

**WINNEBAGO COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

PUBLIC HEARING

DATE: Wednesday, June 24, 2009

LOCATION: Oshkosh Public Library, Room A/B

TIME: 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Don Griesbach, Jef Hall, Jim Koziczowski, Ron Kuehl, Donna Lohry, Rob Paterson, Harvey Rengstorf, and Tom Widener

BOARD MEMBERS EXCUSED: Mike Norton

STAFF PRESENT: Bill Topel, Ken Stoffel, Tom Saari, Mary Krueger, Leo Podoski, Ellen Shute, Ann Kriegel, Marty Watkins, Ron Duerkop, and Dorothy De Grace

Jim Koziczowski, chair of the Department of Human Services Board, opened the hearing at 6:00 p.m. by welcoming those present in the audience and introducing the Board members and staff who were present. Jim explained that the intent of the public hearing is to provide an opportunity for the public to comment on programs funded by the Department of Human Services for residents of Winnebago County who are affected by developmental disabilities, chemical dependency or mental illness, and on the financial and social service programs available through the Department. Jim reviewed the guidelines for the hearing.

The following information is testimony given:

Testimony given by Ginger Beuk: Ginger thanked the Board for the services she receives through the Long Term Support program. It adds a great deal to her quality of life.

Testimony given by Kathy Keen: Kathy expressed concerns about what has been done in the system regarding family members calling to alert Human Services when there is a problem or concern about another family member. She feels there should be more follow-up and communication with the family members who know the person best.

Testimony given by Jean Krings: Jean represents the Hope & Care Center in Oshkosh. She thanked the Board for its financial support last year. The money is the biggest part of their budget right now. She said NAMI (National Alliance for the Mentally Ill) owns their building, but they are a non-profit drop-in center. They are looking for other funding to help them stay open. She would like to check into the possibility of their program being located in a building that the county might purchase, since their clientele are already receiving mental health services through us. She suggested that it would save the county the money that they currently give them for rent.

Testimony given by Mark Ziemer: Mark is the director of senior services for the city of Oshkosh. He thanked the Board for its support, especially in the area of Long Term Support and Elderly Services. A portion of the funding they get from us goes to the Oshkosh Senior Center for staffing of their registered nurse and program director for educational programs and exercise classes. Mark thanked staff for collaborating with them and other agencies wherever possible in working out solutions for seniors.

Testimony given by Paul Eisen: Paul is a Winnebago County Supervisor. He said he recently learned that the number of food share recipients in Winnebago County has increased by 1,000 since the first of January. New mandated programs for health care will be expanding Medicaid services, but state revenues are declining. Paul is concerned that with the current economic downturn the Human Services budget will be overwhelmed. In the past he has advocated for zero-based budgeting and has been critical of the Human Services budget which addresses broad categories of services, making it difficult to assess programs and their outcomes for efficiency and effectiveness. Paul said he would like the Human Services Board and the Department to review and consider the November 2007 Personnel Function Review Committee report, which specifies options to program adjustments and service cost reductions as a guide and starting point. He said it is a ready source of input to balance the scale for the needs of our citizens.

Testimony given by Rodney Keen: Rodney stated that he and his wife attended a 12-week class at NAMI so they could be educated about mental illness. He found that his situation was equal to that of other people that attended the class, no matter how big or small the situation. His message was that it is a win-win situation when participants can attend classes and programs given by volunteers through organizations in our community like NAMI.

Testimony given by Diana Drew: Diana is secretary for the local affiliate of NAMI and she is a family instructor for NAMI. She spoke on behalf of the Hope & Care Center. She said it is a wonderful place for those with mental disabilities to spend some time associating with others and sharing some common problems through discussion. Diana said NAMI's role is advocacy and education for the family. Their funding comes from grants and public donations. The 12-week class they offer is at no expense to families. She advocated for the Hope & Care Center, which she said deals directly with the consumer.

With no further testimonies offered, the hearing was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Submitted by:

Dorothy De Grace, Secretary
Winnebago County Department of Human Services