

Suffolk County Legislature



WELFARE TO WORK COMMISSION

of the Suffolk County Legislature
c/o Clerk of the Legislature
725 Veterans Memorial Highway
Smithtown NY 11787
631-499-6725

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Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair

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The INN

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Harry Chapin Food Bank

April 23, 2009

TO: Members of the Health and Human Services Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature

Health and Human Services Committee Chair Kate Browning responded to a recommendation in the Welfare to Work Commission's October 2008 *Report on Understaffing at the Suffolk County Department of Social Services* by securing monthly SCDSS staffing reports from the legislative Budget Review Office.

Attached is the Commission's analysis of the staffing report as of March 22, 2009, as well as several other sources, which led us to the disturbing conclusion that, while staff vacancies for this period are at 12.9%, the demand for services has increased by 14%. A separate BRO memo reported that in Client Benefits alone, the staff vacancy rate rose to 11% in March, 2009 compared with 9% in March of 2008.

The Commission's analysis of the 2009 staff vacancies and the increase in services points to an untenable situation in which there has been a 14% increase in the demand for services at SCDSS while Client Benefits staff vacancies have increased by 22% over last year when the Department was not coping with a severe recession.

Additionally, the Commission found that the total salary expenditure for these vacant positions in March, 2009 could have been \$1.7 million. Yet, using 2008 reimbursement rates, federal and state estimated reimbursements of \$1.5 million could have net the County only \$218,425 in salary expenditures. The Commission feels that not filling the SCDSS positions yields a meager salary savings for the County when measured against the possible loss of \$1.5 million federal/state funds that could have been pumped into Suffolk's ailing economy, as well as the strains that the vacancies are placing on staff and clients.

The Commission understands that the County is facing a severe revenue shortage. But we also believe that SCDSS staffing and quality services should be of the highest priority in these tough economic times.

Yours truly for the Commission,

Richard Koubek

Richard Koubek, Ph.D., Chair

Kathy Liguori

Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair

Summary and Analysis of Suffolk County Department of Social Services (SCDSS) Staff Vacancies as of March 22, 2009
Prepared by Richard Koubek, Chair, Welfare to Work Commission of the Suffolk County Legislature, April 14, 2009

The SCDSS staff vacancy data in this report were analyzed by the Welfare to Work Commission at their April 14th meeting. The data on current SCDSS staff vacancies are taken from the legislative Budget Review Office (BRO) report, "DSS Vacant Positions as of 03/22/09." Data on the staff reimbursement rates are taken from a September 23, 2008 SCDSS memo provided to the Commission and a 2007 report to the Legislature transmitted by County Comptroller Joseph Sawicki, Jr. Data on increases in services are taken from a March 12, 2009 BRO memo to Legislator Kate Browning, "2007 vs. 2008 DSS Major Trends" and *Newsday*. Footnotes appear on page. 2.

Approp./Unit	Vacancies/Total Budgeted	% Vacant	Increase in Services¹	Biweekly Vac. Salary Total	% Reimbursed²	Est. Reimbursements³
6005/Gen. Admin.	21/147	14.3%	NA	\$26,379	81.7%	\$21,551
6006/IT	10/45	22.2%	NA	\$13,620	Av. 87.5%⁴	\$11,917
6008/Hous./Adult/ Employ.	20/175	11.4%	Av.⁵ +11.2%	\$32,778	82.6%	\$27,074
6010/Fam./Childrens	16/438	3.7%	NA	\$22,626	60.7%	\$13,733
6015/Client Benefits	36/308	11%	Av.⁶ +15%	\$55,966	Av. 69%⁷	\$38,616
6073/Child Support/Enforce	18/159	11.3%	NA	\$26,430	80.3%	\$21,223
6204 Medicaid	106/495	21.4%	Av.⁸ +25%	\$162,150	100%	\$162,150
Grand Total	229/1,782	12.9%	+14%⁹	\$339,949		\$295,474

Summary:	Salaries¹⁰ for Vacant Positions, Jan. 1-March 22	\$1,699,745
	Less Federal/State Estimated Reimbursements	- \$1,481,320
	Net Estimated County Unspent Appropriations	\$ 218,425

¹ March 12 Budget Review Office (BRO) memo to Leg. Kate Browning, “2007 vs. 2008 DSS Major Trends”

² SCDSS memo, “Staffing as of 9/19/08,” presented by Roland Hampson and Linda O’Donohoe at the Welfare to Work Commission meeting on September 23, 2008.

³ Ibid. Calculation of Estimated Reimbursements based on 2008 reimbursement rates. The 2009 reimbursement rates have not yet been released.

⁴ Ibid., IT average reimbursement range from 81.7-93.94%

⁵ March 12 (BRO) memo, Op. Cit.. Average of these reported caseload increases:

- Homeless individuals: + 8.5%
- Emergency housing placements: +14%

⁶ Ibid. Average of Food Stamps and Temporary assistance reported caseload increases:

- Food Stamps +19%
- Temporary Assistance +11%
 - Safety Net Individual +14%
 - Safety Net Family +18%
 - Family Assistance + 7%

⁷ 69% average reimbursement as per October 2007 *Department of Social Services Accounting Payment Process Report* transmitted to the Legislature by County Comptroller Joseph Sawicki, Jr. and referenced in the October, 2008 *Welfare to Work Commission Report on Understaffing at the Suffolk County Department of Social Services*, p 22.

⁸ March 12 BRO memo, Op. Cit., average of these reported caseload increases:

- Medicaid Community +19%
- Managed Care +31%

⁹ Newsday, April 8, 2009. The 14% increase in applications processed, 2009 over 2008, was provided to Newsday by SCDSS spokesperson, Roland Hampson.

¹⁰ March 12 BRO memo, Op. Cit., Salary data does not include benefits. Summary calculated on 5 biweekly pay periods, January 1-March 22, 2009.