

DSS/OFA/COMMUNITY SERVICES/PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE MEETING
January 17, 2018

DSS Commissioner Jenny Jones

A docket was approved to authorize an agreement with Jefferson Community College (JCC) for DSS to verify for the College the internship site, course instructor and student intern expectations of the internship experience and the responsibilities that all parties have agreed to for the College's Human Services/Chemical Dependency Degree Program.

Jenny reported that regardless that the DSS building was closed Tuesday due to no heat, several personnel performed their work. Required notifications were made to State agencies.

Referring to company specific workforce recruitment sessions to fill job openings, Jenny implied recruiting difficulty for some of the agencies that provide direct care staff such The Arc of Oneida-Lewis, the Lutheran Home, US Care etc., sometimes only having one interested person attend.

Persons with a prior criminal record with substance abuse issues may apply for temporary assistance benefits.

When the temperature falls to 32 degrees or below the DSS Commissioner is charged with providing shelter to homeless people. The County has an apartment located on Dayan Street in Lowville for this purpose, or may utilize hotel accommodations when necessary. The County contracts with Lewis County Opportunities to manage the apartment. In 2017, there were approximately 1,000 nights of shelter provided at the Dayan Street apartment and 20 – 30 other nights at hotels. Sheltering the homeless is a constant challenge.

In order for Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) to receive Federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits they are required to participate in an employment training program and apply for jobs. There are 185 ABAWD persons in Lewis County receiving SNAP benefits that have been notified of the requirement to work 80 hrs. per month. Although the Lewis County unemployment rate of 5.1% is above the national rate of 4.1%, the County has not opted for the waiver. If a recipient does not participate, they may be allowed SNAP benefits for only three months out of 36. Jenny reported that a few people have been exempted due to medical conditions, while others with special circumstances have been approved to work 40 hrs./month.

Jenny reported good staff attendance at the recent New Year's breakfast, at which she outlined and discussed goals for the upcoming year.

She clarified that DSS is not on the same computer network as the County.

The "Raise the Age" legislation will prohibit 16 year olds from being housed in jail effective 10/1/2018, and 17 year olds effective 10/1/2019. DSS and other departments responsible for supervising youths are charged to identify alternatives for court ordered secured detention. St. Lawrence County prospectively may repurpose their old jail to house regional youths.

Jenny stated her primary focus is for staff to understand expectations and accountability. The department has 25% newly hired staff during the past two years. Later this month two employees with 64-years of aggregate experience will be retiring.

The Point In Time Study will endeavor to count every homeless person with a goal to assure they have access to assisting resources. The numbers will be reported to the Federal Housing and Urban Development that allocates funding according to documented need. The Governor wants to eradicate homelessness. Law enforcement, physicians, emergency room staff, food pantries and anywhere known to assist homeless persons have been alerted to notify DSS of anyone they suspect as homeless.

Jenny reported that the Lewis County DSS Workforce Development office was recognized as number one in the State for employment services; and the Child Support Unit was recognized as number one in the State for collections and establishing paternity.

Jenny and Phil McDowell will be presenting a program at the upcoming NYPWA conference on the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics- NMT.

Legislator Chartrand left the meeting and Legislator Andrea Moroughan entered the meeting at 9:35 a.m.
