

# Rochester Area Task Force on AIDS, Inc.

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## ADVOCACY MEETING

NOVEMBER 20, 2006

### MINUTES

**Members Present:** Mary Angerame, Roberto Burgos, Cherie Hawkins, Catherine James, Debra Khani, Duncan McElroy, Patricia Terziani, Calvin Twoguns, Lynn Varricchio, Rayne Williams.

**Opening:** Members began by introducing themselves for the sake of a new person present. Calvin moved approval of the minutes as distributed. Duncan seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.

**Mission Statement:** Calvin pointed out that the mission statement had been approved last month and should have been presented to the Executive Committee for approval earlier this month. Lynn will take it to the Executive Committee meeting in January.

**Update on the Ryan White Care Act:** The Senate has a hold on the Ryan White Care Act that passed the House. At this time it appears that either no action will occur on the Bill or the Lautenberg Pallone Bill will be acted on as a stop gap measure during a short session between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

**Announcement:** Deb indicated that neither she nor Lynn has heard any news from the State Prison Health Work Group. Deb indicated that in California groups are working on issues of public health in prisons and jails. She recommended that we look beyond NYS to get models of things that might be done locally. Deb will send Lynn and Romeo Sanchez web sites where there is information on how other states are setting up programs.

Lynn reported that at a recent meeting at the Monroe County medical society for purposes of discussing pandemic flu, she met an ethicist. After her presentation, she asked Mia Powell what preparation has been made for prisoners in the event of pandemic flu. As part of her response, Lynn learned that the state task force on pandemic flu includes one of the foremost ethicists on prisoners rights in the U.S. The woman happens to be a personal friend of Jack Beck. Lynn called Jack who indicated that he would meet with her and discuss the position of the prison health network and see if she would help us make the case for health department oversight with the administration of the new governor.

Calvin and Deb both expressed concerns about Friedan cutting money for staff to do testing at Riker's Island. It is the wrong direction to be moving at this time. The research is clear that the African American communities' rates of HIV in the U.S. are being impacted by impacted by high rates of men moving between the community and prison and back and transmitting the virus. (Lynn will send the report with the minutes from this meeting.)

Deb also expressed the lack of continuity of care due in part to the ways in which medical records are kept and handled. Lynn indicated that she and Deb had discussed the value of having electronic medical records that were kept at a central server that could be downloaded to a health care provider by using a thumb print of the prisoner to gain access to the record. This would allow for a unified record and could prevent access

by persons without need to access the record. Moreover, if the record were set up properly, a record could not be closed until all of the data that are essential for the type of visit are recorded.

Patty indicated that people don't want to be tested while they are in prison because they fear their confidentiality will be breached.

**Medicaid Churning:**

It was decided that when we have our case together we should meet with Kelly Reed, the head of Monroe County Medicaid program and Bill Carpenter and their equivalents in other counties exhibiting similar behavior.

All cases should be sent to Trilby briefly providing a name (pseudonym), the types of errors which occurred, as much information as possible about delays in getting Medicaid re-instated, and negative outcomes that resulted from a lack of continuity of care.

Mary will provide cases from the high school.

Roberto will ask county legislators to provide him with case complaints that they receive.

Cherrie indicated that people are frequently cutoff because they miss their substance abuse treatment and are sanctioned. DSS then responds that they have 45 days to reconsider the sanctions and makes it clear that they don't want to be bothered before that. However, people with HIV and substance abuse issues need medications. DSS usually stops the food stamps and cash benefits.

People with AIDS are suppose to receive enhanced shelter allowance so that more money is available for food etc. DSS does not inform clients of this, yet they have a positive duty to do so.

People have particular problems with people who are homeless and don't have all of the paperwork that is required. DSS makes them start all over again if they miss the deadline for having all of their information together. The issue of sealing a case, rather than being able to continue the case or transfer information that does not change, such as birth certificates, is questionable.

Calvin raised the issue of the training DHSS workers receive. Cherrie responded that she has friends who work at DSS and it is true that they are frustrated because often they do not receive the training that they need to provide services. She also indicated that her friends have told her that even when they try to move cases along, they have to be reviewed by supervisors and they can sit on their desks.

It was decided that we should get more information on training as well as case load sizes. Roberto indicated that he knows the John Fasco, Union Representative from the County Social Workers group and that person could give us important background information about the configuration of teams, training of staff, and case load sizes. Roberto will contact the union representative and make arrangements for the person to make a presentation at one of the next Advocacy meetings.

DSS has monthly meetings for agencies. There is a customer service phone number that guarantees someone will call you within 24 hours. That phone line is never full.

ABW has taken to emailing everything. This way they have documentation for everything they do.

**Legislative Outreach:**

At a previous meeting it was decided that there would not be a legislative breakfast this year. The strategy will be to meet with legislators in their offices with messages tailored to the county, state, and federal issues we are working on. We need to work on developing relationships with each one.

Federal focus: Ryan White, and federal Medicare and Medicaid issues;  
State: Prison Health;  
Local: Medicaid Churning;

Consumers will be part of all meetings. We will try to connect LTI grads to this process. Talking points will be developed on each of the issue areas for use in the meetings.

**Announcements:**

A list of the World AIDS Day activities was reviewed.

There will be no meeting in Dec. The next meeting will be January 8<sup>th</sup> at 9:00AM.