



Coalition Briefs

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

CCoC Technical Assistance

The New York City Coalition on the Continuum of Care, which helps to determine the funding priorities for a portion of HUD homeless dollars, has announced training dates and technical assistance workshops for renewals and new projects. Both workshops will be at the Department of Homeless Services at 33 Beaver Street, 17th Floor. The workshop for Renewals will be on April 11th from 2-5 pm, while the workshop for New Projects will be on April 12th, from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm. Pre-applications will be distributed and priorities will be announced. The ultimate deadline for the pre-application is May 14, 2001.

For more information, call Jill Berry at (212) 361-7959. ✉

WEP Exemptions

Advocacy is key for individuals with psychiatric disabilities who are negotiating the welfare system today. This was the main message given at the March 20th training on Obtaining Exemptions from Work Experience Program Requirements for Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities. The training, presented by the Mental Health Committee of the Welfare Reform Network and the

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This just in!

On Friday, March 30, 2001, Governor Pataki signed into law a postponement of the local provisions of New York State's lobby law. This will mainly delay the implementation of the law until April 1, 2002; however, it also re-authorizes a local lobby-law advisory board that will submit a report to the governor and the legislature by October 1, 2001 on the implementation of the Lobbying Act of 1999. ✉

Senate and Assembly join search for solution

The Governor's formula for giving community based mental health agencies a Medicaid fee increase and a cost of living adjustment hit a snag last week when both houses of the New York State legislature, the Senate and the Assembly, rejected the closing of two state psychiatric centers and the co-locations of four children's psychiatric centers on the grounds of adult centers. These closings, in addition to a reduction of 625 beds, were intended to free-up money that would fund the proposed 2.5% cost of living adjustment for the next three years and a one-time 10% Medicaid fee increase for community-based mental health agencies.

Mental health is just one of the many areas where the Governor's budget has come under fire, and many analysts are predicting a long legislative session to pass a state budget that surpasses \$80 billion. The lowest estimate of revenues comes from the Governor's office, which predicts a budget of \$83.7 billion. At \$85.97 billion, the Assembly's proposal is the highest, and projects a spending increase of 8.2%. Meanwhile, the Senate is in the middle, proposing an \$84.1 billion budget.

The main features of the Governor's mental health budget center around a proposal called the *Community Mental Health Support and Workforce Reinvestment Act* which link the COLA and the Medicaid

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Rosenberg, Felton present to Coalition membership

Linda Rosenberg, Senior Deputy Commissioner of the State Office of Mental Health, and Chip Felton, Associate Commissioner were guests of The Coalition on Friday March 23, 2001. They conducted a presentation on OMH's Progress Report, which was made publicly available in January and gave a brief look at the current state of Kendra's Law implementation.

The Progress report is a 36-page document that includes a variety of descriptive statistics about the current state of mental health in New York State. For example, it estimates that the current public mental health system serves 500,000 people— 400,000 adults and 100,000 children. These individuals suffer from a variety of dis-

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Funding for minorities with mental illnesses and HIV

Last week, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration announced the availability of grants for minorities with mental illness living with HIV/AIDS. There are three components to this announcement: 1) \$6 million will be available for 15 community-based agencies for treatment services; 2) \$2 million will be available for HIV/AIDS mental health education and training at the community level, and 3) \$1.4 million is available for a coordinating center that will provide technical assistance to education and training, and the treatment services.

The application deadline is May 21, 2001. Details will be published in the Federal Reserve or can be obtained online at www.samhsa.gov. Or you can call the CMHS Clearinghouse at (900) 789-2647. For questions please contact Mary C. Knipmeyer, Ph.D at (301) 443-0688 or mknipmeyer@samhsa.gov. ✉

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Mental Health Project of the Urban Justice Center, discussed how to advocate for consumers of mental health services during the welfare disability assessment process, employability findings and WEP/Workfare assignments.

Presenter, Ray Brescia, from the Urban Justice Center, described how the welfare system has changed since 1996. He said, "Welfare is no longer seen as a right but as a benefit in a system that is punitive." Brescia described the main differences in today's system is that welfare is time limited, it is attached with barriers and obligations such as engaging in work and work related activities, and sanctions are applied if requirements are violated.

Advocates attending the meeting raised numerous issues around the struggles individuals with psychiatric disabilities face getting into the system. They spoke about the difficulties some consumers have in attending the numerous initial application appointments and assessments scheduled at different locations throughout the city. Few accommodations are made around the application process and if a consumer misses an appointment, their case is automatically closed. They said that the disability categorization for mental health is not standardized and those individuals administering the assessments are often untrained and unfamiliar with mental health issues. Also consumers

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OMH progress report

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orders that range from Attention Deficit Disorder to Schizophrenia and other psychotic conditions.

Aside from the overview of services offered, there are two prominent sections on the proposals that have been initiated in the community and state-operated mental health sectors under Pataki.

On the whole, it is a useful overview of the state of New York's mental health sector. The Progress Report can be downloaded from the OMH website at <http://www.omh.state.ny.us/omhweb/progressreport/index.htm>.



Pascaris takes helm

We are very pleased to announce that Ms. Alysia Pascaris has joined the staff of the New York Work Exchange as Director. Ms. Pascaris comes to the New York Work Exchange from the New York City Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Alcoholism Services where she worked for three and a half years as the Coordinator for Employment Services in the Bureau of Strategic Planning. Ms. Pascaris obtained much of her experience working in the mental health system in Toronto, Canada where she developed and directed rehabilitation services for consumers with serious mental health problems. Ms. Pascaris has extensive experience in establishing new initiatives and working with consumers to promote system sensitivity and responsiveness to their needs. She has a Masters in Science from Boston University. Alysia has been a member of the steering committee from the inception of the New York Work Exchange project and brings to the position a wealth of information and experience. We are proud to welcome her to the team.?

The end is nigh!

Time is running out to register for the first presentation in the New York Work Exchange Employment Seminar Series. The speaker will be Gary Bond, Ph.D., Chancellor's Professor, Indiana University, a noted researcher and authority on the implementation and use of supported employment in mental health treatment programs. He will be giving two presentations on supported employment at the NY Work Exchange, on 90 Broad Street, on April 16th 2001.

In the morning session, **Overview of Supported Employment (9am-12pm)**, Dr. Bond will provide an historical perspective, offer comparisons with other employment models and discuss the integration of supported employment into existing clinical services.

The afternoon session, **Basics of Implementing Supported Employment (1:30pm-4:30pm)**, will focus on applying the principles of supported employment, how to interface employment programs with treatment teams and rehabilitation providers, and employment barriers.

All interested in attending one or both sessions must **RSVP by April 6, 2001**. Seats are filling up quickly so please contact us as soon as possible to reserve a spot. Programs are limited to two registrants per session. To RSVP or for more information, contact Shaleigh Tice at (212) 742-1122x238.

Upcoming Events

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| April 16 | 9:00 am | Supported Employment Program with Dr. Gary Bond. |
| April 26 | 3:30 pm | Coalition Membership Meeting |
| May 11 | 11:00 am | Picnic for Parity (Bryant Park) |

New Yorkers for Community Mental Health

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without Reinvestment III!

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State budget(s)

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fee increases to hospital closures, facility co-locations, and the elimination of 625 under utilized beds. Despite the fact that all parties recognized the necessity of providing community-based agencies with infrastructure support, the closings and co-locations were a major sticking point.

The Assembly, for example, funded the COLA (at a minimum of 2.5% for three years) and the Medicaid fee increase by re-estimating the savings from the 625 beds that will be lost due to excess capacity. The Governor's budget estimates this number in the neighborhood of \$65 thousand per bed, while the Assembly estimates the per bed savings closer to \$95 thousand. This re-evaluation increases the estimated savings by more than \$18 million dollars. The Assembly also calls on the OMH Commissioner to present long-term plans to the legislature on closings, co-locations, and funding methodologies. They also create a new funding source that directs to new capital projects and local operations surpluses that result from capital sales and debt service reductions on state mental health facilities, respectively.

Another piece of pertinent legislation from the Assembly relates to the medication grants program for forensic consumers. Kendra's Law set aside \$15 million for this program that sought to provide medication for people with mental illnesses who are released from prisons and jails. According to the Assembly, only a small portion of this has been used. They therefore propose to take \$5 million from it in order to pay for presumptive Medicaid eligibility for the population targeted by the medication grants program.

The Assembly also includes funding for programs for adolescents, various member items, and funding for research projects on forensic mental health and retention strategies for community mental health agencies.

The main feature of the Senate's bill is that it funds the Medicaid fee increase and a 2.5% COLA for only one year, while rejecting the closings and co-locations. They also fund many of the same programs as the governor without any modification. In addition, they include nearly \$1.6 million for an increase to the Children's day treatment rate and for the Nathan Kline Institute, and \$3.3 million for local initiatives.

Disappointingly, although the Assembly and the Senate reject the co-location of the children's facilities, they make no budgetary provisions to repair the poorly maintained children's facilities that already exist. OMH estimates that these four facilities will require millions of dollars of renovations simply to bring them up to Joint Commission standards. ❧

Save the Date

Tuesday June 5, 2001 from 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.

Regional Conferences

This year's Mental Health Empowerment Project's Regional Conferences will focus on the theme "Wellness and Resilience" and include presentations on topics including spirituality, loving kindness (ways of dealing with negative talk) and double trouble in recovery. Presenters will include MHEP's Ike Powell, Peter Ashenden and Rick Fritsch, DTR founder Howie Vogel, the Southern Tier's Carolyn Jefferson and many others.

Conferences will be held:

- ▶ March 27 in Binghamton
- ▶ April 10 in Poughkeepsie
- ▶ April 12 in New York City,
- ▶ April 19 in Watertown,
- ▶ May 15 in Buffalo and
- ▶ June 7 in Long Island

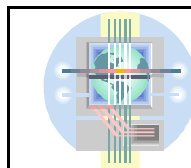
All conference are scheduled to run between 9am and 4 pm. For more information call Myrna at (518) 434-1393. ❧

NYC Legislative Update

On Thursday, April 12th the NYC region of the NY Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services will host "Mental Health Advocacy in New York City: NYAPRS's 2001 Legislative Update." The meeting will be held at the Top of the Times on 255 West 43rd St. (between 7th and 8th Aves.) from 2:00 to 4:30 pm.

Updates on COLA, Parity, Re-investment and Consumer Rights and Protections are scheduled. There will be a special focus on employment, including the Medicaid Buy-In, Ticket to Work and New York Works. There will also be an opportunity to tell NYAPRS which mental health advocacy issues are most important to you.

For more information call Advocacy at **Fountain House** at (212)



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WEP Exemptions

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are assigned to mismatched work assignments and there is a lack of accommodations made for them on the job sites. Another problem discussed was that many individuals with psychiatric disabilities who need welfare are in the process of applying for Social Security benefits but their required WEP/Workfare assignments end up making them ineligible for Social Security benefits.

Advocates were advised to give as much detailed medical documentation of the disability as possible throughout the application process. Documentation should go beyond a note from a psychiatrist citing a diagnosis and prescription, to listing and describing the functional limitations regarding work activities. Advocates were reminded of the ten-day limit to request a fair hearing and challenge a decision made within the process. Fair hearings can be requested for many reasons including when HRA fails to present proper notification about various decisions made. Job assignments can also be challenged if the duties conflict with the limitations of the individual.

For more information on the Mental Health Committee of the Welfare Reform Network please call the Urban Justice Center at (646) 602-5672.

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newyorkworkexchange

working to increase employment of recipients of mental health services

The New York Work Exchange, an initiative of the Coalition of Voluntary Mental Health Agencies is looking for staff with **extensive experience in the mental health field and in depth knowledge of employment services for individuals with serious mental health disabilities**. The mandate of the Work Exchange is to increase employment opportunities for consumers of mental health services through the provision of education and training resources to New York City treatment, rehabilitation and support services providers. Various positions are available including Deputy Director.

We are interested in individuals who have first-rate experience in program and community development, the design and development of training and education resources, and policy analysis. The ability to facilitate stakeholder involvement is key. Applicants for all positions must possess effective written and verbal communication skills.

In addition to the above requirements, the Deputy Director position requires at least 5 years of management experience, a graduate degree, experience in managing and administering education or training projects, and strong computer skills.

Send resume with covering letter to:

Alysia Pascaris
Director

New York Work Exchange
90 Broad Street,
New York, NY 10004

The New York Work Exchange offers competitive salaries with a generous benefit package. Consumer applicants encouraged to apply.

An Equal Opportunity Employer

Help Wanted

Unit Leader: Venture House, is an innovative psychiatric rehabilitation program based on the well-known "Fountain House" clubhouse model. We are seeking a highly motivated, energetic, creative individual to become part of our team. This is a supervisory position in our Clerical Unit. This unit is responsible for enrolling new members, maintaining member records, preparing certain reports for Government contracts, publishing the *Venture Voice*, our newsletter and managing our da-

tabase. In addition, as a generalist staff worker in our community you would provide assistance to people with mental illness regarding entitlements, advocacy for needed services, management of transitional employment placements, meeting member goals and work with members of Venture House on unit, agency and program tasks.

As a clubhouse, **Venture House** members and staff work in partnership to run the program. Staff needs to be flexible and believe in recovery. A bachelor's de-

gree and at least one year of clubhouse experience is required.

Venture House provides health and pension benefits. The salary for this position is in the 30's. Venture House is open 7 days a week and staff rotate evening and weekend hours.

Please send your resume to Ray Schwartz by April 20, 2001. The fax number at **Venture House** is (718) 658-7201 and our address is 150-10 Hillside Ave., Jamaica, NY 11432.