

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

**Meeting Minutes
May 14, 2007**

Present: Richard Koubek, Kathy Liguori, Barbara LoMoriello, Peggy Boyd, Michael Stoltz, Ed Hernandez, James Andrews, Gwen Branch, Cheryl Keshner, Nina Leonhardt, Pam Killoran, Peter Barnett

Guests: Peter Crisano, SCDOL; Mary Weiler, St. Sylvester Outreach; Joan McGay, St. Joseph the Worker Outreach

1. **Welcomes:** Michael Stoltz from the Clubhouse of Suffolk was welcomed to the Committee as the new representative for the mental health providers. Guests Mary Weiler and Joan McGay were welcomed and introduced.
2. **Minutes:** The amended minutes for March 21st were adopted unanimously on a motion by Kathy Liguori, seconded by Pam Killoran. The minutes of April 28 were adopted unanimously on a motion by Kathy Liguori, seconded by Ed Hernandez.
3. **Education and Training Pilot:**
 - a. Pam Killoran and James Andrews announced that the Job Readiness Training program has been relocated from SCDOL's Oser Avenue Employment Center to the SCDOL One Stop Center. There will be 2 staff assigned to supervise job searches and 2 staff assigned to job development. Commission members who helped develop the Education and Training pilot expressed hope that this move might be more convenient for some SWEP clients.
 - b. Nina Leonhardt and James Andrews reported that 7 clients had been enrolled in the pilot. One was removed due to behavior problems, 3 dropped out because of illness or child care issues, and 3 have begun the program. The lead in time for the April cohort was quite short – only a few weeks - and may explain the low enrollments. There is hope that with a longer lead in, the cohort that begins on July 9th will have more clients enrolled. Among the problems that need to be addressed are:
 - i. The 8:30 AM program start time may prevent clients with young children from enrolling.
 - ii. The program's single start dates (April 23 and July 9) may also be a deterrent. Perhaps rolling enrollment would yield better results.
 - iii. The SCDOL assessors are supposed to be using an addendum assessment tool developed by the Commission which explores clients' educational histories and the reasons that they did not complete programs. James Andrews will check the files of all clients to determine if this form contained predictors to explain why clients left the pilot.
4. **Child Care Reimbursements:** Ed Hernandez reported that the SCDSS reimbursement period for child care providers has fallen from 52 days to 42 days due to changes in staffing and procedures.

5. **Housing Report:** Commission members Richard Koubek, Kathy Liguori, Peggy Boyd and Peter Barnett, along with consultant Rosemary Dehlow from CHI, met with the groups/individuals below to discuss these prioritized recommendations in the Commission's affordable housing report: a regional housing summit; an advertising campaign; a needs assessment study; a county-funded Section 8 program. The recommendations were prioritized at the suggestion of Presiding Officer Bill Lindsay who asked the Commission to specify actions for the Legislature to take.

- May 3rd – SCDSS CAC
- May 4th - Michael White, LI Regional Planning Board Director
- May 4th - Leg. Kate Browning
- May 7th - Commissioner Jim Morgo

The following outcomes were reported:

- a. The SCDSS-CAC was most supportive of the report's call for an educational campaign to dispel myths and fears about affordable housing.
 - b. Michael White supports a summit and plans to hold one in October, 2007
 - c. Leg. Browning recommended that the summit, ad campaign and needs assessment be presented to the Legislature as a package.
 - d. Jim Morgo supports an ad campaign and asked the Commission to present a proposal for his Department's 2008 budget that would utilize the LIA and LICARH ads as well as create a new ads that showcase successful affordable housing complexes on Long Island. He also called attention to a Suffolk County housing needs assessment that Leg. Jay Schneiderman will soon release. The assessment was conducted by Rutgers University. (A meeting will be set up with Leg. Schneiderman.)
6. **Rental Assistance Program:** The Commission's questions on the Westchester Rental Assistance Program (RAP) were submitted by Rosemary Dehlow to Debbie Perkins of Westchester's Community Housing Innovations Program who administers RAP. The answers will be reported to the Commission in June.
7. **Extended Hours at SCDSS:** Richard Koubek yielded the Chair to Kathy Liguori for this discussion because he works with the two presenters in his Catholic Charities public policy office. Two parish social ministry coordinators were introduced, Mary Weiler of St. Sylvester's parish in Medford and Joan McGay of St. Joseph the Worker in East Patchogue, for the presentation. They laid out their arguments (attached) for extended hours, citing NCDSS extended hours on Thursday evenings as an example. A number of points were made,:
- a. Ed Hernandez reported that SCDSS Commissioner Janet DeMarzo would support extended hours.
 - b. Cheryl Keshner noted that SCDSS offices close to the public at 3PM rather than at 4 or 5 PM as do other county DSS offices. She also reported that her intern had researched the number of NY State DSS offices with extended hours. The report will be e-mailed to Commission members.
 - c. Richard Koubek reported that NCDSS averages between 650 and 950 clients per day during daytime hours and 200 during extended hours on Thursday evenings. There is a problem with entering new clients into the system because the state computers shut down sometime between 5PM and 7PM. The primary services provided during extended hours at NCDSS are:

- i. Document drop off
 - ii. Making appointments
 - iii. Child care
 - iv. New applications
 - v. Recerts
 - vi. Medicaid applications
 - vii. Food Stamps.
- d. Richard Koubek read an e-mail from the SC Association of Municipal Employees (AME) union indicating that, “after careful consideration, AME is not in a position to support this measure at this time.”
 - e. The lack of evening public transportation may be a major barrier to extended hours, which is an example of the larger issue regarding the lack of mobility by poor, disabled and vulnerable people in Suffolk County.
 - f. There is a SC Transportation Commission, headed by Cliff Hymowitz, that has addressed this transportation/mobility issue for years, with some progress having been made, for example, changing bus schedules to accommodate disabled people and working poor people.

Motion by Peter Barnett, seconded by Michael Stoltz, to place extended SCDSS hours on the agenda of the June Commission meeting. Passed: 9 yes, 2 abstentions.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, June 6th, 9:30 AM at the One Stop SCDOL Center.

WHY OPEN SUFFOLK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES ONE NIGHT A WEEK?

Presented to the Welfare to Work Commission on May 16, 2007 by Mary Weiler, St. Sylvester Parish Social Ministry coordinator and Joan McGay, St. Joseph the Worker Parish Social Ministry Coordinator.

Primary Goal for Evening Hours: to help working poor people access DSS benefits who are unavailable during their work hours for daytime appointments at DSS.

- 1. Won't union rules prevent SCDSS from opening in the evenings?**
 - Nassau County Department of Social Services was able to open one night a week by getting the union to accept the idea of flexible hours.
 - Most of the NCDSS employees who work the evening hours have volunteered to do so because it helps with their child care and other family needs.

- 2. Won't evening hours be costly for DSS?**
 - Again, NCDSS has found the money for security and other related expenses.
 - Additionally, DSS could benefit from evening hours because they will be able to enroll people who work part or full time, thereby helping DSS to reach its newly-required 50% work participation rate.
 - Evening hours could also improve the DSS work participation rate by enrolling in TANF additional clients who are already working.
 - Evening hours will draw off some clients from the daytime hours and thereby reduce the stress on DSS workers who are sometimes overwhelmed with applicants, especially in the morning.

- 3. Don't the State computers shut down after 5PM and therefore limit the processing of applications?**
 - There are certain computer-related activities, such as case inquiries, that can be processed at NCDSS until 7PM. (Tracing benefits that have gone out cannot be done in the evening)
 - Many client requests can be processed at NCDSS without the State computer, including:
 - New applications
 - Re-certifications
 - Child care
 - Medicaid
 - Food Stamps
 - Requests for a DSS appointment

- 4. Won't evening hours be of limited use to many DSS clients because public transportation is unavailable in the evening?**
 - Many of the clients who will be helped are working poor people who probably drive their own cars and who are not available, because of their work requirements, for daytime appointments at DSS.