



Testimony
of
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before the

New York City Council Committee on Aging
Committee on Mental Health, Mental Retardation, Alcoholism, Drug Abuse, and
Disability Services
Subcommittee on Senior Centers

regarding

Oversight: Provision of Mental Health Services in Senior Centers
April 11, 2011

250 Broadway, Hearing Room, 14th Floor
New York, NY

Good morning Chairs Koppell, Lappin, and Greenfield, and members of the Committees. I am Trish Marsik, Assistant Commissioner for the Bureau of Mental Health in the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.

In addition to work of the Department for the Aging, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene supports geriatric mental health programs and provides depression education and screening in senior centers around the five boroughs.

As Commissioner Barrios-Paoli pointed out, our jointly funded depression education and screening program, provided through the Mental Health Association, conducts presentations in 55 senior centers.

DOHMH provides supplemental funding to licensed mental health clinics providing services in senior centers. Many of these clinics also provide outreach to the home bound elderly and I am pleased to report that DOHMH successfully negotiated funding for these important services after it was eliminated under clinic restructuring.

Psychosocial activities for seniors are critical for maintaining mental health and we have been fortunate to be able to continue to retain some funding for geriatric psychosocial clubs which provide therapeutic recreation programs, health-related services, and social activities for seniors recovering from mental illnesses.

With the Council's support DOHMH coordinates mental health services for seniors through the Geriatric Mental Health Initiative. In Fiscal Year 2011, this funding supported 25 community-based mental health providers throughout the five boroughs delivering services to approximately 12,000 older adults. Services include psycho-educational presentations on depression and alcohol abuse; screening for depression, alcohol abuse, and anxiety; individual and group counseling; and case management. These services are provided by multicultural staff members who speak a variety of languages: English, Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin), French, Hebrew, Russian, Spanish, Toishanese, and Yiddish. I want to thank the Council for its robust support of mental health services for this population.

Last, for seniors or their loved ones who don't know where to go for help, the Department funds LIFENET, the City's crisis and mental health service hotline. Lifenet is staffed by social workers who can provide immediate intervention and referral to callers in multiple languages. LIFENET receives approximately 120,000 calls annually.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be glad to answer any questions you may have.