

Coalition Briefs

June 5, 1998

The
Coalition
of Voluntary
Mental Health
Agencies, Inc.



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

New SNP schedules

The Deadline for responding to SOMH's Request for Information on Mental Health SNPs for Children and Adolescents has been changed from June 15, 1998 to **July 15, 1998**.

It appears that the blackout period, which will begin once the Mental Health Adult SNP RFP is issued by SOMH, will NOT begin on July 2, 1998, as SOMH had previously announced.

SOMH foresees that mental health SNPs for adults will be voluntary for at least three years. ■

Legislative leaders listen

The Coalition sent a blue-ribbon panel to Albany on June 3 to testify at a joint hearing of the Assembly Standing Committees on Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, Alcoholism and Drug Abuse and Ways and Means. Phillip Saperia led a delegation that included staff members, agency executives and agency board members. Excerpts from Steinyway Family and Children's Services' Ann Vazquez can be found on page two. The hearing was presided over by Assemblyman James Brennan. If you would like a copy of The Coalition's testimony contact Joshua Rubin at (212) 586-4555 or jfrubin@cvmha.org. ■

Working for transitional funding

The Coalition to Preserve Access to Community Based Healthcare Providers spent Wednesday, May 27 in Albany letting elected officials know how much funding is needed to enable not-for-profit providers to transition to Medicaid managed care. Coalition Executive Director Phillip Saperia joined other members of The Coalition to Preserve Access' leadership in meeting with legislators from both houses and both sides of the aisle, as well as members of the Governor's staff. ■

Awards Ceremony is a huge success

The 14th Annual Mental Health Awards ceremony was held at the World Headquarters of Pfizer on the evening of June 4th. The evening was a splendid affair with delicious food and wonderful company. Author and monologist Spalding Gray headed a list of worthy honorees that also included New York State Senator Velmanette Montgomery, New York City Assemblyman Herbert Berman and The Coalition's own Judeth Podell. For those of you who missed out on the festivities, fear not, you have twelve months to make sure you get tickets for the 15th Annual Mental Health Awards. ■

Merger hearing held

The New York City Council Government Operations Committee met on June 4 to discuss the proposed merger of the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Alcoholism Services with the Department of Health. Coalition Executive Director Phillip Saperia testified that "...we are not here today to support or oppose the planned merger...We do feel strongly, however, that the legislation...needs significant amendments to help ensure the integrity of mental hygiene services and signal the equal importance of mental hygiene..." Copies of the testimony are obtainable by contacting Joshua Rubin at (212) 586-4555 or jfrubin@cvmha.org. ■

Parity takes one more step

On Tuesday, May 26th the New York State Senate Insurance Committee passed its version of the Mental Health Parity Bill. The Senate's Bill differs from the Assembly Bill in some important ways, so those differences will have to be worked out. Passage is unlikely until the budget impasse is broken. ■

Albany activism

Nearly 2,000 people overflowed the area below the steps to the New York State Capitol on Tuesday, June 2, 1998 to protest Governor Pataki's vetoes of human services funding in the 1998-99 State budget. A very broad coalition of nearly thirty human services advocacy groups came together with unions and other concerned supporters to make their voices heard. The theme of the march was 'We came together, so you should too,' referring to the inability of the legislature and Governor to agree on a supplemental budget.

The sight was truly inspiring as marchers literally surrounded the whole of the Capitol chanting, singing, waving banners and carrying posters. Everyone sported snazzy buttons and even the sidewalk dressed (with chalk) for the occasion. In addition the participants in the rally produced approximately 3,000 signed petitions to the Governor, asking him to restore funding for human services. ■

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Ann Vazquez's testimony before the NYS Assembly

"...I am here today to share with you Chairman Brennan my plea to assist social service workers for voluntary agencies in getting a COLA increase that is more than overdue, and well deserved. Many workers have not received an increase for over a decade. Close the disparity between state workers and not-for-profit agency workers. The failure of the State to provide any reasonable funding increases for many years has had a very hurtful impact on me and my family. Assist us in our ability to meet the needs of people who depend on us. Failure to provide an increase in funding has had a significant effect on my workload as we struggle to meet the

needs of the communities and the clients we serve, placing staff retention at risk, and long-term direct service relationship with clients at risk. COLA is not about salaries but about services.

"Chairman Brennan and Committee members, when my child needs a new pair of shoes or sneakers for school, I don't say no, veto that! When I have to pay rent increases, utility expenses, as well as tuition costs, I don't and can't say no, veto that!

"I am asking the state to help the helpers. Tell Governor Pataki to reverse the veto. Thank you for allowing me this time." □

Will they abolish the IBO?

Mayor Giuliani's fiscal year 1999 New York City Budget does not include any funding for the City of New York Independent Budget Office (IBO). This is a direct violation of the City Charter which mandates that IBO be funded at not less than ten percent of the budget of the Mayor's Office of Management and Budget. To address this legal problem, Mayor Giuliani has had legislation introduced in both the State Senate and the State Assembly to abolish the IBO. Senate Bill S7050, introduced by Senators Maltese, Goodman and Padavan, would allow the City to pass a local law eliminating the Office. Assemblyman Lafayette has introduced identical legislation in the Assembly (A10817). Both bills are pending in the Cities Committee in each chamber. Assembly legal counsel has determined that it is unable to act on A10817 unless the City Council passes a home rule message requesting that the legislation be enacted. Watch this space for a progress update on both of these bills. □

SOMH speaks to members

Coalition members met with guests from the State Office of Mental Health, Keith Simons, Director of Adult Special Needs Plans (SNPs), and Marcia Fazio, Director of Children's SNPs, who provided the following information on the planning for mental health SNPs:

Marcia Fazio highlighted SOMH's principles for Children's SNPs that: they will be based on CASSP principles, which call for a coordinated system of service delivery; there will be an interagency focus as well as a flexible program and finance models, and these SNPs will be part of a total system of care. The benefits package will include: services coordination/individualized care planning, crisis/emergency response, mental health treatment, mental health maximization (rehabilitation and habilitation), mental health support and empowerment services, and inpatient services (short-term acute care). Details are in the RFI. **The deadline for commenting on the RFI has been extended by one month, to July 15, 1998.**

SOMH will be developing a children's managed care web page on its website <www.omh.state.ny.us>,

which will survive the blackout period on adult SNPs, allowing for communication on children's SNPs during that time. Additional SNP information will be found on the SOMH website, which can also be accessed via The Coalition's website <www.cvmha.org>.

Keith Simons said that the adult mental health SNP RFP will be

tailored to local requirements and rates will be developed regionally. It now appears that July 2nd is no longer the anticipated date for issuance of the adult RFP and start of the blackout period; we conclude from his remarks that there will be at least a month's delay beyond July 2nd. □

Upcoming Events

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| June 8 | Technical Assistance Cohort Meeting for Programs for the Aged in NYANA Auditorium, 9:30 a.m. |
| | Technical Assistance - CAHPS in NYANA Auditorium, 1:00 p.m. |
| June 9 | Coalition members from Brooklyn and Staten Island visit Albany |
| June 10 | Coalition members from Queens visit Albany |
| | Presentation on Massachusetts Outcome Measurement Project at Puerto Rican Family Institute, 11:00 a.m. |
| June 11 | Coalition members from Manhattan visit Albany |
| | Finance Committee at CVMHA, 8:30 a.m. |
| | Board of Directors at CVMHA, 9:30 a.m. |
| | Technical Assistance on Children's SNP RFI at CVMHA, 1:00 p.m. |
| June 23 | Technical Assistance - Operating systems for clinical and financial records in NYANA auditorium, 9:30 a.m. |
| June 25 | Membership Meeting at CVMHA, 3:30 p.m. |
| July 15 | Deadline for Children's SNP RFI responses |
| July 23 | Technical Assistance - Managed care Update in NYANA auditorium, 9:30 a.m. |