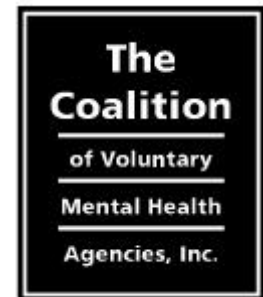


Coalition Briefs

February 20, 1998



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

COLA - It would be refreshing

The cost of living and Medicaid rate increase campaign is in full swing. The Coalition has joined with the Human Services Council and we will likely be partnering with other organizations in this essential campaign. Mental health and human services staff are contacting elected officials in their districts during the next two weeks. Coalition members and partners are joining in this full-court press before the expected budget passage in early April.

Did you know...State mental health workers received a 3.5% increase in last year's budget and will receive ANOTHER 3.5% increase in this year's budget? Voluntary sector workers have received none. Hardly seems fair, does it? ▣

More merger matters

Mental hygiene advocates and consumers were given their first quasi-public opportunity to comment on the proposed merger of DMH and DOH. Councilmembers Una Clarke and Victor Robles sponsored an open discussion on the matter at City Hall on Wednesday, February 18. A wide range of opinions were expressed and suggestions offered by the many individuals and groups represented at the closed door meeting. ▣

Budget briefing book online

The budget briefing book, produced by The Coalition and the New York State Council of Community Behavioral Healthcare, is available for viewing and downloading at <http://www.cvmha.org>. ▣

Parity bill passes Assembly

To the applause of advocates, families and consumers, mental health parity unanimously passed the New York State Assembly in a bi-partisan effort on February 9. Sponsored by Assembly Mental Health Chair James Brennan, the legislation requires insurance companies to provide mental health benefits (number of inpatient stays or treatment sessions, co-payments, deductibles and co-insurance requirements) equal to those provided for medical claims.

The fate of this legislation in the Senate is unsure. The text of the bill (A.8315B) may be found on the Assembly's website, also accessible through www.cvmha.org. ▣

Albany Lobby Day

This year's Albany lobby day, on Tuesday, February 10, was a collaborative effort with the NYS Council for Community Behavioral Health. We had meetings with legislators and staff from both sides of the aisle, the Governor's office and DOB, too. Our main topics were COLA and transitional assistance to managed care. Participants made direct impassioned appeals, citing the severe difficulties of operating in an inflationary environment without a real cost of living increase since 1987. Providers told of the difficulty in maintaining staff morale, keeping qualified staff and upholding quality care without deserved relief.

Reinvestment, New York/New York 2 and children's mental health issues were also on The Coalition and Council agenda. ▣

SNP News

◆ The Data Book, of Historical Medicaid Costs & Utilization, concerning managed care Mental Health Special Needs Plans (SNPs) for Adults, has been released by SOMH. It is available on the Office's website, which can be reached quickly from The Coalition's own website, www.cvmha.org. A hard copy of the Data Book can also be obtained from Gail Garrison at the SOMH Division of Strategic Initiatives/Managed Care, phone 518-473-6655.

◆ The contract with Maximus as the state's Medicaid managed care enrollment broker is proceeding through the approval process. The earliest date for *mandatory* enrollment is now mid-July 1998.

◆ SOMH has a new Director of Children's SNPs, Marcia Fazio. The Draft RFI on SNPs for Children and Adolescents is being reviewed by NYSDOB and DOH and should be released soon. Projected start-up for SNPs for Children and Adolescents is summer 1999. ▣

Coalition Briefs

— Help Wanted —

Child Health Plus coverage to grow

The current New York Child Health Plus (CHP) insurance program is designed to help low-income families with their children's health care needs. Since October 1, 1997, CHP has included a 20-visit mental health outpatient benefit. To obtain materials on the current CHP program, call the HMO Council, 518-462-2293. There is also a hotline for client information: 1-800-698-4KIDS (1-800-698-4543).

New York State stands to receive about \$256 million per year in new funding under the federal State Child Health Insurance program (S-CHIP), in addition to the state funds already set aside for Child Health Plus. The Governor, the Assembly and various advocacy groups have announced proposals for expanded insurance coverage, including expansion of CHP. These proposals vary concerning income eligibility levels, premiums and co-pay costs, but all would expand CHP to cover dental, vision, speech and expanded mental health services, for children up to age 19. The goal is a seamless health insurance system, with simplified enrollment for CHP and Medicaid. In addition, current Medicaid age and income differentials would be eliminated.

Details concerning the Governor's and Assembly's proposals for an expanded mental health benefit have not yet been released. The Coalition supports a proposal by Citizens' Committee for Children and State Communities Aid Association for a convertible (actuarial equivalent) mental health benefit for inpatient or other high-level care, such as crisis residences, and for creation of a separate CHP catastrophic illness rider or funding pool for children with exceptional care needs. We will keep you informed. □

Psychiatric Social Worker for innovative geriatric CDT. CSW, experience and strong ind./group skills required. Resume to A. Cohen, **SPOP**, 188 W. 88 St., NYC 10024-2402 or fax to 212-787-1230. □

Legal advocacy organization seeks experienced and dedicated public interest lawyer to manage direct services advocacy programs, supervise staff, initiate class action litigation, participate in community coalitions and raise funds for project serving homeless and incarcerated mentally ill individuals. Qualified candidates should have knowledge of mental health issues including managed care, criminal justice and homelessness. Must have experience with several or all of the following: fundraising, litigation, program management and system-wide advocacy. Salary range: \$35,000-\$50,000. Send resume to: Susan Batkin, Urban Justice Center, 666 Broadway, NYC, 10012. □

Medicaid audits revisited

The Coalition's Task Force of Medicaid Providers is reviewing issues and strategies stemming from the current round of Medicaid audits of mental health outpatient programs. Any Coalition agency with issues that we may wish to address is urged to call Marilyn Kneeland at The Coalition as soon as possible. □

February 24

February 26

March 12

June 4

Upcoming Dates

Managed Care Technical Assistance Program at NYANA

Membership meeting with Hon. James Brennan

CSP Implementation Technical Assistance Meeting

Children's Mental Health Alliance

Finance Committee

Executive Committee

Taskforce on Children and Families

14th Annual Mental Health Awards Ceremony

Author and Monologist Spalding Gray

will receive

The Mental Health Award

at the 14th Annual Mental Health Awards Ceremony

Thursday, June 4, 1998 at 5:00 p.m.

Don't miss it!