



Coalition Briefs

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

Margarita muscles MTA

Councilwoman Margarita López has taken up the MTA ½ Fare Fairness banner in New York City. She brought a group of consumers to the MTA's Brooklyn office to file ½ fare applications on February 3rd, held a City Hall press conference on February 8th and introduced a resolution later that day to require public hearings on the MTA's failure to implement the law passed last year. We are grateful for Councilwoman López's attention to this critical issue. ▣

Lobbying with love

For the third year in a row The Coalition and the New York State Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare joined forces to make our case in Albany. On the heels of Valentine's Day we asked key elected officials and staff people to be our Valentines by crafting a permanent solution to the inflation-pacing needs of the community-based health care sector.

Copies of the budget book produced for the day are available on The Coalition's website at www.cvmha.org. Action Alerts will begin to appear on member's fax machines as we gear up our grass-roots machine to press our elected leaders to shore up the sector with a 3.9% adjustment on all rates, grants and fees this year and use the Autumn to craft a permanent solution. All *Briefs* readers are encouraged to contact Speaker Silver and Majority Leader Bruno to encourage them to fund a trended adjustment. ▣

Brennan bill would remove Medicaid neutrality cap

Assembly Mental Hygiene Committee Chair James Brennan has introduced a bill (A.9536) that would eliminate the discriminatory cap on Medicaid mental health spending that has severely restricted the needed expansion of the community-based mental health care system.

Through this cap, called "Medicaid neutrality," OMH has limited the expansion and approval of new mental health outpatient services. This restriction, which is based solely on limiting state Medicaid spending, is not a criterion for licensing considered by the Department of Health, Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities or the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services. In this way, the mental health outpatient sector has been singled out and held to a restriction that results in insufficient outpatient mental health services in the community.

If this bill passes, it will end the current requirement that providers applying for new, transferred or renewed licenses have to identify the source of the state share of Medicaid funding before OMH will grant the licensure request. With thirty co-sponsors, prospects for passage in the Assembly look pretty good. The Mental Hygiene Committee will address the bill on March 1st. Briefs readers are encouraged to contact their State Senators and the Governor's office to encourage their support of this critical bill. ▣

Clarke combats cruel cuts

City Council Mental Health Subcommittee Chair Una S. T. Clarke has not wasted any time responding to Mayor Giuliani's proposed behavioral health care cuts. She has already scheduled a City Hall press conference to protest the Mayor's proposal on the City Hall steps on February 28th at 10:30 a.m.

In a February 3rd letter to DMHMRAS Commissioner Neal Cohen Councilwoman Clarke registered her disapproval of the drastic reductions, "Please know that I will not rest if any proposed cuts go through. I have the support of the advocacy community and all citizens of good conscience." As advocates and citizens, we agree. ▣

Presidential budget proposal boosts mental health spending

On February 7th, President Clinton unveiled his final budget proposal. His \$1.835 trillion proposal includes large election year increases for health care, education, child-care and defense. Of particular interest to the mental health community is:

- A \$60 million increase to the Mental Health Block Grant, a 16.8% increase to bring it to \$416 million.
- A \$5 million increase to the PATH program for homeless people with mental illness to bring the total to \$35 million.
- A \$4 million increase to Children's Mental Health Services, bringing the total to \$87 million.
- \$43 million for a disabilities initiative in the Department of Labor to reduce the 75% unemployment rate

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Federal budget proposal

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among people with severe disabilities.

- A \$53 million increase for NIMH research, an increase of 5.9% to bring the total over \$1 billion.
- A new \$30 million Targeted Capacity Expansion proposal to promote prevention and early intervention. \$10 million would be focused on people at risk of developing a mental illness, and \$20 million would be allocated to develop service capacity in "non-mental health settings," i.e. foster care, primary care, criminal justice settings and head start.
- A \$9 million increase to the HUD Section 811 (to provide community-based residences for people with severe disabilities) to bring the total to \$211 million.
- A \$180 million increase to the McKinney Homelessness Assistance program to bring it to \$1.2 billion.

To view the complete text of the President's budget proposal, visit his website at www.whitehouse.gov. □

Charter goes belly up

On February 16th the largest psychiatric hospital chain in the nation announced that it was seeking to restructure its operations under Chapter 11 of the federal bankruptcy code. As part of the announcement, Charter indicated that it would sell 37 hospitals. Charter officials made assurances that no services will be disrupted during the negotiations with COPI Healthcare, a wholly owned subsidiary of Charter majority owner Crescent Operating Inc. □

Maximus reeling from discrimination complaints

Mandatory Medicaid managed care enrollment broker Maximus is in danger of losing \$103 million in New York City government contracts as a result of numerous discrimination complaints filed with the federal Equal Opportunity Employment Commission (EEOC). Maximus officials acknowledge that eight EEOC complaints have been filed alleging racial and gender discrimination and allegations that welfare recipients are being mistreated.

Mike Skrak, spokesman for City Comptroller Alan Hevesi indicated that the \$103 million recently awarded contract, one of 17 awarded by negotiated acquisition by the Mayor's office last week, may be sent back for reconsideration. Although the Mayor has full authority to award the contracts, vendors are unable to draw down funds until approved by the Comptroller. According to Skrak, "(Maximus) has to be sweating a little bit." □

Counties carry Kendra's costs

A State Supreme Court judge ruled this week that local county governments, and not hospitals or other providers that file Kendra's Law petitions, are responsible for the costs of services mandated under involuntary outpatient commitment orders.

Orange County attempted to avoid responsibility for the costs of the court-ordered treatment plan that resulted after a hospital (Arden Hill Hospital in Goshen) brought an application for an order requiring a patient to accept mandatory outpatient treatment.

Supreme Court Justice Andrew P. Bivona found Orange County's argument without merit and claimed that the suggestion that the New York State Legislature intended that psychiatrists, parole or probation officers should have a financial obligation because they may bring petitions "borders on the frivolous."

Orange County plans to appeal. □

HHC online

The New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation has ventured into cyberspace for the first time. The website, which contains information about HHC facilities and services, can be reached through the government links on The Coalition's website at www.cvmha.org. □

More uninsured in Queens

A report recently released by the Commonwealth Fund, *Five Boroughs, Common Problems: The Uninsured in New York City*, indicates that 28% of City residents aged 18-64 lack health care coverage of any kind. That is 50% higher than the rest of the State or nation. New York City accounts for 41% of the State's population and 60% of its uninsured. Only 15% of Staten Islanders lack insurance, while in Queens, 1 in 3 residents is without insurance. In Manhattan slightly less than 1 in 4 lacks coverage while in Brooklyn and The Bronx 29% have no insurance. 70% of uninsured New Yorkers live in households with at least one worker and nearly one-third work full time themselves.

To view more complete study results, visit the Commonwealth Fund online at www.cmf.org. □

Labor Department gets disability head

On February 7, 2000 the federal Department of Labor (DOL) announced, as part of their FY 2001 Budget presentation, the creation of a new Assistant Secretary for Disability and Employment Policy.

As DOL takes a larger role in helping people with disabilities find and maintain employment, advocates welcome the chance to see responsibility for the implementation of the new Workforce Investment Act and the Work Incentives Improvement Act legislation consolidated within one DOL office.

New York State may wish to consider this model to ensure a coordinated State policy. □

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— Help Wanted —

Member Notes

Brooklyn Psychiatric Center's dual diagnosis outpatient program Clearway has moved into its permanent home. The program, now located at 44 Court Street in downtown Brooklyn, serves clients over 12 years of age with co-occurring psychiatric and addictive disorders. For more information about the program, contact Elaine Schechtel, A.C. S.W. at (718) 855-9890. □

The **New Hope Guild** Child and Adolescent Therapy Training Program is hosting a full-day seminar entitled Children of Disrupted Connections on Sunday, February 27th at New York University School of Law. The conference will feature Erna and Robert Furman and Arietta Slade. The cost is \$130. For more information contact Karen Cadwalader at (718) 998-2240. □

New York Work Exchange, a project of **The Coalition** seeks an Administrative Assistant. Requires a very high level of computer literacy, exceptional writing and communication skills, excellent analytic abilities and good interpersonal skills. Must be well organized and be able to manage a variety of simultaneous tasks and projects. No experience necessary but be prepared to provide wrap-around support. Salary commensurate with experience. Send resume with cover letter to Norman Council, 120 West 57th Street #1014, NYC 10019. □

The **Brooklyn Bureau of Community Service** in New York City is seeking a Director of Foundation and Government Funding. The outstanding candidate will be a team player and bring demonstrated skills in communication, critical thinking, conceptualization of social service programs and supervision. Successful experience in managing ambitious public and foundation grant-seeking required. Interested candidates should forward resumes to Eva Toth, DRG, 104 East 40th Street, Suite 304, NY, NY 10016, FAX (212) 983-1687 or e-mail etoth@drgnyc.com. □

Volunteers of America seeks Director of Mental Health Programs with MA in human services clinical discipline & 5+ yrs. exp. incl. quality assurance. Will implement & assess program models, train & evaluate staff, and represent agency in community mtgs./events. Competitive salary/benefits & exc. Opportunities for growth. Please send resume & salary history to Human Resources Dept. - MHP, 340 W. 85th St., NY, NY 10024. □

Weston United Community Renewal seeks Art Gallery Manager; innovative & inspired self-starter w/retail & art gallery exp. to take charge of new venture w/ non-profit mental health agency in Harlem. Will have opportunity to build from ground up & be involved in all aspects of operations. College degree w/related exp. Supervisory skills, computer lit.; 30K w/benefits. Fax resume to: Joseph Wong, Human Resources Manager, (212) 316-0789. □

Service Program for Older People (SPOP) seeks Development Assistant P/T. Highly organized, detail-oriented person to assist Development Dir. in fundraising incl.: donor acknowledgments, research, report prep., database maintenance & gen. admin. support. Req. strong writing skills & word processing exp. Flexible days/hours. \$15/hr.; 12 hrs/wk. Fax or mail resumes to D. Adler, SPOP, 188 West 88th St., NY, NY 10024. Fax: (212) 787-1230. No calls. □

Weston United Community Renewal seeks ESL & GED Teacher P/T. Should have BA in English or related field. Resp. include setting up curriculum for Span. Speaking Clubhouse members to achieve a GED or increase their proficiency in Eng. 20 hrs./wk. Must be fluent in Spanish. Mental health & MICA exp. +, but not necessary. Computer lit. \$15/hr. Fax resume to: Joseph Wong, Human Resources Manager, (212) 316-0789. □

Jewish Association of Services for the Aged seeks PT Registered Nurse to work w/ geriatric pop. ½ day per week. Clinic & home visits req. Resp. include medication management & supervision, patient evaluations & patient education. Geriatric and/or psychiatric exp. helpful. Flexible hours. Exc. consultant rate. Send resume to Judi Gordon, JASA, 2488 Grand Concourse, Bronx, NY 10458 or fax to (718) 733-7622. □

Upcoming Events

February 21	President's Day — Coalition closed
February 22	TOP meeting for current NYC users at FPWA
February 24	Membership meeting at CVMHA
February 25	PLC: NCQA 2000 and You at CSS
February 28	MICA Committee at The Bridge
March 7	PLC: Federal and State Laws Which Impact on Providers in Managed Care at CSS
March 9	Finance Committee at CVMHA Executive Committee at CVMHA
March 23	Membership meeting at CVMHA
March 24	PLC: Time Effective Treatment for Children, Adolescents and Families at CSS
March 27	MICA Committee at The Bridge
June 15	Mental Health Awards at Pfizer