

Federation of Organizations Testimony

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Federation of Organizations (Federation) is a nonprofit, 501(c) (3) community-based multi-service agency serving the New York City (NYC) metropolitan area and Long Island.

Federation of Organizations was incorporated as a not-for-profit in 1972. For over fifty years, Federation has provided healthcare and social service programs designed to meet the needs of vulnerable community members, including low income seniors, people with mental illness and/or substance use disorder (SUD), people with disabilities, those living with chronic medical conditions, adult home residents, homeless individuals and families, and at-risk children and teens. Federation serves a diverse population. As a leading provider of cost-effective, community-based services, Federation of Organizations works in close partnership with individuals, families, and communities to deliver services, improve access to resources, and promote wellness for improved quality of life. Federation has particular expertise in working with some of the most at-risk and challenging populations; using innovative, evidence-based strategies and best practices to effectively outreach, engage, build rapport, and link clients to the services they need.

Federation has been providing services and programs for older adults, age 60 and over, for over 45 years, and case management programs for over 20 years. We currently serve over 8,000 clients a year with healthcare and social support services and an additional 22,000 individuals through our food pantry/soup kitchen sites. Of our 8,000 clients in our behavioral health, clinical care, Care Coordination, Foster Grandparent, Senior Companion programs, Aging in Place, and Senior Respite programs, over 2,000 were older adults, age 60 and over. With the opening of two large, affordable housing developments this year, including one specifically developed for older adults and older adults who care for children, we will add more than 200 additional seniors to our programs, as we will be providing support services and linking older adult residents of our housing developments to wraparound health and social support services in their communities.

Our Senior Companion program, which was started in 2002, is an AmeriCorps-funded program that recruits, trains, and pairs healthy older adult volunteers with seniors who are frail, homebound, or isolated as part of our ongoing efforts to help them “age-in-place” and live independently. Senior companions provide friendly visits and socialization and may help with preparing light meals, provide medication reminders, perform light household duties, accompany their recipient on occasional outings and errands, and connect the recipient to additional resources, as needed. Friendly visits from a Senior Companion also provide family members with an “extra pair of eyes” and assures them that their loved one is safe. This past year, we recruited and trained 27 Senior Companion volunteers and 24 are currently active.

Within our Senior Services, we also conduct a Senior Respite Care program, through which we maintain a team of part-time Respite Workers who conduct home visits with frail, older adults, in order to provide family caregivers an opportunity to take a well-deserved break from the

emotional and physical stressors of daily care giving. With the assistance of the respite care program, caregivers are able to take time to tend to their own personal needs and have peace of mind knowing that their loved one is safe and secure in the comforts of their own home. Respite care services include a companionship level of care and support, socialization and recreational activities, relief to the caregiver in comfort of their own home, preparing and serving light meals, light housekeeping, and attention to overall well-being of the client.

In 2014, Federation was awarded a grant from the New York State (NYS) Department of Health to conduct the Nursing Home to Independent Living (NHIL). The NHIL assisted individuals transitioning out of nursing homes into supported housing. The NHIL program provided supportive housing services and rental subsidies for high-need, high-cost Medicaid beneficiaries, specifically, for seniors and individuals with chronic physical disabilities who required nursing home level of care and who were homeless or resided in nursing homes. The program placed and maintained 104 individuals in supported housing across Suffolk and Nassau County. Federation provided services through the implementation of an enhanced, medical, mobile support team which was comprised of: registered nurses, social workers, community health workers, and housing case managers to assist the residents in their homes. The enhanced mobile team assisted residents with transitional supportive services, tenancy sustaining services and preventative health services. This demonstration project was a four-year project. We achieved many of our objectives including: assisting individuals in moving from nursing homes, diverting nursing home placements, integrating individuals back into the community and reducing hospitalization admissions and re-admissions. However after 4 years of operation, NYS DOH changed the model of the program and we were not able to operate it as originally intended. The new model removed all comprehensive supportive services from the clients being served, opting for external resources which is a fragmented approach. Having all services delivered by one agency and creating linkages to additional support services was a successful approach. It provided quality of services for the recipients as well as a cost savings for the state. Federation has an interest in providing a similar model throughout Westchester, NYC, and Long Island and is making a request of \$10,000,000 to be included in the budget.

Federation has a wide range of experience providing case management programs where we have been instrumental in making our communities more livable for older adults. We provide care coordination services to assist individuals with managing all aspects of their healthcare. Care coordinators link clients to behavioral health specialists and primary medical care as well as housing services, vocational services and entitlements. Coordinators work with each individual to follow up on appointments including, medical, specialist, and mental health treatment to ensure individuals are receiving the necessary care to keep them well in the community.

Just like the nation at large, New York is getting older as the Baby Boomer generation retires in greater and greater numbers, and medical advances allow more adults to live longer. Today more than 1.1 million adults over 65, about 13 percent of the city's total population, call the five boroughs home, and this number is projected to rise to over 1.4 million by 2040 in NYC alone. New York ranks fourth in the nation in the number of individuals aged 60 and over, at 4.6

million. By 2030, this population is expected to reach 5.3 million. The number of affordable housing options available to this growing population, particularly among low-income seniors and those in need of supportive services, has been dwindling.

The services needs of seniors can be extensive, ranging from healthcare needs to physical disabilities and limitations, cognitive disabilities, and a lack of social supports. Geriatric symptoms in homeless populations are more frequent and debilitating than among non-homeless individuals, often as a result of the stress of being on the street, having limited access to healthy foods, limited or sporadic access to health care and support services, and increased exposure to violence and trauma. To effectively engage and address the complex needs of seniors, our staff will utilize evidence-based practices and trauma informed services with residents and help them access healthcare and support services in order to avoid costly institutionalization and hospitalization. The services that will be provided by our team would include social work services, care coordination, occupational therapy, home safety assessments, aging services, living assessments, medical home visits, tenant association meetings and community integration services to prevent isolation. Individuals at risk for nursing home care have extensive degrees of medical conditions such as strokes, dementia, congestive heart failure, coronary artery disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases, emphysema, asthma, chronic renal failure, diabetes, and urinary tract infections, that prevent them from living independently in the community due to lack of supports. Due to the limited resources that are available to this cohort of individuals, nursing homes have been traditionally the safest option. Resources such as home health aides, personal care assistants, physical therapists, visiting nurses, and occupational therapists are necessary to sustain these individuals living in the community. These individuals may not have the supports necessary to assist them in seeking out services and are unable to pay out of pocket to find and obtain the proper supports. We would be able to support them in the community.

Federation is committed to the NYS Master Plan of Aging and would like to continue to providing Aging in Place services to individuals in need to help them remain in their home for as long as possible. We believe the funding is essential in this area to continue the work we have done and expand on our existing services.