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September 30, 2003

Antonia C. Novello, M.D., M.P.H., Dr. P.H.
Commissioner
Department of Health
Corning Tower, Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY 12237

Re: Report 2003-F-17

Dear Dr. Novello:

Pursuant to the State Comptroller's authority as set forth in Article V, Section 1 of the State Constitution, and Article II, Section 8 of the State Finance Law, we have reviewed the actions taken by officials of the Department of Health (Department) as of July 22, 2003, to implement the recommendation contained in our audit report, *Child and Adult Care Food Program* (Report 2000-S-5). Our report, which was issued on October 25, 2000, examined the plan developed by the Department for implementing and monitoring the program.

Background

The Department's Division of Nutrition (Division) administers the Federally-funded Child and Adult Care Food Program (Food Program). The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) administered the Food Program until 1992, at which time responsibility was transferred to the Department. The Department enters into agreements with sponsoring agencies and individual centers and home providers that serve meals to program recipients at the local level. Currently, the Food Program has 1,351 sponsors managing 11,829 centers and providers, including Child Day Care Centers, Family Day Care Homes, and Adult Day Care Centers serving persons over the age of 60. The Department reimburses providers for serving breakfast, lunch, supper, and snacks to eligible children and adults.

Summary Conclusions

In our audit, we found that client participation in the Food Program has increased significantly since USDA transferred responsibility for its administration to the Department. However, the Department has not developed a formalized strategic outreach plan that details its goals and objectives for increasing participation in the Food Program or measures its success in achieving them.

In our follow-up review, we found that the Department has implemented the recommendation contained in our prior audit.

Summary of Status of Prior Audit Recommendation

Department officials have implemented our single prior audit recommendation.

Follow-up Observations

Recommendation

Develop and implement a formalized strategic plan with an outreach methodology that establishes program growth by participation level for each program component and geographic location that enables Food Program staff to measure the success of their outreach efforts.

Status - Implemented

Agency Action - The Division has developed and implemented a formal strategic plan with an outreach methodology that promotes Food Program growth in regional areas with the highest needs. Food Program staff have implemented all four goals of the plan: 1) identify existing programs currently serving the State's neediest clients; 2) implement a community-based outreach plan; 3) promote expansion of Family Day Care Homes; and 4) provide clear and consistent information to potential and current sponsors.

The Division recently completed the first year of its outreach program in its selected pilot area, which included Albany, Rensselaer, and Schenectady counties. Food Program staff initiated the program by identifying focus groups within the pilot area and meeting with community leaders to explain the Division's outreach plans. Staff have also completed an evaluation of their first year's efforts and conducted research on a national level to identify successful programs. The Division contracted with a local marketing firm to identify ways to improve marketing of the Food Program and provide better information to potential sponsors. The Department's pilot program is expected to run for a second year and has been expanded to include the Utica area.

Major contributors to this report were John Buyce, Joel Biederman, and Don Wilson.

We thank Department of Health management and staff for the courtesies and cooperation extended to our auditor during this review.

Very truly yours,

Frank J. Houston
Audit Director

cc: Thomas E. Howe
Deirdre A. Taylor