

7/9/25

TGNCNBI Taskforce Meeting

Attendees: Lucas Marquez, Ethan Lin, Grace Detravarah, Dori Lewis, Michael Griffin, Valerie Grisokh, Alberto Santus, Camila Rueda-Labrador, Alicia Miranda, Sara G., Nicole Levy, Chelsea Chard, Ronald Porcelli, Natalie Fiorenzo, Matt Graham, and Sahar Moazami. No representatives from the Board of Correction or the Governor's office were present.

1. Introductions and Good News

- Valerie introduced Alberto as new Director of LGBTQ Affairs and mentioned partnership with Destination Tomorrow. Grace gave a shoutout to Destination Tomorrow.

2. Department of Correction Updates

- Can we get an update on the staffing for the LGBTQ+ Affairs Unit?
 - Valerie: Santus is the new Executive Director. They're interviewing for coordinators to fill Santus' former role.
 - Lucas: How many coordinators?
 - Valerie: Three, since Mr. Santus was promoted, and another coordinator joined the mayor's office.
- What is the status of the "X" gender marker implementation and the related court staff training?
 - Chelsea: Not much updates and still slowly working through that. We have other priorities given our population crisis to address right now, so this is on the back burner. I always expect a summer of reprieve so that's typically when I plan to refocus on these issues. I'll try my best to focus on this issue in the coming months. We're currently focused on making sure there's enough beds for everyone in our custody. We're coordinating with OCA since they haven't promulgated any changes at this point, but once those changes are promulgated we will work on training staff. OCA staff needs training just as our staff needs training on basic issues related to trans and nonbinary folks coming into custody. OCA needs to do their own research and work with law enforcement.
 - Natalie: So OCA is doing the training for your staff?
 - Chelsea: OCA need to do their own training before promulgating any rules on their end.

- Since the addition of the “RESH annex,” what impacts have been observed on the SCU and Rosie's populations in terms of programming, medical care, recreation, or other services?
 - Chelsea: We have a population problem so we're focused on making sure everyone has beds and going through intake in 24 hours. RESH annex is GP units and not restrictive units in Rosies, and they're populated by men. Some of those floors have been populated by men since we're continuing to get an influx of people in custody. That means consolidating women on certain floors. The SCU was moved to a different floor but essentially SCU is not going to change. The dorms all look the same - there's no change in terms of infrastructure. SCU is not the only unit impacted by this - some [cis] women have been moved to different floors as well. We want to maintain keeping women in Rosies so that means there's going to be shuffling around.
 - Lucas: You said all units look the same. Are there any differences in the new units that weren't there before or is it exactly the same?
 - Chelsea: They're all the same, if you move up a floor, it's like an apartment, layouts are the same. The facilities are consistent in bed counts within each unit. The SCU never reaches near capacity in a given unit so the bed count remains the same. Frankly in other units the capacity has increased because we're consolidating.
 - Lucas: In terms of programming and medical care, what has been impacted with RESH addition and consolidation?
 - Chelsea: We're managing a crisis and the population is increasing. When we first made those transitions there was an impact because we're focused on making sure people have beds. We've been transparent in public hearings that there has been an impact on men and women - we only have one set of elevators and we are trying to avoid commingling. Programs haven't been cut or anything - the same services and programs continue to be available. But if people are transiting then there are some changes because we're trying to avoid men and women commingling at the elevators.
 - Natalie: What's the reason for putting men in the lower floors? That's closer to the clinics.
 - Chelsea: I'm not sure what the consideration was. I wasn't involved in the operational conversation.
 - Natalie: Can you get that information?

- Chelsea: I can try but can't guarantee - it could just be related to consolidation purposes. I wasn't involved in those conversations.
- Natalie: When you were talking about capacity, you said in other units the capacity has increased. Does that mean you're adding beds or filling up the beds?
- Chelsea: The latter, we're hitting the capacity. Previously people were more spread out. I think everyone is experiencing more people in their housing area than they have been used to given everything that's going on.
- Lucas: Are there any other plans to either move the women further, either out of Rosies or to convert Rosies to an all mail facility, or anything like that in light of DOCCS transfers?
- Chelsea: DOCC transfers aren't halted right now. They have resumed transfers but not at the pace they were doing prior to the strikes and not at the pace of people being sentenced. It's almost leveled out but not yet - we're still experiencing an increase week by week. We do have a high number of people but there are other places throughout the state like county facilities who do not have the ability to expand at all, so DOCCS are prioritizing accommodating those. At this point we're having to examine day by day what needs to happen operationally to make sure people have a bed once they enter custody. I'm not involved in those conversations but the goal is to keep women in Rosies and not to disrupt operations. In the summer we generally see an increase in admission due to increased arrests during the summer. It's complicated and something we're having to work with hour by hour day by day.
- Lucas: Would it be possible if there are further changes to where the SCU is located to provide the Taskforce either a heads up or notification soon after that has happened? What we experienced is that we get a lot of clients especially in SCU who are freaked out because there are a lot of rumors. This is a population facing a lot of pressure and fear of being transferred, so it's draining to not have information.
- Chelsea: We have been trying to be more mindful about communicating what's happening, but given the nature of the influx sometimes things happen very quickly. I can be available if there are questions. We're not constantly communicating with organizations as we make changes, but we will be mindful of this. Folks can always reach out to me for information as needed.
- Valerie: On the program side we continue to have a presence on the ground. It's understandable that people have questions as transitions happen. I want to reassure you that the support and services are continuing to be there on the ground during these transitions.

- Natalie: Re communication, this is not entirely truthful because during the moves we reached out to the taskforce and we didn't get any responses. Understandably you're dealing with a crisis, but if our clients are being forced out by smoke from their housing areas, you were not available to answer what's going on. So what can be done to get better answers about what is happening?
- Chelsea: If info is available, I'm happy to chat. Reaching out individually would be a better approach, with less accusations next time. It's not helpful to have a large email chain. If someone reaches out to me personally it's better. If it's coming in a giant chain, that's not the most helpful format. Everyone has my contact information so I'm happy to chat.
- Natalie: I don't have your contact - can you share?
- Chelsea: Yeah I'll put it in the chain.
- Natalie: When we were asking about moves, you said that's not a conversation you're really involved in. Is there someone better we should pull into these meetings who could better answer these questions? What is your role exactly in terms of how you fit into this taskforce?
- Chelsea: I'm involved in some stuff and not others. As a general point, we're not able to provide updates on operations or internal conversations that are happening. If there are questions of whether something will happen, there's not anyone you can speak with who could give you this information. To the extent I know, I can share information and once things are finalized and I'm happy to be available. I understand we don't always agree and folks have conflicted feelings about my work, but I have been advocating strongly - we don't want SCU to move - we have done a lot of work to establish it and maintain it. Our goal is to keep people, all people, safe. We have an understanding that SCU is best kept in a woman's facility. We don't want operations to be disrupted and we are trying our best to be thoughtful but we're dealing with an unprecedented situation. No one is going to be happy in these circumstances but we're trying to keep people as safe as possible.
- We've received reports of transgender clients being repeatedly involuntarily transferred in and out of Rosie's. Can you clarify why this is happening? These transfers not only place clients at increased risk but may also jeopardize their chances of being placed in gender-aligned housing once transferred upstate. The latest Quarterly Report on TGNBI Individual in Custody shows that there were six TGNBI people involuntarily removed from gender-aligned facility, which is alarmingly high. Why are so many people moved out of gender-aligned facilities?

- Valerie: Those decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. A lot of times the transfers happen after intervention specialists and check-ins with people to find out what's causing challenges. We explore housing areas within the facility before anyone is transferred out. Transfers are done as a last resort. We can't speak more specifically without discussing specific cases.
- Dori: You said people would be moved to another housing area before a gender non-aligned facility - could you say more about that? I don't think that's what we're seeing.
- Valerie: If there's conflict between two people in SCU, then we first find out if there's another housing area within Rosies where one of them can be placed.
- Dori: Are there high classification housing units at Rosies? If there's a fight and someone has a high classification, then are they moved to non-gender-aligned housing?
- Valerie: There are high classification housing units at Rosies.
- Dori: Could you explain more about why there are three coordinator vacancies?
- Valerie: One person left for the mayor's office and another recently resigned, and Alberto got promoted, so we have three vacancies. We're interviewing and we have really strong candidates.
- Dori: In terms of communication with SCU at this moment, what's the implication of the three vacancies?
- Varerlie: We're prioritizing what is most critical, such as transfer requests. If Santos can't take those requests then I will - nothing changed here. We also regularly check the hotline - it's one of the main ways people can let us know they're seeking transfer to SCU. All those most critical elements, including regular presence in SCU, have not been missed. We're also working closely with many members of our division - we just had a pride celebration and that's a partnership with members of our recreation unit. Technically we have one person on this team, but we have quite a few colleagues, from accounting and recreation, to support us. If there's info that needs to be conveyed, such as someone needing a reentry guide, we can connect them with a counselor. If there's an LGBT event then we connect them with recreation. It might sound like - how are we doing this with one person - but I can reassure you the critical work like checking the hotline is not missed. The programmatic work is done in collaboration with others.
- Chelsea: Our uniform staff is very involved and on the ground, literally in the units 24/7, they also communicate with people in custody. They have familiarity with those people in those units in particular and help people get oriented as

needed. I have to hop off shortly but there are a couple of other questions that Valerie can handle. I saw some questions about federal things: nothing happening at the federal level is impacting us. We get very little funding from the federal government. Other agencies do and maybe there's impact as far as city budget but nothing direct. Nothing in state budget we know about that's worth flagging.

- Camila: We have some clients going back and forth from male facilities to Rosies - I just want to know more specifications about what are the considerations - one of my clients was sexually assaulted at a male facility then transferred to Rosie's then transferred back to the same male facility. What are the protocols and restrictions to avoid people going back to the same place where they are harmed?
- Valerie: I can speak at a high level generally - if you want to share client info we can look into it - when we approve someone to go to a male facility, that approval doesn't result in them going to just any male facility, any unit. We can talk more about Harmony House later. We make every effort to make sure that when they are transferred to male facility, it's a place where they can feel safe - that's definitely taken into account. The reason for transfer, that depends on what's happening there. We try our best to avoid transfer out of Rosies, such as working with intervention specialists.
- Camila: Recently there was another client who was attacked in Harmony House. I spoke with Alberto - I don't know the specifications - the new system says you can't house folks based on sexual orientation or make an LGBT unit within a male facility, so a lot of times, with Harmony House, there was an incident where the client has a huge gash on their arm and they feel unsafe and attacked. How are you ensuring their actual safety in these other housing units not at Rosies?
- Valerie: We established Harmony House this year to bring together diverse groups of people, with a focus on healthy communication and respect. It's not LGBTQ specific, but there are LGBTQ people there. This is a new unit and it takes some time to establish it - I'm grateful to Alberto for having this established. There are a lot of people who are grateful to be there. It's absolutely voluntary - it's a program house where people are willing to communicate respectfully. People can transfer out whenever they want. In the beginning some people find that it's not right for them so they were transferred out. It's a program house where we have some members who are LGBTQ+. Santos has a regular presence there. We have regular meetings there. Destination Tomorrow has been going there. We are aware of situations of people wanting to be transferred out for different reasons. We had more of that in the beginning, but there's less of that now.

- Camila: For those with maximum classification - is there anything in the works for those with maximum classification that are part of the LGBT community that are able to be housed somewhere that is safe or an actual LGBTQ housing unit?
- Valerie: Harmony House is lower classification - dorm style. Higher classification option is something we've been discussing on and off - we don't have anything to share right now since nothing is formalized.
- Dori: What is the criteria for admission to Harmony House?
- Valerie: Unlike SCU where it's really structured with a committee, Harmony House is just a program house for a diverse group of people who want to be in this program house. So long they meet the classification, anyone can be there if they want to, and anyone can leave.
- Dori: Are there specific programs and community meetings?
- Valeri: There is a regular presence of LGBTQ+ affairs, which is very much appreciated based on feedback we're hearing. Destination Tomorrow is also regularly there. Counseling is available in all housing areas and same goes for programming, but we do prioritize program houses for additional programming. Harmony House probably gets more programming than the average.
- Camila: I have two clients who are claiming that people with maximum classification and gang affiliation in Harmony House - so how do you claim this is an LGBTQ safe space?
- Valerie: We did not claim it is an LGBTQ safe space. This is a program house for diverse groups of people. This is unlike SCU. There are different individuals across different housing areas - we can't guarantee a housing area with no one with previous gang affiliations. Just looking at who is currently incarcerated, there are many people who have gang affiliation as part of their background. We're looking at whether someone is getting into conflict or being disrespectful - we transfer those people out. We also have a bed capacity issue. We are aware of challenges - there are days when we hear something happens and people are having conflicts, and we figure out what to do and whether to transfer people out, as with any housing area. Our intention for establishing this housing area is to create a space for a diverse group of people. I have a 1 o'clock so I can only stay for a bit longer.
- Natalie: The LGBTQ Initiatives is just Santus right now?
- Valerie: Yes, as of last week, we had just Santus as a coordinator, but now we have an ED because of Santus' promotion.

- What coordination exists between DOC and DOCCS to ensure that individuals housed in gender-aligned facilities in city custody are appropriately placed upon transfer to state custody?
 - Valerie: We have developed a close working relationship with the team at DOCCS. DOC can't make decisions for DOCCS - that's entirely within their purview, but we provide information about individuals who are going upstate. Beyond that it's up to DOCCS. But we have a good level of partnership and coordination.
 - Natalie: Has that changed since the delay in transfers?
 - Valerie: No, we're still providing information. The transfer itself is not up to us.
 - Alberto: If someone is on the LGBTQ roster I make sure to share that information so once DOCCS does their intake they have this info.
 - Dori: If someone is not housed in SCU or Rosies, are they on the LGBTQ roster? For example, those in Harmony House and other facilities. Do you inform DOCCS regardless of where someone is housed?
 - Alberto: Yes exactly, anyone regardless of where they're housed.

3. CHS Updates

- Are there any impacts on CHS from the Trump executive orders?
 - Nicole: It hasn't changed how we provide health care for the TGNCNBI population which is based on individual needs. Access to health care has been consistent for the first quarter of 2025.
 - Lucas: With the efforts to avoid men and women commingling - has that created any disruption in services?
 - Nicole: I believe they're in separate clinics but I'm not sure, I can get back to you with that info.

The following responses were provided after the meeting, as the Taskforce was unable to address all questions before it concluded:

- Nicole: All men in the RESH Annex are being escorted to the RESH main clinic for their healthcare services, not the RMSC clinic.
- Are there any impacts on CHS from the Trump executive orders? Are there any known or anticipated impacts on CHS operations stemming from the executive orders issued by President Trump, particularly those affecting PREA regulations?

- There has been no impact on CHS' PREA requirements or our provision of care to patients who report sexual harassment or assault.
- Are there any known or anticipated effects on CHS operations, including the provision of medical care, resulting from threatened federal defunding or changes to program reimbursements, such as those related to Medicaid?
 - We anticipate seeing a higher volume of patients enter custody without Medicaid coverage once all the changes from the "One Big Beautiful Bill" go into effect, but there have been no effects thus far. NYC Health + Hospitals continues to analyze the bill's potential impact on our system.
- Have there been any other impacts on CHS operations due to executive orders issued by former President Trump?
 - We have seen no other impacts on CHS operations thus far, but the NYC Health + Hospitals system continues to monitor all executive orders closely.
- What are the impacts of the RESH annex on the SCU and Rosie's populations from a healthcare perspective, particularly in terms of programming, medical care, and recreation?
 - The opening of the RESH annex has not changed how we provide healthcare for the TGNCNBI population at RMSC, which is always individualized based on the patient's needs.
- Have delays from DOCCS affected CHS's ability to serve the SCU and TGNCNBI populations?
 - Any increase in the patient population places additional demands on CHS staff, but access to health services in RMSC remained fairly consistent in Q1 of 2025.
- Are women being relocated from Rosie's, and does CHS have any involvement?
 - We defer to DOC to report any housing changes. When patients are relocated, CHS ensures it has the staff and facilities to provide healthcare services in the new location.
- Why hasn't CHS sent updates to the task force regarding changes like the RESH annex or the SCU's movement?
 - We defer to the Department to report housing changes they have made.