HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING
April 16, 2019

Present: Legislators Greg Kulzer, Randy LaChausse, Andrea Moroughan, John Lehman and Chairman Larry Dolhof.

Others Present: Legislator Ron Burns, Legislator Tom Osborne entered at 4:05 p.m., County Manager Ryan Piche, County Attorney Joan McNichol, Human Resources Director Chris Boulio, Community Services Director Pat Fralick, OFA Director Kelly Hecker, Public Health Representative Joe Austin, Social Services Commissioner Jenny Jones & several staff, and reporters Nick Altmire and Julie Abbass.

Committee Chairman Greg Kulzer called the meeting at 3:58 p.m.

Legislator Moroughan made a motion to accept the minutes from the March 19, 2019 committee meeting as recorded, seconded by Legislator LaChausse. Motion carried.

Veterans’ Service Agency Presentation (attached) – Stephen Kilianski

Steve handed out copies of his 2019 1st Quarter Report for the Veterans’ Service Agency. He noted that most of the quarter’s good outcome came from VA Disability Compensation payments, which increased money into the local economy by $174,496.39. Every time a veteran is signed up for VA Healthcare it is one less person enrolled in the Medicaid system which is an average savings of $53,214. There were a total of 44 Veterans signed up for VA Healthcare this quarter.

The VA’s new Community Program, which will be fully implemented in June, will allow local providers to help with healthcare needs keeping travel costs and wait times down for Veterans. In August the G.I. Bill will raise the tuition assistance for private and foreign schools by $804.85. The VA is adding bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, hypertension, and Parkinson’s like symptoms to the list of presumptive diseases linked to Agent Orange as well as adding Blue Water Navy Veterans to the presumptive exposure list. Purple Heart recipients will now be in the same top-priority category for adjudicating disability compensation claims as Medal of Honor recipients and former POW’s.

Steven concluded his report by stating he has helped four different Veterans and their families purchase new homes in Lewis County through the VA Home Loan Guarantee Program.

OFA Director Kelly Hecker reported briefly that the “Senior Prom” was well attended and a huge success with the help of County Manager Ryan Piche being the MC for the 3rd straight time.

Commissioner Jenny Jones introduced her staff that was in attendance: Principal Social Welfare Examiner Caroline Virkler, Support Examiner Tracy Pate, Social Services Investigator Sandy Lane, Senior Social Services Program Examiner Amanda Waugh, and Staff & Workforce Development Coordinator Lisa Hetzner.

Lewis County Temporary Assistance Presentation (attached) – Caroline Virkler (DSS)
Caroline began by explaining that the Temporary Assistance staff of 6 handle a variety of other “Emergencies” on top of their TA caseload, like finding shelter for the homeless, evictions, shelter arrears, car repairs, moving and storage expenses and even bus tickets to relocate people back to their original location. The TA cases have dropped since 1996 to only 83 currently active cases. The two Acts that helped reform the TA program were the Personal Responsibility Act of 1996 which provided TANF block grant funding, required certain participation rates, established time limits for benefits, and supported personal responsibility, self-sufficiency, and work; and The NYS Welform Reform Act of 1997 which replaced the ADC program with the FA program, replaced NY’s Home Relief program with NYS Safety Net Assistance Program, and established time limits for receipt of cash assistance.

Temporary Assistance has two programs: Family Assistance and Safety Net Assistance. The Family Assistance Program has a 60 month lifetime limit and the Safety Net Assistance Program has a 24 month lifetime limit. Once the limit is reached individuals must be moved to non-cash Safety Net Assistance. This means that the payments no longer go to the individual but directly to the vendor.

Family Assistance is reimbursed 100% with Federal monies and Safety Net is reimbursed 29% by State monies and 71% local monies. In 2018 both Programs combined spent $802,411 of which $506,787 was Federal monies, $85,731 was State monies and $209,893 was local monies. This doesn’t included any Administrative costs to either of the programs.

Out of the currently active cases, 48 are in the Family Assistance Program and 35 are in the Safety Net Program. Recently there were 12 cases where the individual became self-sufficient and was able to obtain a job. There are 5 cases where the individuals are currently in Drug and Alcohol facilities for treatment which is $1,200/month and sometimes by court order before they even sign up for benefits. The Income and Resource Guidelines are set by the State and for a household of one the maximum monthly payment is only $406, for a family of 4 it is $889. You are only eligible is your resource limit is $2,000 or under or $3,000 and under if you are over 60. This is any money you have in the bank or any assets like vehicles or property. If the individual owns a home there will be a lien put on it.

The requirements for Temporary Assistance are to meet income and resource guidelines, if you are able to work you have to actively look for work and if you are not able to work you have to keep all your medical appointments, you have to cooperate with any investigations, follow all drug and alcohol requirements, cooperate with any procedures to obtain child support, allow liens to be put on property, and be finger printed to check if you are receiving any benefits outside of the state.

The TA application is 27 pages long and there is a 30 day waiting period before benefits can be issued. The initial interview process can take up to 3 hours and if there is any domestic violence issues that could add another additional hour. The Investigation Unit will do a home visit to look at the living conditions, who lives in the residence and what property is owned. There were 179 home visits completed in 2018 which helped keep overpayments down to only $38,000 over the year.

In addition to the TA application there is an additional Child Support application that is 8 pages, this application is designed to help find out if there are any absent parents. If anyone under the
The age of 21 applies for TA. If the parents don’t want to support the child, this unit will petition the court to order the parents to pay. This allows the TA Program to recoup some if not all of the money being expended. There is also a Drug and Alcohol questionnaire, if there is any past use they are automatically referred to Credo.

The Employment Unit is involved in working with clients to find them a job so they can become self-sufficient. They follow up with clients on a regular basis to make sure they are looking for work or keeping all their medical appointments to get healthy enough to work. They also meet with a TA examiner to go over all the paperwork that needs to be submitted as there are many documents.

The TA Program requires each separate Unit to case conference with each other on each specific client’s case to make sure that the goal of getting clients back to being self-sufficient is being met in the best and quickest way possible. The TA Program is just a small piece of what DSS does and there are other programs available for assistance including HEAP and SNAP. Out of the 35 application received last month only about 40% are opened and 60% are denied for eligibility/guideline requirements.

The following dockets/motions were then approved:

**Dockets**

1. Resolution Appointing Members to Sub-Committees of Lewis County Community Services Board. To Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Sub-Committee: Ashley Waite to fulfill the unexpired term of Penny Ingham from 5/8/2019 – 12/31/2021 and Linda Wilton to fulfill the unexpired term of Patricia O’Donnell from 5/8/2019 – 12/31/2019. To Mental Health Sub-Committee: Ashley Waite to fill vacancy from 5/8/2019 through 12/31/2022. There was discussion on the process for appointing individuals. Pat Fralick commented that she asks her governance committee for suggestions, does phone interviews, and makes sure each individual meets the stringent requirements. There are certain requirements for each sub-committee as far as the representation that makes up the board. Pat did respond to Legislator Lehman’s question that there are board members who have been through treatment programs.

2. Resolution for MOU between Public Health and Village of Lowville Police Department for onsite security at locations identified as either County Staging Sites (CSS), used for receiving supplies and material distributed through the New York State Office of Emergency Management or Department of Health to Public Health, or Point of Distribution Sites (POD’s) for the purpose of conducting mass immunization clinics or medication distribution to the entire population of Lewis County. Public Health has the responsibility to develop a bioterrorism or large-scale communicable disease outbreak preparedness and response plan assigned by the New York State Department of Health and the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

3. Resolution to rescind Resolution No. 492-2018 and authorize a multi-year contract between the Lewis County Public Health Agency and the New York State Department of Health for the purpose of the Rabies Program. The Board of Legislators previously authorized an agreement between the Lewis County Public Health Agency and the New York State Department of Health for the purpose of the Rabies Program pursuant to Resolution No. 492-2018. Upon review, the adopted resolution mistakenly set forth the ending date of March 31, 2020 that should have read 2022.
4. Resolution to appropriate Department of Social Services Federal allocations to support “connectivity” to Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and other Homeless Services Plans in the amount of $45,000.

5. Resolution for budget transfer in the Workforce Investment Opportunity Act accounts to reallocate funds in the amount of $1,516.16.

6. Resolution re-appointing individuals to serve on the Leis County Youth Bureau Advisory Board: John Exford, Scott Mathys, Rhonda Vanucchi, Mike Leviker, and Brian Finn all for the term of June 4, 2019 through June 4, 2021.

Motions

1. Motion to authorize Social Services Commissioner Jennifer Jones to refill a Social Services Program Examiner effective immediately, due to a resignation. In response to Legislator Kulzer Jenny Jones asked that the temporary PT person who came back from retirement to fill in remain until part way through June so that they can be utilized to train the new employee as there has been serval retirements and turn over making for a very green staff.

Legislator LaChausse made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:17 p.m., seconded by Legislator Lehman. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Cassandra Moser, Deputy Clerk to the Board of Legislators
**Highlights**

VA’s new Community Care Program on track to be fully implemented in June 2019 that will provide healthcare for Veterans from providers in the local community outside of VA. Veterans may be eligible to receive this care from a community provider when VA cannot provide care. This care is provided on behalf of and paid for by VA.

Effective August 1, 2019, the maximum yearly G.I. Bill rate for anyone using the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill at a private or foreign school will increase from $23,671.94 to $24,476.79.

VA is on the verge of recognizing up to four more medical conditions as presumptively linked to Agent Orange exposure... bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, hypertension and Parkinson's-like symptoms.

VA Secretary Robert Wilkie recommended that the U.S. Department of Justice refrain from appealing the Federal Circuit decision that finally expanded the presumption of Agent Orange exposure to Blue Water Navy Veterans. This means that the VA has conceded the accuracy of this decision. Unless the Department of Justice decides to contradict the VA’s decision, the Federal Circuit's holding will stand as valid law, securing the ability of Blue Water Navy Veterans to be granted the same legal presumptions as all other in-country Vietnam Veterans.

Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) will place Purple Heart recipients in the top-priority category for adjudicating disability compensation claims; giving them the same type of priority as Medal of Honor recipients and former Prisoners of War.

Assisted four different Veterans and their families with the purchase of a new home in Lewis County through the VA Home Loan Guarantee Program.
Lewis County Temporary Assistance Caseload
4/16/19

Created by Caroline Virkler, Principal Social Welfare Examiner
Lewis County DSS Temporary Assistance staff consists of 1 Community Services Worker, 3 Social Services Program Examiners, and 1 Senior Social Services Program Examiners, and myself who is the Principal Social Welfare Examiner.

Besides handling the TA Caseload, they also handle a variety of Emergencies, such as housing our homeless people, evictions, shelter arrears, car repairs, moving and storage expenses, etc. We’re even able to buy bus tickets to relocate people back to where they came from when the find themselves stranded in Lewis County!
In Lewis County we currently have 83 active Temporary Assistance Cases.

The Personal Responsibility Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) and then the NYS Welfare Reform Act of 1997 shifted the focus of government/public assistance from entitlement to personal responsibility and self-sufficiency.
PRWORA is federal legislation that:
1. Provided Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant funding to states, thus ending public assistance as an entitlement.
2. Required States to meet certain work participation rates.
3. Established Time Limits for receipt of federally funded benefits.

The NYS Welfare Reform Act:
1. Replaced NY’s Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) program with the Family Assistance (FA) program under the TANF block grant.
2. Replaced NY’s Home Relief program with the NYS Safety Net Assistance Program (SNA).
3. Established Time Limits for receipt of cash assistance.
NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) is the State Agency that administers Temporary Assistance.

Within Temporary Assistance are two programs:

1. Family Assistance (households with minor children or pregnant women)

2. Safety Net Assistance (single individuals with no children)

Local districts are responsible for designing and delivering Temporary Assistance Programs and executing local welfare-to-work programs for these TA recipients.
Time Limits:
Family Assistance – Adults are limited to 60 months in their lifetime.

Once this limit is reached, the individuals must be moved to non-cash Safety Net Assistance.

Time Limits:
Safety Net Assistance – Adults are limited to 24 months in their lifetime.

Once this limit is reached, the individuals must be moved to non-cash Safety Net Assistance.
Reimbursements:

TANF Program Costs (Family Assistance) are reimbursed at 100% Federal Monies.

Safety Net Program Costs are reimbursed at 29% State Monies, leaving 71% for the Local Share.

In 2018, $506,787 was spent on TANF Programs.
    $295,624 was spent on Safety Net Programs.
This totals $802,411 of which $506,787 was Federal Share,
$85,731 was State Share, and $209,893 was Local Share.

These are program costs only and do not include Administrative Costs.
As of March 2019, Lewis County has 83 Temporary Assistance Cases. (Back in 1995, there were 421 active TA cases.)

Family Assistance – 48 cases
Safety Net – 35 cases

Child Only – 45 cases
Families/Single people – 38 cases

Currently in Drug and Alcohol Facilities – 5 cases

Employable – 7 cases. 1 case sanctioned for not complying with drug & alcohol requirements
Non-Employable – 40 cases
Income and Resource Guidelines

The TA budget is based on household’s needs. Household needs are determined by the household size and the Standard of Needs set by the State and County Guidelines.

- **Household of One:**
  - Basic Allowance: $158
  - Home Energy Allowance: $14.10
  - Supplemental Energy Allowance: $11
  - Shelter Allowance: $152
  - Fuel Allowance: $71
  - **Total Needs: $406**

- **Family of Four:**
  - Basic Allowance: $433
  - Home Energy Allowance: $38.70
  - Supplemental Energy Allowance: $30
  - Shelter Allowance: $314
  - Fuel Allowance: $74
  - **Total Needs: $889**

Resource Limit: $2000. If age 60 or over, then $3,000

**Shelter allowances were last updated in 2003.**

*Temporary Assistance (TA) is designed to be short-term help available for eligible families and individuals as they work toward self-sufficiency.*
Requirements for Temporary Assistance:
Meet Income and Resource Guidelines
If able to work, then look for work.
If not able to work, then keep your medical appointments.
FEDS/EVR Investigations
Drug and Alcohol Requirements
Locate absent parents and obtain child support
Domestic Violence
Liens
Finger Imaged
Next we will demonstrate what happens during the Temporary Assistance application process.