



# MET COUNCIL

ACTS OF CHARITY • DEEDS OF KINDNESS צדקה וגמילות חסדים

**New York State Senate and Assembly**

**January 30, 2013**

**Budget Hearing on Health/Medicaid**

**Testimony of Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty**

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## **About Met Council**

Since its inception in 1972, Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty (Met Council) has been a defender and advocate for New Yorkers in need. Met Council is also the voice of the Jewish poor and the first line of defense for our community's needy. We fight poverty through comprehensive social services and treat every individual with dignity and respect. Services range from affordable housing to kosher food pantries to crisis intervention to benefits enrollment assistance, and are designed to stabilize individuals and families while giving them appropriate tools for sustained self-sufficiency.

Together with our network of 25 local Jewish Community Councils, Met Council is able to reach and strengthen more than 100,000 people annually, in every ZIP code in the city with culturally sensitive services and programs for all ethnicities. Met Council programs especially targeted to communities with a high concentration of working-poor and near-poor households, whose unmet needs are not fully addressed by government and other social service agencies because they hover just above the Federal Poverty threshold.

## **Met Council's CHP FHP Enrollment**

Met Council has been a contractor for the NYS Department of Health (DOH) for over 10 years, beginning with a Child Health Plus (CHP) Facilitated Enrollment contract in November 1999, which was expanded in September 2001 to include Family Health Plus (FHP) services. Over the years, the SDOH has also awarded Met Council funding for both CHP/FHP and Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) initiatives. During this time, Met Council has distinguished itself as a CHP/FHP service provider. In our first year of operation,

with the help of its community-based organization partners, successfully enrolled more than 7,600 children in Southern Brooklyn into Child Health Plus, achieving the highest number of enrollments for that period of any lead agency for the program in New York State. To date, Met Council has continued to be a lead agency for a diverse group of subcontractors who are responsible for the provision of health insurance facilitated enrollment. In the FY11 the total unduplicated applications submitted was 17,821 and in FY12 16,788. The FY12 reduction of 1,033 applications was due to a program contract cut of \$174,300. **We strongly advocate for an increase in funding for Child Health Plus and Family Health Plus enrollment contracts to enable us to reach, educate, and enroll more needy families and individuals unto public health insurance.**

### **Met Council's Home Care**

Home care was one of Met Council's first direct services, begun in the mid-80s to fill a two-fold need of providing unemployed and underemployed individuals the chance to become certified Personal Care Aides, while filling the large demand for home attendants for New York's rapidly aging population. Each day our Home Care agencies provide vital care to more than 2,000 frail elderly and disabled individuals living in their own homes. In addition to receiving assistance with essential activities, clients greatly benefit from Met Council's "No Wrong Door" approach enabling them to access a broad array of critical social services and programs, which enhance their overall well-being and quality of life. **We would like to emphasize that the Medicaid Redesign implemented by the Governor has completely altered the healthcare landscape, and nonprofits, unions, and workers must all adapt to a new model of care and reimbursement levels in order to continue serving our most vulnerable populations. It is critical to ensure that nonprofits have working capital to cash flow workers' salaries prior to reimbursement from private health plans.**

### **Alarming Rise in General and Jewish Poverty Increasing Need for Comprehensive Services**

Newly released Census Bureau figures show that poverty is increasing especially rapidly among working New Yorkers. One out of four New Yorkers are low-income and are finding that they can barely make it from month to month, while working as hard as they possibly can. Jewish Poverty in New York is subject to many of the same forces and continues to grow at an alarming rate as well. Presently, one in four New York City Jewish households is poor and one in ten is

near-poor. In light of this downward trend, the need for emergency food, affordable housing, access to public health insurance, and crisis intervention services has increased dramatically.

### **Importance of Reinstating New York State Senate and Assembly Member Items to Fill Service Gaps for Working Poor Populations**

This new data underlines the need for policies that provide direct mechanisms to fund grassroots community and neighborhood efforts that fill in service gaps for working-poor and near-poor populations. An example of this would be an individual representing a household who comes to a CBO to enroll his/her family in public health insurance, and in the process reveals a whole host of other crises such as an impending eviction, domestic violence, etc. New York State Senate and Assembly Member Items used to fill these service gaps by funding Crisis Social Workers and leveraging privately raised dollars used toward emergency cash assistance and food vouchers. Discretionary funding enabled organizations like Met Council and our network of JCCs to have the capacity and the organizational infrastructure to be responsive to emerging needs of your constituents, natural disasters, and other unexpected crises. The elimination of Member Items for the past three years has had a devastating impact on neighborhood social service infrastructure and community support systems. Reinstating discretionary funding is critical to enabling agencies like ours to continue providing vital services to underserved populations.

Met Council is grateful for its partnership with the New York State Government through the following contracts:

- **Supported Housing with OMH-** This contract enables Met Council to operate several residential programs for mentally ill adults, many of whom are formerly homeless. The Metro House, Brooklyn Scattered Site and Abraham Residence all provide on-site case management, which includes developing and maintaining linkages to medical and mental health services, and government entitlements and community support services in accordance with individual needs.
  
- **Child Health Plus and Family Health Plus with the Department of Health-** This contract enables Met Council to facilitate enrollment into public health insurance by screening low-

income families and individuals for eligibility, enabling thousands to obtain this vital coverage.

- **Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program with the Department of Health-**  
This contract enables Met Council to provide 27 HPNAP eligible food pantries with a total of 1,750,000 meals to be distributed to hungry New Yorkers and allocates resources to HPNAP eligible food pantries.
  
- **Americorps State with OCFS-** Met Council's AmeriCorps program creates a replicable, cost-effective, sustainable volunteer management model. This model draws upon successes identified through the Connect to Care Regional Consortium Centers, and serves to strengthen each community's capacity to engage and utilize volunteers to address pressing issues facing poor and near-poor families without relying on increased professional management

We deeply value your leadership and look forward to working together to help those in need throughout the New York area.

Thank you.

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