



Coalition Briefs

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

Clarke calls on Pataki for MH \$\$

On June 17, City Council Mental Hygiene Subcommittee Chairwoman Una S.T. Clarke held a press conference on the steps of City Hall to decry the lack of support for mental health services coming from the Governor's office. Joined by Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer, Councilwoman Helen Marshall, **Staten Island Mental Health Society** President Kenneth Popler, Ray Brescia from the Urban Justice Center, and The Coalition's Phillip Saperia and Joshua Rubin, the press conference also highlighted the work of the City Council Taskforce on Outpatient Mental Health Services. □

Marchi introduces eligibility bill

State Senator John Marchi has introduced a Medicaid presumptive eligibility bill in the Senate. The legislation (S5869) is identical to an Assembly bill (A7558), introduced by Assemblyman Brennan, which passed the Assembly 141-0 on March 26th. We are grateful to Senator Marchi for championing a cause that has died in the Senate for a number of years in a row. We are also grateful to Kenneth Popler and the Staten Island Mental Health Council for their work lobbying the Senator to introduce the bill. □

Kendra's Law moves despite Albany's lethargy

In a legislative session during which negotiations have been a rarity, three-way discussions about an Involuntary Outpatient Commitment (IOC) program have been moving along steadily for days. It appears all sides have a desire to move something called 'Kendra's Law' regardless whether it is sound public policy or not. Although there is not yet agreement, there is movement in that direction.

Most distressing to us is the word from Albany that the presumptive Medicaid eligibility provision of the Assembly version of the bill (A8477) may be falling off the table or sharply reduced in scope. In a piece of legislation with questionable value, it would be a shame if the only truly beneficial substantive provision were removed.

The Coalition remains firmly committed to presumptive Medicaid eligibility for medications and services, and we would vociferously object to any IOC bill that mandates services without paying for them. □

NY/NY III...We should be so lucky

Assembly Mental Health Committee Chair James Brennan and Speaker Sheldon Silver have introduced a proposal for the State to allocate \$210 million for housing for people with mental illness, creating 3,500 new beds. If this proposal were implemented, it would be the single largest allocation for housing for people with mental illness in the history of New York State. The proposal would re-create the funding formula

that was used in the first New York/New York agreement, 2/3 State funds and 1/3 local match.

The money would be divided between community-based programs in the City and Upstate as well as state-operated programs on the grounds of state psychiatric centers. \$150 million would be earmarked for New York City, which with a \$75 million City match, would result in \$225 million for housing in the City alone. An additional \$18 million is set aside for similar programs in Upstate communities, with an anticipated \$9 million local match. Additionally, \$42 million would go to expansion of state-operated community residences on the grounds of state psychiatric facilities. This allocation would create over 500 new beds.

"Enacting legislation to create more mental health housing is not an option, but rather a necessity," said Speaker Silver in announcing the initiative, "We are...obliged to provide the resources necessary to ensure that the mentally ill are not simply put through a revolving door of care." We couldn't agree more. □

Business and Practice Imperatives:

A Future Look at Behavioral Healthcare

June 22 - 23, 1999 at Fordham University, 113 W. 60th Street, New York, NY

Featuring:

- ◆ Monica Oss and other professional staff from Open Minds;
- ◆ Faculty from the Fordham Graduate School of Social Service;
- ◆ Workshops for administrators and clinicians;
- ◆ Exhibit hall;
- ◆ Plenaries and workshops on business and clinical issues for behavioral health providers;
- ◆ Presentation on Co-occurring disorders;
- ◆ And much, much more.

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7th SNP - Just Do It!

Both houses of the Legislature have passed bills authorizing a seventh mental health Special Needs Plan (SNP). The Senate bill includes an extension in the SNP sunset that neither the Assembly nor The Coalition approves of. We feel that it is premature to extend the authorization and that a full debate should occur next year when the legislation sunsets. If the current impasse remains, New York City will be left with only 2 SNPs. We encourage Senator Libous to separate these two unrelated items and enable the Seventh SNP to move. □

President provides parity

The recent White House Conference on Mental Health was remarkable for the way in which it brought mental health issues into the mainstream. That the President, Vice President and both first ladies participated sent a clear message that mental health issues can no longer be swept under the rug.

More remarkable, however, was what President Clinton announced during the conference. In a sweeping move, by Executive order, over 9 million Federal employees were granted mental health insurance parity. The Federal Employees Health Benefits Plan, the nation's largest private insurer, must now include only plans that provide full mental health and substance abuse parity.

Other important initiatives announced by the Clinton-Gore Administration during the conference include:

- A pilot program to enable people with mental illness to get the treatment they need to return to work,
- Education for senior citizens and their care providers about the specific risks of depression to the aged,
- New strategies to meet the mental health needs of victims of violent crimes,
- An expansion of the "Caring for Every Child" campaign, which identifies and supports children with mental illness.

The Coalition is pleased with the entire range of policy moves the President announced, particularly the provision of mental health and substance abuse parity to such a large number of Americans. □

Medicaid to cover Viagra

The New York State Department of Health (DOH) has informed physicians and pharmacies that effective June 1, 1999, prescriptions for Viagra are reimbursable by Medicaid. Viagra will be available for Medicaid recipients who are male, over 19 years of age, diagnosed with erectile dysfunction and attest that they have not used nitrates in the previous 180 days.

The Coalition is very pleased with this new addition to New York's Medicaid formularies. We worked very hard to encourage officials from every level of government to cover Viagra with Medicaid. Clinical studies have demonstrated that access to Viagra could be a blessing for many people who suffer from sexual dysfunction, a common symptom of several mental disorders, including severe depression. Sexual dysfunction among males can also result from the side effects of many of the medications commonly prescribed for these conditions.

Questions about New York State Medicaid policy regarding Viagra should be directed to the Pharmacy Policy Unit of DOH at (518) 486-3209. □

Member Notes

Bleuler Psychotherapy Center Executive Director Dr. John Rosslund presided over a legislative breakfast for the Federation of Mental Health Centers on May 14, 1999. Attending the event were Assembly Mental Health Committee Chair James Brennan, Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan, Assemblyman Ivan Lafayette and State Senator Daniel Hevesi. Federation President Dr. Rosslund highlighted the gross lack of funding under which outpatient mental health clinics in New York State operate, noting that many Federation clinics had not received a rate increase in 14 years. The Coalition supports the efforts of the Federation to educate legislators at every level about the need for additional mental health funding. □

1/2 Fare bill through Senate

The MTA 1/2 Fare Fairness bill passed the Senate unanimously (99-0) on June 17th. This critical piece of legislation (A1807) is now being held in the Assembly Ways and Means Committee. We encourage all Briefs readers to contact Ways and Means Committee Chair Herman D. Farrell, Jr. at (518) 455-5491 and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver at (518) 455-3791 to register your support for this essential bill. □

Work Incentives Act moves

On Wednesday, June 16, 1999 the United States Senate passed the Work Incentives Improvement Act unanimously (99-0). This important bill would enable people with disabilities who receive SSDI to return to work and keep their Medicare benefits. It is estimated that the bill would affect about 9 million people. Currently less than one-half of one percent of Americans who receive disability benefits ever return to work, primarily for fear of losing their health benefits.

The battle now moves to the House where the legislation has substantial support. The Commerce Committee cleared it, but it is currently stalled in Ways and Means. Committee chairman Bill Archer (R-TX) is optimistic about the bill's chances. A similar bill passed the House last year. □

New DOH Commissioner

After two days of hearings and two weeks of criticism from abortion-rights advocates, Dr. Antonia C. Novello was unanimously confirmed by the New York State Senate as the new Commissioner of the State Department of Health on Tuesday, June 15th. The former U.S. Surgeon General fills a seven-month vacancy left by former Commissioner Dr. Barbara DeBuono. □

Clarification

In the previous issue of Coalition Briefs (June 4, 1999) we indicated that Jacob Barak had taken the position of Acting President and CEO of **Postgraduate Center for Mental Health**. We should have mentioned that Dr. Barak will also continue in his role as Assistant Executive Director for Managed Care and New Business at **Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services**. We regret any confusion this may have caused. □

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— Help Wanted —

Program Coordinator: **Weston House** has F/T program coordinator position available. Responsibilities include supervision of counselors, caseload, treatment plans, progress notes, etc. Provides rehabilitative and restorative services to MICA residents. Provides services to residents in apartment visits, individual sessions, group meetings, and off-site activities. Reports to Program Manager, participates and runs individual and group supervision, team meetings and staff meetings. College degree preferred w/2 yrs. exp. in a mental health or related field. Supervisory skills a +. Computer literate and good writing skills. Salary: \$26K. Fax resume to: Joseph Wong, Human Resources Manager **Weston United Community Renewal, Inc.** (212) 316-0789. □

Social Worker - Counseling Department: The Social Worker will be responsible for "hands-on" supervision and developmental functions of a small afterschool program. Primary focus will be running a small afterschool program for SED adolescents that is part of larger teen program in multi-service agency and other required duties as assigned. Position is Full-Time with Flexible hours (early evenings and some Saturdays). Candidates must have CSW and specific experience working with SED teens, preferable within a recreational setting. Supervisory experience and bi-lingual Spanish/English a Plus. Comprehensive benefits package. Salary commensurate with experience. We are an Equal Opportunity Employer. If you meet these qualifications then please send us your resume in confidence. Mail resume to: Human Resources/Social Worker, **Hudson Guild**, 441 W. 26th Street, New York, NY 10001. Or fax resume to: (212) 268-9983. No Phone Calls Please. □

Counselors: Hourly - (late afternoons & evenings). Position provides counseling to individuals, married couples, and families. Work on a collaborative basis with team and supervising psychologist, M.S.W., or Doctoral student in clinical psychology who has completed internship and other requirements except dissertation. State Certification in Social Work where appropriate or evidence of completion of internship in clinical psychiatry. Bilingual (Span.-Eng.) pref. Send resume, salary requirements & include job title in your response to **Catholic Charities**, 1011 1st Ave., Rm. 1113, NY, NY 10022 or fax to (212) 826-8795. □

Social Workers: Conduct pre-screening interviews, intake evaluations, individual, family & marital therapy. Conduct crisis intervention interviews, intake evaluations, individual, family & marital therapy. Conduct crisis intervention interviews. Complete statistics, record keeping in accordance w/ program requirements. Participate in case presentations at staff mtgs. & in supervision. M.S.W. Clinical exp. w/ children & adults. State Certification in Social Work. Bilingual (Span.-Eng.) pref. Excellent Benefits. 19 Holidays. Send resume, salary req. & include job title in your response to **Catholic Charities** 1011 1st Ave., Rm. 1113, NY, NY 10022 or fax to (212) 826-8795. □

Case Manager: Provides direct case management services to the poor and the disenfranchised in the NYC area through advocacy, information & referral, crisis intervention services, & short-term case management. M.S.W. or B.A. w/ at least 2 yrs. of exp. in the social service field. Span.-Eng. Pref. Excellent interpersonal, organizational, time management & communication skills. Ability to work well independently as well as part of a team. Excellent benefits. 19 Holidays. Send resume, salary req. & include job title in your response to **Catholic Charities** 1011 1st Ave., Rm. 1113, NY, NY 10022 or fax to (212) 826-8795. □

Associate Director: Overall management of Migration Services & its programs, including day to day operations, direct supervision of staff, review of client files & accounts. Responsible for compilation of monthly statistical reports & budgets. Provide training & tech. assistance to casework staff regarding immigration related issues. Assist the Director in developing strategies and program expansion as well as drafting grant proposals. M.A. preferred. Previous exp. in staff supervision, highly motivated & self-starter, good communication, analytical and interpersonal skills. Bilingual (Eng.-Span.) pref. Knowledge of immigration & naturalization laws helpful. Exp. w/Microsoft Office. Excellent benefits. 19 Holidays. Send resume, salary req. & include job title in your response to **Catholic Charities** 1011 1st Ave., Rm. 1113, NY, NY 10022 or fax to 212-826-8795. □

Upcoming Events

June 22-23

July 5
July 15
July 21
September 6
September 7
September 13
September 20
September 22

Best Practices Conference at Fordham

Independence Day observed - Coalition closed
CARF: Improving Performance by Measuring Outcomes
Breakfast for prospective new members at PRFI
Labor Day - Coalition closed
MCTA: Larry Berg, Ph.D., Esq. on MC Contracting at CSS
MICA Committee at The Bridge
Yom Kippur - Coalition building closed
Children's Committee at CVMHA