



Families Task Force

BOL Meeting Minutes - Published Draft

Task Force Co-Chairs:
Catherine Borgia & Kathy Halas

800 Michaelian Office Bldg.
148 Martine Avenue, 8th Floor
White Plains, NY 10601
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Thursday, April 1, 2021

10:00 AM

Committee Room

CALL TO ORDER

Co Chair Halas called the meeting to order at 10:04 AM.

Others in Attendance: Legislator Maher, Legislator Woodson-Samuels, Y. Valencia, Michael Orth, Caleb Hersh, Karin Anderson Ponzer, Kemi Poug, Commissioner Townes, M. Montalto, Marie Considine, Robi Schlaff, Alice Jeslow, Elizabeth Mark, Susan Weisman, Donovan Beckford, Josh Pryers, Shirley Acevedo Buentempo, Jasmin Drew, Youth Shelter of Westchester, Marcia Spencer, Stan Sheppard, D. Carinici, Jan Fisher, Cindy Kanusher, Tom Gabriel, Esmeraldo Hoscoy, Carolyn Flunckinger

Absent Legislator Nancy Barr, and Legislator Benjamin Boykin

Remote Chairperson Catherine Borgia, Legislator Christopher Johnson, Legislator Damon Maher, Legislator Ruth Walter, and Legislator Alfreda Williams

MINUTES APPROVAL

I. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Immigration Update

Karin Anderson Ponzer was introduced and spoke to the task force on updates on immigration. She spoke about the US Citizenship Act of 2021, the Dream and Promise Act, this would be legalization for DACA, TPS holders and legalization of essential workers. Under these Acts, an estimate of half of the 11,000,000 undocumented would benefit a path to permanent resident status and citizenship. The Farm Workforce Modernization Act would allow agricultural workers and reforms to the temporary visa program for those workers was introduced last month. The Office for New Americans provides services on the state level. The governor has committed 1 million dollars to fund citizenship, immigration, legal services for the liberty defense project fund to access legal council for New Yorkers facing deportation. The concern is that immigration courts have been closed for over a year and at some point the courts will open, thousands of people do not know when their next hearing is and do not have access to the internet to find out. These people are still vulnerable to deportation and they will need legal council. The state's Hero's Act provides labor protections for all, this is similar to the County's Immigration Protection Act.

2. Covid and mental health

Guests:

- Michael Orth, Commissioner
- Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health

Commissioner Orth introduced himself and went on to discuss a Power Point presentation on the impact of Covid 19 and mental health. He mentioned that we are going through a mental

health crises in our country, even prior to the pandemic and took a look at other health issues. Their were 70,980 overdose deaths in 2019 and the leading cause of death for those under 50. Suicide is the leading cause of death among 15-24 year olds. Studies show that 10 % of children receiving services don't get them for more than three months. In 2008, there was a federal law that requires health insurance companies to provide equal access and funding for both physical and behavioral health. Unfortunately, that has not always been the case. Some of the challenges are lack of enforcement and oversight in NYS. The AG's office has a special division and they have investigated 7 health plans and have imposed financial penalties. There's a lack of authorized visits, as well as a lack of choice. Mental heal is an issue not many choose to discuss. In 2018 Executive Latimer completed a report looking at the health priorities in the county depression and mental health were the number one concern, followed by suicide, drugs and alcohol, in which many do not wish to discuss these issues. Data taken form police departments, emergency departments, and from psychiatric hospitals and based on insurance claims show that suicide attempts have gone up since the pandemic. Commissioner Orth is working on the 2019 and 2020 numbers and will forward them when completed. Effective July 16, 2022, the National Suicide prevention hot line will have a three digit number (988) for crisis intervention assistance, these calls will be directed to St Vincent Hospital for local residents. The task force will be sending a survey to all members to ask what is most important for future discussions. Please take a few minutes to complete it. The next task force meeting will be May 6 at 10:00 a.m.

II. OTHER BUSINESS

III. RECEIVE & FILE

ADJOURNMENT

The Families Task Force adjourned at 11:25 AM.