



# COUNTY OF SOMERSET DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES



## OFFICE OF OPERATIONS & PLANNING

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MEG ISBITSKI

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LISA FEDERICO

Aging & Disability Services  
JOANNE FETZKO

Community Development  
KIMBERLY COWART

One Stop Career Center  
Juvenile Institutional Services  
MONICA MULLIGAN

Richard Hall Community HWC  
NICCI SPINAZZOLA

Rutgers Cooperative Extension  
LISA ROTHENBURGER

Veterans Services  
PETER NIEMIEC

Volunteer Services  
WILLIAM F. CROSBY

Youth Services  
LINDA M. PORCARO

## HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL

Wednesday, February 23, 2022 Meeting Minutes  
Meeting held via Zoom

### Council Members Present:

Chair Mary Jane DiPaolo, Community Child Care Solutions  
Vice-Chair Pastor Tim Wolf, EmPower Somerset  
Secretary Diann Robinson, Adult Day Center  
Andrea Strack, Legal Services of Northwest Jersey (LSNWJ)  
Jerry Star, Jewish Family Services (JFS)  
LuAnn Dias, Catholic Charities Diocese of Metuchen (CCDOM)  
Michelle Dufour, Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P)  
Mike Frost, Director of Human Services  
Nancy Good, Alternatives, Inc.  
Nicci Spinazzola, Richard Hall Community Health and Wellness Center  
Paul Grzella, The Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board (GRWDB)  
Rajni Chopra, Martin Luther King Youth Center (MLKY)

### Council Members Excused:

Joanne Kemp, Board of Social Services

### Council Members Absent:

Daniel Powell, Community Visiting Nurse Association, (VNA)  
David Walker, Visions and Pathways  
Lauren Frary, The Arc of Somerset County  
Lucy Forgione, Bernards Township Health Department  
Dr. Mark Avery, Zarephath Christian Church  
Michele Boronkas, Safe + Sound Somerset  
Richard Schumann, Family and Community Services (FCS)

### Council Officials and Liaisons:

Nelson Troche, NJ Department of Human Services (DHS)  
Rick Hager, NJ Department of Children and Families (NJDCF)

### Somerset County Department of Human Services (SCDHS) Staff:

Advisor Rheanah Johnson, Office of Operations and Planning (OAP)  
Antonietta Phelan, Office of Youth Services  
Ellen Russo, Office on Aging and Disability Services

Henry Young, Office of Youth Services  
Jennifer Guyette, Office of Operations and Planning (OAP)  
Kim Cowart, Community Development Office  
Marla Matthews, Family Crisis Intervention Unit (FCIU)  
Meg Isbitski, Office of Operations and Planning (OAP)  
Monica Mulligan, Juvenile Institutional Services (JIS), One Stop Career Center  
Zachary Berliner, Office of Operations and Planning (OAP)

**Guests:**

Alba Robles, Community Food Bank of NJ (CFBNJ)  
Catherine Sackey, HOPES, Inc.  
Genna Rutka, Big Brothers Big Sisters Coastal & Northern New Jersey  
Linda Zimmerman, TriCounty CMO  
Maria Marnell, Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission (ESC)  
Mary Jane Canose, Bernardsville Mayor, Office on Aging Advisory Council  
Paige Boyce, Big Brothers Big Sisters Coastal & Northern New Jersey  
Susan Bruder, NJ Department of Education  
Susie Suter, Central Jersey Housing Resource Center (CJHRC)

**I. Call Meeting to Order & Introductions**

Mary Jane DiPaolo called the meeting to order at 1:30 PM. A quorum was established.

**II. Approval of the January 26, 2022 Minutes**

Rheanah Johnson announced a correction for Andrea Strack's affiliation to be changed to Legal Services of Northwest Jersey (LSNWJ). Motion to approve the January 26, 2022 meeting minutes was made and approved. All were in favor with no opposition or abstentions. Motion carried.

**III. Presentation: Central Jersey Housing Resource Center (CJHRC) - Susie Suter, Assistant Director**

The mission of Central Jersey Housing Resource Center (CJHRC), as a HUD approved agency, is to provide the very low-, low- and moderate-income individuals and households with the information they need to make informed and reasonable decisions to achieve their housing goals. Free counseling services include fair housing, pre-purchase, rental, financial literacy, foreclosure, and homeowner services, homeless, and seniors. All counseling services include fair housing, budgeting and tracking expenses, debt-to-income ratio, credit, identity theft and scams, and resources.

In 2021, CJHRC served 1,364 unduplicated clients (43% increase from 2020). For 2022, CJHRC is already experiencing a significant increase over 2021. 90% of clients are very low, low, or moderate income. Regarding the housing situation, there are many rental hurdles. Somerset County has the highest rent in the State -- 2-Bedroom Market Rate Unit cost \$1753/month; need to earn \$70,120/year to afford this rent comfortably. 80% of clients in 2021 earned \$66,000 or less. Additional hurdles include but are not limited to the expiration of the eviction moratorium on December 31, 2021, employment issues, and prices on necessities increasing.

CJHRC Office: **92 East Main Street, Suite 407**  
**Somerville, NJ 08876**  
**Website: [2cjhrc@gmail.com](mailto:2cjhrc@gmail.com)**  
**Phone: 908-446-0036**  
**Email: [2cjhrc@gmail.com](mailto:2cjhrc@gmail.com)**

**IV. State and County Agency Reports**

**New Jersey Department of Human Services (NJ DHS) - Nelson Troche**

- All counties are encouraged and welcome to attend the webinar presentation this Friday, February 25, 2022 at 10:00 am for this unique funding opportunity that improves accessibility for deaf, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing New Jerseyans. Ms. Johnson will send the full details.
- The Excluded New Jerseyans Fund reaches \$40 million in submitted applications, will remain open until February 28<sup>th</sup>.

**New Jersey Department of Children and Families (NJDCF) - Rick Hager**

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) webinar is set for March 9, 2022. Anyone can register and the webinar will be recorded and archived for distribution. The Recreation and Park Association is having their annual conference March 7<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup>, 2022 at Harrah’s Waterfront Conference Center in Atlantic City. The NJ Associations of Counties (NJAC) Annual is having their annual conference May 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Information to register is on their website [NJAC.org](http://NJAC.org). Mr. Hager will be exhibiting at both events.

**Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P)- Michelle Dufour**

2022	January
<b>Families</b>	328
<b>Children</b>	605
<b>Children in Out of Home Placement</b>	48
<b>Referral Type</b>	
<b>Child Protective Service Referrals</b>	105
<b>Child Welfare Referrals</b>	8
<b>Allegation Type</b>	
<b>Neglect</b>	105
<b>Physical Abuse</b>	46
<b>Sexual Abuse</b>	14
<b>Emotional Abuse</b>	2

Ms. Dufour reminded everyone of the new office manager Iretha Nalls. Zachary Berliner asked, have the numbers rebounded since school has returned to in-person. Ms. DuFour explained the numbers have not rebounded to where they were pre-COVID-19 and have been holding steady over the last year.

**V. Human Services Director’s Report – Mike Frost**

- Commissioner’s meeting held on February 22, 2022. Applications for funding have finally been funded. Asked to fund a total of 54 programs and 52 were approved. The programs approved include

five new agencies and eight new programs. The funds were allocated from a split between two funding streams. One includes the traditional nonprofit of service funding which includes nearly \$1.9 million and another \$2.9 million from American Rescue Plan funds. The funds are awarded for a two-year cycle. The allocated amount can be viewed on the posted resolution in the recording from the meeting.

- Dameon Stackhouse, Community Police Alliance Coordinator presented at the Commissioner's meeting. Mr. Stackhouse's work is central to what is going on in Bridgewater. Mr. Frost expressed that we are hopeful that The Bridgewater police department and Chief Payne are open to some of the changes that have been proposed that have not yet occurred. The Community Police Alliance is a piloted program designed for a year. However, the ultimate goal is to create a shared service agreement with other interested municipalities throughout Somerset County, to imbed social workers in their police departments. There are two primary missions for the positions. One is crisis de-escalation; meaning being dispatched with officers to the scene. Mission two is follow up, referral, and linkage. Dispatch has not happened yet.
- Department of Human Services Director's attended a meeting with DCF senior staff on February 18, 2022. Part of the discussion was the DCF needs assessment. Last year it was a heavy lift and many colleagues and HSAC chairs had made this clear to the DCF staff. DCF was receptive of this and will be changing the demand.

## **VI. Unfinished Business**

Ms. DiPaolo reminded the council to complete the survey to select the committee they would like to serve on. Once members select committees, they will elect chairpersons and determine the frequency they will meet.

Ms. DiPaolo opened the discussion for the council to share the top three priorities that should be of focus. LuAnn Dias asked for more explanation on who will be leading each committee. Ms. Dias also asked would a staff member be leading the meeting. Ms. Johnson explained a staff member would be at each meeting and in charge of correspondence, but a chairperson should be running the meetings. The expectation is that committee reports will be given at least quarterly. Catherine Sackey from HOPES, Inc. stated that a priority should be helping the elderly population with direct support services. Seniors have shared they need help with transportation, issues facing housing, and accessing technology. Ms. DiPaolo presented that a criticism is the DCF Needs Assessment is focused only on families and children. Diann Robinson agreed with Ms. DiPaolo and explained the assessment does not necessarily address the senior population or those with disabilities. Ms. Robinson suggested we focus on adult protective services and other underserved populations. Tim Wolf presented the rotating priorities of food, housing, and transportation. There was discussion of the need for a focus on mental health. Linda Zimmerman shared the TriCounty CMO is increasingly serving youth within the counties of Somerset, Hunterdon, and Warren who have grandparents serving to support their families. Ms. Zimmerman emphasized the intersectionality of the need for assistance all populations.

## **VII. New Business**

A motion was made and seconded to vote on establishing a membership committee. The motion passed. A motion was made and seconded to vote to eliminate the December HSAC meeting. The motion passed.

**VIII. Agency Highlights/ Announcements**

Ms. DiPaolo shared that Community Child Care Solutions is having a national expert speak on emergency management specific to childcare. Part two of the presentation will be related to crisis communication, site security, and de-escalation. Ms. DiPaolo will send to Ms. Johnson to forward to the council following the meeting.

**IX. Meeting Adjourned**

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 2:45 PM.

**The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 23, 2022, at 1:30 PM via Zoom. The link will be sent out a week prior via email.**