



Coalition Briefs

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

Coalition decries CSEA's ad campaign

The Civil Service Employees Associated (CSEA), a union representing some state psychiatric hospital workers, has begun a campaign to prevent the closing of two state-run facilities by utilizing a base, vicious campaign that paints people with mental illnesses as violent drug users who frequently attack their caretakers.

"These kinds of stereotypes perpetuate the myth that people with mental illnesses are a danger to the community and that the public is only safe when those who suffer from mental illnesses are sequestered in secure facilities with padded walls," said Phillip A. Saperia, Executive Director of The Coalition. "This is a patent distortion of the truth."

Indeed, according to the Surgeon General's 1999 Report on Mental Health more than 20% of all people will suffer from a serious mental illness at some point in their life. "The CSEA should be ashamed if itself," Saperia added. "They say in their ad

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The Coalition and Council go to Albany

On February 6th Coalition members and staff made the annual pilgrimage to Albany to meet with legislators in order to educate legislators and executive staff about the needs of the community mental health sector. Members of our partner agency, the New York State Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare, joined the cooperative effort. This year, however, was significantly different than previous years. In the words of Government Relations Chair Jonas Waizer of **F.E.G.S.**, "Instead of starting at the bottom of the mountain and struggling to get up as we do most years, this year we are two-thirds of the way up at the beginning of the process."

Indeed, the governor recently proposed a fortification of the base of the community mental health sector with a 2.5% COLA for each of the next three years and a 10% increase to the Medicaid fee. These are proposals for which The Coalition has fought long and hard. But, as our intrepid travelers discovered while in Albany, the Jordan is deep and wide and we have not yet reached the Promised Land.

In a series of meetings that lasted most of the day, Coalition and Council members met with a wide variety of representatives. These included Senator Libous, Senator Stafford's office, Speaker Silver's office, Assemblyman Luster, Ways and Means Committee staff, and Program and Council Office staff— not to mention Governor's office staff and OMH officials. In all, it was a very busy day.

The good news is that the COLA message has finally taken root; Albany is in total agreement that the infrastructure of the community mental health system is in dire straits and needs to be repaired. The bad news is that the agreement stops there. The COLA and the fee-increase are controversial because the executive has linked their funding to the closing of the Middletown and Hutchings Psychiatric centers. Unions strongly oppose these closings.

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Mayor's budget harsh but not unusual

Mayor Giuliani last week released his financial plan for New York City. This is the first of many parts of the City's budget process that will culminate with the passage of the budget sometime in the late spring.

Of particular interest to the Mental Health community is the fact that Mayor Giuliani has recommended cuts in mental health to the tune of more than \$5 million— \$1.1 of which is for the remainder of the current fiscal year. Although these cuts are dramatic and substantial, they are not cause of

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Coalition joins the Coalition

The Coalition of Voluntary Mental Health Agencies has joined the New York City Coalition on the Continuum of Care (NYC-CCoC), a diverse group of agencies that advocate for or provide services to the homeless. Part of the McKinney Act, the Continuum

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Mental Health Managed Care Consumer Advocacy and Ombudsprogram Managed Care Hotline (646) 602-5675

Information about managed care for Medicaid, Medicare and other insurance including exemptions/exclusions, disenrollments, access to care, and grievances. Advice, dispute resolution, representation at Fair Hearings and other administrative hearings as well as educational materials and training seminars. For immediate assistance on managed care issues or to receive a free copy of our pamphlet, *Medicaid Managed Care Health Plans: A Fact Sheet for the Mental Health Community*, please call our Managed Care Hotline at (646) 602-5675.

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Conference series

The case conference is a time-honored method for training and supervising medical personnel in academic settings. The New York Work Exchange is bringing this time-honored tradition to community-based organizations to promote the integration of vocational and clinical practices. The purpose of the case conferences is to provide an opportunity to develop a common language and understanding between clinicians and vocational staff. It will provide an opportunity for clinical staff to experience how to integrate vocational issues into their treatment, and for vocational staff to experience the value of clinical involvement.

Deborah Draving, Ph.D., joins the NY Work Exchange staff to lead this effort as Clinical Case Conference Coordinator. As a highly trained and seasoned clinician, she will work with program staff to select, write-up and present a case to a consultant invited to listen and comment on the issues presented. There are four possible formats for a case conference. Client confidentiality is a primary consideration and all cases will be presented with the involvement and/or consent of the consumer.

- Live Case Presentation– The treatment and vocational staff will first present the key clinical/vocation issues to be considered. The consultant will interview the client, significant others, and those involved in the individual's treatment. Case formulation and recommendations will be provided.
- Panel Presentation– Agency staff will present the history of

several individuals that share common vocational/clinical issues. The invited discussant will comment on the main themes presented and make recommendations.

- Treatment Team Presentation– Members of the host agency treatment team will provide the history and presenting vocational/clinical issues of an individual on their caseload. A question and answer period will be open to those in attendance. The consultant will provide the final case formulation and recommendations.
- Discussant Presentation– An expert in supported employment research is invited to present on several cases from his/her clinical research and experience. Discussion is invited from the audience.

Mt. Sinai will host the first case conference on March 6th from 10:00am to 11:30am. Agencies who are interested in attending or getting on the case conference series mailing list should contact Holly Kempner at 212-742-1122 x236 or email at hkempner@nyworkexchange.org. Those interested in participating as a host agency or as a presenter should contact Dr. Draving at (212) 742-1122x202 or email her at ddraving@nyworkexchange.org.

Grant alert

The Department of Labor seeks to award \$9.3 million in grants to organizations to provide employment and support services to Welfare-to-Work eligible individuals. Individual organizations will be awarded grants ranging from \$150,000 to \$1 million.

The Welfare-to-work program goals are to “move participants toward self-sufficiency through work preparation, job placement, job retention and post-employment services; and gain the participation of a variety of organizations, many of

which have not traditionally been involved in welfare-to-work programs, to work with employers and participants to meet these goals.”

Applicants must demonstrate coordination with local departments of social services, local workforce investment boards and other organizations that specialize in serving target populations. Letters of support from partner agencies must be included with all application submittals.

Letters of intent must be sent in by March 1, 2001. Completed proposals must be submitted by March 16, 2001. Questions and Answers about this proposal will be posted on the DOL website by February 14, 2001. The awards will be announced in May and successful bidders will be funded through July 1, 2002 with possible extensions.

The New York Work Exchange is available to provide consultation, editing and underwriting costs for grant writing services. If you would like to utilize these services or would like a copy of the RFP, please contact Shaleigh Tice at (212) 742-1122x238 or by email at stice@nyworkexchange.org.

Welcome aboard Dan

Dan Del Bene, CSW, has recently joined the NY Work Exchange as Program Manager of the division of Research and Program Development. For the past several years, Dan worked as the Associate Executive Director of Information Systems and Quality Assurance for The Bridge, Inc. Under his direction, Mr. Del Bene brought the Bridge, Inc. to its present status of a paperless clinical charting environment for all its clinical and residential programs. Prior to The Bridge, Dan worked as a member of a team of Columbia University researchers at the New York State Psychiatric Institute. He researched new therapies for affective disorders and worked on genetic epidemiology studies. He has been an adjunct faculty member at New York University Shirley M. Ehrenkranz School of Social Work for the last five years. Dan is currently heading the NY Work Exchange citywide survey of employment programs. We warmly welcome Dan to the team.©

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Luster Introduces Parity

Assemblyman Martin Luster announced on Monday that he will introduce legislation for Mental Health Parity. Long an important issue for The Coalition, Mental Health parity mandates that insurance companies cover mental illnesses and substance abuse disorders the same as physical illnesses.

Unfortunately, mental illnesses are treated differently by insurance companies who have vastly different coverage levels for physical and mental illnesses. 'Comprehensive' parity would eliminate insurance companies' ability to discriminate on any level— whether for dollar or service caps.

Last year, Parity bills passed in both the Assembly and the Senate, but both houses adjourned for the summer before they could agree on details of a joint bill. As a result, despite the fact that the bills were similar, there was no change in the law.

The Coalition commends Assemblyman Luster for introducing this legislation and looks forward to working with him to make Comprehensive Parity a reality. ©

CSEA ad campaign

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that 'good public policy cares for patients' rights' and I agree. But they then turn around and stigmatize the very community they purport to serve. It's just wrong." ©

Mayor

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alarm...yet.

Unfortunately, it has become commonplace for the Mayor to recommend substantial cuts such as these for mental health and a variety of other social service programs. The city council frequently will then 'buy back' the service cuts. While this rescues the programs, it nevertheless diverts efforts from needed service expansion.

This game of see-saw between the Council and the Mayor has been going on a long time. The Coalition is monitoring the situation and will continue to report on the developments as they occur. The real work will come when the Council begins holding the budget hearings and the final form of the budget begins to take shape.

For more information, contact David Bergman at dbergman@cvmha.org, or at x102.©

More Grants

On January 11, 2001, the U. S. Department of Commerce issued a Notice of Availability of Funds as part of its Technology Opportunities Program (TOP).

For those interested in applying, there are two primary ways of obtaining additional information. The Application Kit is available on-line (<http://www.nita.doc.gov/otiahome/top/>), or you can call (212) 482-2084.

Technical assistance workshops will be available on February 2 in Washington, DC. For information on other workshops and details for registering, see the web page. ©

HIPAA Presentation

The Professional Learning Center has engaged Robert Belfort, Esquire, from Kalkines, Arky, Zall & Bernstein LLP, to present on the HIPAA requirements. This law addresses financial administrative transactions, privacy, security and electronic transactions, and uniform data standards for client records to which behavioral healthcare organizations must adhere.

In his presentation, Mr. Belfort will cover:

- Purpose and Legislative History of HIPAA
- Security Rules

- Privacy Rules
- Relationship of HIPAA to State Laws
- Enforcement and Penalties
- Structuring a Compliance Initiative

This presentation is free to Coalition member agencies. A fee of \$25.00 is required for all other organizations, checks made payable to The Coalition. Please RSVP by e-mailing Patricia Gallo Goldstein at patgg@cvmha.org, or calling 212/742-1600x106.©

Upcoming Events

February 15-16	9:00 am	Anasazi Software Work Group
February 20	9:30 am	Professional Learning Center
February 22	3:30 pm	Coalition Membership Meeting
February 28	10:00 am	HIPAA Training

* All meetings at The Coalition unless otherwise stated.

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Albany trip

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Accordingly, each branch has a different idea about how to fund the COLA and the fee increase while avoiding the wrath of the Unions and local community interests. Most allege that the Executive has no clear reason for linking the increases to the closings and argue that the Executive has the power to close the beds and do the facility consolidations without any legislation. The savings could therefore be realized with no guarantee that the funds would be redirected to the community mental health sector. Many of the legislators were frustrated by OMH's lack of communication and wanted to see how these closings were part of OMH's overall strategy for the state's mental health system.

The Coalition, meanwhile, supports the concept of reinvestment—eliminating excess capacity in expensive state psychiatric centers and redirecting the funds to the community. The specifics of where that capacity may lay and how best to realize that potential is knowledge to which The Coalition is not privy. Regardless of where this excess capacity exists, the base of the community mental health system is crumbling and must be repaired.

The Coalition looks forward to working closely with the Senate, the Assembly, and the Executive to help forge a working plan to ensure that the infrastructure of community-based is repaired.

Special thanks to all who made the trek. We couldn't do it without you.©

UJC and WRN announce MH project

In conjunction with the Urban Justice Center's Mental Health Project, the Welfare Reform Network is announcing the creation of a Mental Health Subcommittee. This new initiative will develop advocacy opportunities around how welfare impacts the mental health community. The Mental Health Subcommittee will have their initial meeting on Tuesday, February 20th at 3:00 pm. The meeting will take place at the **Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies** at 281 Park Ave South in Room A. For more information, call (646) 602-5672.

The Mental Health Project has also developed an advocacy course for consumers that will begin in March. The course will teach consumers about basic advocacy skills and will provide further detail on welfare laws, SSI benefits, housing and legal issues, among other topics. These meetings will begin on Thursday, March 8 at 2:00pm. At the time of print, a location was not specified, but will likely be at the Urban Justice Center. Call the Urban Justice Center at (646) 602-5600 for more details.©

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of Care is a federal program administered and funded through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and provides services to the homeless. Localities receive an annual percentage of a nation-wide budget based on demonstrated need. Last year, New York City received \$85 million for this program, nearly 10% of the nation-wide budget.

The primary function of NYC-CCoC is to develop a local plan to address homeless needs. This includes the identification of gaps in the current service structure, as well as reviewing applications from service providers for funding. Targeted areas are all geared towards alleviating homelessness. Among the needs identified last year were shelters for homeless transgender individuals who were difficult to house in conventional settings.

NYC-CCoC will hear testimony in each borough of New York over the next six weeks, which will help to determine the priorities for the coming year. For more information, call David Bergman at x102.©

— Help Wanted —

Assistant Job Developer: **Weston United Community Renewal**, located in Harlem seeks full-time individual for bilingual program. Responsibilities include telemarketing and assisting employment specialist in job development and placement for the mentally ill. Also interacting with clients in skills training, resume writing and interview skills. Must work well with little supervision. Read and write Spanish. Experience with individuals with disabilities a plus. H.S. degree. Computer literate. Salary low 20s with benefits. Fax resume: (212) 316-0789.©

Save the Date

Tuesday June 5, 2001

5-8 pm

The Coalition of Voluntary Mental Health Agencies
Celebrates the 17th Annual Mental Health Awards
at Pfizer World Headquarters

For tickets and information,
call Judeth Podell at (212) 742-1600 x104.