

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
February 20, 2024

Present: Jessica Moser, Chair; Thomas Kalamas, Vice-Chair; Josh Leviker; Vincent Nortz; and Barry Lyndaker.

Legislator Moser called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

Legislator Moser moved to approve the January 16, 2024, committee meeting minutes as recorded, seconded by Legislator Nortz, and carried.

Bridges Out of Poverty – Stephanie Houser-Fouse, Public Health Specialist; Heidi Lehmann, Grand Slam Safety HR Director; and Montanna Hoppel, Bridges Out of Poverty Graduate

Stephanie Houser-Fouse began by pointing out that the Bridges Model is not a program, instead it is used by people and organizations to develop programs and strategies that improve relationship at the individual level, improve outcomes at the organizational level, and change systems at the community level. Bridges helps prevent poverty, alleviate suffering, supports people in transition, and improves stability. Lewis County has a median household income of \$60,049, compared to the US median household income of \$70,784. The Lewis County average household income is \$29,207 which is below the federal poverty level for a family of four. Approximately 12% of Lewis County residents live in poverty.

The Priorities Council Initiates Bridges Out of Poverty model. Two Bridges Out of Poverty trainings are held each year for agencies and the public. The Getting Ahead in a Just-Getting'-By World is a 20-week session for people experiencing poverty who want to transition to stability. The "Kitchen Table" experience is where the group eats together, shares experiences, and create future stories using a curriculum developed by national Bridges organization. Many groups re-create a graduation experience for those who have not has a graduation. Since 2020, there have been seven cohorts and more than 30 graduates. The Staying Ahead group is Getting Ahead graduates from all cohorts who attend monthly sessions to review Getting Ahead concepts, share tips, and learn new skills.

Montanna Hoppel spoke about her experience graduating from Getting Ahead. She was hired by Grand Slam Safety after interviewing with Heidi Lehmann and then as a condition of employment she was asked to complete the Getting Ahead course. Through this process she was able to recognize that she was with the wrong group of friends and needed to make changes in her life. She felt defeated up until the end of 2023, and now after graduating from the course she has better friends and a much better outlook on the future.

Heidi Lehmann spoke about Getting Ahead from a Workforce perspective and how valuable this course is to anyone who is struggling with stability or poverty. It really

helps give individuals the tools necessary to make changes in their lives and learn new skills. The difference in someone's life is incredible.

To get involved with Bridges Out of Poverty in Lewis County you can take a Bridges training course, you can join the Learning Collaborative, make referrals to Getting Ahead if you knew someone who would benefit from it, invite Getting Ahead graduates to provide input for your agency and your programs, and lastly you can help to fund a Getting Ahead cohort. The next full day Bridges training is scheduled for March 6th at Social Services on Outer Stowe Street. You can contact Stephanie House-Fouse at 315-376-5504 to sign up, talk about some ideas, or ask questions.

IGT Facts – Eric Virkler, Treasurer

Eric Virkler handed out an informational sheet on IGT and reviewed it. IGT stands for Intergovernmental Transfer. This is a funding mechanism where federal Medicaid funds flow through New York State to public hospitals and nursing homes. Lewis County Health System (LCHS) receives funding for the Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) and separate funding for the Hospital. Funds are identified as Disproportionate share funds and Upper Payment limit funding. The timing of funding is undefined. Generally, the SNF funds are received annually in January or February, and in December. Hospital funds are often paid for a two- or three-year period with a preliminary payment and then reconciliation payments for each year later on.

The funding that is scheduled for LCHS must be offset or matched at 50% by the sponsoring parent organization, in our case the County. An example would be if LCHS is to receive a scheduled IGT payment of \$1,000,000.00, Lewis County must first make a payment to New York State Department of Health in the amount of \$500,000.00. Both LCHS and the County budget for these IGT amounts (LCHS as a revenue and the County as a DSS Medicaid expense). Due to the undefined timing of the IGT program, budgeting is a challenge. It is important to note, LCHS only receives double what the County matches. It is possible not to fully recoup the available funds.

The total IGT paid by the County for the Hospital since 2010 is \$22,841,512.00 and for the SNF is \$25,948,605.00. That means that the Hospital has received \$47,038,770.00 since 2010 and the SNF has received \$53,257,592.00. The 12-year average of IGT payments as part of the County's overall budget is 8.8%. If you look at what the County has budgeted over the last 4-years, it has resulted in an excess of \$134,077.00 showing that the way this is being budgeted now seems to be working.

Montague Tower – Joan McNichol, County Attorney

Joan McNichol stated that the County was approached by Verizon to lease space on the Montague 911 Tower. AT&T Currently leases space on a tower for \$2,200 per

month, which is split between the County and the landowner. The agreement with Verizon would be similar but she would like to begin the process of looking into it further in order to determine if it is feasible or not. Just like with AT&T the initial payment would cover any studies needed or expert costs.

The following dockets were reviewed:

1. Appointing Karen Boliver of Lowville, NY as a member of the Alcohol & Substance Abuse Subcommittee to fulfill an expired term that has been vacant since January 1, 2024. The term of appointment shall be effective March 5, 2024 through December 31, 2027.
AYE 5 NAY 0
2. Authorizing agreement between Lewis County Community Services and Fort Drum Regional Health Plan Organization to act as project manager for developing a mobile crisis service in Lewis County at a cost of \$150,000.00, which is 100% State funding, commencing January 15, 2024 through December 31, 2024 with an option to extend if needed.
AYE 5 NAY 0
3. Accepting and appropriating the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services award of \$60,000.00 to offset the costs associated with certified pretrial services provided by Probation and authorizing Treasurer to deposit said funds into the appropriate budget lines when received.
AYE 5 NAY 0
4. Authorizing an agreement between Lewis County Public Health and Melanie Saber, LCSW, PLLC for the purpose of providing psychological services to qualifying children in the preschool education program commencing March 1, 2024 through February 28, 2025 under the preapproved NYSED rates.
AYE 5 NAY 0
5. Appropriating the 2023-2024 NYS Radio Grant funds awarded in the amount of \$665,538.00 into the E911 account lines for equipment, repairs, and professional services.
AYE 5 NAY 0

The following motion was made:

1. Legislator Moser moved to authorize out of state travel for Lewis County Public Health employees Marcia Ashline and Anna Birchenough to attend the Immunization Coalition National Conference in Philadelphia, PA from April 8th through April 11th, 2024, seconded by Legislator Leviker, and carried.

There being no other business to come before the committee, Legislator Moser moved to adjourn at 2:31 p.m., seconded by Legislator Kalamas, and carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Cassandra Moser, Clerk of the Board