

General
Human
Outreach *in the Community, Incorporated*

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May 3, 2013

Commissioner Courtney Burke
NYS OPWDD
44 Holland Avenue Albany, NY 12229
email: People.First@opwdd.ny.gov

Dear Commissioner Burke,

This letter of intent is offered to you in response to the OPWDD call for Letters of Intent and Expressions of Interest related to Specialized Managed Care for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities, following the People First Waiver initiative:

http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/opwdd_services_supports/people_first_waiver/Becoming_a_DISCO

On behalf of the Asian consumers of NYC, and in fulfillment of our mission, we embrace People First (Consumer First) values, and request your advice and assistance in navigating the redesign of our health care system towards optimal benefit to both our consumers and to our society as a whole.

Below are the requested information and an explanation of our reasoning underlying this effort.

The new entity will be a DISCO.

The DISCO will operate in New York City (primarily in the counties of New York, Kings, and Queens)

The DISCO will seek affiliations with mainstream managed care plans and MLTC entities, and other Developmentally Disabled service providers that:

- 1) Are existing New York City providers having significant Asian consumer populations
- 2) Have service delivery facilities located in NYC communities having significant Asian populations
- 3) Offer culturally relevant provider services.

The DISCO will be sponsored and guided by the following existing Developmental Disabilities services provider experienced in culturally relevant Medicaid service coordination, family support, residential habilitation, in-home residential habilitation, outreach, and advocacy:

General Human Outreach in the community, inc. (GHO)

The DISCO Board of Directors will be comprised of Directors of the sponsoring agency and open to representatives of affiliate entities and consumer representatives.

Vision and Mission: The justification for the formation of a new GHO-sponsored DISCO to focus on the provision of culturally relevant service coordination for Asian consumers in New York City.

Legacy of Success

GHO was founded in 1992 by an Asian Health care worker, Jane Ning Kuo. Jane worked with the developmentally-disabled as a regional manager of residential and day programs operated by Catholic Charities, after coming up through the ranks in direct care and program administration. Jane had also worked for the Bancroft School in their New Jersey and Maine facilities.

Jane realized that a dedicated agency was needed to offer Asian consumers a comfortable, familiar, culturally relevant environment in which to thrive. At 'Charities' and at all the other large social service agencies the Asian consumers were being lost in the crowd, not fitting in, and suffered without the aid of their familiar language and culture. With the Asian population in NYC on the rise, Jane knew what must be done to meet their needs, and thus GHO was begun. Jane's reputation and contacts allowed her to attract funding and the right staff for the agency.

Today GHO is a thriving Asian services agency with dedicated staff and consumers, and marks it's 20th anniversary providing services to Asian consumers. Jane passed away in 2007, but the agency she nurtured continues to grow and strengthen.

Response to Medicaid Redesign

With the advent of the New York State People First Waiver Medicaid system redesign into a more generic healthcare management system, the mission of GHO is again called into action to prevent the Asian consumer from being lost in the crowd. Today the Board of Directors, most of whom knew Jane personally, are resolved to preserve gains in relevant service coordination to the Asian consumer by again drawing attention to the need for culturally-relevant services coordination and delivery environment that is a natural fit supporting the consumer towards optimal well-being and quality of life.

Language and Cultural Relevancy in the delivery of Health Services in New York City: The Importance of Culturally-Relevant Service Coordination

The new People First System places the consumer first, and service coordination as the consumer's key point of relationship, advocacy, need evaluation and plan implementation. For Asian consumers, this service coordination must be as closely culturally relevant as possible to be meaningful and successful.

The formation of a new culturally-specialized DISCO will fill this need and thereby insure that the Asian consumer is not lost in the crowd once again- which would return consumers back to the original problem that drove Jane to create a new specialty agency in 1992.

The GHO Board feels that generic conglomerate associations of existing providers now forming into one or two DISCO entities will have the effect of diluting the focus on culturally relevant services, disenfranchising the growing Asian consumer population in New York City.

The addition of specific language and cultural requirements for both DISCO service coordination staff and provider health service environments is one that is added voluntarily on top of standard service and qualification requirements generically set by the State. Only a dedicated, culturally-specialized, experienced and capable DISCO will hold this relevancy as a key value and pursue it with vigor in all facets of delivering health care services to the consumer.

The need for a pronounced culturally- focused approach to health care is genuine and uniquely justifiable in New York City. Census demographic data has demonstrated that Asian populations are among the fastest growing cultural groups among immigrant populations, with that trend first being recognized by us in 1990, leading to the creation of GHO's first case management and family support efforts. Since then the trend has continued dramatically upwards as reflected in first the 2000 and more recently the 2010 census data.

It was the 1990 census that first led to the observation that Asian consumers were under-served: among the known consumer population Asians were not proportionally represented in accordance with what were believed by many to be under-reported census counts. It was a perceived cultural stigma and language divide that prevented many families from seeking care or understanding that care was indeed available.

Financial and Management Excellence: Why our DISCO will thrive

We at GHO are most proud that our agency does well in managing its financial resources. Rooted in a culture of thrift, resourcefulness and optimization of opportunity, we have the confidence to make decisions going forward. It is our deep concern that if we are not in a position to make the new systemic and organizational decisions on behalf of consumers that must be made, that the quality, access, and suitable nature of available health care offerings to Asian consumers may be degraded through inefficiencies and systemic limitations.

Upon acknowledgement of this letter of intent by OPWDD, the DISCO Corporation will be formed and affiliations with existing providers enacted. Information technology systems and capitation resources will be standardized based on systems used by managed care plan affiliates. Our Executive team will continue to work inclusively with the community and advisors as we create new solutions effecting meaningful change.

Again, on behalf of the Asian consumers of New York City, and in fulfillment of our mission, we embrace People First values, and request your advice and assistance in navigating the redesign of our health care system towards optimal benefit to both our consumers and to our society as a whole.

Thank you for your consideration!

This letter of intent is offered on behalf of the GHO Board of Directors



Kenneth J. Rozsahegyi, MPA
President

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c: GHO Board of Directors and Executive Staff