

**Welfare to Work Commission  
Of the Suffolk County Legislature  
Minutes of the February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014 Meeting**

**Present:** Richard Koubek, Chair; Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair; Leg. Monica Martinez; James Andrews; Jacky Horsley for Ray O'Rourke; Ellen Krakow; Jeff Reynolds; Debbie Joseph; Charles Fox; Barbara Egloff; Michael Haynes; Nina Leonhardt; Peggy Boyd; Luis Valenzuela

**Excused:** Kimberly Gierasch; Don Friedman; Sr. Lisa Bergeron; Gwen O'Shea; Joan Travan; Rob Greenberger; Michael Stoltz; John Nieves; Marjorie Acevedo;

**Guest:** Julia Schnurman, Eastern Suffolk BOCES

1. **New Commission Member:** Chair Richard Koubek introduced Luis Valenzuela, Executive Director of the Long Island Immigrant Alliance, who will be representing the Long Island Council of Churches on the Commission. Mr. Valenzuela is a member of the Council's Public Issues Committee.
2. **Minutes:** Minutes of the January meeting were adopted unanimously on a motion Jeff Reynolds, seconded by Kathy Liguori.
3. **McKinney-Vento Requirements:** Mr. Koubek introduced Julia Schnurman, the Eastern Suffolk BOCES McKinney-Vento Act liaison officer. Ms. Schnurman was invited to make a presentation on the requirements imposed by the federal McKinney-Vento Act on school districts with regard to homeless children. This presentation grew out of a discussion at the previous Commission meeting of the DSS/Hauppauge School District tensions over placement of homeless children as well as Leg. John Kennedy's resolution to close the Hauppauge shelter. That resolution had been tabled again at the previous meeting of the Human Services Committee. Leg. Martinez noted that there are several technical issues that need to be resolved with this resolution before it can be put to a vote.
  - a. Ms. Schnurman reviewed the McKinney-Vento Act's requirement that every school district appoint a liaison to deal with the act's requirements. This liaison is responsible for working with the homeless family and the school district to ensure that each child receives the services required by the act. Among these requirements:
    - i. The district must provide transportation for the child to attend the school district he/she was attending when becoming homeless. The district must pay for this transportation to the previous school within an 80 mile radius, except in situations where the homeless family is in a DSS shelter, in which cases, DSS pays for the transportation.
    - ii. The homeless child should be registered in the new school district within three days. This requirement is not always met, especially in situations where the liaison is not properly trained. Western Suffolk BOCES provides training for school district liaisons. Ms. Krakow stated that she has worked with many districts and observed a wide

range of competencies among the McKinney-Vento liaison officers. She reiterated the importance of training.

- iii. Parents of homeless children are supposed to provide a copy of the lease for the property that they previously occupied. Peggy Boyd noted that homeless families often have difficulty providing the required documentation because they have moved frequently and do not have the paperwork.
  - iv. Children who live doubled up with other families pose a special problem for school districts. Nevertheless, McKinney-Vento requires that they be admitted to the school district where they are currently residing or provided with transportation back to their original school district. Super Storm Sandy created many such situations.
  - v. McKinney-Vento imposes unfunded financial burdens on school districts that are exacerbated by the 2% property tax cap.
- b. Mr. Koubek thanked Ms. Schnurman for her excellent presentation and suggested to Leg. Martinez that a similar presentation be made to the Human Services Committee to inform legislators about the McKinney-Vento requirements.

#### 4. **Child Care Committee:**

- a. **Public Hearings:** Chair Kathy Liguori distributed a summary of the major themes and recommendations that were covered during the child-care hearings. The themes fall into four broad categories: Need/Quality; Accountability; Costs/Funding; Access. She pointed out that the recommendations on Accountability fall into two broad categories: health and safety; program quality. (The themes and recommendations are appended below.) She noted that licensed child care is highly regulated by the State with regard to health and safety requirements but there is a great deal of latitude with regard to curriculum selection and program educational quality. The problem with quality rests with the informal child care (neighbors, friends, relatives) that has no State regulation. She also stated that a major point in the child-care report that will be issued by the Commission will be to call attention to the need for quality standards regarding program delivery. A review of approved curricula will be included in the report. Some Commission members noted that there is wide disparity regarding curricula used by districts that have chosen to participate in the Universal-Pre-K (UPK) programs as well as among those that have full and half-day Kindergarten. Mr. Koubek pointed out that the move toward Universal Pre-K for all State children may cost \$1.6 billion and, consequently, tensions are rising between Early Learning advocates and the public schools who are losing State aid and are concerned that UPK may draw off additional State aid at the same time that the 2% property tax cap imposes other restrictions on the K-12 programs.
- b. **CCBG Letter:** Ms. Liguori distributed a copy of the DSS letter that was sent to OCFS regarding CCBG funding. She pointed out that this letter is the best summary of the CCBG issue that she had yet read. Mr. Koubek distributed a draft Commission letter to OCFS on this issue. Peggy Boyd moved, and Jeff

Reynolds seconded a motion to adopt the letter (appended below) which passed unanimously.

5. **Employment Assessment Committee:** Mr. Koubek reported that he received an e-mail this morning from John Nieves, who was ill, stating that DSS had not yet reviewed the proposed ADA policy due to pressing demands caused by the homeless issues, winter storms and other demands on the Department. Mr. Nieves’ e-mail stated that the issue was now on the “backburner” and that he and the Commissioner would review the proposal during “down time.” Mr. Koubek noted his disappointment since Commissioner O’Neill received this draft in September, 2013 and had promised a review by January 18<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Nieves’ e-mail also noted that the ADA draft submitted to the Commissioner was different from the draft agreed upon in the last months of Commissioner Blass’ tenure. Mr. Koubek again stated that he believed these changes had been largely editorial, not substantive, and that they could be discussed when the Commissioner reviewed the policy. Ms. Krakow again reported on the excellent cooperation DSS was offering with regard to homeless shelter policies and expressed hope that this cooperation would be extended to the ADA policy. Leg. Martinez asked that a meeting be set up with her and the Employment Assessment Committee to brief her on the draft ADA policy. Mr. Koubek said that he would arrange this meeting.
6. **IDA Scoring:** Mr. Koubek distributed the IDA Scoring tool that had been discussed at the January meeting. At the request of James Andrews, a vote on this tool was delayed so that DOL management could have an opportunity to review it, which they did, adding one additional item that IDA applicants would post job offerings at DOL. Mr. Andrews moved and Barbara Egloff seconded a motion to adopt the IDS Scoring Tool, which passed unanimously.
7. **2014 Meeting Schedule:** It was agreed that for the next several months, the meeting time for the Commission would return to the second Friday of each month. This may be changed mid-year due to Nina Leonhardt’s schedule conflicts.
8. **Commission Goals:** Mr. Koubek again reviewed the 2013 Commission goals, noting that all except two (education/training and health care centers) had been acted on and most would continue into 2014. James Andrews expressed his support for making education and training a priority in 2014. Jeff Reynolds pointed out that it might make sense to focus on children as an overarching theme for the 2014 goals. Mr. Koubek stated that he would try to do so in drafting the 2014 goals which, along with the 2013 Commission report to the Legislature, will be voted on at the March meeting.
9. **Announcements:** Mr. Koubek distributed the flyer for the March 28<sup>th</sup> LI Jobs with Justice “Working But Still Poor” conference at Tuoro Law Center.
10. **Next Meeting:** March 14<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 AM at the SCDOL One Stop Center.

## **Summary of Some Major Themes Provided by Participants in WtW Child Care Hearings and Focus Groups**

	<b>Accountability</b>	<b>Costs/Funding</b>	<b>Access</b>
<b>Need/Quality</b>			
Need to reach	Child care industry is a	Lack of government	Federal

children before age 5 since 85% of brain development occurs by then (Friedman; Walerstein, Paley; Gammerman; Jackson; Lieser)	patchwork of too many programs, funding streams and approaches. There is a need for consolidation and coordination of services. (Friedman; Walerstein; O’Neill; Walter; Lieser; Rojas)	supports for child care because the field is widely viewed primarily as a “parent” concern and that it is “babysitting” (Friedman, Walerstein; Rojas)	government’s call for improved quality standards could drive out small providers and those that provide services to working-poor families (Walerstein; Dowell)
Stresses on children- especially poor and those with special needs – can be reduced with continuity of care, expedited intervention services and quality Early Learning (Friedman; Gammerman)	Testing pressures are beginning to infiltrate pre-K and grades K-2 with negative impacts (Iannuzzi)	NYS/CCBG formula flawed because it does not account for actual demand for child care – funding based only claims filed in previous year (Walerstein; O’Neill)	Six month SC recertification requirement puts an undue burden on working-poor parents who need child-care subsidy (Walerstein; Trujillo; Dowell)
There is much empirical evidence that early intervention improves later school achievement and is cost effective for society such as higher high school graduation and college admission rates, etc. (Friedman; Walerstein; Paley; Walzer; Geary; Lieser; Rojas)	Need for professional development for providers (Dowell; Iannuzzi; Paley; Geary; Rojas; Levin)	Market rate formula used by OCFS provides distorted data on child-care costs which actually average \$13,000/child(Freidman; O’Neill)	Finding quality child care is very difficult; affording quality child care is even more difficult, even for middle-class families (Walerstein; Friedman; Focus Groups)
Widespread but erroneous belief that “anyone” can do child care which is essentially “babysitting” (Friedman, Walerstein; Walzer; Levin)	Evidence-based Early Learning curricula exist but are unevenly utilized (Friedman; Walerstein; Paley; Geary; Lieser)	Property tax cap has limited pre-K, full-day K, both of which should be funded as part of regular public school pre-K-12 programs (Iannuzzi; Casey)	Negative impacts of CCBG cuts in Suffolk hit working poor the hardest (Walerstein; O’Neill; Eppolito; Roche)
Children must be spared underground”		UPK funding formula is flawed – many	The child-care subsidy eligibility

child care (Walerstein; O'Neill)		districts opt out or don't opt in ((Paley)	standards are extremely rigid and punishing, forcing working-poor parents to lose their entire subsidy if they earn even \$1 over the cap (Focus Groups)
Some criteria for quality programs : space, safety; good food; caring staff; staff-student ratios, parent engagement, licensure, defined curriculum with clear outcomes; well-paid staff with benefits; structure but not overly structured (Freidman; Walerstein; Paley; Walzer; Geary; Zimmerman; Levin; Focus Groups)		Need to engage business community in funding and providing child care (Roche; Jackson)	Special-needs children have difficulty accessing child-care programs that meet their needs (Levin; Gammerman)
Lack of data and public awareness about quality Early Learning experiences and child care impedes progress in the field (Friedman; Gammerman)			Children of immigrants have difficulty accessing bi-lingual programs (Focus group)
Child care provides parents with parenting skills as well as early-intervention information about their children's skills, abilities an special needs (Focus Groups)			

<p>Improve parenting skills through social connections, development of their leadership skills (i.e. Parent Leadership Institute), and maximizing resources through collaboration of school districts and child care centers. (Zimmerman)</p>			
<p><b>Need/Quality Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SC and NYS need to conduct serious research that yields data on: quality; costs; accessibility; number of providers; number of slots; number of children, etc.</li> <li>• “Wrap-around” system (e.g., before and after school care; etc.)</li> <li>• Engage parents to advocate for quality child</li> </ul>	<p><b>Accountability Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for qualitative – non-test based – student evaluations (e.g., teachers’ anecdotal/observational evaluations)</li> <li>• Explore single-county delivery system</li> <li>• Build staff development into funding/cost arrangements</li> </ul>	<p><b>Costs/Funding Recommendation s:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SC must increase its funding</li> <li>• SC should link child-care delivery to CBOs (churches, libraries, etc.)</li> <li>• NYS needs to provide CCBG of \$38-\$40 m to meet actual SC demand for child care</li> <li>• Include Early Learning in public-school funding streams and local school district budgets</li> <li>• Ask the</li> </ul>	<p><b>Access Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One year recertification for subsidized child care</li> <li>• On-line eligibility check and application process for subsidized child care</li> <li>• Expand access for children with special needs</li> <li>• Create a flexible child-care eligibility standard that phases out the subsidy as parents increase their</li> </ul>

<p>care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve communication between providers and DSS on specific cases</li> <li>• Utilize college interns to improve staff-student ratios</li> <li>• Work with DOH on early diagnosis and intervention strategies for children with special needs</li> <li>• Expand application of QUALITYstars NY standards and assessment tools in SC</li> <li>• Ask Cong. McCarthy, Bishop and King to co-sponsor Strong Start for America's Children Act</li> <li>• Create Public Service announcements to educate the community on the importance</li> </ul>		<p>County Executive and/or the Legislature to convene a forum to consider a County-wide coordinating agency for all Early Learning programs (Possible invitees: DSS; DOH; BOCES; NYSUT; Child Care Council of Suffolk; WtW; providers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide state/county grants to providers that agree to accept subsidized children</li> <li>• Encourage small businesses to pool resources so their workers can access child care</li> <li>• Consolidate UPK and CCBG funds to expand wrap around, full year services</li> <li>• Create a</li> </ul>	<p>earnings, rather than eliminate the subsidy entirely when they cross the income threshold</p>
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<p>of quality Early Learning and child care experiences</p>		<p>model “school districts shared services” pilot for SC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update 2004 Rauch Foundation study on LI economic impact of child care</li> <li>• Create a SC Task Force to coordinate child-care policies with economic development</li> <li>• Provide QUALITYstars NY with town, county, state and federal funds to expand application in SC</li> </ul>	
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February 7, 2014

Sheila Poole, Acting Commissioner  
New York State Office of Children and Family Services  
52 Washington Street  
Rensselaer, New York 12144

Dear Acting Commissioner Poole:

The Welfare to Work Commission of the Suffolk County Legislature is charged with advising the Legislature on policies related to people leaving welfare for work or working-poor people who may slip into welfare dependence.

Toward this end, in 2012 the Commission conducted public hearings and focus groups on poverty in Suffolk County, releasing a report in December of that year which called attention to specific public policies needed to support working-poor people. **Among the most important of these policies is subsidized child care.** Our report, “Struggling Suburbia: Meeting the Challenges of Poverty in Suffolk County,” along with its child-care focus, was featured in a January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2014 nationally-aired PBS

Weekend NewsHour story and again on January 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> locally in the PBS MetroFocus broadcasts. The Commission's full poverty report can be accessed at the Suffolk Legislature's website.

In December of 2013, the Commission held two public hearings and five focus groups titled, "Who's Minding the Kids? Meeting Challenges and Creating Opportunities for Quality Child Care in Suffolk County." We will be releasing our child-care report later this year.

Over and over again, during both the Suffolk poverty and child-care hearings, we heard about the struggles of working-poor families who lost their child-care subsidies. PBS featured one of these families in its report. One reason for the hardship faced by these families has been the loss of some \$5.1 million in State Child Care Block Grant (CCBG) funds Suffolk sustained between 2008 and 2012, forcing SCDSS in 2012 to reduce the eligibility for subsidized child care from 200% to 100% of FPL while increasing the family co-pay from 15% to 30%. Several thousand children of working-poor families were cut from the rolls while many parents had to make draconian choices, such as reducing their work hours or foregoing raises, to maintain their child-care subsidy.

**The Commission is grateful that last year, because OCFS increased the CCBG allocation for Suffolk by almost \$995,000 and County Executive Steve Bellone increased County funding for the subsidy by about \$3.5 million, SCDSS was able to restore the eligibility to 150% of FPL.** However, as we indicated in our April 2013 letter to Commissioner Carrion, and as we stated in our poverty report, we believe that the reductions in the Suffolk CCBG allocation were due to a flawed formula used to determine the allocation which does not account for the actual, rising demand for child care in Suffolk County.

**We therefore again respectfully request that your Department consider increasing the Suffolk CCBG allocation for 2014-2015 so that eligibility for the subsidy can be restored to 200% of FPL. We also respectfully request that you consider a change in the CCBG formula which will take into account:**

1. Funding for mandated services (Suffolk's TA child-care population, for example, has increased 142% from 2007 to 2012 and increased almost 82% from 2009 to 2012, which significantly reduced the CCBG funds available for NTA, working-poor families),
2. The various child care modalities;
3. Regional costs of care;
4. Adjustments in the market rate;
5. The district size.

Absent a change in the CCBG methodology, we remain concerned that the 2014-2015 CCBG allocation will once again fail to meet the actual child care needs for Suffolk County.

Acting Commissioner Poole, we wish you well in your new position and we look forward to working with you and your Department so that OCFS and Suffolk County together can meet the needs of struggling, working-poor families. We also look forward to sharing our child care report with you when it is released later this year.

Yours truly for the Commission,

*Richard Koubek*

Richard Koubek, PhD, Chair

*Kathy Liguori*

Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair

CC: Members of the Suffolk County Legislature  
SCDSS Commissioner John O'Neill