connor**

How many other communities are participating in the program? I think she asked.

**Michael Prezioso**

Oh, okay. Thank you. Supervisor, I'm not sure how many other counties are participating in this particular iteration. It's a State-run program, or it operates through the State. And there are other counties that have participated along the way to develop their own CIT programs. I know, for example, Albany County has had theirs up and running for quite some time. And our Sheriff's Deputies have gone and participated in the program in Albany. So we're pleased that this is available now.

**Tara Gaston**

Is this a little bit better?

**Darren O'Connor**

Yeah. Did you hear Dr. Prezioso was just answering, did you hear that Tara?

**Tara Gaston**

I heard that. I just had another question. So I noticed in the application, it says that you're required to partner with a community or family advocacy group. I didn't catch that earlier. Who are we partnering with?

**Michael Prezioso**

The Saratoga County Citizens Committee for Mental Health and with the National Alliance for Mentally Ill Saratoga Chapter.

**Tara Gaston**

Okay. And the mapping will be done outside of just the Sheriff's Department and the County staff. Right? It will involve members of the community or not.

**Michael Prezioso**

I'm really sorry, Supervisor. There's a lot of sort of reverberation and I'm having trouble understanding the question, I apologize. Was anyone else able to hear?

**Darren O'Connor**

I didn't hear it.

**Tara Gaston**

No problem I'll just.

**Michael Prezioso**

I'm available Supervisor, if you want to, if you want to give me a call.

**Tara Gaston**

I will. I will figure it out later. I was, part of it was hoping for public information. But all right, thank you.

**Michael Prezioso**

Sure.

**Darren O'Connor**

Any other business before the committee?

**John Lant**

I'll make a motion to adjourn.

**Phil Barrett**

Second.

**Darren O'Connor**

Discussion. All in favor?

**Several Supervisors**

Aye.

**Darren O'Connor**

Opposed, carried. Thanks, everybody for coming. Really appreciate it.