

**Summary of Proceedings – October 15, 2007**  
**Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council (MISCC)**  
**Meeting**

**MISCC Meeting Participants**

**Diana Jones Ritter, Chair**

*Commissioner, New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities*

**Dr. Michael Hogan**

*Commissioner, New York State Office of Mental Health*

**Deborah VanAmerongen**

*Commissioner, New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal*

**Michael Burgess**

*Director, New York State Office for the Aging*

**Gary O'Brien**

*Chair, Commission on Quality of Care and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities*

**Charlotte Mason**

*Health Care Administrator IV (representing Dr. Richard Daines, Commissioner, and Mark Kissinger, Deputy Commissioner, New York State Department of Health)*

**William Carpenter**

*Addiction Program Specialist II (representing Karen Carpenter-Palumbo, Commissioner, New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse)*

**Nancy Martinez**

*Deputy Commissioner (representing Gladys Carrion, Esq., Commissioner, New York State Office of Children and Family Services)*

**Dr. Rebecca Cort**

*Deputy Commissioner VESID (representing Richard Mills, Commissioner, New York State Education Department)*

**Ron Epstein**

*Director, Statewide Policy Bureau (representing Astrid Glynn, Commissioner, New York State Department of Transportation)*

**Public Members**

**Debra Holland**

*Government Affairs Associate (representing Carol Raphael, President and Chief Executive Officer, The Visiting Nurse Service of New York)*

**Constance Laymon**

*Chief Executive Officer, Consumer Directed Choices*

**Harvey Rosenthal**

*Executive Director, New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation*

**Patricia Fratangelo**

*Executive Director, Onondaga Community Living*

- Commissioner Diana Jones Ritter, Chair, welcomed the council members and acknowledged Michael Seereiter, Program Assistant to the Governor, who was in the audience. She also acknowledged Donna Mackey who serves as counsel to the MISCC.
- Commissioner Ritter noted that, Kim Hill, a member of MISCC since its inception, had her baby. It's a boy and his name is Alexander Joseph Ridley!
- Commissioner Ritter next acknowledged the great momentum we have achieved with MISCC - our Housing Task Force is making solid progress. A Transportation Workgroup will be reconstituted today and early in 2008 we will form an Employment Workgroup. Housing, transportation and employment are key areas which need improvement if we are to achieve MISCC outcomes.
- Commissioner Ritter also noted that state agencies should be meeting with their stakeholder groups to work on MISCC report recommendations.
- Next, Commissioner Ritter turned to outcomes of the People First Listening Forums. She noted that at our July MISCC meeting, a member of the audience asked what the forums did to improve the everyday lives of people with disabilities.
- Commissioner Ritter, Commissioner Daines, of DOH, Commissioner Carpenter-Palumbo of OASAS, and Commissioner Hogan of OMH conducted the statewide listening forums which were held to advance Governor Spitzer's mandate to "put people first." By sending the Commissioners out, each could hear first-hand from people with multiple needs what it is like to deal with complex state and local bureaucracies.
- People who spoke at the forums identified difficulties in assessing child psychiatry, other medical services and dental care. Housing, employment, and transportation were also identified as pressing needs. People with a combination of physical and developmental disabilities and people in recovery from mental illness and substance abuse need better support.
- Commissioner Ritter shared two quotes from speakers at the hearings. One person said that "accessing treatment is sometimes like climbing Mount Olympus!" and another said that "we should not have to knock on 20 doors to receive one service, rather we should knock on one door and receive 20 services."
- There has been a lot of forward movement as a result of the forums. DOH is consulting with other state agencies on its RFPs, Commissioner Hogan (OMH) and Commissioner Carpenter-Palumbo (OASAS) are working together on fixing problems for people with co-occurring mental health and dependency disorders. OASAS is sharing information on its County Planning System with OMH, OMRDD and DOH. And in all the agencies "single points of accountability have been established to get people the services they need and a place to go when things go wrong."

- Commissioner Ritter also noted that she and Commissioner Hogan are developing a new model for regional office collaboration to address needs of people with mental health and developmental disabilities diagnoses.
- As another forum outcome, the Inter-Office Coordinating Council (IOCC) is being reinvigorated. The IOCC will actively work to coordinate services and issues involving OMRDD, OMH and OASAS. DOH will also participate.
- Finally, Commissioner Ritter noted that MISCC is included in the follow-up action plan for the forums - MISCC is being looked to as a body that can address the housing, employment, and transportation needs described by forum participants.
- Following the discussion on the forum, Commissioner Ritter turned to Commissioner Hogan to describe OMH progress in providing a strong community support system for people with mental health diagnoses.
- Commissioner Hogan titled his presentation: “Planning and Action for Better Health in New York State: Where Have We Been? What Do We Do Next?” His presentation focused on policy, organizational and financing challenges for New York State.
- Commissioner Hogan began by discussing the status of people with mental illness across the country. He said that while people today are more likely to receive treatment and that more resources are being devoted to mental health, the “persistent poverty” of people with mental illness endures. The continuing pattern of “late intervention” for children is another major concern as are challenges presented by adults with mental illness and physical illnesses. (People with mental illness have significantly higher rates of obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.)
- Commissioner Hogan also underscored the fragmentation in mental health services provided by federal, state and local entities. The efforts by these entities are often not well coordinated.
- Against this national background, Commissioner Hogan turned to directions for mental health services in New York State.
- He pointed to two systems providing public mental health services: the public mental health system and publicly supported health care. Within the public mental health system, he noted an imbalance between in-patient and out-patient rehabilitation services. Additionally, mental health services are often fragmented leading to “discontinuous care.” For people served within the publicly supported health care system, there is often poor detection and treatment of mental disorders and the mental health services tend to be episodic rather than continuous.
- Commissioner Hogan presented statistics to demonstrate the lack of coordination between in-patient and out-patient mental health services. He noted that only 28% of in-patient discharges were followed by an out-patient visit within seven days and only 42% had a visit within 30 days.

- Commissioner Hogan also noted that despite high resource levels in all categories of intensive adult mental health services, in-patient lengths of stay are high and access to community supports is poor.
- Finally, Commissioner Hogan defined the key mental health challenges for New York State and the areas his administration will address. These include: appropriate reimbursement for mental health clinic care, re-balancing in-patient care to integrated community care, addressing poverty and underemployment, better detection and treatment of mental disorders in general health care settings, inserting mental health capabilities into chronic illness care and management settings, inserting primary care capabilities into all mental health clinical settings, and expanding the “depth, diversity, and coherency of advocacy, peer and family supports.”
- Commissioner Ritter thanked Commissioner Hogan for his excellent presentation and asked for comments from Council members.
- Gary O’Brien, Chair of the Commission on Quality of Care and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities (CQCAPD), praised Commissioner Hogan for his candor. He said that the presentation identified current service gaps and problems in service coordination, but also gave a sense that OMH knows where it is going.
- Commissioner Ritter noted that some of the fragmentation Commissioner Hogan spoke of also exists in other agencies including her own, OMRDD, and that this was a challenge Commissioners must address.
- Harvey Rosenthal also thanked Commissioner Hogan for his candor and his leadership. Mr. Rosenthal said that employment issues must be highlighted as OMH moves forward. Further, Mr. Rosenthal acknowledged that the MISCC is a good place to work on the generally poor employment outcomes for people with disabilities because “we have all the right people at the table.” Mr. Rosenthal also pointed to affordable housing as another major concern.
- Commissioner Hogan responded by noting that people who are mentally ill don’t respond to “vanilla employment solutions” and that, in fact, there are special challenges for this population that must be acknowledge and addressed. Commissioner Hogan also noted that Governor Spitzer has been especially generous in creating funding for 1,000 new housing support opportunities and 1,000 units of new construction. He added that New York needs a comprehensive low income housing strategy; without it, different groups compete for scarce resources.
- Chair O’Brien noted that the special needs of children with mental health diagnoses are a major issue.
- In response Deputy Commissioner Rebecca Cort, stated that “kids with mental illness diagnoses have the highest school drop out rates and this leads to employment, poverty and housing issues.”

- Commissioner Hogan said that we must also address the problems of our elderly with mental illness.
- Commissioner Ritter again thanked Commissioner Hogan for his presentation and agreed with Harvey Rosenthal's view that MISCC does have the right people around the table to tackle employment and housing issues.
- Commissioner Ritter next called upon Commissioner VanAmerongen to provide a status on the MISCC Housing Task Force.
- Commissioner VanAmerongen began by noting that the task force had met twice and was very goal-oriented and focused on incorporating its objectives into the "everyday work of our respective agencies and organizations." The task force "wants tangible changes in our programs and policies."
- Commissioner VanAmerongen noted that the task force had adopted a mission statement that will be posted on the MISCC website.
- At the housing task force meeting, SOFA shared information on "Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities" (NORC) and OMRDD presented on the "Home of Your Own Program." Other approaches to housing will be shared at future task force meetings.
- Commissioner VanAmerongen next reported that three workgroups on Rent Subsidies, Data and Education have been created within the Housing Task Force. The groups will work independently and will report on their progress to the entire housing task force.
- Commissioner VanAmerongen also asked to use her time on the agenda to describe some of DHCR's accomplishments that impact the lives of people with disabilities. She noted that DHCR's Affordable Accessible Housing Registry is up and running and that it is an important resource for people with disabilities seeking housing. DHCR's partner in operating the registry, the Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY (CIDNY) has been culling information from the internet and developers to populate the site.
- In recognition of the need to populate the site with as much usable information as possible, DHCR's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (OFHEO) began requiring that, as part of an Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Plan, managers/landlords register their accessible properties "no later than 90 days prior to engaging in marketing activities on the site and that they post vacancies once the project is rented up."
- Commissioner VanAmerongen asked every state agency to provide a link on their webpage to the CIDNY site. It is a very useful tool for connecting consumers with much needed affordable and accessible housing. The website address is [www.nysaccessiblehousing.org](http://www.nysaccessiblehousing.org) or it can be accessed through DHCR's website under "links" in the bottom right corner.
- Finally, Commissioner VanAmerongen turned to a discussion of the State's Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP) which sets the criteria for and preferences by which Low Income

Housing Tax Credits are allocated to housing capital projects. The QAP is the guiding document for award of this most important housing development resource. It was last reviewed in 2005. As the Lead Housing Agency for the Low Income Housing Credit (LIHC) program, DHCR has responsibility for issuing a Qualified Allocation Plan that sets forth New York State's priorities for allocation of this precious housing resource. DHCR has determined that it is time to review this document so that it can assess how to best target what has become the preeminent housing production and preservation program in the state. As part of this effort, DHCR has held meetings with stakeholders to solicit input on how the state can utilize this program as effectively as possible. Proposed changes to the Qualified Allocation Plan will be published in the State Register, at least one Public Hearing and public comment will follow, with a final Qualified Allocation Plan scheduled to be in place for 2008.

- Commissioner VanAmerongen concluded by thanking Commissioner Ritter for the opportunity to share the considerable progress of the MISCC Housing Task Force as well as that of DHCR generally.
- Mike Burgess, SOFA's Director, noted that various pots of federal money are available to support people at home (for example, the Home Energy Assistance Program and WRAP which funds weatherization projects). He wondered whether federal monies could also fund the kinds of adaptive equipment (e.g., grab bars) that allow people with disabilities to remain at home. Mr. Burgess also said he wondered why Habitat for Humanity doesn't get involved in making homes accessible and in providing home maintenance services for low income individuals.
- Commissioner VanAmerongen pointed to two programs that help with these kinds of home adaptations - they are "Access to Home" and the Restore programs.
- Next, Commissioner Ritter noted that OMRDD had signed an MOU with SONYMA which gives OMRDD permission to offer a very low interest mortgage product to income-eligible parents/and or legal guardians of individuals with developmental disabilities. This development piggybacks on OMRDD's very successful home ownership program which has assisted more than 200 individuals with developmental disabilities to buy their own homes. Ms. Lucinda Grant-Griffin of OMRDD heads this model program.
- As the final formal agenda item, Commissioner Ritter announced the formation of a revitalized MISCC transportation workgroup. She noted that Commissioner Astrid Glynn of DOT has graciously allowed Ron Epstein, Director of DOT's Statewide Policy Bureau, to chair the group. All the MISCC state agencies will be asked to appoint representatives to the group which will also be open to MISCC council members and generally to people with disabilities and their advocates. She asked Ron Epstein to discuss the workgroup.
- Ron Epstein thanked Commissioner Ritter, on behalf of Commissioner Glynn, for the opportunity to lead the workgroup. He described current efforts to coordinate transportation resources across communities, state agencies, and not-for-profit providers funded with public monies. He said while there is "no magic bullet" in meeting the transportation needs of

people with disabilities, we need to “stop looking at barriers” and figure out ways to make better use of vehicles and drivers that are being funded. Mr. Epstein said that he would merge DOT’s United We Ride workgroup with the MISCC transportation workgroup. The combined body will work on both low income and disability transportation issues.

- Commissioner Ritter next asked who on the MISCC wished to join the transportation workgroup. Harvey Rosenthal volunteered and Constance Laymon asked that Cliff Perez, a transportation expert within the advocacy community, be included in the workgroup.
- Commissioner Ritter noted that transportation is very local and that we need to also work on the issues at the local level. She asked Mr. Epstein to provide a status on the workgroup at our January full MISCC Council meeting. She also pointed to the transportation recommendations in the MISCC report which were adopted in November of 2006. She said that the transportation workgroup under Mr. Epstein needs to review these recommendations and figure out what actions are required.
- Commissioner Ritter next opened up the meeting to general comments from MISCC members.
- Constance Laymon began by asking for a status report on each state agency’s stakeholder group. Ms. Laymon stressed the need to have people who use a state agency’s services participate in charting a course for the state agency.
- While most state agencies have convened their workgroups, several had not.
- Commissioner Ritter said she will ask each state agency to formally report on its stakeholder group at the January MISCC meeting. She noted that this is a critical commitment that must be met by each state agency involved in MISCC.
- Next, several council members stressed the importance of following-up on the recommendations in the MISCC report. Commissioner Ritter agreed and said we must use the report to guide state agency actions.
- Commissioner Ritter opened up the comment period to audience members as the final piece of business.
- Bruce Darling of the Center for Disability Rights said it was important for the MISCC to understand that housing needs go beyond those who require supportive housing. Many people simply need affordable and accessible housing without special supports. Mr. Darling also expressed concern that his organization hasn’t been asked to participate in the Monroe County’s Long Term Care Council. He is also concerned that Monroe County’s council generally focuses on the needs of the elderly rather than those of younger people with disabilities.
- Mike Burgess, Director of SOFA, said that the counties need to work with Independent Living Centers and said that he would again contact Monroe County.

- Bruce Darling further noted that Monroe County doesn't offer consumer-directed personal care, a Medicaid option that is very important to people with disabilities. Finally, Mr. Darling raised the issue of members appointed to the MISCC who are not actively engaged in the council - these seats should be opened up to other members of the public.
- Chris Hilderbrant of the Center for Disability Rights indicated that paratransit is not working well for people with disabilities. He argued for user-side subsidies which let people with disabilities themselves purchase transportation. He also noted that besides needing better employment and housing opportunities and transportation, people with disabilities need better services. He pointed to gaps in DOH services and challenged MISCC to really do the right thing for people with disabilities. He said that the fact that some state agencies had not even met with their stakeholder groups was a big concern. He said he was impatient because the lives of people with disabilities need to improve now.
- Commissioner Ritter closed the meeting noting that she expected each state agency to convene its stakeholder group and to engage in serious work to achieve MISCC outcomes. She also said she looked forward to continued progress by the Housing Task Force and a good beginning for the reinvigorated Transportation Workgroup. Finally, Commissioner Ritter noted that the next MISCC meeting would be held on January 23, 2008 in Room 6 of the Empire State Plaza (concourse level) from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

## Action Items

1. State agencies should offer links on their websites to the Accessible Housing Registry operated jointly by DHCR and the Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY (CIDNY). The site's address is [www.nysaccessiblehousing.org](http://www.nysaccessiblehousing.org)
2. Ron Epstein of DOT will form a MISCC Transportation Workgroup. State agencies are to contact Lisa Kagan with the name of their representative.
3. Each state agency must convene and work with its stakeholder group. (State agencies will be asked to make presentations on their stakeholder groups at the January 23, 2008 MISCC meeting.)
4. Commissioner Ritter will explore the issue of inactive public MISCC members. (i.e., can we seek new appointments to replace public members who have not participated on a regular basis?)