



Coalition Briefs

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

Technical assistance season finale

The Managed Care Readiness Series is winding up for the year. The last sessions are scheduled for May 11th (Children's Services), May 25th (Systems Integration), and on June 8th a two for one special. From 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. the topic will be clinical pathways, and in the afternoon (1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.) we invite agencies to participate once again in the managed care self-assessment process by completing a survey. Last year, 51 member agencies completed the surveys. White-washed of all identifiers, the Coalition is able to aggregate basic information regarding the abilities of our agencies to negotiate and engage in managed care contracts. This information has not only helped us plan for additional technical assistance but also informs us in our lobbying, advocacy and monitoring activities for managed care public policy. Member agencies that complete the survey will once again be entitled to a follow-up, on-site visit by one of our consultants. Please call Patricia Gallo Goldstein at (212) 586-4555x12, to reserve. Look for more information on the 1999/2000 Managed Care Technical Assistance Series in future issues of *Briefs*. ▣

Presumptive Eligibility Bill Introduced

Assembly Mental Hygiene Committee Chair James Brennan introduced a bill (A7558) to provide presumptive eligibility for Medicaid for people with psychiatric illnesses who are released from inpatient psychiatric facilities or incarcerations in prisons and jails. The bill would allow people 90 days of Medicaid coverage for medications until their application for permanent coverage was accepted. Since Medicaid eligibility cannot be applied for until release, and since there is a time gap between application for benefits and acceptance, this piece of legislation would be very helpful in keeping newly released people in the community. The Assembly previously passed similar legislation that did not include people who were receiving psychiatric medication in jail or prison. The Coalition supports this important piece of legislation and will continue to work for its passage. ▣

New York/New York 1½?

On April 21st Mayor Giuliani and Governor Pataki announced a second New York/New York agreement to house homeless people with mental illness. The long awaited agreement proved to have more bark than bite. Although it is positive that the money allocated by both the City and State in last year's budget will be released, we are concerned that the agreement does not allocate any new funding.

We are concerned that despite the overflowing coffers of New York State, the Governor was unable to come up with any money on his own for this important measure. Lost in the hullabaloo about the agreement has been the fact that the money spent by the State came from an Assembly one-house budget bill for FY99. The Assembly, led by Speaker Sheldon Silver, included over \$100 million for NY/NY housing that was negotiated to over \$40 million in the conference committee process led by Speaker Silver and Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno.

We are grateful to the Mayor for pushing the State to allocate additional funding. We are similarly grateful to our friends in the legislature, particularly the chairs of the mental hygiene budget table, Assemblyman James Brennan and Senator Thomas Libous for allocating the first year of the necessary funding. We hope the Governor and the Mayor can get back to the drawing board to come up with the necessary funding for the remaining four years of the agreement. ▣

May is Mental Health Month

Assembly passes parity bill

New York State has moved one step closer to ending its tacit approval of discrimination against people with mental illness...again. In a unanimous 146-0 vote the Assembly passed a mental health parity bill introduced by Mental Hygiene Committee Chair Jim Brennan (A6325). This bill applies to all insurers, would eliminate day/visit, annual, lifetime, co-insurance and deductible disparities and would effect people diagnosed with mental, nervous or emotional disorders. This is the third year in a row that the Assembly has passed an identical mental health parity bill. In 1997 and 1998, the bill died in the Senate. We encourage all *Briefs* readers to contact their State Senators to encourage them to support mental health parity legislation. ▣

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7th SNP bill moves in Senate

On May 5, The Senate Mental Hygiene Committee moved a bill (S3312B) that would authorize a seventh SNP. The bill, introduced by Senator Libous, incorporates the OMH Departmental bill (S4283) that would make the same change. In addition the bill specifies that at least one SNP shall be in New York City and extends until July 1, 2002 the statutory authorization for the establishment of HIV and mental health SNPs. A bill to authorize a seventh SNP is currently before the Committee on Ways and Means in the Assembly. The Coalition strongly supports a seventh SNP. ■

Staten Island IPA formed

Five Staten Island based mental hygiene providers have formed the Staten Island Behavioral Network IPA, Inc. Beacon of Hope House, Sky Light Center, Staten Island Mental Health Society, Sisters of Charity Health Care System and Project Hospitality have joined together to offer "one-stop shopping," according to founding President, and Coalition Board member, Dr. Kenneth Popler. "The five organizations going forward with this venture will fill an important service gap on Staten Island," he continued. The IPA will provide traditional inpatient, outpatient and emergency psychiatric care as well as newer modalities like clubhouses, employment placements and consumer-run projects. ■

Special membership meeting

Involuntary Outpatient Commitment, where should The Coalition stand? This important decision will be made at an upcoming special membership meeting. At the suggestion of the Government Relations Committee, on Wednesday, May 19, we will hold a membership meeting from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. to determine The Coalition's position. Coalition staff will provide an analysis of the provisions of the bills introduced and meeting attendees will determine what provisions are most important to The Coalition's membership. We will then make a recommendation to the Board of Directors about which bill or bills we feel we should support. All Coalition members are strongly encouraged to attend. ■

HIV SNP RFA released

On March 4th the New York State Department of Health (DOH) released a Request for Applications (RFA) for HIV/AIDS Special Needs Plans (SNPs). As many as 12 HIV SNPs will be qualified for HIV+ Medicaid recipients and their minor children. DOH expects to issue contracts for the SNPs by May 2000. Letters of intent to submit applications are due to DOH by May 28, 1999 and bidders conferences are scheduled for July 8 and 9. The RFA will be posted on DOH's website, which can be reached through The Coalition's web page at www.cvmha.org. Questions should be directed to Ira Feldman at (518) 486-1383. The Mental Health SNP RFP is currently under consideration by the Department of the Budget. ■

Picnic for Parity

The Coalition is pleased to be a sponsoring agency of yet another Picnic for Parity on Friday, May 21st from 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. in Bryant Park (42nd and Sixth Avenue). Along with other members of the MEND (Mental Health Equality Not Discrimination) Coalition we anticipate a successful 5th Annual Picnic with a free lunch, mental health information, awards, prizes and voter registration. Fun though they may be, we hope that this will be the last year that we must picnic because of a lack of parity. For more information call (212) 989-8460 or go to www.picnicforparity.com. "If you care, you'll be there." ■

Kids day treatment carve-out

The Senate unanimously and without discussion passed a bill on May 3rd (S1502) that would make explicit that children's day treatment programs are exempt from managed care. The bill, sponsored by Senator Padavan and cosponsored by Senator Spano, would make clear that mental health services that are provided in conjunction with educational services cannot be funded through managed care, retaining the current fee-for-service structure. A companion bill has been introduced in the Assembly (A5600) by Mental Hygiene Committee Chair James Brennan. It is currently before the Committee on Ways and Means. Opposition to the legislation is expected from the State Office of Mental Health which is concerned that without day treatment programs, there will be insufficient money to sustain a children's SNP. ■

Help Wanted

Social Worker: Award-winning mental health agency located in Central Harlem, seeks CSW with psychiatric and MICA experience. Successful candidate will supervise casework staff, coordinate intake referrals and interviews, interface with community agencies, and provide direct clinical services to a chronically mentally ill and homeless population. Knowledge of Department of Homeless Services, compliance standards and supervisory experience preferred. Excellent career opportunity, competitive salary and benefits. New graduates are encouraged to apply.

Residence Counselor: Weston United has an opening for a full time, day shift residence counselor. Duties include counseling adults with possible mental illness and/or substance abuse. Provides rehabilitative and restorative services to residents. Provides services to residents

in apartment visits, individual sessions, group meetings and off-site activities. Reports to Team Coordinator and participates in individual and group supervision, team meetings and staff meetings. Qualification includes a High School Diploma or equivalent with two years experience in a mental health or related field. Computer literate and good writing skills, Great Benefits. Salary \$18,000.

Gardener/Landscaper: Non profit mental health agency seeks gardener/horticulturist to plant, landscape and maintain our urban garden located in Harlem. Focus of garden is to beautify the community, to enrich our consumers with a rural setting in the midst of a concrete environment and for them to have hands-on participation in the gardening process. Prior experience in landscaping and gardening a must. Salary of 30K with benefits.

Fax Resume and Cover Letter to: Human Resources Administrator, **Weston United Community Renewal, Inc.** at (212) 316-0789. ■