



Meeting of the
POLICY COMMITTEE
January 21, 2009

Matthew Lesieur and Darryl Ng, Co-Chairs

Members Present: Susan Alston, Damian Bird, Sean Cahill, PhD, Terri Faulkner, Elaine Greeley, Matt Lesieur, Paul Meissner, Darryl Ng, Jan Carl Park, Dorella Walters

Members Absent: Gregory Cruz, Coco Jervis, Esther W.Y. Lok, Andresa Person

DOHMH Staff Present: Nina Rothschild, DrPH

Others Present: Yves Gebhardt

Material Distributed:

- Agenda
- Minutes from previous Policy Committee meeting on December 12, 2008
- Proposed bylaws amendment protocol for removal from committee membership
- Proposed bylaws amendment protocol for urgent/less urgent matters
- Copy of letter previously sent to Senator Ted Kennedy and Congressman Henry Waxman concerning technical fixes to Ryan White/HATMA; letter is now being sent to all members of Senate HELP (Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions) Committee, the House Energy and Commerce Committee, and the New York Congressional delegation
- CAEAR agenda from Winter 2009 meeting
- Summary: American Recovery and Reinvestment (Obama Administration document re stimulus package)
- Memo from Matt Lesieur to VCNY staff on proposed FY 2010 New York State budget

Welcome and Introductions: Matt Lesieur and Darryl Ng welcomed meeting participants. Members introduced themselves.

Review of the Meeting Packet and Review of the Minutes from the December 12, 2008 Meeting: Nina Rothschild reviewed the contents of the packet. Matt Lesieur reviewed the minutes. The minutes were approved by all present with one abstention.

Letter about Technical Fixes to Ryan White HATMA -- Follow-Up: Paul Meissner asked about the letter concerning Ryan White reauthorization included in the meeting packet. Matt Lesieur explained that the letter had already been sent to Senator Kennedy and Congressman Waxman and is now being sent to all members of the Senate HELP (Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions) Committee; all members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee; and the entire New York Congressional delegation. Jan Park asked about steps to be taken by the Committee if a response to the letter is received from any of the recipients. Nina Rothschild noted that the Planning Council received a response from HRSA to a letter about the HRSA housing policy last year, and a copy of the letter was included in the packet for Planning Council members.

Jan Park suggested including in future Policy Committee packets a list of open items and closed items, similar to the lists distributed in the past with PPG packets. An open item, for example, would be the letter to the Senators and Representatives; an item would be closed if, for example, a letter of response were received from a Senator or Representative.

Paul Meissner asked whether our letters are effective and also asked whether there is a way other than letter-writing to transmit our message. The American Public Health Association, for example, informs members about how and where it is going to lobby. Darryl Ng reminded attendees that they can lobby regarding issues. Mr. Park noted that our letter-writing activities have raised the profile of the Planning Council, and seeing other planning councils become active like our Council would be rewarding.

Federal, State, and City Budget Issues:

- Food stamp benefits will increase by 13%.
- Medicaid matching rates will increase by 4.9%.
- The House has passed a bill providing \$335 million for HIV, STDs, TB, and viral hepatitis. The Senate will consider a slightly different version, allocating \$400 million for HIV and STD screening and prevention.
- The Obama federal stimulus package is for \$825 billion dollars and includes a three-month extension on the implementation of all seven Medicaid regulations.

- More money will be allocated to the community health centers serving 16 million patients

Paul Meissner noted that in his inaugural address, President Obama had said that programs that do not work would be cut. Mr. Meissner asked whether we should advocate for use of the money that is cut from non-performing programs. How do we determine whether or not a program works? Are we in a position to assess program effectiveness? One option is to call for a periodic review of the efficiency of programs.

Committee members agreed to send a letter to Governor Paterson urging him to ensure that 1) New York receives the maximum possible increase in funding if Congress passes an increase in the Federal Medicaid Assistance Percentage (FMAP) as part of a federal fiscal stimulus package and 2) these funds are targeted to preserving and strengthening New York's ambulatory health care safety net and to bolstering HIV/AIDS services. Nina Rothschild agreed to draft a letter. Matt Lesieur agreed to put a motion on the floor regarding the letter at the next day's Planning Council meeting. All present voted in favor of crafting such a letter with one abstention.

Policy Committee members reviewed Matt Lesieur's letter to VCNY staff regarding the New York State budget, focusing in particular on the impact of the budget on ADAP. New York State plans to cut its contribution to ADAP just for this year and will make up the money via rebates from pharmaceutical companies. Darryl Ng suggested inviting a representative from the AIDS Institute – perhaps Humberto Cruz -- to speak to the Policy Committee regarding ADAP and reauthorization. Matt Lesieur volunteered to contact Deborah Bachrach, Deputy Commissioner in the NYS Office of Health Insurance Programs, regarding the requirement for step therapy in Governor Paterson's budget – namely, patients must first try less expensive drugs for various conditions before trying more expensive drugs. Jan Park addressed the provisions in the Governor's budget regarding home care. He noted that both the State and the Planning Council have changed funding for home care and advocated for bringing these changes to the attention of the Integration of Care Committee for when IOC starts to re-RFP this service category. Mr. Lesieur agreed to present his analysis of the New York State budget to the Planning Council. His analysis will lead into the FMAP suggestion to the Governor as a solution to budget cuts.

CAEAR Coalition Meeting: Mr. Lesieur, Mr. Park, and Soraya Elcock attended the recent CAEAR Coalition meeting in California. Members of the CAEAR Coalition receive Part A and Part C funds. During the meeting, members worked on a strategy for dealing with appropriations for 2009-10. Those appropriations may be combined with other legislation in an omnibus bill. CAEAR Coalition members agree with aiming for a 2- or 3-year reauthorization of the Ryan White/HATMA legislation.

CAEAR Coalition members also discussed the issue of EMAs/TGAs. Will TGAs that become EMAs because of their growing caseload bring their funding with them from the TGA pool of money, or will they instead dip into the EMA pool of funds (thereby reducing the amount of money available to the other EMAs)?

Another presentation at the CAEAR Coalition meeting was on integrating prevention into care – i.e., prevention with positives. If a physician has a conversation with an HIV-positive patient about his or her sexual health, that conversation has more impact than if a peer educator talks to the patient. However, training, money, and time – all of which are in short supply -- are required for the doctor to have this conversation.

At the CAEAR Coalition meeting, attendees received FY09 and FY10 appropriations estimates. In addition, Mr. Park and Soraya Elcock were elected to the Board.

Funding: The federal government is currently operating under a Continuing Resolution. The New York EMA will receive its award from HRSA on March 1, 2009. Currently, the PSRA Committee is doing scenario planning in anticipation of receiving the award.

HIV Travel Ban: Policy Committee members discussed the HIV travel ban. The repeal of designation of HIV as a disease of public health significance did not happen at the end of former HHS Secretary Michael Leavitt's term. Dr. Cahill had hoped that the designation would be repealed under the Bush Administration so that any flack would fall on Bush rather than on Obama.

New Business: Terri Faulkner requested a list of acronyms used in policy conversations.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned.