

## Public Health & Social Services Committee Regular Meeting Minutes

**DATE & TIME:** March 2, 2020 – 5:00 PM  
**LOCATION:** K.L. Binder Library, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, C.O.B.  
**PRESIDING OFFICER:** Chair Craig Lopez  
**LEGISLATIVE STAFF:** Nettie Tomshaw  
**PRESENT:** Legislators Criswell, Bruno, Uchitelle  
**ABSENT:** Legislator Petit  
**QUORUM PRESENT:** Yes

**OTHER ATTENDEES:** Legislator's John Gavaris, Mary Wawro, Marc Rider Deputy County Executive, Kristin Carney, Dr. Carol Smith & Tara McDonald Health & Mental Health Dept., Teresa Brudge LPN, Marie Shultis & Pam Pesleins AWARENESS Program, Anthony Mignone RCAL Chief Exec. Director, Tom Kadgen LWV

Chair Lopez called the meeting to order at 5:08 PM.

---

**Motion No. 1:** Moved to Approve Minutes of the March 2, 2020 meeting

**Motion By:** Legislator Bruno  
**Motion Seconded By:** Legislator Criswell  
**Discussion:** None  
**Voting In Favor:** Legislators Lopez, Criswell, Bruno, Uchitelle  
**Voting Against:** None  
**Votes in Favor:** 4  
**Votes Against:** 0  
**Disposition:** Minutes **APPROVED**

---

### Resolutions for the March 17, 2020 Session of the Legislature

**Resolution No. 65:** Approving The Execution Of A Contract In Excess Of \$50,000.00 Entered Into By The County – Family Services, Inc. – Department Of Mental Health

**Resolution Summary:** This resolution approves the execution of a contract with Family Services, Inc. for family advocate services seeking treatment for substance abuse when they struggle to navigate insurance regulations and/or denied coverage. The agency will also assist in expediting referrals to treatment and support services. \$100K, 100% County professional services, contract date 1/1/20 – 12/31/2020.

**Discussion:** As sponsors Chair Lopez & Deputy Chair Criswell withdrew the resolution at this time with the understanding of possible duplication. Committee discussion ensued. Marc Rider noted funds may be applied in a broader opioid task force use at a later date. Committee thanked Tom Kadgen for his input.

**Disposition:** Resolution WITHDRAWN by Sponsor

---

**Resolution No. 87:** Confirming Appointment Of A Member To The Ulster County Board Of Health

**Resolution Summary:** This resolution confirms the appointment of Tasha Defelice to the UC BOH, term to begin: present to 12/31/2024.

**Motion No. 3** Moved to Discuss & Adopt Resolution No. 87

**Motion Made By:** Legislator Bruno

**Motion Seconded By:** Legislator Criswell

**Discussion:** Marc Rider and Dr. Smith provided an overview of the vetting process. Chair Lopez noted the first whereas provides County Charter and Administrative Code appointment protocol. Dr. Smith noted these are volunteer advisory positions that do not set policy and are time consuming.

**Voting In Favor:** Legislators Lopez, Criswell, Bruno, Uchitelle

**Voting Against:** None

**Votes in Favor:** 4

**Votes Against:** 0

**Disposition:** Resolution adopted

---

**Resolution No. 88:** Confirming Appointment Of A Member To The Ulster County Board Of Health

**Resolution Summary:** This resolution confirms the appointment of Naomi Stevens to the UC BOH, term to begin: present to 12/31/2024.

**Motion No. 4** Moved to Discuss & Adopt Resolution No. 88

**Motion Made By:** Legislator Criswell

**Motion Seconded By:** Legislator Bruno

**Discussion:** Same as Resolution No. 87 discussion. Committee was impressed with the candidate's experience.

**Voting In Favor:** Legislators Lopez, Criswell, Bruno, Uchitelle  
**Voting Against:** None  
**Votes in Favor:** 4  
**Votes Against:** 0  
**Disposition:** Resolution adopted

---

**Resolution No. 99:** Re-establishing The Ulster County Trails Advisory Committee – Ulster County Legislature

**Resolution Summary:** This resolution re-establishes the UC Trails Advisory Committee. Not more than (14) appointments can be made by the Legislature. Term expires 12/31/2021.

**Motion No. 5**                    **Moved to Discuss Resolution No. 99**  
**Motion Made By:** Legislator Bruno  
**Motion Seconded By:** Legislator Criswell

**Discussion:** Chair Lopez and Deputy Exec. Marc Rider provided the history of the ongoing Rail + Trail system and related committee structure. Committee discussion ensued. Members expressed removing any reference to track. Chair Lopez recommended the committee discuss changes/concerns with the sponsor first.

**Disposition:** NO ACTION TAKEN

---

**Resolution No. 129:** Authorizing The Chair Of The Ulster County Legislature To Enter Into An Agreement With Awareness, Inc. For The 2020 Appropriation - Legislature

**Resolution Summary:** This resolution authorizes the Chair of the UC Legislature to enter into an agreement with Awareness, Inc. to help offset administrative costs for the program. The firm will provide peer-to-peer education services to youths aged sixteen to twenty-five encouraging youth to recognize positive behavioral changes, and to provide positive consequences to help change behavior, with the end goal of positively affecting the youths' futures. \$12,500.00

**Motion No. 6**                    **Moved to Discuss & Adopt Resolution No. 129**  
**Motion Made By:** Legislator Criswell  
**Motion Seconded By:** Legislator Uchitelle

**Discussion:** Marie Shultis provided an overview of the Peer to Peer Education self - directed and self-accessed program and provided handouts. Legislator Wawro noted restorative justice funding would also be beneficial to the AWARENESS program.

**Voting In Favor:** Legislators Lopez, Criswell, Bruno, Uchitelle

**Voting Against:** None

**Votes in Favor:** 4

**Votes Against:** 0

**Disposition:** Resolution adopted

---

**Resolution No. 132:** Authorizing The Chair Of The Ulster County Legislature To Enter Into An Agreement With Resource Center For Accessible Living, Inc. For The 2020 Appropriation - Legislature

**Resolution Summary:** This resolution authorizes the Chair of the UC Legislature to enter into an agreement with RCAL, to help offset costs for training in the areas of prevocational services, behavior modification, social skills, special education, and online skills training for the disabled within Ulster County. \$15,000.00

**Motion No. 7** **Moved to Discuss & Adopt Resolution No. 132**

**Motion Made By:** Legislator Criswell

**Motion Seconded By:** Legislator Bruno

**Discussion:** RCAL Director Anthony Mignone provided an overview of the agency, and prevocational services. Mr. Mignone invited the committee to tour the RCAL facility. Legislator Bruno confirmed referrals are made through case manager /coordinators. Other services provided are referred through community agency advocates. There are six programs offered within the employment program, employing eight. Mr. Mignone provided handouts. Committee discussion ensued. Legislator Criswell confirmed this is RCAL's first contract awarded through the Legislature. The committee unanimously support the programming efforts. RCAL annual budget \$1.7 million, approx. 4000 people served within the community.

**Voting In Favor:** Legislators Criswell, Bruno, Uchitelle

**Voting Against:** None

**Votes in Favor:** 3

**Votes Against:** 0

**Abstention:** (1) Lopez

**Disposition:** Resolution adopted

---

Chair Lopez asked if there was any other business, and hearing none;

**Adjournment**

**Motion Made By:** Legislator Criswell

**Motion Seconded By:** Legislator Bruno

**No. of Votes in Favor:** 4

**No. of Votes Against:** 0

**TIME:** 5:45 PM

Respectfully submitted: Nettie Tomshaw, Legislative Staff

Minutes Approved: April 13, 2020







## **What is Awareness, Inc.?**

AWARENESS Inc. is a nonprofit that has been in existence for 14 years providing educational programs using evidence-based practices in a group format. It includes several separate programs.

The common goal of all AWARENESS programs is to help youth build positive relationships with themselves and others while learning cognitive skills that support healthy decision making. The peer led group format empowers them to utilize what they learned to help others.

**The following three programs utilize a non-judgmental peer to peer approach to address behavioral health, substance use, anger, coping skills etc. for youth ages 16 to 25, to help them change their attitudes and identify if behavior modification is needed. Groups are divided by age and risk level.**

### **NYS OASAS Approved Alcohol Awareness Program**

An Alcohol Awareness Program that is an alcohol abuse early Intervention service designed to provide an educational experience for underage youth who are referred through the courts, schools, family members or other agencies.

### **AWARENESS Inc. Peer Facilitated Self Help Program\***

School and Community based educational cognitive skill building program targeting youth, ages 16 - 18 and 18 - 25, that engages adolescents from the same age and risk level in an 8-week program led by trained peer leaders.

### **AWARENESS Inc. Peer Facilitated Self Help Program for Youth at Higher Risk**

Cognitive skill building group for youth ages 18 – 30 out of high school who are struggling with addiction. Young people in solid recovery are trained as peer leaders who also help participants connect to care resources. Participants are encouraged to stay involved, are supported if other levels of care are necessary. When appropriate they are invited back as part of an aftercare plan, to build a sober network and eventually once in solid recovery to train to become peer leaders.

### **AWARENESS Inc. The Next Step Group**

In 2019, a wellness job/career networking group for young people aged 18 to 25. With guidance from professionals in the community who love what they do, participants are engaged in helping each other to find the next step towards professional development and meaningful satisfying work.



## **AWARENESS Inc. New Paltz and Ellenville High School Programs**

For the past four years AWARENESS Inc. has provided an after-school program in New Paltz High School for any students who volunteer or are mandated to attend by the court or school. The group meets one time a week. In 2018, 25 volunteer high school students became trained to be Peer Leaders in addition to those mandated to participate.

In February 2018, AWARENESS New Paltz peer leaders peer trained Ellenville student Awareness participants in peer leadership at a training day there, as part of the 8-week Ellenville Awareness Program for high schoolers, with the hope that Ellenville peer trainers will train students in other school districts in the future. Having the students from one district train another and so on, is a natural way to duplicate the program and increase its positive benefits. Just as the opioid epidemic spreads from one community to another, this unique model spreads protective factors and early intervention from one community to another. It also helps youth move from experiencing negative peer pressure to use, to experience peer support to prevent, delay, reduce or cease substance abuse. Further, Awareness has provided yearly speaker presentations in New Paltz health classes for the past six years.

In Fall 2018, Jo Coppola, Licensed Mental Health Counselor, AWARENESS's mental health consultant, and older peers went to Ellenville to provide classroom presentations with her there. They spoke in the health classes sharing their recovery experiences. The school invited a reporter who documented this event in the following article. (Click the link for story)

<http://www.recordonline.com/news/20171222/ellenville-high-school-presentations-promote-early-intervention> We continue to go into both high school two days each semester.

## **AWARENESS Inc. Contacts Served**

AWARENESS Inc. provides services to a significant number of youths. It had an 8-week pilot program for middle school with high school and college leaders and our 8-week behavioral health program as well as providing substance abuse presentations in high school health classes and assemblies. We have had **2141** youth contacts January through December.

## **Participant Creativity**

Awareness Inc. encourages the creativity of participants. In the past participants have developed original videos to provide substance abuse and mental health information in the form of short scenes drawn from real life scenarios enacted to promote healthy choices. These videos were then utilized as part of peer training. In Spring 2018, Ellenville students enlisted their principal and created original PSA'S to make the community aware of Awareness as a youth resource. In Spring of 2019 New Paltz and Ellenville students created Vaping PSA's. Parents become engaged with the programs effort in early intervene in substance abuse as well. There is a true story of a Mom sharing her experiences in a 1-minute PSA on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/savingyouthfromaddiction/videos/1110214922350561>

## **AWARENESS Inc. School Presentations**

AWARENESS Inc. offers School assemblies and presentation in schools, twice a year in Ellenville, New Paltz. In April 2019 New Paltz High School Students in AWARENESS and SUNY New Paltz AWARENESS Intern joined High School Administrators and did a Vaping Presentation for Middle and High School Parents. We added presentations to Highland High school and New Paltz Middle School this year.

### **AWARENESS Narcan Trainings**

Narcan Trainings are offered as a free public service by Marie Shultis and local youth in partnership with Hudson Valley Community Service. We have partnered with the Ulster County Sheriff, Town Supervisors, SUNY New Paltz, New Paltz High School, the NYS Office of Mental Health and Ulster County Legislators.

### **Additional Projects**

**AWARENESS Inc. is excited to announce a new group is presently in development, we did an 8 week pilot program in May and June 2019.**

### **Tuning In Connections/ Tuning Out Isolation**

Helping younger kids become aware of creating healthy relationships with each other. A wellness group promoting healthy attitudes. Topics include; tuning in by connecting with others in a caring positive way. Looking at strategies to use to replace “tuning out”, i.e., with unhealthy use of Video Games and Social Media, becoming engaged in hurtful relationships, Bullying, Mental Health and Substance Abuse (including vaping). On December 20<sup>th</sup> we did a presentation for half the middle school, 261 students and plan to do the other half in January and resume our weekly program with the middle and high school.

AWARENESS collaborated with One Strike Fitness and other community sponsors, to plan a campaign to help energize young people to connect around positive peer activities. The campaign culminated in a support rally for local athlete Sella Rega as she broke three Guinness World Book of records for the most skips over a rope in 8, 12 and in 20 hours, locked up in 24 hours on March 30, 2019. We are looking forward to working together with young people to break a world record in 2020.

### **ABOUT THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

In her role as Executive Director of Awareness, Marie Shultis serves on many Committees and Boards including the following:

*Family Peer Advocate Training and Credentialing Advisory Committee*

*NYS Planning Consortium Mid-Hudson Region Board*

*NYS Mental Health Hudson River Regional Coalition Member- Advocate*

Marie is a Certified CCAR Recovery Coach trainer, Ethics trainer and Professionalism trainer and can provide this training for adolescents.

\*AWARENESS Inc.’s 8-week program has been documented as an effective early intervention program. During its early development, Dr. Hongyan Cui, Ph.D. in Program Evaluation, Measurement and Research Design, found that 90% of the AWARENESS participants assessed, identified an increased perceived need to change their behavior after completing the program, a very high success rate for any program.

**Thank you for taking time to read about AWARENESS’s services in the community.**