



Coalition Briefs

A SEMI-MONTHLY UPDATE ON COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH IN NEW YORK

Here we go again

The New York State legislature will reportedly reconvene for a special session some time shortly after Thanksgiving. The latest word from Albany is that the Senate will convene on Monday, November 30th and the Assembly will be back in town on Wednesday, December 2nd. A key agenda item is a possible raise for legislators. We will be pushing them to add two items to their agenda. First, and foremost, the Assembly has a bill before them that has already been passed by the Senate to provide a 2.5% COLA for human services workers. The Governor has publicly expressed his support of the legislation, so if the Assembly passes it, we will get the COLA for which we have fought so hard. Additionally, we will be asking the legislature to create a seventh SNP for New York State. Action Alerts are on their way, so keep

Historic hospitals

While we worry about ensuring that the money from the sale of unused State psychiatric hospitals is Reinvested in community mental health programs, the National Trust for Historic Preservation is working to save the buildings that they feel are an important piece of New York's architectural history. The Victorian belief that mental illnesses could be improved with air, light and imposing architecture resulted in some extraordinarily beautiful buildings. Of ten psychiatric hospitals in the nation that have been designated as national landmarks, four are in New York and three (Mohawk Valley, Hudson River and Binghamton) are among the twelve currently for sale by the Empire State Development Corporation. □

Yes, Virginia, there is a City budget

The budget battle between the Mayor and the City Council came to a close before all of the ballots from the November 3rd election were counted. The end of the five-month standoff meant the release of desperately needed money for City non profits. Of the \$150 million that the Mayor held up, \$130 million was released in the deal. None of the funding allocated for mental health services was lost in the missing \$20 million, but \$2.6 million that had been allocated for substance abuse services was cut. In order to get the deal passed the Council agreed to put \$165 million into a rainy day fund instead of spending it on debt reduction. They also allocated \$15 million for renovations to the Museum of Modern Art, and agreed to a longer phase-in of weekly recycling pickups. With the budget out of the way, we expect discussions of the merger of DMHMRAS with DOH to regain momentum. □

MHS expands

On January 1, 1999 Oxford's Brooklyn Medicaid business will come under the control of Managed Healthcare Systems (MHS). According to Oxford's 10-Q filing with the SEC, the sale price was about \$14 million. The purchase will apparently make MHS the biggest Medicaid HMO in New York State. Steve Matthews, MHS Director of Public Affairs, acknowledged "We have 31,000 MHS members, if we get 34,000 Oxford members I believe that puts us above HIP [as the largest in the State]." □

Kings County Hospital in danger

Kings County Hospital is in danger of closing its doors if Federal regulators from HCFA decide that the accusations against the hospital of denying care to uninsured patients are serious enough to warrant a loss of Medicare funding. If Medicare funding is taken away, Medicaid funding and managed care contracts would be jeopardized and the hospital could lose accreditation, forcing it to close its doors. HCFA has given the hospital until December 6th to fix the problems or suffer the consequences. □

What Congress didn't do

When Congress left town to campaign at the beginning of the month, much was made of the Omnibus Budget Bill passed in a hurry before they went. (See Briefs 11.6.98) Of equal importance, however, is what was not passed.

- A House subcommittee draft proposal to tighten the eligibility determination process and criteria for SSI was never introduced as a bill.
- The House Budget Committee's proposal to slash Medicaid funding was killed by the Senate Committee, led by Sen. Pete Domenici (R-NM)
- The proposed amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) introduced by Rep. Bob Livingston (R-LA), the new Speaker of the House, that would have permitted schools to remove students with disabilities from the classroom permanently for perceived threats or behavioral problems were kept out of the resolution.
- Legislation protecting patients' rights in a managed care environment introduced by Sen. Tom Daschle (D-SD) was defeated on a strict party line 50-47 vote in the Senate.
- Bills protecting privacy of mental health and medical records never made it very far. Look for a variety of bills to be reintroduced in the 106th Congress.

Coalition Briefs

Member notes

Tuesday and Wednesday nights come alive at the ClubNet Café. From 5:30 to 8 p.m. the second floor of Cooper ETC, a **Community Access** clubhouse at 30 Cooper Square, is filled with poetry, music, comedy and camaraderie as Eddie Birchmore and Annette Campbell host open mike night. All are welcome to attend, "people who've already been diagnosed and people who are waiting to be diagnosed" as Eddie formulates it. For more information, call Eddie or Annette at (212) 260-1611. ■

Steinway Child and Family Services Executive Director and President of The Coalition, Mary D. Redd received a Community Service Award from the Neighborhood Care Team, Inc. (NCT), a St. Albans, Queens mental health provider. Ms. Redd received the award on October 23rd at NCT's 5th Anniversary Celebration Dinner at the Allen AME Cathedral Banquet Hall in Jamaica, Queens. ■

Barrier Free Living is pleased to have a new web page up and running. The site, located at www.barrierfreeliving.org includes a discussion forum and information on how to volunteer. Paul Feuerstein, Executive Director said, "We're looking at this as an exciting new means for reaching out to people with disabilities, other service providers and managed care entities."

The Coalition is always interested in our member's forays into cyberspace, so please let us know

Circus rides again

The Coalition's Annual Big Apple Circus event was yet again a huge success. Judeth Podell's tireless work ensured that the circus was another sell-out. We would have been lost without her. Also essential was the gracious and generous assistance of **JBFC's** Ed Kirschenbaum and Jose Perez. We have come to rely on Ed's expertise and energy, and can never really thank him enough. Coalition Vice President Alan B. Siskind was similarly invaluable, stepping into the ring to pinch-ringmaster for Coalition President Mary D. Redd, who was unable to join the festivities. We hope that those of you who were unable to be there will be able to join us next

DMH recognizes excellence

The Fifth Annual Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Alcoholism Services Mental Hygiene Awards were held on November 18 at the Brooklyn Children's Museum. Commissioner Neal Cohen was excellent as always in his role as Master of Ceremonies. Assembly Mental Health Committee Chair James Brennan, HHC Chair Rosa Gil and Acting Community Services Board Chair (and Coalition Executive Committee member) Kenneth Popler joined him on the stage.

Diane Charet presented the prestigious William A. Charet Memorial Award to **Astor Child Guidance Center**. Coalition Board member Joan DiBlasi accepted the award, "It's something that we're going to treasure because it's named after Bill and because it comes from the Department." **Steinway Child and Family Services, Inc.** received an agency award. Coalition President Mary D. Redd accepted the award, "It was really wonderful and we thank the department and special thanks to Elsie Del Campo for her lovely presentation of the award."

Other award recipients included Brooklyn Union Gas, On Your Mark, Inc., Single Parent Resource Center, Inc., WNET Channel 13, The Family School, Teresa Thompson, Bernadine C. Meeks and the Morningside/Westside Bulletin. Congratulations to Joan and Mary and all of the other award

recipients. ■

OMH on SNPs and COMBHO at PRFI

Barry Brauth, Director, Bureau of Financial Planning, NYS Office of Mental Health (SOMH), met with Coalition members on November 16th at **PRFI** to discuss fiscal methodology for the upcoming Adult Mental Health Special Needs Plans and SOMH's current exploration of a new single outpatient license, known as COMBHO (Community Behavioral Health Organization). Also present at this Membership Meeting was Dr. Sharon Carpinello, Deputy Commissioner, Division of Managed Care, SOMH. We are grateful for the willingness of these SOMH officials to meet with us, and for **PRFI's** gracious hosting. We anticipate another meeting on the COMBHO concept, as it evolves. ■

MAXIMUS needs space

MAXIMUS, the enrollment broker for New York's upcoming mandatory Medicaid managed care program, is still accepting applications from community-based organizations for outreach, education and enrollment services to Medicaid consumers. Please note, however, that any CBO which provides health or Medicaid services and/or has a direct or indirect interest in the ownership of an organization which is a health plan or health or Medicaid services provider may subcontract with MAXIMUS only for space utilization for outreach and enrollment activities. For further information, contact Awilda Martinez at MAXIMUS (917

Upcoming events

November 26-27	Thanksgiving - Coalition closed
December 2	Children's Committee at CVMHA
December 3	Coalition Annual Meeting
December 10	Finance Committee Board of Directors
December 15	Committee on Co-Occurring Psychiatric and Addictive Disorders

Managed Care Technical Assistance Schedule

Special Population Meetings - at JASA, 132 W. 31st Street

12.8.98	9:30-12:30	Day Treatment Programs
1.12.99	9:30-12:30	Club Houses
2.9.99	9:30-12:30	Residential Programs
3.9.99	9:30-12:30	Mental Illness and Axis 3 Diagnosis
4.13.99	9:30-12:30	Programs for the Aged
5.11.99	9:30-12:30	Children's Programs

Training Sessions - at FPWA, 281 Park Ave. South or CSS, 105 E. 22nd Street

11.24.98	9:30-4:30	Risk Management at FPWA
12.15.98	9:30-4:30	Consumer Satisfaction and Outreach at CSS
1.26.99	9:30-4:30	Marketing and Business Development at FPWA
2.23.99	9:30-4:30	Clinical Pathways at CSS
3.23.99	9:30-4:30	Utilization Management at CSS
4.27.99	9:30-4:30	Quality Assurance at CSS
5.25.99	9:30-4:30	Systems Integration at CSS
6.22.99	9:30-4:30	Mandatory Medicaid Enrollment at CSS

MIS Focus Groups - at ICL, 40 Rector Street or FPWA, 281 Park Avenue South

11.30.98	9:30-12:30	For MIS Staff at ICL
11.30.98	1:30-4:30	For Finance Staff at ICL
12.1.98	9:30-12:30	For Executive and Policy Staff at FPWA
12.1.98	1:30-4:30	For Executive and Policy Staff at FPWA
12.2.98	9:30-12:30	For Staff of Clinic Treatment Programs at FPWA
12.2.98	1:30-4:30	For Staff of Residential Programs at FPWA
12.3.98	9:00-12:00	For Staff of Continuing Day and Day Treatment Programs at FPWA
12.3.98	12:30-2:30	For Staff of Clubhouses and other CSS Programs at FPWA