

Reorganization of Aging, Veterans & Youth Services is part of Molinaro Budget

Poughkeepsie, NY... As part of his continuing efforts to provide information and receive feedback about the proposed structural components of the 2013 Executive Budget, Dutchess County Executive Marcus J. Molinaro will be hosting another informational session today for Dutchess County legislators. Today's session will focus on the reorganization of the Department of Services for Aging, Veterans and Youth (SAVY), one of several significant county department consolidations and reorganizations County Executive Molinaro is proposing as part of a multi-year transformation of Dutchess County Government.

"We continue to evaluate every area of county government to determine how we can best balance available resources to meet the needs of our residents," said County Executive Molinaro. "Additionally, results from our Budget Survey show that programs and services focused on seniors, veterans and young people are a priority for our community. This reorganization realigns the divisions to take advantage of enhanced service delivery opportunities, while realizing operational efficiencies."

Two of the SAVY divisions, Veterans and Youth, will be realigned with other County Departments, while the Aging division will once again be a stand-alone county department known as the Office for the Aging. These realignments will preserve the critical services provided by each agency to each unique population and will help reduce county costs through operating and administrative efficiencies. The realignments will also meet the stringent state and federal requirements that each agency must follow. The reorganization will eliminate the SAVY Commissioner position, which also functioned as a third Assistant to the County Executive, generating savings in excess of \$100,000.

Division of Veterans' Services

The Division of Veterans' Services will be affiliated with the Department of Health as a separate division. Veterans' Services will maintain its unique identity and have self contained office space as part of the Department of Health's relocation to the Poughkeepsie Journal building at 85 Civic Center Plaza, a move projected to save the County more than \$500,000 over the next five years. This realignment will provide Veterans' Services with

greater “back-office” support for administrative tasks such as payroll, invoice processing and filing, allowing veterans counselors to spend more time addressing veterans’ issues. According to Veterans’ Services Director Nelson Eddy Rivera, health-related issues are the number one reason that veterans contact their office, particularly returning combat veterans who are dealing with issues of post-traumatic stress as well as aging veterans who have changing healthcare issues. “Working within the Department of Health, we will be able to better provide services and information to our veterans who have sacrificed so much in service to our country,” Director Rivera said. Mr. Rivera also noted he looks forward to the new location as well. “This new location will provide greater exposure and public access, with a direct entrance with expanded, free parking for our veterans. The new space sends a clear message to our veterans that they are priority for Dutchess County Government and we want to be as accommodating to their needs as possible,” Rivera said.

Division of Youth Services and the new Department of Community and Family Services

The Division of Youth Services will become a separate division under the Department of Social Services. The entire department will be renamed the Department of Community and Family Services (DCFS) to reflect youth services as well as the overall department’s focus on providing services that lead to long-term independence and sustainability for individuals and families.

Under DCFS, Youth Services will have greater administrative support as part of a larger agency allowing youth counselors to address a broader range of youth needs. There is also the potential of enhanced revenue streams for youth as the transition moves forward. Additionally, Social Services and Youth Services are jointly responsible for the administration of the Child and Family Services Plan as required by New York State. Consolidating Youth into the new DCFS will allow the needs identified in the Child and Family Services Plan to be addressed in a more streamlined approach for families, allowing them to better access needed resources and services.

Return of Office for the Aging

The Division of Aging Services will once again be a stand-alone department, known as Office for the Aging (OFA). Funded almost entirely by state and federal revenue streams, there are very specific requirements for the Office for the Aging to be an independent agency. With the County’s senior population (60 and older) having grown nearly 30% between 2000 and 2010 according to census data and today 1 in 5

Dutchess County residents are seniors, OFA can be singularly focused on the needs of this growing demographic, including rapidly emerging issues such as long-term care, health insurance information and the impact of Alzheimer's on caregivers.

The initial consolidation of Aging, Veterans and Youth into a single department, in 2011, produced savings of over \$1 million. This new move serves as a continuation of the process designed to preserve services to each of these special population groups. "We realized significant savings from initial SAVY consolidation. We will add to those savings with the elimination of the SAVY Commissioner position and be better able to serve each population group with further realignment," said Mary Kaye Dolan, who has been serving as Acting SAVY Commissioner and will continue as the Director of the Office for the Aging. "The three agencies will continue to take advantage of the working relationships we have developed over the last two years, continuing to work together as members of the Health & Human Services Cabinet," Ms. Dolan continued. Mary Kaye Dolan also serves as the Chair of the Dutchess County Health & Human Services Cabinet and will continue in this capacity.

"Seniors, veterans and young people in our community have unique needs that must be addressed. This reorganization serves to better address those unique needs while providing operational savings to our taxpayers," said County Executive Molinaro.

Some of the department consolidations and reorganizations will require amendments to the Dutchess County Charter. All charter change proposals will be submitted to the Dutchess County Legislature along with Executive Budget proposal.

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