



# Coalition Briefs

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

## "Anasazi is formidable," says SOMH

Last year The Coalition, assisted by a very able MIS Committee and several professional consultants, chose Anasazi Software as the "vendor of choice" for mental health agency clinical and operations software needs. Since September, several NYC and two up-state provider agencies have met on a regular basis to work with Anasazi to design a billing module specific for New York State. The Coalition gladly hosted

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## Assembly passes Buy-In

On Monday, February 26 the New York State Assembly passed a revised version of the Medicaid Buy-In bill, an optional state measure of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Act. The measure, known as the Work and Wellness Act, enables workers with disabilities to purchase Medicaid health-care coverage on a sliding scale. The amended version of the bill creates a program beyond what Governor Pataki en-

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## Coalition to host Rosenberg and Felton

On March 23, at 10:00 am, Linda Rosenberg, Senior Deputy Commissioner, and Chip Felton, Associate Commissioner, of the State Office of Mental Health will be the guests of The Coalition to provide an update on the AOT (assisted outpatient treatment) program as well as the recently released OMH Progress Report. The Coalition is proud to host them.

Members are welcome to attend. For more information, contact Marie Scripture at x105.✉

## New Yorkers for Community Mental Health Care launch campaign for *Reinvestment II*

The Coalition and the Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, working under the banner of New Yorkers for Community Mental Health Care, demonstrated tough resolve at a press conference on Tuesday as they launched a campaign to support the Governor's *Community Mental Health Support and Workforce Reinvestment Act*. This act, also known as *Reinvestment II*, calls for an across-the-board cost of living adjustment, a Medicaid fee increase, and increases for programs like Supported Housing.

"It is vitally important to the care and well-being of New Yorkers living with mental illnesses that community-based mental health agencies receive these increases," said Phillip A. Saperia, the Executive Director of the Coalition. "Agencies are in dire need of an increase so they can continue to provide high quality care. We are here to implore legislators to approve the 10% Medicaid fee increase and the 2.5% cost of living adjustment for each of the next three years."

Meanwhile, the Syracuse Post Standard reported on March 7 that some State Senators oppose the closing of Hutchings and Middletown Psychiatric Centers, part of the Governor's proposal, and will block the passage of any bill that includes the closures. Unless an alternative proposal is put on the table, however, opposition to the governor's proposals may put the kibosh on the 10% Medicaid fee increase and the 2.5% COLA community agencies need. According to the article, Sens. John DeFrancisco (R-Syracuse) and

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## Julius Green mourned

The Coalition was saddened to learn that Julius Green, the assistant director at the Howie the Harp Center, passed away on March 6, 2001. Julius survived homelessness and graduated from the Peer Advocacy program at the Howie the Harp Center. He also participated in an anti-stigma campaign run by the City Department of Mental Health. His dedication to helping those who live with mental illnesses and his strong voice in the advocacy community will be sorely missed. The Coalition joins the entire mental health community in sorrow. Cards and letters may be sent to the Howie the Harp Peer Specialist Training Center, 85 Stanton Street, New York, NY 10002.✉

## CCoC identifying City's needs

After three of four hearings, Coalition on the Continuum of Care (CCoC) is getting closer to identifying the gaps in programs for the homeless in New York City. The Coalition (of Voluntary Mental Health Agencies) sits on the CCoC Steering Committee, which determines the priorities for a block of funds from the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development that are targeted towards homeless assistance.

With one more hearing to go, the hearings have thus far brought to light the need for programs that offer housing and/or services for youth aging out of foster care, people with HIV/AIDS, survivors of do-

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## Medicaid Buy-In

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dorsed earlier this year and what the Assembly proposed last year.

Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver said, "The Work and Wellness Act is common-sense legislation that will provide significant health care protections for New York's working disabled. The measure will not only increase employment of the state's disabled population, it will also offer an added sense of dignity and self-fulfillment as productive members of their communities."

The bill allows for disabled workers with net income of up to 400% of the federal poverty level to be eligible for subsidized coverage (the governor proposed a limit of 250%). Those with net income at or below 150% would pay no premium. Disabled workers earning between 150%-400% of the federal poverty level would pay for premiums on a sliding scale. Those earning above the 400% limit would be able to purchase coverage by paying a full premium.

Other features of the bill include an allowance of \$40,000 in assets, and Medicaid coverage for one year after termination of employment, if the individual loses or leaves their job due to health reasons or factors other than voluntary

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## CCOC

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mestic violence, undocumented residents, people with recent forensic histories and MICA consumers. Other needs include transitional housing serviced for families, vocational training and assisted employment, and permanent supportive housing for families. Various speakers also made specific mention of people with mental illnesses, though they were typically subsumed under one of these larger categories.

The final hearing will be held on March 20<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 pm at Samaritan Village, 138-02 Queens Blvd. Call David Bergman at x102 for more information or if you are interested in testifying about the needs of those who are homeless and live with mental illnesses. ✍



### Employment Seminar Series

**Gary Bond, Ph.D.**, Chancellor's Professor, Indiana University, will kick off the New York Work Exchange's Employment Seminar Series beginning on **April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2001**. Dr. Bond, a noted researcher and authority on the implementation and use of supported employment in mental health treatment programs, will give two presentations on supported employment.

Dr. Bond will present in the morning, **9am-12pm, on an Overview of Supported Employment**. He will provide a historical perspective, offer comparisons with other employment models and discuss the integration of supported

employment into existing clinical services. This presentation is directed at the broader mental health community including employment providers.

The afternoon session, 1:30 to 4:30 pm, will be on the Basics of Implementing Supported Employment. Dr. Bond will focus on applying the principles of supported employment, how to interface employment programs with treatment teams and rehabilitation providers, and employment barriers. The seminar is more narrowly focused and will appeal to staff in mental health employment programs.

All interested in attending must **RSVP by April 2, 2001**. Space is limited so programs are limited to two registrants per session. To RSVP or for more information, contact Holly Kempner at (212) 742-1122x236. ✍

### Coalition Supports Assembly bill amending Lobby Law

The Coalition has been supportive of amending features of the state's 1999 Lobby Law that went into effect on January 1, 2000. Because of the efforts of many of our colleagues, New York State Bill A.5798 has been introduced to amend the 1999 lobby law. This bill responds to the voices of the non-profit community and others who sought clarification on the impact of the 1999 lobby law upon non-profits and their lobbying activities with local governments. The bill seeks to delay enforcement of the lobbying law with respect to municipalities until April 2002.

The 1999 lobby law also authorized the creation of an Advisory Council whose purpose was to examine and report on the impact implementation of the lobby law would have upon municipal governments. The Advisory Council was authorized to make recommendations with respect to any additional legislation necessary to further the intent of the lobby law as it related to municipalities. The Advisory Council, however was never formed and the existing law dissolved the Advisory Council on December 31, 2000.

The Coalition, together with members of the recently formed Non-Profit Policy Cabinet of New York State, organized by the Council of Community Services of New York State, has also supported the bill amending the 1999 lobby law whereby the Advisory Council will be recreated and is to issue a report by October, 2001. We look forward to this report because the complexities of how the various lobby laws in New York State will interrelate with the recommendations of the Advisory Council and the local New York City lobby laws will require definitive guidelines which currently do not exist. The Coalition will be keeping a careful eye on these guidelines and looks forward to working with the non-profit community in New York City and throughout the state to ensure that the state guidelines do not conflict with existing municipal lobbying law. ✍

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separation. A demonstration program for 5,000 individuals would provide Medicaid eligibility for people with potentially disabling conditions like multiple sclerosis or asymptomatic HIV. The bill also includes provisions for outreach and enrollment, and the development of an advisory board housed within the New York State Office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities.

Stay tuned for further updates on the Medicaid Buy-In negotiations between the two houses and the Governor. ✍

## Anasazi

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the meetings and also retained several billing experts to join this dedicated and hard-working group of individuals from the agencies as well as staff from Anasazi and its top design expert, Eric Morris, CEO. We are proud to announce that thanks to the efforts of this group the design phase is over and the customization process has begun.

We are also gratified to report that after viewing a Coalition sponsored Anasazi software demonstration in January, Michael R. Mittleman, PhD, SOMH Deputy Commissioner and Chief Information Officer, proclaimed the software *formidable*. Since then, Dr. Mittleman invited Anasazi to demonstrate its software at SOMH and asked the company to bid on some innovative projects. Coalition staff would like to thank Dr. Mittleman and his colleagues, Dorothy Nanek, Deputy Director, and Mr. Chip Felton, Associate Commissioner, for taking

the time to come from Albany in order to review and comment on the products.

Coalition and New York State Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare members can still **enjoy a 30% discount when they sign up for the software; but only until January 12, 2002!** In addition, in order to further reduce training costs, The Coalition will sponsor group trainings in our conference room, which will be equipped with the necessary hardware. Anasazi will train up to 15 people from five agencies and charges to the agency will be pro-rated.

This April, Coalition staff will attend the National User's Group in Texas. We look forward to sharing information with other users in May, when we host the first New York State User's Group. For more information regarding the next demonstration and/or user's group, please contact Patricia Gallo Goldstein at 212/742-1600x106 or e-mail her at patgg@cvmha.org. ✍

## Reinvestment II

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Nancy Lorraine Hoffmann (R-Fabius) even claim they have the support of important Senate colleagues.

Despite the fact that legislators have received hundreds of letters in support of the governor's proposals, Unions and others have dominated the press with an intransigent message that focuses on the jobs that will

be lost instead of patient needs. "The real question here is what is best for consumers and their families. The State Office of Mental Health is not in the business of providing a jobs program." said Gayle Nayowith, Executive Director of the Citizens Committee for Children. "Anyone looking at the needs of adults and children can clearly see that they are better served in a community-based setting." ✍

## Upcoming Events

March 22	9:30 am	Professional Learning Center "Confidentiality and its Limits."
March 23	10:00 am	Membership Meeting with Linda Rosenberg and Chip Felton of OMH
March 27	9:30 am	Anasazi Software Demonstration
March 28	9:30 am	Government Relations Committee Meeting
April 2	3:00 pm	MICA Committee Meeting (at The Coalition)
April 5	3:00 pm	Housing Committee Meeting



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## Free legal training

The Mental Health Committee of the Welfare Reform Network and the Mental Health Project of the Urban Justice Center Invite You to Attend a Free Training for Legal Advocates and Attorneys, Mental Health Professionals and Consumers regarding: Obtaining Exemptions from Work Experience Program ("WEP" or "Workfare") Requirements for Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities.

Individuals will learn how to advocate for clients during the disability assessment process in Welfare and will learn how to challenge HS Systems employability findings and WEP/Workfare assignments.

When: March 20, 2001

Time: 1:00 p.m. -- 3:00 p.m.

Where: Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies at 281 Park Avenue South (at East 22nd Street), Room A (1st Fl. Conf. Room). Take the 6 Train to 23rd Street.

RSVP: To reserve a space, or if you have any questions, please call Barney at the Urban Justice Center's Mental Health Advocacy Line at (646) 602-5672.

The Mental Health Committee of the Welfare Reform Subcommittee will meet at 3:00 p.m., immediately following the training. Anyone interested in staying for the Committee meeting is welcome. ✍