

Future of NYC Long-Term Care Agency in Jeopardy

By Allison Howe

Independence Care System (ICS), a Medicaid managed long term care (MLTC) agency serving people with disabilities and those older than 65, is in the midst of a financial crisis, which could lead to its closure or it being forced to merge with another agency, outcomes that could severely impact thousands of consumers in New York City who rely on homecare and related services.

The agency's fiscal shortfall is due to insufficient funding from the state's Department of Health (DOH). This primarily stems from the fact that ICS has a much greater number of consumers who have serious disabilities than other MLTC agencies.

However, the rate of coverage for Medicaid MLTC consumers who need extensive care is nearly the same as those who need limited care. Therefore, ICS incurs higher costs but does not receive more funding to cover those higher costs from DOH.

"ICS has an exponential-ly greater number of people with greater needs," said Alex Elegudin of the Civics League for Disability Rights. "But the state provides the same amount of money to serve someone with the greatest needs as they do for people who have basic geriatric issues. ICS has thousands of members, and about half of them have significant disabilities. We need a higher rate for members who have higher needs"

According to Elegudin, of all the MLTC agencies, ICS has the most knowledgeable staff in terms of consumers who have the most serious and complex needs. Therefore, if it closes, clients will be forced into agencies that are not equipped to handle their specialized care.

He claims either closure or merger "would be catastrophic." Many other agencies often reject intensive-needs clients, contract with non-union vendors that provide fewer benefits for its personal care aides

and subcontract out many services to vendors with limited experience with the disabled.

"ICS has been the gold standard in long-term care for New Yorkers with complex care needs," said Assembly Health Committee Chair Richard Gottfried. "The Assembly's budget proposal includes language for a high-needs rate cell tailored to plans serving large numbers of patients with severe disabilities, and I believe there must be continuity of care rules to ensure the same high-quality services for patients transitioning to other plans."

"This issue came up at a town hall meeting we had recently," said Dan Campanelli, chief of staff for Assemblymember Robert Carroll (D-Dist. 44). "We're trying to set up a meeting with ICS soon. I know this is a priority of the assemblyman. This is a very important issue, and we will continue to work in the Assembly to try to address it."

"The Department of Health is aware that ICS is facing

some financial challenges and continues to work with ICS to ensure access to services for its members," the DOH said in a statement.

The Civics League for Disability Rights, a New York City advocacy group has worked to address this situation in several ways, such as a letter writing campaign directed at Gov. Andrew Cuomo and a planned visit to his office. They also started an online petition and have stated their cause on social media. Other disability organizations are also urging the public to contact policy makers such as senators, assemblymembers and Cuomo at 518 474-8390.

The office of Gov. Andrew Cuomo (D-N.Y.) did not respond to a request by *Able Newspaper* for comment.

"If ICS does merge, it is almost sure that there would be major cuts to services," said Elegudin. "Politicians have the capability to fix this. The governor is the one person that can fix this with a stroke of a pen."

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Job Title: Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator (Part-Time)

Description: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator will build upon and administer the ADA accommodation program from start to finish. The position will also be involved in the Light Duty/Return-to-Work program. Other duties include but are not limited to the following: Identifies and performs outreach to employees possibly requiring accommodations; educates management and employees on the rights and duties under the ADA; coordinates with management and employees to develop and provide employees effective and reasonable accommodations; develops written materials and other informational pieces regarding the ADA program; develops and maintains internal measures to track ADA status and compliance and maintains and documents records of all disability and accommodation issues ensures compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies; assures that workers with disabilities are provided effective and reasonable accommodations allowing them to work productively and safely; assure Township-Sponsored activities, Township Facilities and events address accessibility and accommodation concerns.

Requirements: Bachelor's degree in social sciences, human resource management, business administration or related field and two years of personnel administration experience are required (or a combination of education and/or training and/or experience which provides an equivalent background required to perform the work of the class); a minimum of eighteen (18) months of experience in a position that involved evaluating and administering reasonable accommodation issues subject to the ADA or §504 and completion of a course on barrier-free design or ADA accessibility guidelines which was sponsored or approved by the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs or a department which oversees the Uniform Construction Code in any other State, the American Institute of Architects, the Paralyzed Veterans Association, or the United Spinal Association, within twelve (12) months of hire.

Salary: DOQ

Hours: Part-Time, three days weekly (not to exceed twenty one hours per week).

Apply: Send resume or application to:
Ms. Braedon Gregory, HRIS Coordinator, Human Resources Department,
Township of Montclair, 205 Claremont Avenue, Montclair, New Jersey 07042
or email: bgregory@montclairnjusa.org

Closing Date: Job posting will remain open until position is filled.

Accessible Home Specialists!



**INCREASED ACCESSIBILITY AND INDEPENDENCE
FOR THOSE LIVING WITH DISABILITIES**

From minor improvements to full remodels, Coastal Caretakers' network of highly-trained and licensed professionals redesign and renovate with sensibility and sensitivity to the unique needs of individuals with disabilities. We also perform weekly checks to ensure the home is safe and properly maintained.



*Remain at Home Safely
and Comfortably.*



Contact us for a free assessment at [888-828-6278](tel:888-828-6278) or info@coastalcaretakers.com
www.coastalcaretakers.com