



# Onondaga County Legislature

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## **WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE REVIEW OF THE 2023 TENTATIVE BUDGET BUDGET REVIEW DAY 5 – SEPTEMBER 22, 2022 BRIAN F. MAY, CHAIR**

**MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Ryan, Mr. Olson, Mrs. Ervin**

**MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. Kinne, Mr. Burtis, Ms. Abbott**

**ALSO ATTENDING: Chairman Rowley, Dr. Kelly, Mr. Bush, Mr. McBride, Ms. Cody, Ms. Gunnip, Mr. Garland, Ms. Kuhn** also please see attached

Chair May called the meeting to order at 9:12 a.m.

**DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES:** Amy Cunningham, Commissioner; Jennifer Parmalee, Deputy Commissioner Mental Health; Damian Pratt, Director Juvenile Justice

- Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS) has 5 divisions: Child Welfare, Mental Health, Juvenile Justice, School Based Initiatives, Youth Bureau
- DCFS is committed to providing programs and services that support the success of children, youth, adults, and families in the home, school, and community
- DCFS is projected to be within budget for 2022
- 2023 budget includes standard salary increases, increased cost for supplies, contract services, and professional services due to inflation and contract escalators
- Mandated program costs are increased in the 2023 budget for state training schools and foster care
  - State training schools are where juveniles are placed through OCFS; placements have increased with Raise the Age with 16 and 17 year olds being placed
  - Foster care increases are based on foster care rates; maximum state aid rates that are paid to placements (foster families or residential programming)
- 2023 budget includes baseline additions of \$815k in local direct support to provide additional support to the Early Childhood Alliance and \$1.2M in child welfare contracted services
- Contract agencies that provide mandated programs and services to families that are involved with child welfare historically have been required to provide a financial match amount of up to 25% of the contract total
- Community partners are providing mandated services to keep families together and return kids to their families sooner
- Onondaga County has been the only county in the state that asks agencies to provide their own funds to fund these mandated services
- The 2023 Executive budget eliminates this match requirement and strengthens commitment to community partners by fully funding these critical services
- 2023 Transfer to Grant Expenditure line includes \$12.5M for school based mental health services and youth initiatives
  - \$5.5M will support school based initiatives expansion of mental health services for children and youth in every Onondaga County school
  - \$5M will support the Children's Rising Center as part of the transformation of the 15<sup>th</sup> ward
  - \$2M will support the construction of the Jon Diaz Community Center and partnership with Latavius Murray
- 2023 budget supports baseline programs and services and provides funding for expansion while including new initiatives for all children, youth, adults, and families in the community

**Questions:**

- Any progress with the challenges on how overtime at Hillbrook is being allocated?
  - The overtime issue was one individual due to small pool of Senior Counselors
  - Overtime issue resolved by hiring one additional PT Detention Home Counselor
  - Overtime will not be included in 2023 budget numbers
- On the appropriation side with revenues from State and Federal, are those numbers from what the State and Federal provide or that Finance creates?
  - In the Human Services/Social Services world, there are different types of revenues:
    - Formula Driven - An unlimited amount of revenue from the Federal or State government based on how money is spent;
    - Block Grants - Set amount of money; mix of funding for direct program services as well as administration of services
  - Financial Team needs to be precise in ensuring that any increase or decrease in spending in these areas (either administration or program side) are accounted for correctly
  - Finance is comfortable and confident that revenues are accurate in the Human Services Departments
- Positions moving from 365 to 361, is there an explanation?
  - Result of moving positions from DCFS to Social Services Economic Security. Doing the same work, just on Social Services roster now
  - There is currently Income Maintenance titles that are typically in the Department of Social Services that are currently in Children and Family because they determine eligibility for programs that DCFS provides
  - In order to allow for a promotional track, these positions have to sit in DSS. Sitting in DCFS hampered the ability to promote into or out of those positions. Mainly a shift in positions, but DCFS is still paying for them
  - Currently have 37 vacancies
  - Funded positions for 2023 are the same as 2022
- How much have State mandates changed over the last couple years with Covid?
  - Increase in foster care rates is most influential on budget
  - Onondaga County is in a better place than other counties with the increase in rates because, in the past, counties were not required to pay the maximum rate the State sets, they could pay less than that, but Onondaga County has paid the maximum rate
  - Maximum rates have increased and DCFS has to make up the increase whereas other counties, who did not pay the maximum, will not have to make up as much
  - The State Training Schools is not a change in mandate, it is change in Raise the Age in the Juvenile Justice System. Now have 16 and 17 year olds in the justice system and being placed in State Training Schools
  - Mental health increases 5.5% COLA
- \$5.5M in schools, is that an increase from last year? What do we do now and what do we project for next year?
  - Initiation of this project was funded with American Rescue Plan Act funds (ARPA). County Executive's commitment has been to continue those services with local dollars as we proceed into the future
  - 2023 programs will now be funded with local dollars
  - 2021-2022 were funded with ARPA funds
  - Looking to move forward in perpetuity
  - Different funding source, same providers, same schools
    - \$5.5M was originally an expansion to include all school districts in Onondaga County that previously were not all being served with mental health services inside school buildings
- What are the long term intensions of the money?
  - Disruption is incredible and will be for years to come. Can also see it as a generational issue rather than out and to forever
  - For clarification, those that were in Kindergarten a couple of years ago will possibly need help for several years
- Will the need change once we move past the generation where the need is the greatest or maybe the need can be transferred to the district once realized that this is an important component of the educational infrastructure moving forward?

- The services didn't start with the onset of Covid
- There were school based mental health services (with involvement from Onondaga County) in schools going back to 2008. Everything was exacerbated by Covid
- Hopeful that the spike in need for services will not be long lasting
- All of the school districts are in partnership with Onondaga County paying half of expenses
- Starting to get a handle on the extent of issues with many of the children, some with very high needs with the whole school building needing a reset around behavioral norms
- Health Department looking at and teaming up with every school district because of different needs in each district
- We do anticipate the continual sharing of costs and perhaps transitioning of costs to the districts
- Have general health clinics been held in schools before the start of mental health?
  - Prior to ARPA funds from 2022 Onondaga County was involved with Syracuse City School District (SCSD) since 2008. Been involved with Solvay schools, North Syracuse schools, East Syracuse Minoa, Liverpool
  - Last year (2022) expanded throughout every school district. The need for the \$5.5M was to create the expansion for the need to expand across all of the districts
  - Total investment is much higher than \$5.5M, but it utilizes State and Federal dollars that we have been able to capture in order to provide services in school buildings
  - Challenges kids and families were facing prior to Covid were significant around mental health challenges. Prior to Covid (around 2015) there was a significant increase of kids being hospitalized for injurious behaviors or suicide ideation. This is the reason for the expansion to Liverpool, North Syracuse, ESM, and Solvay
- Does the expansion include just public school districts, are there plans to expand to private schools?
  - ADAPEP counselors are in every district, then assigned to private schools through the district
- In terms of getting early intervention service providers, is there trouble recruiting?
  - Struggling to hire mental health clinicians to work in the community in general
  - Although still a challenge, agencies have been able to fill a significant amount mental health clinicians in school districts
  - Done well with Promise Zone staff originally; but has become more challenging
- Is the challenge a lack of bodies or reimbursement rates? Are reimbursement rates fair?
  - Providers are advocating for higher rates and believe providers and community would benefit from a higher rate
  - Believe children's mental health system is highly underfunded across the State and across the Nation
- On the Grants budget – increase of \$1.5M in Contractual Expenses and offset in Other Misc. Revenues (roughly the same amount)
  - Most of the increase is due to the Youth Development (State) funding due to changing from calendar year to fiscal (Oct-Sep) year
- Hillbrook – expanded population due to Raise the Age. Are there the same amount of teachers with growing population? Are the teachers comparable to those in school districts?
  - Added considerable number of teacher positions under Raise the Age as well as adding child care workers that serve in a teacher assistant role
  - Recruitment has been challenging because:
    - 1) Even if pay is comparable, Hillbrook teachers work a 12 month calendar as opposed to 10 month in district, which can be more attractive to candidates. Worked with the union and made schedule changes to allow teachers extra time off in the summer
    - 2) The stigma of working in the detention center. Hillbrook is no less safe than any other school, however, the detention setting is a concern with applicants
  - Prior to expansion: 3 FT and 1 PT teacher. Increased to 7 FT teachers, 6 child care workers. Net volume of education staff has tripled
  - Extremely comfortable with the number of staff. State is supportive of the model
  - Hillbrook is fully staffed with more educators than any other detention facilities in the State

- 12 graduates in the last year, due to older population staying longer. Prior to Raise the Age, youths had shorter stays which did not allow them to get through graduation
- Population – Hillbrook went from a 32 bed facility to a 50 bed facility; average daily population is 40 youths. Had dramatic reduction in census since the beginning of September 2022
- As of 9/22/22 current census is 33 young people which is the fewest Onondaga County youth Hillbrook has had at one time
- Census has been balanced out by accepting out of county youths. Anticipating to open up last section by Thanksgiving
- A major impact of Covid was the changes in core processing, and length of time cases were open. Young people didn't have the opportunity to get back to their court appearances or meet with council; prolonged the stay at Hillbrook
- Within the last 45 days lengths of stay have shrunk to pre-pandemic rates; sign of court systems opening up and doing more in person

p 4-70

## ONONDAGA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

## 2023 EXECUTIVE BUDGET WRITTEN STATEMENT

## SECTION 1:

## 2022 INITIATIVES &amp; ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Onondaga County DCFS has carried out its plan to invest \$5.5 million annually to expand School Based Children's Mental Health Services to every school in Onondaga County. This investment added with our current investment of over \$11 million per year equates to a total investment of nearly \$17 million in student's mental health through combined local, State and Federal funds. The expansion deployed 40 new Promise Zone Specialists throughout city and county for a total of 76 specialists in 79 schools. In addition, the expansion added 8 School Liaisons covering 112 schools to assist families with challenges they may be experiencing. Prior to this expansion, the partner organizations employed licensed outpatient mental health clinicians working on site in 52 schools across the County. As of today, the expansion has provided start-up dollars to add 32 School Based Mental Health Clinics through our partner agencies (Arise, Helio Health, Upstate Medical, and Liberty Resources) for a total of 68.5 clinicians. This will allow for every school in the county to have the opportunity to have an on-site school based clinic that will be sustained through the clinics billing the child's insurance for ongoing treatment.
- DCFS worked closely with community partners to develop and implement the 911/988 Diversion of Police Response to Mobile Crisis. In 2020, the 911 center received over 5,000 "Persons in Crisis" calls. These are calls for individuals who are experiencing some level of emotional or behavioral crisis. This was a 22% increase from 2019. In 2021, these calls increased to approximately 7,000. In addition, the National Suicide Call number of 988 will be established in July of 2022. Therefore, in conjunction with our partners in Law Enforcement, the City of Syracuse, Contact Community Services, St. Joseph's Hospital and Liberty Resources, Onondaga County will establish a pilot to ensure that Persons in Crisis (PIC) calls made to 911/988 are responded to with trained mental health professionals and individuals with lived experience during peak call hours. The pilot will add 2 additional mobile crisis teams to the existing Crisis System in Onondaga County. In addition, the local Suicide Crisis Hotline at Contact Community Services (988) will be co-locating within the 911 during peak call hours.
- The Child Welfare Division continues to emphasize kin placement to keep children with family members when a removal from the home is necessary. Close to 50% of children placed in foster homes are now placed with kin.
- "In person" contacts were resumed at Hillbrook for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a shutdown to all outside entities in March of 2020: Family visitation and programming (Winning Because I Tried-CCSI, iApologize-Building Company Theatre/Syracuse University, Thinking for a Change-New Justice Services, Rising Phoenix Program, Painting Program w/ SPD Officer Nikki Hendrix, Drum Circle Program-Creative Rhythm Events, Chaplain Services-Interfaith Works) as well as others.
- In 2022, Hillbrook opened a Female Housing Unit for the first time since 2019 allowing our young women to be supported in Onondaga County.
- While at Hillbrook, five youth have obtained regents diplomas in 2022 with an additional two youth on track to graduate this year. We also recently participated in a state wide education summit focused on improving the educational services within the facility.
- Upgrades to Hillbrook included the replacement of carpeting and the installation of desks/stools in all dormitory units (scheduled for completion in October).
- Our Juvenile Justice Division continues to reduce racial & ethnic disparities for African American youth across various system points. This reduction is attributed to the implementation of our Community Engagement Initiative (Word II YOU): Percentage of African American Youth Detained at Hillbrook: 2016-80% 2021-64%. Percentage of African American Youth Placed: 2016-76% 2021-52%.
- The Syracuse/Onondaga County Youth Bureau received and distributed Youth Sports and Education Opportunity Funding to community partners to support non-traditional sports programming in the community.

## 2022 BUDGET REVIEW

As a department, DCFS is projected to be within budget for 2022, outside of the approved transfer for the supplies account.

## SECTION 2:

## 2023 BUDGET OVERVIEW

The 2023 budget includes standard salary and wage increases consistent with the baseline budgeting approach. Also included in the base are increased cost in supplies, contract services and professional services due to inflation and contract escalators. Mandated Programs are also increased in the 2023 budget as result of the following:

- State Training Schools –increased amount of 16 and 17 year old youth entering the Juvenile Justice system and being placed in State Training Schools.
- Foster Care –increases are being driven by OCFS rate increases.

CFS budget also includes baseline additions of \$1.2M in contracted services and \$815,000 in local direct support that eliminate agency matches for Children and Family Services contracts and provides additional support to the Early Childhood Alliance.

The 2023 Transfer to Grant Expenditure line includes \$12.5M for Mental Health in Schools and Youth Initiatives. Additional information is available in the one-time initiatives handout attached below.

## SECTION 3:

## 2023 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Continued implementation of the School Based Mental Health Expansion
- Increase families' abilities to provide safe, stable, and nurturing environments for their children through an improved system of preventative services
- Further enhance the Adult Mental Health System to ensure consistency of delivery of the following principles – Person Centered, Recovery Oriented, Data Driven, Trauma Informed, Evidence Based, Peer Supported, Equity Focused, Flexible and Mobile, Coordinated Collaboration
- Support youth voice in youth development programming and strengthen the Youth Board
- Facilitate community-wide summer youth employment and fellowship programming

## ONONDAGA COUNTY LOCAL PROJECT INITIATIVES

## FUNDED TO SUPPORT HUMAN SERVICES

## INITIATIVE: MENTAL HEALTH SCHOOL SUPPORT

BUDGET: \$5.5M

Onondaga County will continue to support our school-based initiatives expansion of mental health for our children and youth across the county in every school. Addressing the many and diverse social and emotional needs of the youth and families of Onondaga County, a Multi-Tiered System of Support mode has shown promising results. In the first year of expansion, 15 Onondaga County School Districts have increased mental health supports through of Promise Zone Student Engagement Specialists, ACCESS School Liaisons, and School Based Mental Health Clinics (Tier 3 Support).

Moving forward, key areas of emphasis include:

- Targeted partnership with school districts to develop and implement culturally inclusive and trauma informed MTSS through the provision and coordination of professional development and technical assistance.
- County-wide inter-district collaboration on shared initiatives that will benefit families and youth across the region such as Community Schools programming, Trauma, Illness, & Grief networks, and shared crisis prevention, intervention, and post intervention resources.

As we recover from the pandemic, the continuation of the commitment is more important than ever.



## FUNDED TO SUPPORT HUMAN SERVICES

## INITIATIVE: YOUTH INITIATIVE GRANTS

BUDGET: \$7M

Onondaga County will continue its focus on our youth through our county programs, as well as working on collaborative projects with our community partners.

As part of the transformation of the 15<sup>th</sup> ward, the Children’s Rising Center will be a focal point of the initiative. This best-in-class facility will include an early learning center, a parent/child play center, a YMCA and will house the offices of the Early Childhood Alliance. The Center will be a constant “safe place” for children and families while offering programs and experiences that will promote positive youth development. The County, along with the City of Syracuse, the Allyn Foundation and others are partnering to implement this initiative.

The County will also work in partnership with Latavius Murray and his non-profit organization by investing capital for the construction of the Jon Diaz Community Center to be located in the Town of Onondaga. This \$2M capital investment will assist in his goal of creating a hub that will deliver programming and resources that will empower youth and families in Nedrow and in the Town of Onondaga and surrounding areas.

**HEALTH DEPARTMENT:** Ann Rooney, Deputy County Executive; Michelle Mignano, Deputy Commissioner

- Thank you to the Management staff of the Health Department. They have done a fantastic job with continuity of operations during transition
- The role of Health Department was Ground Zero over the last few years for responding to Covid
- Health Department is now in a time period of everybody hands on deck to transitioning back to regular operations
  - Seemed a lot easier to shut things down during Covid than it has been to reconstitute normal operations
- 2022 is expected to finish well within operating budget
- 2023 budget overview went through baseline budgeting approach
  - Projected budget increases are related to inflationary challenges, rate increases in Special Children’s Services area, certain contract escalators
- Re-organization of vital records section – complexity of work requires a higher level of staffing
- Wide ranging approach dealing with lead issues
  - It is not just remediation, the Health Department is now going to be interacting with families through early intervention; making sure children are getting the services they need with exposure prior to elevated blood levels
  - The reconstitution of the Mobile Ed Van
  - Much more holistic approach to lead
- Challenges seen with opioids are not going away
  - Not just opioids, fentanyl is laced in many of the illicit drugs
- 2023 focus will be on lead and opioids
- 2023 will bring reaccreditation which will require all hands on deck
- 2023 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) and Assessment
- Labor intensive community based approaches to make sure the community needs are met

**Questions:**

- Do the same formulas apply on the revenue side?
  - Yes, different than the Social Services world but some are formula driven; the Health Department receives a base percentage reimbursement for public health expenses
  - One change, the State has approved reimbursement of some interdepartmental costs, mainly fringe costs, which infused additional revenue into the 2023 budget
- How many vacancies?
  - 45 vacancies in core operations, does not include specific areas such as Public Health Fellows

- Change from 424 positions to 440, are there positions that aren't filled at this time?
  - Includes 5 additional Grant positions, and 1 Pathologist (money moved from Professional Services to Salary)
    - Movement with Health Department Personnel budget are in line with baseline, except the 4 additional Public Health Social Worker positions
    - Vital Records – Unfunded Typist positions have not been abolished. Cannot abolish until a complete transition with Personnel is done to staff with the different titles
- The work the Health Department did was vital to the safety of everybody in the community, thank you.
- Is pickup truck a mosquito sprayer?
  - Pickup truck is for environmental health; mosquito sprayer
- 4 positions were on a Grant?
  - 4 additional positions for Early Intervention Services; 6 positions under Baseline; 5 Grant related; 1 Pathologist (swap in money from Professional Services to 101 line)
- Open nurse positions?
  - Nursing shortage across the country
  - Talking with Dr. Anderson on how to mitigate the nursing shortage for 2023
  - Have added a couple nurses in the last few weeks
- No local appropriations under grants projects fund, but there is a shift of \$500k in the 101 to \$500k to OT
  - Grant budgets are not controlled or managed by line; the important number is the total amount
  - Looks like trying to get it more in line with what the actual in 2021 was from the overtime perspective
  - Money is moving between Total Salaries and Overtime, so the net impact is 0

**MEDICAL EXAMINER:** Ann Rooney, Deputy County Executive; Michelle Mignano, Deputy Commissioner

- Presentation is for Medical Examiner's office together with the Center for Forensic Sciences
- Dr. Ho has been employed for a year
- Historically been a backlog of cases, however processes have been put in place for tackling backlog
  - Able to fill vacancies
  - Considered a regional Medical Examiner's Office
    - Have robust contract with Oneida county; going on 9 years
  - Doing a good job attracting Pathologists
    - Contract Pathologists are available as demand warrants
- Biggest customer is District Attorney's (DA) office
  - DA's office is pleased with both operations

**Questions:**

- Where is the backlog now?
  - Slowly addressing backlog; in a better position than have been in years
  - Allows for cases to move more expeditiously through the Judicial system
  - Criminal Justice reform has expedited certain aspects of the process and put pressure to keep pace and get things done
  - Another byproduct of Covid was the slowdown in court systems, which allowed us to catch up, but under the same mandates with criminal justice reform. The time has been condensed where the necessary technical case work can be done
- Are we still able to perform services with Oneida County given the extra pressures and keep pace in both Oneida and Onondaga County?
  - Great experience with Oneida and Onondaga County
  - Oneida county is very willing to sit and talk about upcoming needs which could include money or even hiring
  - No contention between counties
  - 100% reimbursable
  - Very willing to discuss going into budget
- In the past, there have been extraordinary expenses with hiring out. How is that going?

- Currently have a good number of Pathologists to address cases quickly
- Reports were mentioned, can you describe what type of reports are being referred to in respect to the DA's office?
  - Analyzing all evidence that comes in from DA, i.e.: DNA, fingerprints, fire arms, toxicology
  - Not done correctly could lead to a case getting thrown out
- Are there contracts with other Counties?
  - Center for Forensic Science only performs work for Onondaga County
- Has been a disconnect with legislative process. As part of the program year, would like to see both departments come in (maybe together) to Program Committee Meetings with informational updates
  - Unconventional for Onondaga County, Dr. Ho has invited media in to give them a tutorial on the process
- Is there a relationship with Upstate in terms of teaching?
  - Reconstituted the Pathologist Resident and Internship programs. If Residents and Interns are training with us, it would be more likely that they would stay with a FT employment opportunity
  - Hopeful to strengthen the ties between Onondaga County Health Department and Upstate once Dr. Anderson is on board



## ONONDAGA COUNTY

Health Dept.  
p 4-23

## 2023 EXECUTIVE BUDGET WRITTEN STATEMENT

## SECTION 1:

## 2022 INITIATIVES &amp; ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## Opioid Overdose Prevention Program (Mental Health and Substance Use Initiatives)

- Launched an expanded harm reduction program, including the purchase and installation of naloxone dispensary boxes (“naloxoboxes”) throughout the community. Engaged in extensive outreach in Black and African American communities to prevent opioid overdose and increase awareness
- Worked with local treatment agencies to provide case management services to support individuals on their recovery journey

## Lead Poisoning Prevention

- In partnership with the Central New York Community Foundation, hosted a community Strategic Planning Event to identify and advance strategic priorities to address childhood lead poisoning
- Worked with the NYS Attorney General, the Onondaga County District Attorney and the EPA to hold accountable landlords and property owners whose uncorrected lead hazards resulted in lead poisoning of local children

## Tobacco Free Onondaga County

- Provided education and technical assistance to municipalities and other entities to create tobacco free grounds policies, including the Town of Van Buren and the New York State Fair
- Re-established Reality Check youth group in Syracuse. Youth participated in a number of awareness events and activities including NYS Tobacco Youth Advisory Board, World No Tobacco Day and a Smoke-Free Movie event at the Palace Theater
- Worked with landlords and property managers to establish 246 new smoke-free apartments

## Health Assessment Data Team

- Collaborated with local hospitals and community partners to develop the Community Health Assessment and Improvement Plan for Onondaga County. This included an extensive community feedback initiative, where input on health-related topics was gathered from nearly 4,000 local residents.
- The Community Health Improvement Plan will identify specific priority areas for collective action to improve public health, with a focus on achieving health equity and reducing disparities

## Healthy Families

- The Syracuse Healthy Start Program hosted a Family Wellness Day at the Everson Museum plaza in honor of National Minority Mental Health Awareness to showcase the resources available in our County.
- Hosted the Syracuse Stroll at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo to celebrate clients’ children reaching the milestone of their first birthday.
- COVID-19 vaccination door-to-door education and community engagement for disproportionately affected populations was conducted by Community Based Organizations using Outreach Workers through a NYSDOH grant.
- Produced video testimonials of clients regarding their experience with Healthy Families’ home visiting programs to promote our services to the community.

## Bureau of Disease Control

- Responded to the State’s monkeypox outbreak including working with local colleges and community agencies and advocates to communicate about the department’s vaccination clinics.
- Conducted a syphilis awareness campaign in response to the increased rates of STI’s across NYS

## Medical Examiner’s Office

- Fully resumed the SUNY Upstate pathology resident and internship programs
- The MEO's Toxicology Lab passed American Board of Forensic Toxicology mid-cycle accreditation

#### Forensic Laboratories

- Made significant progress transitioning to paperless systems: 80% of the Quality Management System through the use of existing compliance software; 50% of operations /casework through newly purchased devices and our existing Laboratory Information Management Systems (LIMS)
- Implemented new equipment to improve analysis and turn-around-time in the divisions of Firearms, DNA, and Digital Evidence
- The Labs continued to link putative perpetrators to crime scene evidence and among cases using and entering data in CODIS (DNA), SABIS (fingerprints), and NIBIN (ballistics).

#### 2022 BUDGET REVIEW

The Health Department is operating well within the 2022 budget.

#### SECTION 2:

##### 2023 BUDGET OVERVIEW

The 2023 budget includes standard salary and wage increases consistent with the baseline budgeting approach, as well as increased cost in maintenance & utilities, special children services and all other expenses due to inflation, contract escalators and increases in related service rates and transportation cost for preschool. Onondaga County related service rates will increase by approximately 20% for services including speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy and several others in the 2023-2024 school year. The baseline budget also supports a reorganization of the Vital Records office to promote staff retention and increase services, utilization of more grant funded Public Health Fellows to assist community organization promoting access to health care, and grant funded Lead program enhancements. The 2023 budget does include the addition of 4 new funded PH Social Worker Assistant positions to support the increased number of referrals to our Early Intervention program and comply with standard set by NYS to serve these children, families and agencies.

#### SECTION 3:

##### 2023 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Lead
- Opioid
- Health Equity and Access to Services
  - Implementation of the Community Health Improvement Plan
- Rec accreditation
  - PM-QI Plan
  - Workforce Development Plan
  - Communications Strategy and Branding Plan
- New departmental Strategic Plan

Recess: 10:10

Resume: 10:21

### **DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES – ECONOMIC SECURITY:** Sarah Merrick, Commissioner, Brian Lynch, Director of Administrative Services

- Thank you to management team and department staff. Never missed a beat through Covid
  - Moving out of Covid, the department has been responsible for implementing a number of additional programs resulting from Covid
  - During Covid, over 70 staff were contact tracers at the very beginning
  - Moved 70 staff into the Emergency Rental Assistance program
  - Hopeful that by the end of October the department will have distributed \$32M in rental relief to over 7,200 landlords on behalf of eligible tenants
  - Thank you and hats off to the Department of Social Services staff because this was over and above primary work, which is to run Temporary Assistance, SNAP, HEAP, Childcare Assistance, Child Support, and Medicaid
- Down 11% of workforce (53 staff members) and continue to run overtime in the budget
  - Trying to attract people into the public sector and bring back as many retirees as possible on the 103 line
- 2023 budget increase of \$4M in the 101 line due to the transfer of JOBSplus! to Temporary Assistance as well as the 8 staff mentioned during the Children and Family Services
- Significant reduction in the Contract line due to ending the JOBSplus! contract with OCC

- The balance of contracts we have in the Contractual line and Professional Services all support mandated services; whether it is employment, helping transition people to social services income
- Case load near all-time low in Temporary Assistance. Still monitoring to see whether that will be increasing as the federal money starts to disappear; whether it is financial Emergency Rental Assistance or SNAP
- All enhanced SNAP aid will be ending by the end of the year, there may be people coming back to ask for Temporary Assistance. This will be monitored closely
- Medicaid Payment Line - \$2M increase – Federal government pushed \$billions of medical relief to the States and therefore to the local level due to Covid. Anticipate the Federal share will be decreasing, resulting in the local share of Medicaid increasing in 2023
- Daycare is now affordable due to the changes at the State level
  - Local component \$1.4M; bulk of it is Federal dollars
  - People up to 300% of poverty level are eligible for 1% of the family share cost
  - Paying providers for absences, that is not typically done
- Forging ahead on 2Gen Poverty Reduction Project; looking for ways to improve on helping people find employment in the Temporary Assistance area

### Questions:

- Medicaid – Appropriations are going up \$2M, revenue is forecast to be down \$1M?
  - The weekly Medicaid bill is a local share bill that is already at the local amount, therefore, there is no revenue to offset it
- Medicaid – Is the \$99M what we pay?
  - Medicaid program was capped with an inflationary amount every year. About 5 years ago, Governor Cuomo put a hard cap in place. The numbers have ebbed and flowed due to the Affordable Care Act (ACA). The federal government incentivized States to expand their Medicaid program as part of trying to expand healthcare in the country
  - NYS had already expanded its population, so they made a play to say, “We have already done this, we should get the enhanced funding as well”. Onondaga County Medicaid cap payment has been lower as a result of that
  - When the pandemic hit, Federal government enhanced the base federal reimbursement rate for Medicaid
  - Fully anticipate that the enhanced revenue is going to cease to exist for 2023 and the County will be back to paying the normal \$99M per year for the program
- Is the \$99M comparable to pre-pandemic?
  - \$99M is Onondaga County’s statutory cap amount offset with estimated impact from revenue that comes in related to the ACA
- HEAP budget is the same as 2022. Will the rising costs of utilities be enough to cover?
  - Onondaga County is responsible in determining eligibility
  - NYS determines and allocates a set amount of money. Once the cap is met, the program is shut off
  - The County keeps \$70k on hand for some local payments made
  - 99.9% of the HEAP program does not funnel through the County budget anymore
  - When benefit amounts are determined and issued, they flow directly through the State
- Revisit caseload levels?
  - Caseloads are dependent on the program
    - Temporary Assistance is almost at a historical low. During Covid, County had approximately 3,800 cases, whereas currently at 4,100 cases. These numbers are still very low compared to pre-Covid
    - SNAP, like HEAP, cannot be seen in the budget. The aid is a direct payment outside the budget process, however, eligibility is still determined locally. Currently there are about 32,000 SNAP cases and have grown significantly as a result of Covid and remains high
- How many vacancies?
  - Currently have 53 vacancies
  - Filling these vacancies would meet the needs of the department
  - There are a few people who want to work overtime and few retirees who want to come back and work

- If we changed the way we operated, do you think people would be more attracted and want to work here?
  - Unclear what the workforce is looking for
    - Believe workforce is looking for some type of flexibility
    - DSS offers flexible hours (4 days work, 1 day off)
  - Hiring issue could be wages, working on site, parking or all of the above
  - Been able to hire all year long, but then leaving at the same rate
  - Exit interviews show that people are making life changing decisions i.e. moving out of state, going back to school, changing careers, along with a small percentage of retirees
  - Because DSS positions are considered Civil Service titles, we must hire from the Civil service list
    - With few people taking Civil Service exams, the department will sometimes need to hire provisionally
    - If an employee is hired provisionally, they must take and pass the Civil Service test when it comes available in order to retain their position
  
- Can we have a one-time Covid waiver through the State for Civil Service testing?
  - Have asked for waivers, but the State is not willing
  - There are multifaceted issues with Civil Service
    - Covid shut down ability to give the tests, therefore on about a 2 year back log with the State
    - 1 ½ years to take the test plus an additional 6 months to receive certified lists
  - New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) is working on this issue
  - State budget tried to address some of these issues and the Legislature was not up for it at that point
  - Every County and Municipality is suffering with the same issues
  
- What is the funding source for the 2Gen Poverty Reduction Initiative?
  - Grant funds from the State on the All Other Expenses line
  
- Other Miscellaneous Revenues down \$2.7M
  - Under the JOBSplus! contract, a certain portion of the program cost went back to the County
  - With the contract ending, there is a reduction in expense as well as reduction in revenue

## ONONDAGA COUNTY

p 4-53

## 2023 EXECUTIVE BUDGET WRITTEN STATEMENT – DSS-ES

## SECTION 1:

## 2022 INITIATIVES &amp; ACCOMPLISHMENTS

As of September 2022, **served over 100,000 unique County residents** with one or more programs and assisted over **47,000 visitors that have come to the** Civic Center. In addition, handling over **155,000 calls** regarding assistance. 57% of these calls have been in the SNAP program; Completing the implementation of various Emergency Rental Assistance programs (ARPA – City, City CDBG, OCERA, ESG City and County). By the close of the year, nearly **\$32 million** in rental arrears will have been distributed to over **7,200 landlords/tenants** to assist in averting evictions. Work in conjunction with Early Childhood Alliance to launch a marketing campaign to inform working parents about the affordability of childcare. Child Care assistance is available to households up to 300% FPL and the Family Share is 1%, down from 35%; Continue to expand participants in the 2Gen Onondaga Poverty Reduction Pilot. Continue to reorganize the TA Employment unit and improve efficiencies with an employment module being added to our case management system (VenTek). Preliminary data is showing employments are on track to be up 24% and SSI/SSDI approvals to be up 79%.

## 2022 BUDGET REVIEW

The department is projected to be within budget for 2022.

## SECTION 2:

## 2023 BUDGET OVERVIEW

The 2023 budget includes standard salary and wage increases consistent with the baseline budgeting approach. Included in the baseline are 7 positions transferred from Children and Family Services, 78 positions for JobsPlus! (offset by the decrease in the contract line for the former JobsPlus! contract) and 9 grant funded positions. Also included in the base are increased cost in supplies, maintenance & utilities and professional services due to inflation and contract escalators. Mandated Programs are also increased in the 2023 budget as result of the following program changes:

**Safety Net and Family Assistance** – Anticipate an increase in cases as all Federal Covid relief is diminishing; Anticipate in the Federal Year (October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023) settling 1,345 refugees and up to 240 Ukrainian refugees. An increase in those applying/eligible for SNAP which will carry into next year.

**Daycare** -NYS Child Care Budget changed eligibility to 300% FPL, parent share reduced to 1% (ours was 35%), paying up to 24 absences per year per child (we did not pay for absences) and changing the recertification timeframe from 6 months to 12 months – will result in working families accessing day care subsidies at or above pre-pandemic levels;

**Medical Payments** – We expect enhanced federal funding to end at the end of this year and not continue into 2023

## SECTION 3:

## 2023 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Continue recruiting and hiring efforts to fill all vacancies to meet projected programming expectations; Continue implementing the **2Gen Onondaga Poverty Reduction initiative**, part of the County Executive's PIE agenda, a comprehensive program to break the cycle of poverty in Onondaga County. Two-generation (2Gen) builds family well-being by intentionally and simultaneously working with children and the adults in their lives. The results are healthy parents with family-supporting jobs, healthy children meeting developmental milestones, and better-connected individuals able to participate in civic and family life. This approach focuses on five (5) domains that all work together to increase economic mobility for the parents (mom and dad) and development and education for the child. The five domains are: Education Success & Early Childhood Development, Postsecondary & Employment Pathways, Building Economic Assets, Building Social Capital, and Health and Well-being.

Continue to re-organize the TA Employment area to focus on client engagement and employment. For those unable to work, provide case management support to assist them in obtaining SSI/SSDI benefits.

Continue to develop tactics to address the demands of SNAP recipients, an area that increased 16% during the pandemic and has not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Continue to focus on developing the supervisory skills of fifty-five (55) supervisors of direct line staff.



- Thank you Legislators, Ways & Means Committee, Staff and Department Heads who attended and assisted in preparing for these hearings

The meeting was adjourned at 10:47a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Tammy Barber*

TAMMY BARBER, Deputy Clerk  
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: WAYS & MEANS BUDGET REVIEW ~ DAY 5  
DATE: SEPTEMBER 22, 2022

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
VANESSA PIZZANO	CNY Central
Emily Young	Health
MELANIE DROTAR	HEALTH
Steve Smoral	Fin Ops
Ranee Ho	Center Forensic Science
Lauren Pyland	Center Forensic Science
Catherine Unger	OCHD-Med
Carolyn H. Revercomb	OCHD/OCME
JONNA WHITE	OCHD/BDC
Rebecca Shwartz	OCHD/Comm. Health
Lisa Litterer	OCHD/Env. Health
Michelle Mignato	OCHD
Paul Kinder	OCHD
Shawn St Louis	OCHD
Elizabeth Prima	OCHD
Sarah Warwick	DSS-ES
BRYAN LYON	DSS-ES
Jennifer Robinson	DSS-ES
Lorraine Korkus	DSS-ES
Jill Steiner	DSS-ES
Narah Easterly	DSS-ES
Kristi Smiley	Finance
Steven Buff	Finance
Dawn Clamy	Personnel
Ashley Boyd	Personnel
Beth Morbass	Personnel
Anna Cunningham	DCFS
Kelly VanDyke	DCFS
Annika Paganello	Fin Ops
Jenn Pasmalee	DCFS
Tenasha Murphy	CE Office
Dominic Pratt	DCFS
J. Alexander	OCHD
Emilie Valvo	Personnel
Chloe Feller	DSS-ES