

**Welfare to Work Commission
Of the Suffolk County Legislature**

Minutes of the March 11th, 2011 Meeting

Present: Richard Koubek, Chair; Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair; Ellen Krakow; Eric Lopez; Bridget DePasquale; Michael Haynes; Rob Greenberger; Don Friedman; Jack Caffey; Fred Combs for Joan Grant; Mike Stoltz; Judy Cahn; Zoe Taylor for Gwen Branch; Vinnie Cassidy for Pam Killoran.

Excused: Roland Hampson; Peter Barnett; Frank Casiglia; Nina Leonhardt; Peggy Boyd; Idania Aponte; Peggy Boyd.

1. **Minutes:** Minutes of the February 18th Commission meeting were accepted unanimously, on a motion by Kathy Liguori, seconded by Zoe Taylor.
2. **SCDOL Grant:** Vinnie Cassidy reported on \$5 million 5 year New York State grant (\$1 million each year) to the Suffolk County Department of Labor (SCDOL) to train TANF recipients for entry-level health care profession jobs such as medical billing and certain technical work. This announcement was well received by the Commission with gratitude to SCDOL for securing these funds for much needed work training that could lead to careers in the health-care industry. Richard Koubek asked if SCDOL was using the Self-Sufficiency Standard as a norm to train welfare clients for jobs that ultimately would pay four times the federal poverty level. He reminded the Commission that assessing SCDOL educational opportunities for SCDOL clients is one of the Commission's 2011 goals. Mr. Cassidy replied that WIA funds can be used for this purpose, but that many TANF clients lack the basic skills needed for higher-paying jobs-skills training. He also stated that the SCDOL grant is a career-ladder grant that would train clients for jobs that might ultimately reach Self-Sufficiency Standard wages. Mr. Cassidy added that SCDOL's five-year goal is to place 860 clients in vocational training, with approximately 300 securing training-related employment.
3. **Sunday Bus Service Resolution:** Richard Koubek reported that Legislator Schneiderman has split the Sunday bus issue into two resolutions which were laid on the table March 8th. One would provide for a 50 cent fare increase for east end only bus lines so that Sunday service can begin this summer to accommodate the many law-wage resort workers who need the buses to get to work. The second resolution conforms with the proposal endorsed by the Commission via an e-mail vote on March 5 that would establish a 50 cent fare increase to create 10 Sunday bus routes. He reminded the Commission that the Ad Hoc Sunday Bus Service Committee found that these 10 lines serviced 18 of the 24 communities with concentrations of low-income residents that the Committee had identified as needing Sunday service. Legislator Schneiderman added S33 at the request of the Committee to accommodate Wyandanch. It was agreed that, at the appropriate time, the Commission would again draft a letter of support for this resolution. (Note: at the time of the March 11th

Commission meeting, a copy of the resolution had not yet been obtained by the Chair.)

4. **Child Care Committee:** Chair Kathy Liguori reported on a very successful meeting that the Committee had with SCDSS Child Protective Services administrator Denis Nowak on February 15th.
 - a. Mr. Nowak inquired with his counterparts in the State to see what their thoughts are about notifying child-care providers in situations where an employee has been named in a CPS allegation or investigation. There is no current system in place to notify a child care employer, however it was suggested that the Child Care employer re-submit an inquiry to the State Registry on a bi-annual or annual basis to alleviate this concern. All agreed that it would be recommended that the child care employer have a policy in their employee handbook that required the child care employee to inform the employer immediately if they are the “indicated subject” of a child protective report, meaning that they have been found by “some credible evidence” to have committed child abuse or neglect. Brian Lahiff announced the potential of a \$25.00 fee for each inquiry would be imposed if the Governors budget is passed.
 - b. It was determined at the last meeting: While there seems to be no administrative function within the family or criminal courts to inform interested parties that an Order of Protection (OP) has been granted, there is no provision that prevents this from happening. A state-wide OP registry exists but our understanding is that access is limited, usually to the police. Legislative action would probably be needed to authorize or require that certain entities are notified (i.e. child care providers, schools, etc) when OPs are granted. It was agreed that at this time the best practice would be to have the parents of the children and the child care employees sign a policy agreement that they agree to inform the Child Care Provider/Employer any order of protection that they or the family is involved in.
 - c. Jack Caffey inquired of George Nolan, the Legislative counsel if there was any information or action that they could provide. George Nolan who reported that he did a search of state law and there does not appear to be a central registry for protective orders. Suffolk County does not have the authority at the local level to pass a law to establish such a registry nor can we direct the courts to make such information available to child care providers. Perhaps this issue can be addressed administratively by the child care providers, i.e. require their employees and the families they serve to provide notification if they are subject to a protective order. Rob Greenberger stated that he believed there is a central registry that contains the names of people against whom Orders of Protection have been issued by the courts, but that access to this registry may be limited to police and court officials.
 - d. Due to a recent incident, Dennis Nowak issued a protocol written by Marc Clavin and Dennis Nowak titled “Protocol for Staff Regarding Children at Risk Who Are in Child Care Facilities and Other Outside Agencies” This

was reviewed at a staff meeting and distributed via Interoffice Memo to all CPS Staff. Kathy is collaborating with Dennis Nowak to ensure efficient distribution of this protocol to the Child Care Providers.

- e. Ms. Liguori maintained that she believes there is a gap between the time that a serious investigation is underway by CPS and notification [to child care provider and/or other agencies] that there may be a child abuse situation. She stated that, because of restrictions imposed by the legal system's due process protections, children potentially remain at risk between the timeframe of the initial investigation and before the court actually issues an Order of protection. At the next Child Care Subcommittee meeting we will request the presence of Commissioner Blass who is a former Family Court Judge as we call upon his expertise to discuss the processes and potential gaps.
 - f. Ms. Liguori reminded the Commission that, to reduce the likelihood of maltreatment, when a family has been released from CPS jurisdiction it would be beneficial to the child and family to have continuity of care. Mr. Nowak confirmed that in the past there was a policy for transitional child-care services for CPS families put into place by former Commissioner DeMarzo. SCDSS is going to re-issue a statement to the Child Care, Child Protective and Child Preventive Services Units work together to expedite eligibility for transition Child Protective/Preventive Services. Kathy confirmed the previous policy request via letter to Commissioner DeMarzo back in 2007.
 - g. Ms. Liguori reported that Brian Lahiff of the Child Care Council of Suffolk informed Susan Antos at the Empire Justice Center has research showing that use of the special needs rate is extremely low throughout the state and not just Suffolk County. Ms. Liguori referenced a 2007 letter to Commissioner DeMarzo requesting standard practices and procedures be communicated to child care providers and parents since many children served by child care providers under the NYS Child Care Block Grant (NYSCCBG) have special needs such as emotional disturbance. These children require specialized attention for which the child-care providers are not being reimbursed. Richard Koubek recommended to the Committee that a "Did You Know?" flyer be created to help assist these families. All Agreed. More follow up on this question will continue.
 - h. Ms. Liguori reported that Brian Lahiff announced that funding was secured by the Child Care Council of Suffolk or the PCAN child protection training for the child care providers and would be scheduled in March and April. Kathy Liguori has attended two of the four parts in this intensive training series. Assessment of this training will be provided at the end of the training. Dennis Nowak agreed it would be a good idea that SCDSS-CPS staff should be present at each training to answer questions and would offer their availability
5. **Employment Assessment Committee:** Chair Rob Greenberger reported that the Committee has not yet set a date to meet in order to discuss the Commission's 2011 education goals nor to finalize the ADA and SCDSS communication initiatives. Don

Freidman stated that there is a need to monitor compliance with GED goals. Judy Cahn stated that funds for adult vocational education are already spent for the year 2011. It was agreed that Eric Lopez will join the Employment Assessment Committee as it begins its new analysis of education and training programs and policies. Mr. Lopez expressed frustration that federal TANF regulations do not stress education and training. He also noted that, despite the increase in caseloads, the SCDOL SWEP program lost \$800 thousand in funding and 18 percent of its staff.

6. **New York State Budget:** Don Friedman reported that the April 1st deadline for adoption of the New York State budget will likely be met. It was agreed that Commission Chair Richard Koubeke write a Newsday Op/Ed piece opposing the freezing of the scheduled 2100 increase in the Public Assistance grant and the imposition of Full Family Sanctioning that are in Governor Cuomo's proposed budget.
7. **Sober Homes Committee:** Co-Chair Mike Stoltz attended a recent NYS OASAS work group meeting on sober homes. He noted that some providers questioned the requirement that they be nonprofit and an OASAS licensed treatment provider in order to qualify for the enhanced reimbursement rate under the RFQ. He noted that SCDSS stated that these OASAS certified agencies could subcontract the sober home to a non-OASAS agency such as a mental health provider. Mr. Koubeke stated that he believes the RFQ was written with strict criteria to prevent unscrupulous for-profit companies from receiving the enhanced rate while not fully complying with the RFQ.
8. **Next Meeting: Friday, April 8th, 9:30 AM** in Conference Room A of the SCDOL One Stop Center.