

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

# Coalition Briefs

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

## HIPAA delay passed, but compliance plan is required

On December 12<sup>th</sup>, the Senate approved a House of Representatives bill which will delay implementation of the HIPAA regulations concerning transactions and code sets by one year for agencies that opt to submit a detailed compliance plan. Importantly, this delay does not change the compliance date for the privacy and security components of HIPAA.

The required compliance plan must contain information that includes: 1) an analysis reflecting the

(Continued on page 2)

## Federal parity update

At long last, Congress is poised to pass Mental Health Parity! On October 30<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Senate voted to pass parity legislation as an amendment to an unrelated spending bill. The House-Senate Conference Committee is meeting on December 18 to vote whether to include the amendment.

This is the vote that will determine whether parity will be sent to the White House along with the appropriations bill. All interested parties should contact their reps.

The CBO estimates that S.543 will raise insurance premiums less than 1%, however, several key House leaders are still opposed to the amendment.

Among the concerns raised regarding this legislation are the fact that it would cover all mental conditions listed in the latest DSM.

Compromise legislation, including a straight extension of the original Parity Act, are also still on the table as well. We should have news soon of whether or not the amendment has been passed. □

## CUCS receives award

The Coalition would like to congratulate West Harlem Transitional Services, a program of **Center for Urban Community Services**. WHTS received a one of six nationally awarded 2001 Exemplary Program Award from the Center for Mental Health Services.

This program was one of the first outreach and drop-in programs in NYC for homeless people with serious mental illnesses and many with co-occurring disorders. There are three integrated components to this program: the drop-in center, the outreach program and the transitional residence as well as on-site medical services, on-site psychiatric services, case management, group treatment and housing placement.

In 1997, 21 beds were added to the transitional residence for long-term shelter stayers. This program was funded through Corporation for Supportive Housing with Hilton Foundation money as a demonstration project. The need for this program was discovered when Dr. Dennis Sayer of the University of Pennsylvania identified the long-term shelter stayer population defined as those who have spent 730+ days out of the past four years in a shelter.

Due to the success of the WHTS program, similar programs were funded by CSH with Hilton dollars all over the country. Last year, WHTS placed into one or more of its basic needs, recovery or housing services 399 people with mental illnesses and co-occurring substance use disorders; The Kelly, the transitional residence program, placed 35 people in permanent housing. □

## Reinvestment redux?

Despite having adjourned some time last month, rumors at the state level persisted that a fix was in the works for some on-going budget issues. Of primary concern for mental health was a way to address the expiration on September 30 of the Community Reinvestment Act of 1993 which allowed savings from State psychiatric hospital bed rundown to be channeled into new programs in community-based settings.

In the absence of needed placeholding legislation, the funds from this bed run-down will simply return to the State's general fund. This would rob the community mental health sector of a valuable funding source.

Concern until now has been that legislators would try to tinker

(Continued on page 2)

## City budget

Mayor Giuliani recently submitted his Fall budget modifications, commonly called his November Plan. He has taken this opportunity to order across-the-board cuts of 15% in the wake of 9/11. In the Department of Mental Health, this translates into approximately \$1.9 million. The outgoing City Council, meanwhile, is charged with the responsibility to simply approve or decline this proposal.

One of the measures Giuliani is trying to eliminate is the income tax surcharge which has been a long-standing bone of contention with the Council. Additionally, he has targeted for elimination all Council-funded programs since 1998. Insiders believe that Giuliani wants to cut City expenditures to

(Continued on page 2)

# Coalition Briefs

**reinvestment**

(Continued from page 1)

with the old legislation in order to provide a discretionary funding stream for new programs and workforce. This would unnecessarily complicate funding and likely create inequalities in the way it reaches agencies. Much better is the plan for a simple Reinvestment extender.

While some had predicted an early December budget proposal from the Governor, it now appears it will come later this month or at its normal time in early January. Given the impact of 9/11, it is unclear whether Gov. Pataki's election-year budget will address the dire needs in the community mental health sector.□

## HIPAA

(Continued from page 1)

extent to which, and the reasons why, the entity will not be in compliance by the original date of October 16, 2002, 2) a budget, schedule, work plan, and implementation strategy for achieving compliance, 3) whether the entity plans to use or might use a contractor or vendor to assist them in achieving compliance, and 4) a timeframe for testing that begins no later than April 16, 2003.

HHS is required to publish a model compliance plan by March 31, 2002, and any health entity that does not submit a plan by October 16, 2002 may be excluded from Medicare.

The Senate's passage of this bill without amendment avoids tying up the legislation in committee, where the House and Senate versions would need to be reconciled. It is expected that President Bush will sign the measure into law.□



### Work demo projects awarded

In January 2002, the New York Work Exchange will begin the Ways to Work Demonstration Project, funding 4 initiatives targeted at increasing the integration and coordination of employment and clinical services. The overall goal of this project is to increase the number of individuals with psychiatric disabilities who get and retain competitive employment.

The first round of Ways to WORK projects have been awarded to the **Brooklyn Bureau of Community Service**, the **Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services**, the **Postgraduate Center for Mental Health**, and Transitional Services for New York, Inc.

The call for proposals for programs serving the Bronx and Staten Island has been reopened: submissions are due no later than January 19<sup>th</sup> 2002. Only CDTPs and adult clinics are eligible to apply. For more information or to request a copy of the Ways to Work proposal, please contact Alycia Pascaris at 212-742-1122 x201.

### NYC job fair a success

Close to 300 consumers attended the first annual New York City Mental Health Human Services Job Fair held on November 7<sup>th</sup>, from 10am to 2pm at Access ETC.

Called "a big success" by many in attendance, the job fair brought together consumers seeking em-

ployment in the mental health field, and agencies looking to hire consumers. Thirty-one agencies exhibited at the fair, showcasing their programs and meeting potential employees.

The job fair was a collaborative effort of the **New York Work Exchange**, the Urban Justice Center's Mental Health Project, **Community Access' Howie T. Harp Peer Specialist Center**, and Access ETC. An evaluation will be conducted in order to assess the experience of the exhibitors and attendees. Thanks to all who participated and attended! For a complete listing of participating agencies, please call Shaleigh Tice at 212-742-1122 x238.

### Free TRAIN demonstrations

Since July 2001, the New York Work Exchange has been providing free on-site demonstrations of the Training Resources And Information Network (TRAIN), to mental health programs in every boroughs.

TRAIN is an electronic referral directory to Educational and Vocational Services, Childcare Programs, and Alcohol and Substance Abuse Treatment Services in New York City. Accessed for free through the NY Work Exchange website at [www.nyworkexchange.org](http://www.nyworkexchange.org), TRAIN helps consumers efficiently locate the most suitable program for their specific needs through customized searches.

If you would like to schedule a free demonstration for your program's consumers and staff or need further technical assistance, please contact Debbi Talbott at the Work Exchange at 212-742-1122 x209.□

### City budget

(Continued from page 1)

strengthen his position should he decide to seek elective office in the future. Councilmembers are trying to look out for their constituents, and balancing their own legacy against concern about burdening incoming Members.

Negotiations are continuing through this week and a resolution is expected by December 19. With the additional burden facing the mental health sector as a result of 9/11 we hope the Council and the Mayor will negotiate a solution that keeps funds in the community mental health sector.□

