

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT FOR THE AGING
Office of Management Analysis and Planning
Summary of Brooklyn Hearing
October 24, 2008

GENERAL INFORMATION

Number Attending: 70

On Podium: Edwin Méndez-Santiago, Commissioner
Caryn Resnick Deputy Commissioner
Jorge Romero, Assistant Commissioner
Maureen Murphy, General Counsel
Rabbi Moshe Weiner, Member, DFTA Advisory Council
Joyce Matthews-Paul, Member, DFTA Advisory Council
Jerry Chiappetta, Member, DFTA Advisory Council

Number Testifying: 25 speakers, 3 of whom did not submit written testimonies.

SUMMARY OF TOPIC AREAS (Speaker list attached)

DFTA SERVICES/SERVICE NEEDS OF THE ELDERLY

Senior Centers

Senior Center/Program. Senior centers currently face the challenge to include several generations of older adults in activities that they feel comfortable participating in. Speakers indicated that one program model appears not to meet diverse needs, and more targeted programs for each of the generations should be developed. It was suggested that continuing education, computer-based programming, health/physical activities, and sources for part time work or meaningful volunteer experience can be offered to attract newly retired seniors. For the established and healthy retiree, the traditional social and nutritional programs like congregate meals are provided. For the frail and very old elderly, programs which are smaller in size and move at a slower pace would be helpful, and for homebound senior members, programs of home visits, support services, and handy man services and personal care are needed. DFTA was asked to develop culturally appropriate programs such as meals that meet the dietary needs and preferences of ethnic populations, observance of certain holidays and cultural traditions, as well as ESL classes and assistance with citizenship.

It was suggested that rather than reducing the budgets of centers with under-utilized congregate meals, DFTA should allow centers to send meals home to center members who are too frail to attend and to

allow members who are part-time caregivers of their families and not able to eat lunch at the center to take meals home.

(1, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 15, 16, 21)

Senior Center/Program Evaluation. It was suggested that non-meal services should play a greater role in senior center evaluations and utilization measures given the changing needs of center members and increasing importance of these services.

(16)

Salary Increases for Senior Center Staff. Fair salaries and incentives for senior center staff are important in recruiting and retaining personnel.

(9, 17)

Transportation

The speakers stated that lack of transportation can lead to social isolation, anxiety, depression and other mental health problems among seniors who are frail and functionally impaired. They urged DFTA to work toward improving Access-A-Ride services by reducing scheduled pick-up time to 15 minutes or less. Continued and increased funding is needed to maintain existing senior transportation services as costs for gasoline, insurance and maintenance increase and the need for transportation continues to grow.

(1, 10, 13, 16, 24)

Case Management

Speakers were concerned about DFTA's consolidation of case management by collapsing 12 Brooklyn contracts into seven. They said each new contract area seemed too large and diverse for appropriate and effective case management. The current caseload ratio is 130 seniors to one case worker but it was 65 to one before. Seniors may not be given appropriate attention and care they need. They found homebound seniors were undercounted, and those who really need home-delivered meals were put on a waiting list. It was again suggested that the new system should be evaluated by tracking the clients that are currently being served to see how many have disruption in service, with attention being paid to seniors in poverty, members of minority groups and immigrants. They hope that DFTA would share the results of evaluation(s) with them.

(1, 23)

Grandparent Caregiver Support Program

Seniors benefited from the grandparent caregiver support program at the Family Center and hoped that this DFTA-funded program can be continued across the City.

(22)

LEGISLATION/POLICY

Affordable Housing. More resources are needed to maintain, create and ensure safe and affordable housing for senior residents, and the need for affordable housing will become acute as baby-boomers start to retire with a fixed income. Speakers suggested the creation of public/private partnerships that set aside a certain number of units on lower floors from new developments for affordable senior housing. For seniors who want to stay in their existing homes, they suggested that resources and assistance be made available for maintenance and repairs, ranging from help in finding reliable and affordable repair services to assistance in financing repairs with low- or no-interest loans. DFTA was asked to work with utility companies to include inserts with utility bills that explain the available programs for seniors. In addition, DFTA was asked to help link seniors who face home foreclosures and monthly mortgage payments higher than their fixed income with community organizations that can work on their behalf to negotiate with banks.

(1)

Service Need to Accommodate Changing Demographics. Several speakers addressed their concern that there are not enough senior centers in Brooklyn to serve the Asian communities in Sheepshead Bay and Bensonhurst. They urged opening new senior centers and providing financial support to senior centers without government contracts in these underserved immigrant neighborhoods. Since elderly immigrants experience difficulties in accessing services due to language barriers, speakers requested continuous support for ESL and civics education to help them obtain benefits, citizenship, and integrate into American society, and for programs which are linguistically/culturally adequate to these seniors.

(3, 14, 16, 18)

NORC Programs. Speakers commended NORC programs that started in large complexes as a good model for providing vital services to seniors in an age-friendly community setting. However, people who live in the rest of Brooklyn have similar problems to those who live in NORC buildings. DFTA was called upon to develop neighborhood NORCs in a systematic way by cutting up the City into areas where services are managed more efficiently. It was suggested that DFTA help senior centers and health providers expand existing NORCs and establish new Neighborhood NORCs in areas that need them.

(25)

FUNDING/FISCAL

Borough President Discretionary Funding. Many senior programs have long relied on borough president discretionary funding because their baseline funding provided by DFTA is not always adequate to address the increasing needs of senior services. Speakers expressed their concern that borough presidents and other elected officials are no longer entitled to decide which senior organizations receive funding, and they stated that the Borough President's office should retain this discretionary right. More funding is needed for senior citizen transportation programs in the future, and additional funding is needed for senior centers to develop new innovative social programs.

(1, 5, 23, 24)

Budget Cut. Speakers were very concerned about budget cuts to senior programs, in particular the closing of some senior centers. They urged DFTA to postpone the release of the senior center RFP. They asked that DFTA find a way to keep NYCHA senior centers open since studies show that these centers are in the neighborhoods where there is a high concentration of elderly poor.

(1, 2, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12)

Home Care Services. Many frail elderly are not eligible for Medicaid due to a small excess in their income or assets. Funding for essential home care services should be maintained regardless of the fiscal crisis of the City.

(16, 20)

Use of Technology. Several speakers emphasized the importance of new technology services for senior center members, in particular for young members. The service includes practical instruction on the use of computers, the internet and email as a means to educate, empower and entertain. They asked that DFTA continue to give its support to the implementation of appropriate technology for senior centers even in the difficult economic environment. (7, 17, 19, 22)

OTHER

VISIONS/Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired. DFTA was urged to make a long term commitment to the NYC Coalition on Aging and Vision project and fund an on-going resource center on Aging and Vision. DFTA was called on to work with NYCDOT on "modifying quiet cars" and installing audible pedestrian signals throughout New York City. They expected financial support from DFTA for VISIONS Workforce Development and Job Placement Services that enable blind seniors to continue working. They recommended that DFTA fund outreach to the visually impaired and underserved population and ensure access to benefits (SSI, Food Stamps and Medicaid) for seniors with vision loss.

(5)

JCC of Greater Coney Island. This senior center and many others citywide benefited from a demonstration project conducted between DFTA and DOHMH under which mental health professionals provided group and individual counseling. This project was expected be renewed.

(16)

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT FOR THE AGING
Office of Management Analysis and Planning
Summary of Brooklyn Hearing
October 24, 2008

SPEAKERS

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| 1. Marty Markowitz | Borough President |
| 2. Alonzo Jordan | Representing State Senator Maicolm A. Smith* |
| 3. Richard P. Kuo | Executive Director, Homecrest Community Services, Inc. |
| 4. Dean Rasinya | Chairperson, Community Board Ten, Brooklyn |
| 5. Mark W. Bones | Brooklyn Outreach Community Coordinator, VISIONS |
| 6. Paul Curiale | Executive Director, Millennium Development Corporation |
| 7. Thomas kamber | Older Adults Technology* |
| 8. Dolores Pozzuoli | Director of Vandalia Active Adults & Senior Services |
| 9. Nancy Yost | Vice President of Political Action and Legislation, Board Member of NY Statewide Senior Action Council |
| 10. Ceciline Frank | Board Member, East NY Interagency Council on Aging |
| 11. Nathan Williams | Director, Abe Stark Senior Center |
| 12. Mabel Davis | Oceanhill-Brownsville Interagency Council |
| 13. Maria Alvarez | Brooklyn-wide Interagency Council* |
| 14. Yui Ng | Senior, Sunset Park Asian Senior Center |
| 15. Mike Camporeale | Senior, Midwood Senior Center |
| 16. Grace Brandi | Supervising Director, Senior Center Services, JCC of Greater Coney Island |
| 17. Chaya Abelsky, | Managing Director, NonProfit HelpDesk of JCC of Greater Coney Island |

SPEAKERS cont.

- 18. Kwang S. Kim** **Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York**
- 19. Kayza Kleinman** **NonProfit HelpDesk of JCC of Greater Coney Island**
- 20. Esther Mittelman** **Coordinator of Homebound Senior Services, JCC of Greater Coney Island**
- 21. John Alvarez** **JASA Director of Community Based Services**
- 22. Elwood Wright** **Senior, Family Center Second Time Around Client**
- 23. Judy Kleve** **Catholic Charities Neighborhood Services**
- 24. Chanie Freund** **presented on behalf of Avigail Adler, Transportation Coordinator, Senior Citizen Transportation Program, JCC of Greater Coney Island**
- 25. Clare Mayer** **Co-Chair, Shorefront Interagency Council on Aging**

*** Speakers who did not submit testimony.**