

## **NYPWA All Commissioners' Meeting Summary**

as held on April 6, 2023

*Sarah Merrick, NYPWA President*

NYPWA President Sarah Merrick and Executive Director Paul Brady opened April's hybrid All Commissioners' Meeting by welcoming everyone attending in-person and on WebEx.

NYPWA and the commissioners representing OTDA and OCFS will be meeting for lunch in the coming weeks to talk informally about reestablishing a stronger collaborative partnership between the state agencies and local districts. Stay tuned!

### **State Budget News—Little Movement on Final Agreement...Budget Extenders Passed**

On April 3, the Governor submitted and the Legislature passed a budget extension until Monday, April 10 as both sides continue to negotiate a final 2023-24 state budget. Bail reform has emerged as the major topic of conversation between the Governor and legislative leaders, with the Assembly Speaker describing it as “sucking up most of the air” during discussions. To date, only one, non-controversial, budget bill (out of 10 total) has been passed. The Governor has also noted that she expects negotiations to extend past the April 10 extension deadline—but could not predict how late the budget will ultimately end up. This required an additional [budget extender](#) to be passed to keep state government up and running until April 17—as well as ensure that state workers continue to get paid, although state lawmakers will see their paychecks halted until a final budget is passed. The NYPWA will continue to monitor budget developments and share any important information with you as it becomes available.

### **Temporary Assistance/Housing/SNAP**

#### *Homeless Housing/Code Blue Workgroup*

The Homeless Housing/Code Blue Workgroup held a virtual meeting on Friday, March 24<sup>th</sup> to help identify priority homeless issues and potential solutions. A summary of that meeting is attached to the Commissioners' Meeting summary email. With the initial meeting complete, the NYPWA has shared this summary with OTDA and invited them to send representatives to the next workgroup meeting. Thanks again to all the workgroup members and their input!

#### *SNAP*

Commissioners noted that there has not been a large reaction to the loss of enhanced pandemic SNAP payments. It was mentioned that perhaps the influx of tax refund dollars has offset the initial financial hit to SNAP recipients. The NYPWA will monitor the situation and welcome Commissioners input on the local reaction to the loss of these funds.

## *SNA/TANF Caseloads*

There are still concerns that the loss of pandemic SNAP dollars could result in higher SNA numbers—however, many districts reported that numbers have been flat overall. Despite this, it was recommended by some that districts pay attention to overdue applications and to check the Commissioners’ Dashboard for any cases with an error status. Some noted that they close their departments to the public and hold ‘paperwork’ days twice a week to catch up on applications.

## **Medicaid**

### *Notification of Weekly Shares*

Weekly shares were issued last week with no change. However, the Medicaid changes contained within the proposed Executive budget could impact the shares if enacted—especially on already adopted local budgets. In fact, the acting DOB Director, Robert Megna, recently issued a [letter to the editor](#) in defense of withholding county eFMAP dollars for the state.

## **Children Services**

### *Signs of Safety*

Commissioner Kit Kephart (Tompkins) provided a [link](#) to more information and history regarding the Signs of Safety, which OCFS is beginning to unveil.

### *The State of Caseworker Training*

It was noted that the state is having difficulties scheduling caseworker training due to their own staffing issues. Without a large enough trainee pool from districts, they cannot schedule a full training session. In terms of test prep for local caseworkers, some counties are collaborating with local unions, college-based CoC centers, and utilizing staff development coordinators to help prepare workers for the tests.

### *Day Care*

OCFS recently issued emergency [regulations](#) that took effect on March 31 “allowing districts the option to authorize child care assistance for 24 months. Additionally, this rule revises companion regulations time frames to align with the implementation of 24-month eligibility.” Despite these emergency regulations, Commissioners indicated that WMS is not yet ready for the proposed changes.

The state’s [Child Care Availability Task Force](#) relaunched with a March 13 meeting...with another planned for June. Universal Child Care is a topic of growing interest within the task force—this as frontline district staff feel the pressure from eligible child care families but lack the available providers to send them to.

### *OCFS Issues Foster Care ‘Extraordinary’ Rate Regulations*

OCFS has issued proposed regulations ([CFS-14-23-00010-P](#)) related to the new ‘extraordinary rate’ category for foster care payments, among other changes. The regulations would also expand the definition of a handicapped child for adoption subsidy purposes; remove regulatory language affecting therapeutic foster parents; make technical changes to respite care/services; provide that LDSS must pay 100 percent of foster care board rate for all initial KinGAP agreements entered into on or after July 1, 2023; and more. There is a 60-day public comment period on these proposed regulatory changes that are due by June 4, 2023. Note: The actual detailed [regulatory language](#), which was not included in the State Register listing can be accessed on the OCFS “[Legislation and Regulations](#)” webpage. ***Please share any thoughts, comments or concerns about these changes with NYPWA.***

### *ICPC*

OCFS released an informational letter ([23-OCFS-INF-05](#)) on April 5 regarding the NYS Court of Appeals October 2022 decision on applicability of the ICPC on parent placements. Despite the INF, Commissioners expressed confusion about how ICPCs should be handled moving forward. The NYPWA will reach out to OCFS for further clarification on the matter.

### **Local District Support Issues**

- NYPWA will meet with the [NYS Association of Personnel and Civil Service Officers](#) to explore additional workforce recruitment and retention strategies beyond the HELP initiative.
- Commissioners were encouraged to fill out the vacancy survey.
- Commissioner Mike Iapoce (Ulster) brought to light an effort possibly undertaken by Citizen Action suggesting that applications for security deposits for emergency homeless clients seeking to move into permanent housing are not being approved (as per [SSL § 352.6](#)).

### **The Summer Conference is Just Around the Corner!**

Spring is here...and the NYPWA Summer Conference (July 16-19) will be here before you know it. We continue to seek sessions from local districts because they are the most sought after and impactful! [Click here](#) for our Call for Presentations document.

### **Upcoming Events**

Commissioners’ Convening (Lake George) May 10-12

Commissioners Meeting Hybrid (Albany) June 15

NYPWA 2023 Summer Conference (Saratoga) July 16-19