



June 24, 2009  
Volume 1, Issue 6

## **City Council Approves \$59.5 Billion Budget Proposed Cuts to HIV Nutrition and Supportive Housing Case Management Restored**

Last week, the Mayor and the City Council announced an agreement on New York City's fiscal year budget that begins on July 1 and goes through June 30, 2010. City Council has approved a \$59.5 billion budget that includes a number of restorations to HIV services that the Mayor had proposed to cut. The budget is awaiting the Mayor's signature. The budget deal includes a half a percentage (.5%) increase in the City's sales tax, which will require additional approval from the state legislature. If the chaos in Albany results in a failure to approve the sales tax increase, then City Hall could be forced to come up with several hundred million dollars in additional cuts or find other revenue options.

### **Many HIV Services Preserved**

The Mayor's original proposed budget had targeted the HIV/AIDS Services Administration for a number of cuts. As a result, many in the HIV community mobilized and reached out to City Council members for their help to restore these proposed cuts.

The Mayor's Executive Budget proposed three major HIV cuts:

- A 50 percent reduction (\$491,000) in support to a nutrition program that provides counseling and food to persons living with HIV/AIDS. This was a targeted reduction that would have exclusively impacted The Momentum Project.
- A reduction in HIV/AIDS contracted case management in supportive housing programs. HASA claimed that City employees could provide the same case management services currently offered by supportive housing programs. This would have cut nearly \$1.9 million from the City budget for HIV supportive housing programs.
- Elimination of Scattered Site II, transferring these vulnerable clients to HASA case management staff (a "savings" of \$4 million).

Once the HIV community realized that many of their programs were targeted for a serious reduction or elimination, a coordinated advocacy campaign began. The HIV community needed to convince City Council of the critical need for these services in the hopes of restoring funding. Two rallies were held on the steps of City Hall, countless meetings were scheduled with City Council members and their staff (many thanks to Housing Works for coordinating many of these visits), the Momentum Project invited City Council members to visit congregate meal sites and view their services at work and more than 1,200 post-



cards were signed by Momentum clients petitioning City Council and the Mayor not to cut HIV nutrition services.

A call-in campaign was conducted urging the Mayor and Speaker Quinn not to cut these services, and many days were spent on the steps of City Hall hoping to approach Council members as they entered into budget negotiation meetings.

Fortunately, with the help of several champions on City Council, a number of HIV cuts were restored. The cut to HIV nutrition services and case management staff in supportive housing programs was not enacted in the final approved budget. The following City Council members should be particularly thanked for their leadership in protecting these services for persons living with HIV/AIDS: Gail Brewer, Bill deBlasio, Melissa Mark-Viverito, Rosie Mendez, Letitia James, Maria Baez, Robert Jackson, John Liu and Maria del Carmen Arroyo.

Had the cut to HIV nutrition services gone through, The Momentum Project would have been forced to close two sites (of their nine citywide). Through Momentum, some 3,000 poor and homeless persons living with HIV/AIDS obtain meals and pantry bags annually in nine communities in four boroughs. The congregate meal settings also provide opportunity to engage these individuals with nurses, nutritionists, social workers, chaplains and other specialists, and link them to primary health care, mental health and substance abuse programs, housing and other essential services.

Unfortunately, Scattered Site II was eliminated, which means that the 450-500 clients in this program will need to be transferred to alternative programs. We hope that Medicaid-funded COBRA case management programs will be able to absorb some of these clients, otherwise many who are coping with mental health or substance abuse issues will face eviction as they struggle to meet rent obligations.

#### Special Thanks

This advocacy effort was definitely not done alone or in isolation. Many activities would not have been possible without the support of many individuals, including these Village Care staffers: Jose Belizario, Jan Zimmerman, Rob Goldman, Charles Vaccaro, Donnell Tillman-Basket and Edwin Krales. Staff throughout Village Care and Momentum rallied together in this advocacy effort. Momentum client Richard Graham attended several City Council meetings and provided a client perspective to HIV nutrition services. Village Care also wishes to thank Housing Works, in particular Kristin Goodwin and Diana Scholl for their tremendous teamwork and carrying the message of the HIV nutrition cuts in all their venues and advocacy efforts. Village Care would also especially like to thank Allen Zwickler of First Manhattan and the many others in the New York community who worked to help restore the Momentum funding.

For more information,  
please contact:  
Matthew Lesieur  
Director of Public Policy  
154 Christopher Street  
New York, NY 10014  
matthewl@vcny.org  
(212) 337-5601