

**The
Coalition**
of Voluntary
Mental Health
Agencies, Inc.

Coalition Briefs

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

Albany to pass skeleton budget; MH agencies in lurch

Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno have agreed to pass a bare-bones budget that fails to resolve any of the substantive differences and as yet outstanding budgetary issues between the Senate, the Assembly, and the Governor's office. This minimalist budget will continue funding at last year's levels with a singular increase in funding for education. With a host of sorely needed increases remaining on the table for mental health services, including a 10% Medicaid fee increase, a 2.5% COLA and a sub-

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Assembly passes 'Parity' bill

Last Tuesday, the New York State Assembly passed the "Fair Insurance Treatment Act of 2001." People with mental illnesses and substance abuse disorders have long suffered from discrimination by insurance companies who differentiate in coverage of physical and mental health services. Effectively, a legal loophole allows these insurance plans to unfairly limit access and coverage of mental health services for all who seek help. This bill will effectively close this loophole and assist those who seek treatment to achieve 'parity' in the level of coverage. The Coalition extends a hearty 'thank you' to the Assembly for passing this bill, and new Mental Health Chair Marty Luster (D-Syracuse) for introducing the bill.

To date, the Senate has not passed a Parity Bill, but the mental health community is ever hopeful that one day, New York State will join the 32 other states who have already passed comprehensive Parity laws. ▣

DOH responds to MH issues

Over the last two months, the Department of Health began action on two different issues that were of concern to mental health providers: the variety of issues around COPS overpayment recoupment, and changes to the Medicaid billing requirements for Article 31 agencies. The Coalition has corresponded with DOH about these concerns, and DOH is addressing some—though not all—of the issues raised.

In mid-April, many providers began receiving letters from DOH that included unreasonable conditions tied to the recoupment of COPS overbilling. These included, among other things, interest charges that began before the letter of notification was sent to providers and letters that failed to include rate calculation methodologies and volume adjustment reports as in previous years.

In a letter dated June 22nd, DOH agreed to address these matters. First of all, DOH avers that, in the future, OMH will send out volume adjustment reports before COPS overpayments are calculated by DOH for recovery. Secondly, DOH reported that the interest charged on overpayments is statutory, and must be assessed on all Medicaid overpayments, including COPS. However, they did agree to delay assessing interest until August 6th to provide the required 90 days from notification.

Although not an optimal solution, these measures are appreciated by providers.

The Coalition has also been working with DOH regarding changes in billing requirements for licensed agencies. Under a proposed change, agencies operating under an Article 31 license would no longer bill under an

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Welcome to new members

Over the last few months, two organizations have become new members. The Coalition is proud to extend a hearty welcome to The Floating Hospital and C.A.S.E.S., the Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services.

Located in Manhattan, CASES was created in 1989 through the merger of the Court Employment Project and the Community Service Sentencing Project and offers a variety of alternative-to-incarceration services. Their most recent program, The Nathaniel Project, is designed for felony offenders with serious mental illnesses.

The Floating Hospital, on the
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Coalition against Choice

The Coalition has recently taken an 'anti-choice' stand on Charitable Choice in a letter to New York's legislative delegation. The Charitable Choice bill proposed by President Bush would permit social service programs that receive federal funds to promote a sectarian agenda with the people that receive their services. Many of the Coalition's member agencies are affiliated with religious movements. In accepting federal funds, however, they have agreed to a variety of principles which ensure that recipients have equal access to services and necessary protection from unwanted religious solicitations. To

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Employment Training Series

The New York Work Exchange will soon release its fall/winter schedule of trainings for the mental health employment provider community. Highlights of the NYWE "Program of Study" include a five day training on Benefits to be held in September and October, and a two-day training on "Culture Brokering: Bridging the Gap Between Foreign-Born Consumers and Rehabilitation Services," to be held in October. Other trainings include Working with Individuals with Substance Abuse issues, Working with Individuals with HIV/AIDS, Workplace Accommodations, Job Development, and Job Coaching.

Besides the "Program of Study," the New York Work Exchange will offer a one day training on September 7th on "The Benefits of Work: Recovery, Self Sufficiency and Entitlements." This workshop will be targeted for individuals working in the mental health field who help people with mental illness who have a criminal justice background, return to the world of work. A one-day workshop on becoming an Employment Network under the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act will be happening in November. The NY Work Exchange is also providing on-going employment trainings on-site for Assisted Outpatient Treatment teams in the city.

For the next up-coming training, the NY Work Exchange is pleased to announce a five-day intensive Benefits Training pre-

sented by experts Ed Lopez-Soto, Greater Upstate Law Project Inc, and Connie Ferrell, Integrated Services, on September 10, 11, 12th and October 4th and 5th. Registration will be limited to 35 and those signing up will be expected to commit to the full five days. This training will provide participants with a comprehensive understanding of the SSI/SSD programs from eligibility, work incentives including the PASS plan, benefits counseling and assistance. The purpose of this training is to bring this thorough curriculum provided by Cornell University's Program on Employment and Disability to the mental health community. This curriculum is used to provide in-depth training for the Benefits Planning, Assistance and Outreach (BPAO) project as part of Social Security's Ticket to Work Program.

Recent trainings at the NY Work Exchange have included "VESID 101: Understanding the VESID System in New York & How it Helps Consumers with Mental Illness" presented on July 23rd, by William Deschenes, Manager of Quality Assurance, VESID, and William Janowitz, Regional Coordinator, NYC VESID. On July 10th, Thomas P. Golden, presented "That's the Ticket: Exploring the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act and its Implications for Employment Program Providers." Mr. Golden is a faculty member of Cornell University's Program on Employment and Disability and a National Work Incentives Advisory Panel Member.

Stay tuned for more details on up-coming trainings. For more information, please call Deborah Short at 212-742-1122 x235. □

SAMHSA director named

President Bush last week nominated Charles G Curie, as the new director of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Curie, the former deputy secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare's Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, is perhaps best known as a strong opponent of the use of restraints in mental health facilities. Curie has a Masters in Social Work from the University of Chicago. □

Is UJC looking for you?

Recently released from a NYC jail? Or treated by mental health services in jail? If the answer to these questions is yes, The Urban Justice Center needs to talk to you.

An on-going lawsuit called Brad H. v. City of New York requires the City to do discharge planning for anyone who receives mental health services while in a New York City jail. That means that if you or someone you know was in a Mental Observation house, prescribed medicine for Mental Health, or seeing Mental Health staff while in jail, that person was entitled to a plan for release. Mental Health staff at the jail should have made sure that that individual had medicines, benefits, treatment, a place to stay, and transportation, if needed.

The lawyers who are working on the class in the Brad H. case need to hear about the experiences of those recently released from Rikers Island. The Urban Justice Center needs to know whether these individuals got the help that they needed. They may be able to help these people now living in the community. Please call UJC at 1-646-602-5672 and leave a message telling them how to reach you and they will call you back as soon as possible. □

Prompt pay problems? Press print

The New York State Insurance Department is now offering a downloadable form with which service providers can file prompt pay complaints against insurance providers. Get the form at <http://www.ins.state.ny.us/provlhow.htm>. □

For Sale

Group Home Possibilities: 3-family house in downtown Brooklyn for sale. Owner will consider net lease. Call broker Ellen A. Bowin for details at (718) 875-3217. □

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Charitable choice

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date, this system has been effective in enabling service expansion to needy people through a vital social network while adhering to principle embodied in the 1st Amendment's establishment clause which prohibits the state from endorsing a specific religion. In order to preserve this distinction for the benefit of consumers and providers, The Coalition has taken this 'anti-choice' stance. □

—Help Wanted—

Activities therapist. FT, M-F for outpatient adult psychiatric day program and case management services; computer literacy essential. Span/Eng. a plus. Supervision and in-service training provided. Excellent benefits. On-site parking. AA/EOE. Mail or fax: Richard Meador, C.R.C., **Riverdale Mental Health Center**, 5676 Riverdale Ave, Bx, NY 10471; Fax: 718-548-1611. E-mail: rmha@rmha.org. □

Brooklyn Bureau of Community Service: Project Moving On, a Continuing Day Treatment Program with a vocational emphasis, seeks FT culturally competent Social Worker and Supervisor to work with inter-disciplinary team. Primary duties include direct services to a caseload of 17-20 SPMI or MICA adults (10-15 for supervisors), and individual and group therapy. SW also completed intake assessments. Supervisor oversees 2 clinical staff and assistance with quality assurance standards. SW position requires MSW, CSW preferred, plus experience working with MI/MICA adults. Supervisor position requires CSW, CRC, or CASAC with a Master's degree, plus at least 3 years experience and some supervisory experience. Salary commensurate with experience. Fax resume to Susan Buchanan 718-310-5879. □

Case managers/counselors. BA, BS, BSW or related experience. Entry level, ideal for graduate students. Excellent supervision and learning opportunities. PT possible, FT, days/eves, wknds. Provide rehabilitation counseling for adults with mental illness in community residents. Parking available in residential neighborhood. AA/EOE. Mail or fax: **Riverdale Mental Health Center**, 640 W. 232nd, St., Bx, NY 10463. Fax: 718-884-1772. □

Outpatient adult psych program seeks COTA to facilitate ADL, social and pre-vocational programs in CDT setting. 28 hrs/wk. Flexible schedule, excellent benefits./ Supervision and in-service training. On-site parking. Mail or fax resume: Richard Meador, C.R.C., **Riverdale Mental Health Center**, 5676 Riverdale Ave, Bx, NY 10471; Fax: 718-548-1611. □

Community Residence Assistant Manager: Full-time, flexible hours. Requirements: MA, MS, MSW, or PhD. student with relevant experience—new grads welcome. Administrative work and case management and emphasis on psycho-rehabilitation. 24-hr supervised residence for adults with mental illnesses. Parking available for quiet residential neighborhood. AA/EOE. Contact: Lorin Carlson-Healy, ACSW, **Riverdale Mental Health Association**, 640 W. 232nd Street, Bx, NY, 10463. Fax: 718-884-1772. □

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Skeleton budget

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stantial bump for Supported Housing, this move will leave the entire mental health sector in a state of financial limbo.

For the 17th consecutive year legislators have failed to pass a budget by the deadline of April 1st. This is particularly worrisome for mental health agencies who are currently covering already-budgeted increases.

Analysts indicate that the Assembly and the Senate are looking to put pressure on the Governor by putting "the ball back in his court." Throughout the budget process, legislators have been frustrated by Pataki's unwillingness to negotiate. They are hoping that, by passing a budget that does not give Pataki full funding for some projects, he will be forced back to the table. The hope is that the legislature and the governor will then negotiate a series of supplemental budgets which ostensibly will cover such things as the increases for mental health and other sectors.

Of course, this move could backfire severely if Pataki simply accepts the budget; it would give him an enormous goodie-jar to dole out in a re-election year and the Mental Health Sector could be left out in the cold. By the same token, this whole scenario may not even materialize; with the legislature slated to pass this provisional budget on August 2nd, anything can still happen. □

DOH

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agency license, but rather through a licensed individual. This would create an extremely complicated, cumbersome system fraught with potential problems.

DOH and OMH are currently engaged in negotiations to iron out the wrinkles in the changes. Any new developments will be reported here. □

New Members

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other hand, is more than 130 years old and was independently incorporated in 1980 as The Floating Hospital. Originally intended to provide medical services to New York's indigent children, today the Floating Hospital serves the needs of all New York's needy, with nearly 30% of its clientele seeking mental health services.

Welcome to the Coalition! □