



# Coalition Briefs

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

## COLA bills on Govs Desk

The bills providing a 2.5% COLA for human services workers have made it to the Governor's desk. On Friday, December 11 the bills were passed along by the Senate, which sponsored the original bills. The Governor has ten days to sign the legislation or veto it. If he fails to do either, the bills automatically become law on December 22nd. We'll keep you posted. □

## New York's hospitals are inexpensive

New York State hospitals were less expensive than the national average in 1997 according to a recently released study by Data Advantage Corp. of Louisville, KY. New York State ranked 30<sup>th</sup> out of the 51 States (including DC) in average cost for a hospital stay. Washington State was the least expensive at \$9,243, Nevada (\$18,781) was the most expensive and New York came in at \$12,605, a full 9% lower than the national average of \$13,415.

Within the State the range of costs was vast. Albany Memorial proved to be the least expensive with an average cost of \$6,938. North Central Bronx Hospital found its way to the top of the cost list with an average cost of \$25,490 per stay, nearly \$3,000 higher than the second most expensive, Harlem Center (\$22,504). Union Hospital in the Bronx was the least expensive hospital in the City with an average cost of only \$8,396. More information is available at the Data Advantage website at <http://www.data-advantage.com/chargestudy.htm>. □

## New OMH "Rights" poster

OMH has updated its "Rights of Outpatients" poster. The bilingual (English/Spanish) poster indicates the rights of individuals in IPRT, partial hospitalization, clinic, CDT and Day Treatment programs. Programs that want a copy of the updated poster should contact Utica Print Shop at (315) 735-5041. □

## Emotions run high at outpatient commitment hearing

The audience was charged and the tension level was high on Wednesday night at the DMHMRAS hearing on the Bellevue Hospital Outpatient Commitment demonstration project (OCP). The four hour hearing began with the report of the physicians from Bellevue who ran the program and the report of the independent monitoring group hired to assess it, Policy Research Associates, Inc. (PRA)

Dr. Steadman, President of PRA highlighted the six key findings of the report. (1) The legislative intent was very difficult to implement. (2) The enhanced services (coordination and resource mobilization) that the participants in the study received had a tremendous impact on the post-discharge experience, but the court order "had no discernible added value in producing better outcomes." (3) Community providers were very pleased with the enhanced services provided for consumers by the Bellevue Coordinating Team. (4) The court orders were flexible to interpretation. (5) OCP court procedures were much less formal than had been anticipated. (6) It is important to keep in mind when assessing the data that consumers with a history of violence were excluded from the study.

It wasn't until the public comment began that the tension level really began to mount as people discussed what is clearly for many a tremendously emotional issue. As a general rule, consumers and civil libertarians were strongly in opposition to the idea of involuntary outpatient commitment while family members were strong supporters at the hearing. Coalition member agencies could be heard testifying on both sides of the issue, but nearly all of the providers were most interested in highlighting that the expanded services made an enormous difference.

This will clearly be a hot issue in the coming legislative session as the law sunsets in June, so we will continue to follow it for you. □

## Member Notes

If you have any last-minute holiday shopping needs you may want to consider stopping by Goods at 204 Avenue A. Goods is run by **Community Access** and all of the goods are produced by the clubhouse's art program or other programs for people with disabilities from around the nation. The selection is wide-ranging and includes hand made candles, cards, ornaments, handcrafted toys and woven rugs. □

## Upcoming Events

December 18	Committee on Co-Occurring Psychiatric and Addictive Disorders at CVMHA
December 24	Coalition closed in honor of Christmas
December 25	Christmas - Coalition closed
December 31	New Year's Eve - Coalition closed
January 1	New Year's Day - Coalition closed
January 14	Executive Committee at CVMHA

**Note to our readers:** Coalition Briefs will take a brief hiatus for the holidays. The next issue will be on January 15, 1999. We hope you all have a happy and healthy New Year.