



Baker Victory Services
James J. Caslon
Chief Executive Officer

November 12, 2008

Boys & Girls Clubs of Buffalo
Diane L. Rowe
Chief Professional Officer

David A. Paterson
Governor
New York State
New York State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Buffalo Urban League
Brenda W. McDuffie
President and
Chief Executive Officer

Child & Family Services
Eugene Meeks
President and
Chief Executive Officer

Dear Governor Paterson:

EPIC (Every Person
Influences Children)
Vito J. Borrello
President

Ronnel was apparently destined to be just another lost child in Buffalo - another sad ending to a story we all know far too well. He had finally found acceptance and what must be love from his recently extended family of gang members and was really going to be a 'somebody' now. A few streets away, Jason's big brother was already a seasoned gang-banger, had experienced several juvenile detention centers and was formally suspended from school for being too disruptive and scary. Jason's dream was, of course, to be just like him. In a town south of the city, Laurie was missing at least three days of school a week because she was just too tired to get up and, after all, nobody was around to care anyway.

Gateway-Longview
James M. Sampson
President and
Chief Executive Officer

Joan A. Male
Family Support Center
Deborah A. Merrifield
Executive Director

There is a proven system in place for the Ronnels, Jasons and Lauries in our communities. It is called COPS (Community Optional Preventive Services) - designed in large part to fund contracted private services for families and children to avert a potential future crisis - a crisis that could lead to abuse, incarceration, drug addiction, mental health issues, foster care, or worse. The word "optional" in COPS is a holdover dating back to the Child Welfare Reform Act of 1979 which describes services that are really quite different than those now funded by COPS. Today's services are anything but "optional." They are vital to protecting all we hold sacred in our society - protecting the well-being of our children and families. This includes supporting 'Home Visiting' and essential, required probationary services like the highly-respected, evidence-based tool of Youth Assessment and Services Inventory.

New Directions
Youth and Family Services
James W. Coder
Chief Executive Officer

J. Mark Robinson
Executive Director



The 'Nurse-Family Partnership' home visiting program funded by COPS is also evidence-based and has demonstrated a significant return on investment spanning multiple years of implementation, scrutiny and evaluation. It has resulted in a documented \$5.70 in savings for every dollar spent on services. These include reduced childhood injuries, improved prenatal care, reduced subsequent pregnancies, improved readiness through school interventions, mental health collaborations and better maternal employment. By investing a relatively small amount of money today, New York State has significantly improved the lives of its citizens while saving millions of future dollars; dollars that will no longer be available. Funding these critical preventive services appears to be the best child welfare spending possible. They help local districts divert at-risk children from high-end institutional placements and should be protected at all costs.

These services have more than validated the original decision to receive non-capped funding at 65% state share and 35% local share. The 2008-09 New York State budget currently reduces the state share at the expense of the local counties and the statute governing funding for these programs is scheduled to sunset next June. New York has finally achieved stability in its child welfare services due significantly to the 65/35 funding plan. When counties are forced to cut back on spending, supporting non-mandated services such as COPS are historically the first to go. Continuing this funding stream would allow counties to proactively establish more preventive service capacity through collaborative public/private sector partnerships. These new relationships are crucial for our future.

It is, therefore, the unanimous consensus of the Care Management Coalition of Western New York, speaking for the countless children and families desperately needing to be heard, that this original financing structure be restored and that funding for the COPS program be extended at least until 2012. This will allow time to take advantage of a broader review of the system resulting from the Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) and to also give the Office of Child and Family Services the time needed to begin the work on interoperability.

New York State, as well as our country and the rest of the world, are entering what is arguably the most traumatic fiscal crisis of several generations. The blind reflexive action could be to cut funding for preventive services. These are not mandated and the devastating effects may not be immediately felt by the majority of the populace for a little while. Do not let this short-sighted thinking cloud your ability to guard our society's future. Look into the eyes of your children today and think what kind of a world we are leaving them tomorrow.

Unfortunately, tomorrow will be too late to correct today's wrong decisions. We will already be living with the consequences.



By the way, thanks to COPS, Ronnel passed his GED exam and is diligently pursuing admittance to college to be a teacher. Jason has graduated from high school, started his own business, and has grown into a great role model for his friends and his older brother. And Laurie learned that there really are people out there who care. She is a model student with perfect attendance because now, she knows there's so much to learn. Someday soon she wants to be another one of the ones working out there who care.


Please follow your heart and make the right decisions regardless of how difficult they are right now.

Sincerely,


Board of Directors/Members
The Care Management Coalition of Western New York, Inc.



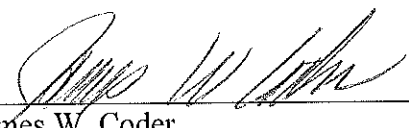
Vito J. Borrello
President



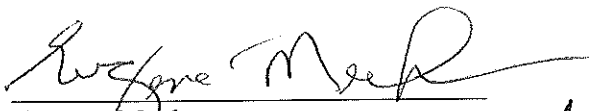
James M. Sampson
Vice President



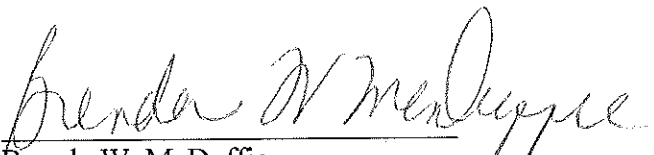
James J. Casion
Treasurer



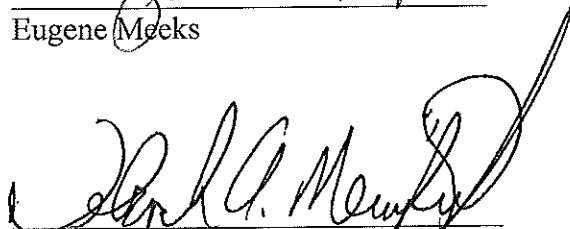
James W. Coder



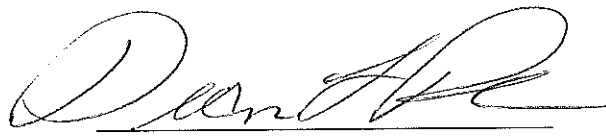
Eugene Meeks



Brenda W. McDuffie



Deborah A. Merrifield



Diane L. Rowe



Letter also sent to: New York Governor David A. Paterson
NYS Senator Carl Kruger
NYS Assemblyman William Scarborough
Gladys Carrion, NYS Office of Child and Family Services
Deborah Benson, NYS Council on Children and Families
Karen Schimke, Schuyler Center for Analysis & Advocacy
Kristin Proud, NYS Children's Cabinet