



Coalition Briefs

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

Coalition helps break bureaucratic logjam

The New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) reimburses some mental health care providers for the cost of the subway tokens they provide to their Medicaid eligible clients. These tokens, provided through the Facility Reimbursement Program, help providers increase attendance levels and contribute to improved outcomes.

Unfortunately, HRA has had a policy of pre-auditing transportation reimbursements. This has caused payment delays from HRA of many months, resulting in serious cash flow problems for agencies that often spend over a thousand dollars a week on Medicaid reimbursable transportation costs.

Responding to a membership request The Coalition's Joshua Rubin contacted the Medicaid Transportation Division at HRA to seek a remedy. When Transportation Director Phillip B. Corwin and his staff became aware of the significance of the problem, they acted rapidly and instituted a policy change. On May 12th Mr. Corwin informed program participants that HRA would immediately change to a post-audit review, thus ending the long wait for reimbursement. The backlog was quickly repaid and one more bureaucratic bottleneck was unclogged. ©

CHP enrollment in NY slows but still leads nation

According to a report released by the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, New York's Child Health Plus program grew by 57% from December 1998 to December 1999. This is in comparison to a national average enrollment increase of 112%. New York fared much better than some states (Texas' enrollment decreased 18%), and much worse than others (West Virginia and Kentucky both saw increases of over 2,400%).

Part of the reason for the enrollment increase lag is that New York has

Prompt pay problems?

In 1998, legislation took effect that requires insurance companies and managed care providers to make prompt payment of claims and bills within 45 days of receipt or otherwise face interest and fines (sanctions) related to the claim. This is known as the prompt payment law. Many agencies are experiencing dilatory payment of patient claims and bills submitted to HMOs, insurance companies, and other health care payers. This has become a major concern to our membership because long delays adversely impact cash flow and budget planning processes.

Since some members have indicated that they are not receiving prompt payment within the 45 day requirement under the law, The Coalition will be conducting a survey to determine the extent to which members are not being promptly paid and what action The Coalition can take concerning this issue. In circumstances where a member has a valid prompt payment claim and prevails, it is possible that a claimant may receive a substantial monetary award in addition to the payment due. As a matter of justice, fair play, and law, our members are entitled to be paid on time after services have been rendered.

Along with the survey we will be providing members with information on how to issue a complaint with the New York Department of Insurance, although we hope to be able to address this issue systemically so that our member agencies need not undertake individual actions. Please look for the upcoming survey and information on this matter. If you are having any problems concerning prompt payment, or have any questions, please contact Edward Smith at extension 103. ©

Membership meeting

The Coalition's first membership meeting of the fall will be held on Thursday, September 28th at 3:30 p.m. in the conference room at The Coalition's new offices at 90 Broad Street in Manhattan. The meeting will focus on what the future of the mental health system will look like in the absence of mental health Special Needs Plans. All Coalition members are encouraged to attend. ©

New SSI work rules proposed

The United States Social Services Administration has published proposed new work rules. The August 11th Social Security register contains a proposed rule that would, among other things, automatically adjust the substantial gainful employment (SGA) level to keep pace with increases in the national average wage index. Other changes in the proposed rule would:

- Eliminate the "secondary" SGA level;
- Increase from \$200 to \$530 the minimum amount of monthly earnings that shows that a person has performed "services" during a trial work period and automatically adjust the amount annually;

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued on page 3)

Coalition Briefs



Community-based mental health agencies throughout the city should expect to receive a brief survey from the New York Work Exchange by the end of the month. The one-page survey asks agencies for a brief description of vocational services provided, as well as other program services. This survey will identify existing agencies and collect information on types of services currently provided.

This information will help the New York Work Exchange begin to create a database that will assist the team in understanding the vocational resources available in the community as well as the ongoing

needs of the programs. The survey will only take a minute or two to fill out and should be faxed to the New York Work Exchange at (212) 742-2132, or mailed to 90 Broad Street. Please include program brochures or information. If you do not receive the survey or have any questions, please call Richard Chimelis at (212) 742-1122 ext. 210.

On a related note, staff of the Work Exchange have been visiting and touring programs to see first-hand the variety of employment services provided. The hospitality, time and effort put forth by the agencies we have visited has been tremendous. If your agency has an effective vocational model that you think staff of the New York Work Exchange should see, please contact Shaleigh Tice at (212)742-1122 ext. 212. We look forward to visiting and learning about more agencies in the future.©

Ombuds-services available

The Coalition wants to remind everybody about the availability of managed care ombuds-services. The Coalition, in collaboration with the Mental Health Project of the Urban Justice Center, created the Mental Health Managed Care Consumer Advocacy and Ombudsprogram in order to offer a wide range of assistance on managed care issues to all members of the mental health community. In addition, the Urban Justice Center is a member of MCCAP (Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program), a city-wide network of CBOs offering free, independent, and confidential information, advice, and assistance on managed care issues. The Mental Health Managed Care Consumer Advocacy at the Urban Justice Center provides advice, dispute resolution, legal representation as well as educational materials and training workshops. For immediate assistance or for more information about scheduling a free training workshop, please call Andrea Ryan at the Urban Justice Center at (646) 602-5663 (Please note the new phone number!).©

County health info online

The United States Department of Health and Human Services has launched a new public education website with details about the health status of over 3,000 counties from 1988 to 1998. The Community Health Status Indicators Project provides details of important public health indicators, life expectancy, child fatality, cancer rates and some mental health statistics.

The site is accessible through the government links page of The Coalition's website at www.cvmha.org ©

SAMHSA video available

On August 10th the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Center for Mental Health Services announced the release of a new video designed to help improve communication between providers of mental health services and the consumers they serve. The 18-minute video, *Partners in Recovery: Creating Successful Practitioner-Consumer Alliances*, was created through a contract with the National Depressive and Manic-Depressive Association.

Partners is targeted at mental health care providers, and aims to stimulate re-evaluations of assumptions and perceptions in an effort to increase effective communication between consumers and their care providers.

The free video also comes with a self-evaluation insert and a list of resources for viewers. Free copies of the video can be ordered from SAMHSA by calling (800) 789-2647.©

Member Notes

The New York Service Program for Older People, Inc. (SPOP) will be offering the following Educational Seminars on Older Adults and Mental Health:

- Oct 25th: Treatment Approaches for Older Adults with Clinical Depression
- Jan 17th: Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication in Dementia Care
- Mar 15th: Working with Bereavement Issues in a Group Setting
- May 16th: Cultural Competence in the Therapeutic Process

The Seminars are offered Free of Charge. They are held on Wednesdays from 9:30-11:00am at SPOP, 188 West 88th Street. Space is limited. Advance registration by phone is required. To register, or to request a flyer, please call 212-787-7120, ext. 111.©

Free MHEP conference

On September 7th the Mental Health Empowerment Project will host their 2000 Annual Regional Conference in New York City. The Conference, *Taking the Time to Care for Yourself* will be held at Metropolitan Hospital's Draper Hall (1st Avenue between 99th and 100th) from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. The conference is free. Lunch and closing refreshments will be provided. For more information or to register, call Iveth at (800) 643-7462. Capacity is limited so RSVP soon.©

Coalition Briefs

CHP enrollment

(Continued from page 1)

had a program to insure uninsured children for much longer than the federal program has been in place (since 1998). In December of 1998 New York already had over 270,000 children enrolled, by a long way more than any other state has enrolled even today. California has the second largest enrollment at 202,514 in December 1999 compared with New York's 452,522. There are still, however, an estimated 500,000 uninsured children in New York. ©

What the New York Post wouldn't print

On July 21st the New York Post published a Steve Dunleavy column that was inflammatory and discriminatory. We were so disturbed by his column that we wrote a letter to the editor. Sadly, the Post did not see fit to publish the letter, so we will:

To the Editor, The New York Post:

Steve Dunleavy has proposed locking up hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers (Liberals must be crazy not to put away mentally ill, 7.21.00, p. 5), presumably to protect the public from them. Despite the vast preponderance of evidence that shows that the great majority of people with mental illness can and do live productive, taxpaying, voting (and completely nonviolent) lives in the community, Dunleavy chose to leap to conclusions about two crimes committed and declare a portion of our community guilty as a whole.

In addition to the obviously absurd conclusion that an enormous percentage of our citizens should be locked up as a preventative measure, (mental illnesses are more common than cancer, diabetes, or heart disease) Dunleavy fans the flames of ignorance with blatantly bigoted language. If Dunleavy presented the editorial staff with a column using derogatory terms for any other minority group, I can only presume that you would refuse to print it. Why is your editorial policy different when it comes to people with mental illness?

Joshua Rubin, Program Associate ©

Prozac patent shortened

A federal appeals court ruled on August 9th that Eli Lilly can extend its patent on the world's top-selling antidepressant Prozac for only one more year until August 2001, two years fewer than had been expected. Barr Laboratories, which plans to sell a generic version of the drug, brought a suit in 1996 arguing that Lilly was holding two patents on the same drug.

The result of this decision, if it is not overturned (Lilly plans to appeal), is that the 38 million users of Prozac could see their costs for the drug cut by more than two-thirds (currently about \$90 per month in New York). Lilly, which sold \$2.6 billion of Prozac last year saw its stock price drop thirty percent to \$76 when the word hit Wall Street. Barr stock, on the other hand, rose 66 percent to \$76. ©

Work rules

(Continued from page 1)

- Increase the maximum monthly (from \$400 to \$1,290) and yearly (from \$1,6250 to \$5,200) Student Earned Income Exclusion amounts and adjust them automatically each year.

SSA has proposed these changes "as part of our efforts to encourage individuals with disabilities to test their ability to work and keep working. We expect that these changes will provide greater incentives for many beneficiaries to attempt to work or, if already working, to continue to work or increase their work effort."

SSA is accepting public comments on the proposed rules until October 10, 2000. The complete text of the proposed rule is available at http://www.ssa.gov/regulations/rin0960_af12.htm. Questions can be directed to Sheri Saltzberg at (212) 742-1122 x.204 or ssaltzberg@nyworkexchange.org. ©

Torrey to speak

On Tuesday, September 12th Dr. E. Fuller Torrey will be speaking at a free NAMI/ NYC sponsored event. The event will take place at 6:30 p.m. at the Mt. Sinai Hospital Department of Psychiatry-Annenberg Building, Goldwurm Auditorium at Madison Avenue and 98th Street. Call (212) 684-3264 for more information. ©

Upcoming Events

- September 4 Labor Day – Coalition closed
- September 14 Finance Committee at The Coalition
- Executive Committee at The Coalition
- September 18 InfoScriber demonstration at The Coalition
- September 26 PLC: Corporate Compliance at The Coalition
- September 28 Membership meeting at The Coalition
- November 15 Big Apple Circus**

*PLC = Professional Learning Center



Save the Date!!!

The Coalition will host the Big Apple Circus on Wednesday, November 15, 2000 at 6:30 p.m.

Don't be left out in the cold!



Coalition Briefs

— Help Wanted —

Safe Horizon seeks Clinical Director w/experience to work in trauma-centered, New York State licensed Mental Health Clinic in downtown Brooklyn. CSW or licensed psychologist, bi-lingual pref. Fax resume, cover letter & salary req. to N. Arnov @ (212) 577-3897. ©

The Mental Health Project of the Urban Justice Center (MHP) is seeking to hire a Discharge Planning Advocate. The role of the Advocate is to ensure that homeless patients on psychiatric wards receive appropriate discharge plans as outlined under State Law. The Advocate's responsibilities are as follows: 1) to assess each client's needs, goals and objectives with respect to discharge; 2) to create, with the client, a reasonable plan that will enable him or her to achieve stability in the community; 3) to serve as the client's discharge planning advocate and representative; 4) to work closely with the hospital staff to negotiate and effectuate each client's discharge plans; 5) to generate ongoing referrals for the project; and 6) to educate providers and consumers about the program through community presentations.

Candidates must have at least one year of experience working with mentally ill individuals, preferably individuals who are homeless. A bachelor's degree is required for this position, although an MSW degree would strengthen a candidate's application. The candidate must possess strong clinical skills, should be well-organized, have excellent writing and public speaking skills.

The MHP is made up of an interdisciplinary team of attorneys and social work staff that advocates on behalf of homeless mentally ill individuals to prevent the revolving door of homelessness, hospitalization and incarceration. All applicants should be highly motivated, committed to securing the rights of people with mental illness, and willing to work with a team of advocates engaged in direct service work, community education and mental health policy advocacy. Applicants of color, mental health recipients, and those with a proficiency in Spanish are strongly encouraged to apply.

This position requires a great deal of sensitivity to client needs as well as diplomacy and professionalism. The Advocate must possess strong advocacy skills, while at the same time must understand how to diffuse conflict and facilitate cooperation. In addition, he or she must be aware of and sensitive to the multifaceted problems and issues facing New York City's homeless mentally ill population, from lack of adequate housing options and the hurdles many confront obtaining public benefits, to challenges our clients face with chemical dependency and their needs while moving towards psychiatric rehabilitation and recovery. (Salary range: \$26,000-35,000, D.O.E. Flex-time and part-time arrangements are possible.)

Letters of interest and resumes should be sent to the following: Ray Brescia, c/o Urban Justice Center, 666 Broadway, 10th Floor, New York, N.Y. 10012 or fax: (212) 533-4598. Please e-mail inquiries to rbrescia@urbanjustice.org. ©

Venture House seeks Part-Time Teacher who is highly motivated and energetic to teach adults w/ psychiatric disabilities as part of an in-house education service in a work-focused program in Jamaica, Queens. Will work w/small groups to assess learning needs, prepare individuals for GEDs and college. MA in Education & exp. w/ teaching adults req. Weekday & Sat. afternoon position. Competitive salary. Please fax resume to: R. Schwartz, (718) 658-7201. ©

Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services, Inc. seeks Director of Human Resources to oversee/manage most aspects of recruitment, compensation, performance evaluation and benefits administration. Will also develop a Personnel Policy & Procedures Manual and implement a new HRIS system. Must have 5+yrs. of senior personnel management exp. & demonstrated competence in recruitment as well as employee relations programming. Exp. & knowledge in the areas of salary & benefits; knowledge of federal & state labor laws & regs. Familiarity w/computerized benefits & personnel management systems. Strong interpersonal and decision-making skills. HR exp. in a nonprofit. Competitive salary commensurate w/qualifications & exp. Exc. benefits. EOE. Contact Ellen Godow, Exec. Search Consultant or Jennifer Lichtman, Recruitment Associate, DRG, 104 E. 40th St., Ste. 304, NY, NY 10016. Tel: (212) 983-1600; Fax: (212) 983-1687. Email: jlichtman@drgnyc.com. ©

Weston United Community Renewal seeks F/T Case Manager. Resp. include: admission/discharge process, assist consumers, ensure ADL services performed by counselors, conduct groups & participate in team mtgs. Knowledge of MICA/homeless pop. a +. BA in human services pref. and 2 yrs. exp. Exc. opportunity for grad students. Good computer & writing skills. Salary \$26,500 w/benefits. Fax resume to: Joseph Wong, HR Manager (212) 316-0789. ©

Weston United Community Renewal seeks Social Worker. MSW w/psychiatric & MICA exp. Will work w/casework staff, coordinate intake, referrals & interviews, interface w/community agencies, & provide direct clinical services to chronically mentally ill pop. Knowledge of Dept. of Mental Health compliance standards a + but not necessary. Computer literate. Competitive salary & benefits. New grads encouraged to apply. Fax resume to: Joseph Wong, HR Manager (212) 316-0789. ©