



Council of Senior Centers & Services of NYC, Inc.

49 West 45th Street, Seventh Floor, New York, NY 10036 (212) 398-6565

<http://www.cscs-ny.org>

**ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON AGING,
ASSEMBLYMAN JEFFREY DINOWITZ, CHAIR**

**ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON CITIES,
ASSEMBLYMAN JAMES BRENNAN, CHAIR**

**ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PROTECTION,
ASSEMBLYWOMAN AUDREY PHEFFER, CHAIR**

**ASSEMBLY SUBCOMMITTEE ON OUTREACH AND OVERSIGHT OF
SENIOR CITIZEN PROGRAMS,
ASSEMBLYMAN WILLIAM BOYLAND, CHAIR**

PUBLIC HEARING

April 18, 2008

The Council of Senior Centers and Services (CSCS) is the central organization in New York City representing the 329 senior centers and a broad array of community-based services for the elderly. CSCS' 200 member agencies provide services to 300,000 older New Yorkers including multi-service senior centers, congregate and home-delivered meals, case assistance, transportation, information and referral for benefits, mental health services, adult day services, ESL/Citizenship classes and other services for elderly immigrants, health and wellness programs, educational and cultural activities, intergenerational programs, opportunities for volunteerism, and other services designed to assist seniors to age in place in their communities.

CSCS greatly appreciates the leadership of the Committee chairs holding this hearing. Decisions regarding the delivery of community-based senior services by New York City to the current and upcoming generations of New Yorkers must be done in a careful and thoughtful manner. Decisions regarding service delivery to older New Yorkers must be based on experience and knowledge. Change must be move ahead in a delicate way to avoid seniors being impacted negatively. We welcome the opportunity to discuss the concerns we have with the direction the city is moving in. The goal is to ensure that New York City remains a good place to grow old providing neighborhood based services allowing seniors to age in place with dignity.

April 18, 2008

We have concerns related to the community planning process, the regionalization of senior centers and meals-on-wheels, proposed changes to senior center services, funding, transportation and the speed at which all of this is happening.

1. DFTA's year long community planning process –

- **A perfunctory process** – Agencies have been invited to a summit last June, to workgroups over this past year and to borough forums held by Commissioner Ed Mendez Santiago. The meetings are all strictly structured limiting discussion. We have seen no evidence that DFTA has listened to or incorporated concerns or recommendations made by the community.
- **Plans appear that aren't discussed in meetings** – For example, the “regionalization” of senior centers was never discussed and suddenly appeared in DFTA's sr. center concept paper.
- **Mayor's 2030 plan**, page 5, says that because of the 44% expected increase in the 65+ population by 2030, we need “additional senior centers and supportive housing.” DFTA's “modernization” plan is headed in the opposite direction. Commissioner Mendez stated at a City Council Aging budget hearing that the closing of senior centers is on the table.
- **Disenfranchisement of minority community** – For example, in the case management rfp, Jamaica was grouped together with Howard Beach and S. Ozone Park. The minority community-based organization, Jamaica Services Program for Older Adults, lost the contract. JSPOA has been an anchor in the Jamaica community for over 35 years. We asked the city to change these boundaries, but they refused.

2. No definition of “regionalization” of senior centers – The 3 month delay agreed upon between City Council and the administration is welcomed. However, there are still many unanswered questions as to the substance of DFTA's proposals to redesign senior centers.

- **Regionalization means “resource allocation”** – Will money be taken out of one district to another? How many senior centers and which ones do they plan to close? How will seniors access a senior center keeping in mind that it has to be geographically close and culturally comfortable.
- **We have been told there is discussion about a “full service” senior center – what is that?** Most centers already are multi-service. Where will the money come from? Will seniors have access to the centers? If not, the result will be isolation for those seniors denied access.
- **Once a senior center and its kitchen is lost, the community won't get it back.** A senior center is a physical plant program. Space and a kitchen are needed.
- **“Underutilization” of senior centers** – DFTA only counts the meals. If a senior comes for a yoga class and doesn't eat lunch, she doesn't count.
- **There are 1 million underutilized meals according to DFTA.** This is within the 10% variance rate DFTA allows. If all 1 million meals were provided centers wouldn't have enough money as food prices increase.
- **For over a year, we have tried to increase utilization by recommending offsite meals but DFTA stands in the way** –DOH is

willing to work it out with us to get past the food handlers license requirement, but DFTA has said no.

3. “Health and wellness” senior center models –

- **Additional resources for programs would be welcomed** – There is no new money forthcoming for the redesign of senior centers. In fact, senior centers will be cut 3% in FY2009. Most centers already do exercise, yoga, arts, computer classes, educational programs, blood pressure and other health screenings, etc.
- **CSCS did a program survey** and 140 senior centers responded in a few days checking off a litany of 40-50 activities they provide.
- If the city wants them to do only health and wellness programs, where is the funding for **social services, ESL classes and other immigrant services, educational classes, recreational programs, and so on?**
- **DFTA plans to rfp out all 329 senior centers simultaneously** – Usually, DFTA rfp’s out about 50-60 a year without all these other rfp’s going on. They don’t have the capacity to handle this as we are seeing with the case management transition. It will be chaotic.
- **We’ve asked they do pilot projects of a new senior center model** – The response has been that the city wants have everything done before the end of the administration. Services will be in a disarray and then they leave.

4. No new money and budget cuts –

- **There is no commitment by the Bloomberg administration to senior centers and other services.** DFTA is imposing a total of 6% in cuts to all DFTA programs – about \$6 million in total for FY08 and FY09.
- **The Bloomberg administration refuses to baseline money put in by city council** - \$4.5 million for meals, \$4 million for vans, \$3.1 million for sr center rents and equipment.
- **An rfp would not include City Council funds if they aren’t baselined.** For example, the meals-on-wheels rfp, due out May 1st, would not include the 35 cents more a meal, \$4.5 million citywide, or \$7800 a van, \$4 million citywide allocated by City Council. That is thousands of dollars less in agency budgets.

5. City supplanted state funds for MOW –

- No commitment from Bloomberg for MOW. State legislature and governor just added \$3.5 million for SNAP home-delivered meals program - \$1.4 million for city – to meet growing need and prevent waiting lists. **City supplanted state money for city money so we made no progress.**
- **DFTA addressed waiting lists after we got stories on NBC.** No plan for ongoing prevention of waiting lists – needs to be an uncapped program so money is available on day one if senior needs MOW.
- **DFTA did pick up 1800 MOW recipients Citymeals had been providing meals for at a cost of \$2.7 million** – For about 10 years, Citymeals was the sole source of funding for additional MOW, saving the city from having waiting lists. In other administrations, the city would step up to the plate and allocate funds for these meals.

6. **Bronx “Senior Opitons” MOW model** – DFTA didn’t meet any of its goals – and IBO review of the KPMG evaluation found that –
- only \$200,000 saved (not millions);
 - cost per meal about \$6.50 which is comparable around the city (not the \$5 it was originally funded at which is why other Bronx agencies couldn’t afford to bid);
 - city paid for no additional meals (new meals paid for by Citymeals which does this across the city).
 - All Bronx MOW recipients **eat the same food** everyday no matter what their ethnicity is – meatloaf for everyone – same food either hot or frozen is prepared by one for-profit caterer for the whole borough, Whitson’s.
 - **No funding for friendly visiting or telephone reassurance or programs to address isolation.** The city’s view is that as long as seniors are receiving the meals, that is enough. This is not the full purpose of the MOW program – it also addresses social isolation.
 - **Contracts would be reduced from 97 to 20 which is too radical a reduction** - The Bronx has 3 regions, Staten Island 1 so this leaves 16 regions for Manhattan , Brooklyn and Queens. This is much too large with too much diversity of seniors palates. Will one big caterer take over for the whole borough or city?
7. **Need to slow down the process and have state oversite role – A.10470, sponsored by Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, Chair, Committee on Aging –**
- A.10470 calls for an independent study of the Bronx mow model and an impact study of any restructuring of senior centers, MOW and case management. A Senate Republican companion bill is needed.
 - It was predictable that the case management transition would be chaotic. Homebound seniors are falling through the cracks – 3000 at last count are missing from DFTA’s count of homebound seniors. The number is probably higher as we don’t have information from all case management agencies.
 - There is state money in these programs and pass through federal OAA money.
 - These changes impact your constituents and agencies that serve them that have been anchors in the community for years.
8. **DFTA is planning to take vans away from senior centers. Transportation is the cornerstone of seniors remaining in community as they age and get more frail.**
- They are talking about transportation “hubs”. It is unclear how this would be done.
 - Taking vans away from centers would fragment services – seniors have easy access to transportation to center, doctors, shopping, etc, through the senior center. They often pick up the slack for access-a-ride’s mess.
 - CSCS developed a group vehicle insurance program this year and we are getting agencies to sign up – saving thousands of dollars and reinvesting back into transportation. We’re working to be efficient, but taking vans away would destroy these efforts. DFTA’s attempt at a group insurance program proved to be unsuccessful.



Council of Senior Centers & Services of NYC, Inc.

49 West 45th Street, Seventh Floor, New York, NY 10036 (212) 398-6565 <http://www.cscs-ny.org>

April 18, 2008

Transition Issues at the Department for the Aging for Case Management:

The meals-on-wheels rfp should not be issued until all seniors are accounted for and transition-related problems are resolved:

Clients

- ***Undercounted homebound elderly clients – DFTA’s “home alone” program***
- To date, we have calculated there are 3000 missing clients and we expect this number to go higher. The meals-on-wheels rfp should not be released until these seniors are accounted for and transition problems are resolved.
- ***Clients are not sure who their case workers are:*** Clients and family caregivers are now in a state of panic. They do not know who their new CM agencies are, and don’t know what will happen.
- ***DFTA lost client information*** – The conversion of the PDS software reporting system has caused the deletion of worker logs and clients. There is no coordination on how satellite offices will get PDS. New case managers will not have critical information on clients. DFTA is taking computers out of outgoing agencies that still need them to complete required work.
- ***New clients seeking services*** - Programs need to assess new clients during this turmoil without adequate staffing.

Agencies

- ***Wrong agencies invited to transition meetings*** - Key agencies are being left out of the transition meetings at DFTA which is inefficient and causing duplication of information for those who have to attend subsequent meetings. Outgoing and incoming contractors are being invited to the wrong meetings.
- ***Meals-on-wheels providers left out of transition process*** - Case assistance programs at senior centers are no longer permitted to assess homebound elderly for MOW. MOW programs are not being invited to any DFTA transition meetings, and are being left out of the process, leaving a disconnect between case managers and meals-on-wheels providers.
- ***Agencies do not know if there are home care hours of meals-on-wheels for new clients:*** One home care agency stated that they cannot take on any new clients until DFTA tells them to do so.

Information

- ***Client data flawed or missing:*** Information on clients via PDS has been given electronically; there are serious flaws in the database. Clients are lost from the database and agencies will not get hard copies of the clients’ cases until the fall. Incoming-new agencies/case management staff do not have the benefit of case

record materials (i.e. copies of important documentation, etc), which will have to stay with the hard copies. No one will be there after the end of the fiscal year to make copies.

- ***There is no IT plan*** - new case management sites are not up and running, no computers, no PDS (software reporting system with city). There is not a coordinated plan for IT for off-site programs and no information as to when agencies can expect to receive computers, software and networking capability.
- ***Misinformation caused by DFTA not putting information in writing and not correcting errors in writing:*** Most of the transition-related communication is not written, leading to misinformation. At the same time, errors have gone uncorrected in writing. This misinformation is overwhelming for agencies trying to work through the transition.
- ***Internal communication at DFTA in turmoil:*** Internal communication within DFTA is in a turmoil exacerbating problems.
- ***Inconsistent information about who is losing jobs/staff,*** causing problems with staffing up new contracts.
- ***Background checks unclear:*** Inconsistent information regarding staff background requirements. This is a new procedure for agencies and they have requested direction from DFTA, who initially was requiring fingerprinting of case managers. DFTA has now retracted the requirement, but has still not given any technical assistance on this, other than to “use professional judgment”.

Contracts

- ***Contracts are not registered yet:*** New contracts start date was April 1, 2008. This means agencies cannot get a financial advance from DFTA. DFTA sent forms to the agencies for interest free loans from the Fund for the City of NY. Two days after the form arrived, the application directions arrived.
- ***No clear fiscal guidelines:*** Agencies do not know how to open or close existing contracts. Agencies don't know how to bill DFTA for services.
- ***Agencies do not have new contracts yet:*** Agencies cannot use the contractual language in setting up subcontractor agreements until they have the specific language of the contract.
- ***Changing procedures are not in writing by DFTA leaving agencies at risk when audited:*** DFTA has told agencies that they will not be held to the standards during the transition period; however this has not been put into writing. There are strict timeline requirements for assessments and finishing paperwork. With everything being verbal, programs are concerned that they will be cited during program assessment in the following years.

For further information, please contact Bobbie Sackman, (212) 398-6565 x226 or bsackman@cscs-ny.org

DFTA Case Management Awards

Borough	Districts Covered	RFP	Actual	Diff
Bronx	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	947	1021	74
	7,8,11,12			
	9,10	863	913	50
Brooklyn	1, 3, 4	809	1067	258
	2,6,7,8,9,17	770	1186	416
	5,16,18	840	1200	360
	12, 14			
	10, 11	775	775	0
	13 15			
Manhattan	1,2,3,5,6	1365	1665	300
	4,7	1011	1344	333
	8,11	1160	1200	40
	9,10,12	1069	1249	180
Queens	1,3	793	907	114
	2,5	818	910	92
	4,6	718	718	0
	7	691		
	9,10,12	905	1105	200
	8,11,13	901	1300	399
	14			
Staten Isl	1			
	2,3	483	650	167
TOTAL		14918	17210	2983

April 22, 2008