



Meeting of the
Policy Committee
February 1, 2008, 3:00-5:00 pm

Members Present: Matt Lesieur (Chair), Sean Cahill, PhD, Gregory Cruz, Elaine Greeley, Esther Lok, Paul Meissner, Darryl Ng, Jan Carl Park

DOHMH Staff Present: Nina Rothschild, Clarissa Silva, Darryl Wong

Welcome/Introductions: The meeting opened with a round of introductions.

Review of Minutes: The minutes from the previous meeting of the Policy Committee on January 4, 2008 were accepted by acclamation.

Policy Issues:

Ryan White Reauthorization: The first New York City-area community forum on Ryan White reauthorization will take place in the Bronx. When the CAEAR (Communities Advocating for Emergency AIDS Relief) meeting takes place in Washington, attendees will hear a report on a community forum on Ryan White reauthorization in Chicago. Shifting the attention of participants at the forums from individual complaints to the larger goals of the community is crucial. Mr. Park noted that three or four town hall meetings using a toolkit prepared by C2EA (the Campaign to End AIDS) have already taken place.

New York City Budget: New York City has a \$57 billion budget and a \$1.3 billion deficit this year. Although a deficit sounds bleak, the City does have money left over from last year's surplus in the Mayor's preliminary budget. The Mayor's executive budget can be expected in mid-February, and the City Council will negotiate over it for six weeks. Although this isn't a slash-and-burn year, obtaining additional money for HIV will be an uphill battle.

HASA for All: The Planning Council adopted a HASA for All platform at its July meeting, at which time members voted to send a letter to City Council Speaker Christine Quinn asking for a hearing on HASA for All. Both the Speaker and the Mayor are opposed to this issue. If the Speaker agrees to hold a hearing on the topic, the Planning Council Community Co-Chair could submit an additional letter in support.

Sex Education in Schools: Sean Cahill suggested that the Policy Committee release a position statement on sex education in schools. Sean Cahill will gather and disseminate a summary of research showing that pro-gay interventions in schools correlate with reduced HIV risk behavior. Dr. Cahill also mentioned the Dignity for All Students ACT (DASA) encouraging gay-straight alliances, opposing bullying, and promoting tolerance and dignity for all students. Mayor Bloomberg says that New York City can't move on the Act without State approval.

New York State Budget: The good news about the State budget is that Medicaid reimbursement rates will finally change. More money will go into prevention and primary care than into episodic treatment, and fees to physicians will increase. Hospital reimbursement rates will also be examined. The reduction in reimbursement rates to pharmacies, however, is a matter of concern: will pharmacies drop out of the Medicaid program?

People being released from prison will now be able to apply directly to the State for Medicaid, a policy which should facilitate continuity in their medical care during the transition from incarceration to civilian life. Another element promoting continuity is a new policy that an individual who moves within the State will continue to be covered by his or her old plan for thirty days.

Individuals who are dually eligible for Medicaid and Medicare will have to use the same managed care plan for both programs.

The State is spending \$3.6 billion this year on HIV/AIDS. The State is also expanding its condom distribution program and providing money to AIDS service organizations for hepatitis C work. Jan Park asked how many of the State dollars come into the City. Close to 80% of the money probably goes to the City; Sean Cahill agreed to try to find the definitive answer to this question.

Money from SSI will not count toward an individual's income when determining eligibility for housing.

HCRA pools come from a tax on hospitals. These tax dollars support health care initiatives, work force training for doctors, care for the uninsured, and the AIDS Institute budget.

There was some disagreement on the Governor's proposed reforms to Medicaid and, therefore, no consensus on generating a formal statement on the Governor's Medicaid proposals.

Universal Health Insurance (Gottfried Bill): This topic was originally introduced so that all members of the Policy Committee are aware of the bill's existence. The Policy Committee supports universal coverage and universal access. Sean Cahill will find out how the Massachusetts health coverage plan is working so that Policy Committee members (and ultimately, the Planning Council as a whole) can learn from other states' experiences. Connie Gardner has raised a question regarding universal coverage. If Ryan White is a gap-filler, and the State mandates coverage for everyone, what is the role of Ryan White? Would Ryan White cover aspects of care that are not covered under universal insurance?

New York State Testing and Confidentiality Law: New York State Health Commissioner Richard Daines is worried about mandatory offering of HIV testing to all individuals entering health facilities. He is concerned about funding for the offer. One possible compromise on the testing issue would be a durable opt-in provision – in other words, individuals would permanently opt-in to testing until they make a decision to opt-out. Paul Meissner noted that Montefiore offers testing without doing a prior risk assessment. Assemblywoman Nettie Mayersohn has sponsored a bill which would require only verbal consent, rather than written informed consent.

COBRA-Lombardi Long Term Care Regulations: Care for clients who are eligible for COBRA and Lombardi long-term services can be covered by either COBRA or Lombardi but not both. The State will meet with COBRA providers to develop a strategy for circumventing this restriction.

Clients can only be in COBRA case management for three years. COBRA case management serves as a gatekeeper, after which a client should be able to move into Ryan White case management, which is more about quality of life. COBRA programs have kept people stable but may be less successful at helping them to transition to a stepped-down level of care. Policy Committee members agreed that someone should speak to the Needs Assessment Committee regarding COBRA case management, as Needs Assessment is involved in discussing case management in anticipation of re-RFPing this service category.

Federal Appropriations: The Federal appropriations process will start again during the week of February 4th when the President releases his budget.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 pm.