



# Coalition Briefs

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

## Judge orders NYC to do prison discharge planning

On July 12, 2000 Manhattan Supreme Court Justice Richard F. Braun ordered New York City prisons to craft appropriate discharge plans for prisoners who receive mental health treatment while incarcerated. The temporary injunction, handed down in the case of Brad H. v. City of New York, indicates that the Mental Hygiene Law implies an individual right to sue if adequate discharge planning is denied. Justice Braun also determined that the plaintiff class, those who have received treatment for mental illness in City jails more than once or twice, could suffer irreparable harm if they were forced to wait until the conclusion of the lawsuit before receiving discharge plans. The decision is expected to affect about 25,000 people per year who receive mental health care in City jails.

The City, citing the increased costs of discharge planning, has indicated that it will appeal the Judge's ruling.©

## Incomplete COLA

### *DOH funded mental health programs to miss out*

The mental health community welcomed the news that a 1.5% COLA for community-based mental health programs was included in the New York State Budget for fiscal year 2001. It was originally believed that the COLA covered all mental health programs, unfortunately, we have recently learned that it does not.

Through conversations with fiscal staff at the Assembly, Senate, Division of the Budget and the Office of Mental Health (OMH), we have confirmed that the COLA will not be applied to mental health programs funded through the Department of Health (DOH). This is in contrast to the COLA allocation in the fiscal year 1999 budget which applied to all programs funded through both OMH and DOH.

All programs will, however, receive a COLA on net-deficit-financing and COPS revenue in the OMH budget. Providers who are reimbursed through DOH should be very careful in planning their fiscal agenda to account for this variance in the COLA in the current State budget.

The Coalition recognizes that this is of serious concern to mental health care providers and we are engaged in advocacy efforts to see what, if anything, can be done to remedy this problem.©

## MTA is in the way

On July 17, 2000 the decade-and-a-half-long struggle to end discrimination on the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) against people with psychiatric disabilities should have ended. The legislature passed a loophole-free bill that the Governor signed into law directing the MTA

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## SAMHSA study shows shrinking spending

An analysis of health care spending trends by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment and Center for Mental Health Services indicates that behavioral health care spending is shrinking as a percentage of total health care spending. The study, *National Expenditures for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment, 1997*, released on July 18<sup>th</sup>, examined spending trends for the decade beginning in 1987. The study found that in 1997 total spending on mental health ser-

vices totaled \$73.4 billion, while substance abuse treatment spending nationwide amounted to \$11.9 billion. Although the spending is substantial, the study had some very disturbing findings.

- As a percentage of total health care spending, behavioral health care decreased from 8.8% in 1987 to only 7.8% in 1997.
- Adjusted for inflation behavioral health care spending grew by 3.7% per year while health care spending in general increased at a rate of 5% per year.
- Substance abuse services

spending by private insurers actually dropped by .6% per year.

- Mental health services spending by private insurers rose 4.7% annually, compared with a 5.4% increase for all health care.
- The public sector took on more of the financial burden of behavioral health care treatment, now covering nearly two-thirds of substance abuse and over half of mental health care.

Complete copies of the report are available on the SAMHSA website, accessible through [www.cvmha.org](http://www.cvmha.org).©

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## MTA half fare

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to extend a half-fare benefit to S.S.I. recipients with psychiatric disabilities. The MTA has, however, managed to make what should be a simple application process into a convoluted mess.

In addition to claiming on the application form that the MTA is entitled to discontinue the program without notice (it is not), the application requires physicians to attest to the S.S.I. eligibility of the applicant, despite the requirement to attach an original, valid S.S.I. eligibility letter. Physicians are asked to verify that the applicant cannot "engage in any other substantial gainful work which exists in the national economy, regardless of whether such work exists in the immediate area in which the person lives or whether a specific job vacancy exists, or whether the person would be hired if he/she applied for work." Nothing in the Half Fare Fairness Law says anything about physicians making determinations about the national job market.

In order to help consumers and their clinicians navigate through the application process, The Coalition, with the help of the Advocacy Center at **Fountain House**, has produced brief instruction sheets for applicants and their physicians. Coalition members should have received the instruction sheets. Others who want copies should contact Joshua Rubin at ext. 102 or [jfrubin@cvmha.org](mailto:jfrubin@cvmha.org). ©

## Our mistake...

In the previous issue of *Coalition Briefs* (Sweet Sixteen, June 29, 2000) we misspelled Jose Orengo's name. Our apologies to Mr. Orengo. ©



## TWWIA money available

The deadline is quickly approaching for organizations to apply for a grant opportunity provided by the Social Security Administration (SSA) through the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Act of 1999. SSA will be awarding "one or more cooperative agreements to entities in every State and US Territory to provide benefits planning and assistance services and conduct outreach to all SSA disability beneficiaries (including transition-to-work aged youth) [sic], to enable them to make informed choices about work."

This opportunity is one of a series of grants from SSA and Department of Labor to provide community-based information on the rules affecting employment for SSI and SSDI recipients. Cooperative agreement awards for the Benefits Planning, Assistance, and Outreach Program will

range from \$50,000 to \$300,000 per fiscal year. It is expected that some awards will be issued by the end of fiscal year 2000 and more will be awarded in early 2001.

Eligible applicants are any state or local government, public or private organization, nonprofit or for-profit agency that is qualified to provide benefits planning, assistance and outreach to individuals with disabilities who receive SSI and or SSDI, within a specified geographical area.

Those not eligible are listed as any individual; SSA Field Offices; any state agency administering the State Medicaid program under title XIX of the Act; any organization described in 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue code of 1968 that engages in lobbying; and any entity that has a conflict of interest to be determined by the Commissioner.

Information, instructions and guidelines regarding this grant can be found on links from the Social Security Administration website, which can be reached through [www.cvmha.org](http://www.cvmha.org). Applications must be mailed or delivered by July 31, 2000. ©

## Robert Wood Johnson matches local grants

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Local Initiative Funding Partners Program has \$7,000,000 available to match grants by local grantmakers in support of community-based projects that focus on at-risk and underserved populations. Support will be given to projects that (1) assure access to basic health care, (2) improve care for people with chronic health conditions or (3) reduce the social, personal and economic harm caused by substance abuse. Grants range from \$50,000 to \$500,000. Application deadlines are August 1, 2000 for Stage I and December 5, 2000 for Stage II. For more information, visit the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation home page, accessible through [www.cvmha.org](http://www.cvmha.org). ©

## Movin' out

For more than three years Ed Blatt has been the Executive Director of the Association for Community Living. He is now leaving for a position at IBM marketing software to human services providers. IBM's gain is the mental health community's loss. Good luck Ed. ©

## HMOs not following up

According to the July 19<sup>th</sup> *Crain's Health Pulse Extra* New York is lagging behind the rest of the nation in follow-ups after a hospitalization for mental illness for HMO members. Nationwide, 67% of HMO members discharged from a psychiatric hospital stay are seen by an outpatient mental health provider within 30 days; in New York only 60% are. Vytra and Cigna lead the pack with 67% and 66% respectively. Oxford trails the field; only 39% of their members receive treatment within 30 days of discharge. ©

# Coalition Briefs

— Help Wanted —

## UWNYC members

After an extensive review of The Coalition's work by United Way volunteers, United Way of New York City has classified The Coalition as a Coordinating Group and granted us four-year membership in the United Way. We are grateful for the confidence United Way of New York City has shown in us and for the generous grant that supports our work. ©

**The New York Society for the Deaf** is seeking the following positions. All positions require fluency in American Sign Language. Excellent benefits. Salary commensurate w/experience. Mental Health Supervisor CSW preferred. Will consider related field w/clinical licensure. Staff supervision & administrative responsibilities include intake coordination, chart compliance and special projects. Supervisory experience required; Mental Health Therapist CSW preferred. Will consider MA in related field. 1 year counseling experience; Director of Substance Abuse Treatment Program responsible for operation of program, staff supervision, intake coordination, chart compliance, and budgets. CSW or CASAC required. Must have supervisory experience; Residential Counselors F/T & P/T. Diploma or GED required. Provide assistance to individuals so they may become more independent; Staff Interpreter F/T, RID Certified a plus; Interpreter Coordinator BA in human services preferred, will consider Diploma or GED; Accountant BA required in accounting w/minimum 3 yrs. work experience; Administrative Assistant BA/BS preferred. Computer skills required. American Sign Language Instructors NYC & Long Island, ASLTA certified a plus. Send letter of intent and resume to: **New York Society for the Deaf/Personnel Dept.**, 817 Broadway, 7th Fl., NYC, NY 10003. FAX (212) 777-5740. ©

**Weston United Community Renewal** seeks Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for new program in E. Harlem. MA in vocational rehabilitation w/min. 2 yrs. exp. in related field. Resp. includes interviewing, evaluating & developing rehab plan for mentally ill population. Assess skills & develop program for voc. training & placement. Knowledge of MICA pop. & bi-lingual +. Computer literate. Competitive salary w/benefits. Fax resume to: Joseph Wong, HR Manager (212) 316-0789. ©

**Safe Horizon** seeks FT & PT Therapists & FT Clinical Director w/exp. to work in trauma-centered, NYS licensed Mental Health Clinic in downtown Brooklyn. CSW req. & bi-lingual pref. Fax resume, cover letter & salary req. to N. Arnow @ (212) 577-3897. ©

**The Coalition of Voluntary Mental Health Agencies**, the umbrella advocacy organization of New York City's mental health community, representing over 100 nonprofit community-based mental health agencies, seeks a bright, high-energy public policy analyst and advocate to help **The Coalition** accomplish its organizational and programmatic objectives.

The successful candidate will analyze State and City budgets, coordinate member and Board committees, critically evaluate policy initiatives and organize The Coalition's constituencies for public information and advocacy campaigns.

Applicants should have excellent persuasive and analytical writing skills, be computer literate, possess a comfort with numbers, be organized, deadline focused, capable of multi-tasking and possess a collegial manner and outlook.

Substantive expertise in one or more of the following policy arenas is a plus: mental health, managed care, substance dependence and abuse, healthcare, housing.

Preference will be awarded to candidates with an advanced degree in mental health, social work, law, and public/nonprofit administration and policy.

**The Coalition** is an affirmative action employer. Qualified candidates living with mental illness are encouraged to apply as are those of every race, ethnicity and creed. Bilingual a plus.

Send resume and salary requirements to Director of Administration, **The Coalition**, 90 Broad Street, New York, NY 10004. ©

## Upcoming Events

July 25 Special Executive Committee at CVMHA  
November 15 Big Apple Circus