



Council of Senior Centers & Services of NYC, Inc.

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**CONNECTING THE DOTS:
VOLATILE YEAR FOR SENIOR CENTERS AND SENIOR SERVICES
IN NEW YORK CITY – TOTALITY OF IMPACT
OCTOBER 6, 2008**

There is an assault on senior services. This past year in the aging services network has been the most volatile and challenging in the 35 year history of senior centers and services in NYC. The provider network and seniors they serve have been faced with the following dynamics:

Major restructuring, “modernization”, of aging services by the Department for the Aging (DFTA). Three back to back rfp’s within 18 months– reducing 32 homebound elderly case management contracts to 23 regions; 97 meals-on-wheels contracts to 20 large regions citywide; and the “regionalization” of senior centers in an rfp due out in October. Of major concern in all this restructuring is the lack of attention paid to the needs of an increasingly diverse and low income elderly population. Addressing diversity is a core value of community-based services. The community-based network of aging services is being eviscerated.

Senior center budget cuts and restructuring:

1. ***City budget cuts to DFTA totaling \$12.6 million –***
 - a. 3% across-the-board cut to all programs. Meals-on-wheels programs cut, but DFTA refuses to allow agencies to reduce the number of meals in their contracts.
 - b. The 35 cents extra per meal allocated by City Council in 2006 cut by \$500,000 as food costs increase.
 - c. There was also a \$1.2 million cut to funding allocated for rent/equipment at senior centers.
 - d. Mayor Bloomberg has asked for an additional 2.5% cut, or \$4 million to DFTA, to be implemented through a November budget modification.
 - e. DFTA is rescinding Borough President discretionary funds for senior services, \$7.5 million citywide. This will result in a reduction in services including everything from a senior center closing, to loss of operational costs of vans and meals funds, to cuts to Alzheimer services, and other critical services. While uncertain at this time, it appears these funds will be put into the senior center rfp due out in mid-October.

2. **State member item funds – “meat and potatoes”, not pork, for senior centers plus additional state cuts -**
 - a. There is no direct state funding stream for senior centers. Lack of an adequate financial base for senior centers has made member items especially critical to senior centers.
 - b. State cuts will further reduce services at senior centers such as funding for the operational cost of vans and meals-on-wheels.
 - c. Member item funds are “meat and potatoes” for senior centers funding meals, transportation, computer classes and supplies, exercise classes, ESL classes, social work services, shopping and escort assistance, adult day services, rent and utilities, equipment and other core services.
 - d. State Office for the Aging should be exempt from further cuts as it is a small agency and will result in further loss of senior services.

3. **Closing dozens of senior centers –**
 - a. An almost \$200 million deficit in the NYC Housing Authority’s (NYCHA) budget and insufficient funding restored by the city will lead to the closing of dozens of senior centers in NYCHA buildings.
 - b. There are currently about 100 senior centers in NYCHA buildings and there is \$30 million of federal HUD dollars used to fund the senior centers. A 2003 MOU between NYCHA and DFTA exchanged \$30 million of city funds for federal HUD dollars.
 - c. City Council only added in \$18 million, and some of those funds will also be used for youth programs, day care and community centers in NYCHA buildings.
 - d. Thousands of poor elderly New Yorkers will lose meals, services and a place to socialize bringing them out of isolation. These senior centers are located in the same neighborhoods lacking supermarkets making access to affordable, healthy food difficult.
 - e. 7300 seniors receive meals at NYCHA senior centers which stretches their food budget and provides a nutritional meal. See chart “Increasing Hunger Among: Closing NYCHA Senior Centers”.
<http://www.cscs-ny.org/files/NYCHASeniorCentersandSupermarkets.pdf>
 - f. This would be the first time in the 35 year history that there could be a wholesale closing of senior centers.

4. **Senior center rfp due out in October –**
 - a. For the first time ever, all 329 senior centers will be rfp’d out simultaneously. Usually, only about 50-60 are rfp’d out a year. DFTA has talked about “regionalizing” senior centers, but it is unclear what that means for a community.
 - b. The Department on Aging was on record that senior centers would close even before the NYCHA budget deficit was made public. Therefore, it is likely that dozens of senior centers, both in NYCHA buildings and other community sites will close within a year.
 - c. Mayor Bloomberg’s 2030 plan, specifically recommended additional senior centers due to the projected 44% increase in the senior population by 2030.

- d. Many senior centers will lose their meals-on-wheels funding (see below under meals-on-wheels rfp)
 - 5. **Senior Center Renovation Survey** – CSCS completed an extensive survey of the renovation needs of senior centers. 160 out of the 329 senior centers responded which is a high response rate. An investment of capital and expense funding is needed to renovate senior centers. <http://www.cscs-ny.org/files/RenovationNeedsurveyFinal2008.pdf> There are formidable barriers to capital dollars being utilized in senior centers: a \$500,000 minimum project amount and the city scrutinizing use of capital dollars in churches and synagogues.
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Services for homebound elderly – budget cuts and restructuring:

- 1. **Case management for homebound elderly - 3500 undercounted homebound elderly clients lose services during case management transition process –**
 - a. CSCS documented at least 3500 undercounted homebound elderly, ie – seniors already receiving case management services that had been dropped out of the data during the transition from 32 case management contracts to 23 large service delivery regions. For example, an agency could bid for an rfp that listed 1000 clients for \$1 million and find out after signing the contract there are really 200, 300, and in one case, 500+ more clients in actuality.
 - b. **City reneges on commitment to fund additional case managers to serve 3500 undercounted seniors:** The city originally committed to funding additional case managers and supervisors in order to keep caseloads at 65:1 as stated in the rfp, even asking agencies to submit budgets. The city recently reneged on its commitment and will not add any new funds. Newly hired case managers will be fired. The choice for agencies is either to allow caseloads to soar to 100+ or put homebound elderly on waiting lists.
 - c. **Homebound seniors will not be able to get meals-on-wheels:** Without a case management assessment, a senior cannot receive meals-on-wheels because part of the restructuring was to disallow senior centers from approving meals-on-wheels and allowing only case management agencies to do it.
 - d. **State cuts will result in longer waiting lists for meals-on-wheels under SNAP and case management and home care under the EISEP program. A small COLA for aging services staff, who earn about \$25,000-\$35,000, would also be reduced.** These cuts would only exacerbate insufficient funding for services that thousands of frail, homebound older New Yorkers depend upon.

2. Meals-on-wheels (MOW) restructuring – gridlock in new clients receiving MOW -

- a.** RFP was due August 1, 2008. Reduced 97 MOW contracts to 20 large regions citywide – 3 in the Bronx, 6 in Brooklyn, 4 in Manhattan, 6 in Queens, 1 in Staten Island.
- b.** Movement from 5 day a week hot meal delivery to 2 day a week frozen meal delivery for substantial numbers of homebound seniors. DFTA imposed a \$7/meal reimbursement for all MOW contracts raising concerns of restructuring with inadequate funds. Agencies had submitted bids of over \$8 since it is a six year contract and needed to build in inflation.
- c.** Large regions will force MOW system to depend more upon catered meals and frozen meals making the five day a week hot meal delivery too expensive and impractical in many cases.
- d.** MOW rfp released despite continued turmoil with case management transition - it's the same clients. Concern seniors will again be lost during the transition as happened before.
- e.** Into only the first six months of the new contracts, April 1- October 1, 2008, there are already over 750 homebound elderly clients on waiting lists just for the initial intake. Because of this, no new clients can be referred for MOW creating gridlock. In the former system, some senior centers could turn on the MOW, but now they are not allowed since only case management agencies can. We're seeing MOW counts go down while about 250 seniors are on waiting lists for MOW indicating the need is there.

The demographic revolution before us clearly shows that the city is moving in the wrong direction. Additional state cuts will exacerbate the problems:

- ***Ageing place at home*** - Increasing number of seniors who will age in place at home rather than in nursing homes. Many will live with co-morbidities in the community.
- ***Increasing diversity*** – 50% or more of NYC seniors are minorities. This number continues to grow.
- ***Increasing elderly poverty*** - The Bloomberg administration's reconfiguration of the poverty measure resulted in an increase from 1 out of 5, to 1 out of 3, elderly New Yorkers living in poverty.
- ***Saving Medicaid dollars*** - The state cannot afford to maintain its Medicaid budget and needs to strengthen preventive community-based services. Additionally, four out of five seniors in NYC are not eligible for Medicaid. It is the aging services system they depend upon which is a system of waiting lists – for case management, home care, meals-on-wheels, and transportation. Senior centers provide meals and services bringing the elderly out of isolation.

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