



Meeting of the
POLICY COMMITTEE
Matthew Lesieur, Chair

October 28th 2010
Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies
281 Park Avenue South
3:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Members Present: Kareem Clemons, Gregory Cruz, Matthew Lesieur, Kali Lindsey, Lorna Littner, Esther Lok, Lucky Michaels, Ed Murphy (alt. for Andresa Person), Jan Carl Park, Lyndel Urbano (alt. for Sean Cahill, PhD), Dorella Walters

Members Absent: Susan Alston, Elaine Greeley, Paul Meissner

NYC DOHMH Staff Present: Nina Rothschild, DrPH

Others Present: Yves Gebhardt, Jeremy Saunders

Material Distributed:

- Agenda
- Policy Committee List of Open and Closed Items
- PowerPoint Presentation on HIV and Disability
- Report Brief from the IOM on HIV and Disability
- CAEAR Coalition Ryan White Program Appropriations

Welcome/Introductions/Moment of Silence: Matthew Lesieur welcomed Committee members. Participants introduced themselves and observed a moment of silence.

Review of the Meeting Packet/Review of the List of Open and Closed Items: Nina Rothschild reviewed the contents of the meeting packet. Jan Carl Park reviewed the list of open and closed items.

- **Appropriations:** Policy Committee members agreed to forward a sign-on letter concerning HIV/AIDS appropriations generated by the

Federal AIDS Policy Partnership (FAPP) to members of the Planning Council's Executive Committee, who would be asked to sign on to the letter on behalf of the full Planning Council.

- **Overturing the Ban on Blood Donations by MSM:** the HHS Advisory Committee on Blood Safety and Availability kept the ban on blood donations by MSM in place but issued recommendations for further research. Six senators and GMHC have been calling on the NIH and the FDA for a clear research roadmap and outline spelling out where, when, and by whom research on this topic will be conducted.

HIV and Disability: Modernizing the Social Security Inventory: Nina Rothschild gave a presentation on the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) recommendations for updating the Social Security listings for HIV and disability. A copy of the presentation is available on the Planning Council website at nyhiv.org. She described how individuals qualify and when benefits kick in; the decision-making process by the SSA, including the SSA's screening tool and additional criteria for disability; the current disability listings; and the proposed revisions. She noted that the proposed changes will only affect new applicants; presented the IOM Committee conclusions on the qualifications for disability, benefits for children, and next steps for the SSA; and discussed community reaction to the report. Committee members agreed that they do not have much room to push back on these issues and that the IOM report is very clinical. Members discussed whether the proposed modernization has fiscal implications for the City.

NYC AIDS Housing Network (NYCAHN): Jeremy Saunders of NYCAHN spoke about several issues:

- NYCAHN and other AIDS activists are pushing the legislature and Governor Paterson to work together on the 30% of income toward rent issue. The legislature is highly likely to override Governor Paterson's veto, but the activists recognize that whoever is elected to serve as Governor in November will be more conservative than Mr. Paterson. On November 9th, the group is planning a prearranged civil disobedience action, and the 30% rent cap issue will be reintroduced in the next session of the State legislature. NYC Council Speaker Christine Quinn is in favor of the legislation, and the bill was passed unanimously by the New York City Council.
- NYCAHN is also involved in parolee organizing and is working to win the right for parolees to vote. Approximately 108,000 disenfranchised individuals are in prison or on parole. According to current law, individuals who are awaiting trial, are on probation, or are no longer in the system can vote. NYCAHN wants to change the law so that ex-prisoners can vote as soon as they are released from prison.

- NYCAHN is also trying to change the New York City Housing Authority policy that bans former prisoners from living in public housing.
- A syringe access law has been passed.
- NYCAHN has fought budget cuts on the City level and has succeeded in ensuring that syringe exchange programs (SEPs) are not cut.
- NYCAHN is trying to obtain more harm reduction services for drug users and to protect people who call in overdoses to 911 from prosecution.
- Activists recognize that they need to think about how to unify and build a state that doesn't cut the safety net for society's most fragile members. They believe that people need to take a more radical position.

Committee members discussed some of the issues raised by Mr. Saunders. Jan Park stated that he would like for someone from NYCAHN to be part of the Planning Council's conversation on re-bidding the Harm Reduction, Recovery Readiness, and Relapse Prevention (HRR) service category. Kareem Clemons asked whether there are halfway houses in New York. The City has three-quarters houses (transitional housing programs) where the Department of Homeless Services, the Division of Parole, and drug treatment programs place people.

CAEAR Coalition Update: Jan Carl provided an update on the recent meeting of the CAEAR Coalition. Members met with Jeff Crowley, who assured them that Ryan White funding would remain in effect after the current legislation expires. CAEAR is now involved in internal discussions to shape the legislation in 2013. Mr. Park noted that at the next Policy Committee meeting, he would present the methodology used to derive the AIDS Budget and Appropriations Coalition's figures about funding for HIV. He also noted that the latest US Government census will show that New York has lost population members and asked how appropriations for the State would be affected if the HIV-infected population diminishes.

Public Comment: Yves Gebhardt inquired about how the changing criteria for disability, under discussion by the SSA, will affect HRA and HASA. Mr. Park responded that the changes will not be retroactive and that people currently on SSI will not be kicked off.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned.