



Coalition Briefs

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

Bloomberg budget cuts mental health

Mayor Bloomberg recently launched his first budgetary salvo at the City Council in proposing his mental health budget. Like the budgets proposed under his predecessor, he began by cutting only those programs added by the City Council. While some of this year's \$14.4M in 'savings' are due to revenue maximization and will not impact services, more than \$8 Million will result from the elimination of existing programs.

Among the numerous programs impacted are substance abuse, domestic violence, family
(Continued on page 2)

Coalition, Council join forces

The Coalition and the New York State Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare have officially joined forces to press Albany on community mental health issues. The Memorandum of Understanding was signed after years of advocacy on common issues like higher reimbursements in mental health.

(Continued on page 2)

City Council breakfast

On February 27, The Coalition hosted a 'get-to-know-you' breakfast for City Council Members and executives of mental health agencies.

Although there were many scheduling conflicts, including a last-minute Manhattan Delegation meeting, the breakfast was well attended by Council members from all over the city. Even Manhattan managed to send a sizeable contingent.

"It was a great opportunity to
(Continued on page 2)



'Ways to Work' grants awarded

The Riverdale Mental Health Association has been awarded the fifth grant in the Ways to Work Demonstration Project, a program that aims to integrate employment and clinical services. The New York Work Exchange is funding these initiatives which will enhance clinical services in Continuing Day Treatment Programs and Adult Mental Health Clinics through the addition of employment-related support services. The overall goal of the project is to provide more opportunities for individuals with mental illness to attain their employment and career goals.

Other Ways to Work grant awardees are 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.

Beginning on February 21, all participating programs will receive training at the New York Work Exchange from the West Institute of the New Hampshire-Dartmouth Psychiatric Rehabilitation Center. This training will cover the fundamentals and principles of Supported Employment and how to provide services in a clinical setting.

For more information on this project, visit our website at www.

(Continued on page 2)

Luster to retire from Assembly

Marty Luster (D-125th), Chair of the Assembly Mental Health Committee, announced last week that he will not seek another term and will retire come December. Luster was originally elected to the Assembly in 1988.

In his 14 years in the Assembly, he authored more than 150 bills that were signed into law. He was also active in the group that sought to reform the Assembly decision-making process in 2000.

Since becoming chair of the Mental Health Committee, Luster has reached out to consumers, providers and families in order to learn about the issues. He has also been an advocate for such issues as Parity, workforce and infrastructure and reinvestment.

Thanks, Marty, for all your hard work and years of service. We'll miss you! □

HIPAA Update

As the countdown to HIPAA compliance continues, the Coalition is planning a set of seminars to provide information and tools on readiness. The seminars will focus on the policy, workflow, and technology changes necessary for compliance.

Among the planned workshops are a walk-through of the model compliance plan that HHS will publish at the end of March. This plan is required of all organizations seeking to file for a delay in implementation of the Transactions and Code Sets component of HIPAA.

The Coalition's HIPAA consultants will also prepare sample policies, consent forms, and business associate contracts for possible use by individual organizations. Look for more information on these seminars in the coming weeks, and contact Gilad Rosner (x210) with any questions. □

Coalition Briefs

Bloomberg budget

(Continued from page 1)

based MICA services, and school-based mental health. They will impact services in every borough of the city.

It is ironic that many of the cuts are in substance abuse and alcoholism. Experts predict that drug and alcohol use will rise significantly in the wake of 9/11, as has already been seen. Oklahoma City saw a similar rise in use after the Murrah Federal Building was bombed there in 1995. Given the greater magnitude of 9/11 the impact could be even worse. □

Coalition and Council

(Continued from page 1)

"The message that turnover is rampant and reimbursement rates don't cover costs is much more effective coming from our agencies together," said Phillip A. Saperia, Executive Director of The Coalition. "They know it's a State-wide issue and that it affects agencies from New York to Monroe, Rensselaer to Buffalo."

The partnership also allows the message to be heard by legislators from disparate parts of the State. This creates a wider impact when agencies talk about the affects of inadequate reimbursement levels in community mental health.

"With turnover averaging as high as 54%, low contract rates have a direct impact on consumers and families," said Gayle Farman, Executive Director of The NYS Council. "The relationship between workers and consumers, so important for recovery and rehabilitation, is undermined each time a case manager leaves for better pay."

When asked about the impact of turnover on the quality of care, New York State Mental Health Commissioner James Stone says there is, "no question it's a problem."

Saperia and Farman both highlighted the quality of care issue as a factor in the decision to partner. "Last year the Governor and the legislature failed to fulfill the promise of a Medicaid hike and a COLA," Saperia said. "This year must be different. We can't allow intermural politics take the 'quality' out of 'quality of care.'" □



(Continued from page 1)

nyworkexchange.org or contact Alysia Pascaris at 212-742-1122 x201.

More Trainings Ahead...

...The New York Work Exchange will present an exclusive training opportunity for ten members of the mental health community. This five-day training, entitled "**Supporting Career Development and Employment: The Role of Benefits Planning and Assistance,**" is sponsored by Cornell University's Program on Employment and Disability.

This training will present information on disability and return-to-work programs administered by the Social Security Administration. It will also look at how to best provide benefits planning and assistance services and supports. The training is targeted towards New York WORKS personnel and mental health direct line staff.

Connie Ferrell, MSW, will lead the training on March 4 - 8th. Participants will focus on various aspects of the Ticket to Work program such as work incentives and employment safety nets..

...On March 19, Thomas P. Golden, Cornell University's Program on Employment and Disability, will present on "**Expanding Customer-Driven Services and Supports: Opportunities in the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program.**"

This program is open to the range of community support programs and will be held at the New York City Regional Office of OMRDD (75 Morton Street). The general focus is on the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program and implications for expanded service delivery. The program will include details on the final regulations, plan for ticket phase-in, Employment Network roles and responsibilities, collaborative agreements between ENs and VESID, new work incentive protections, payment systems, and dispute resolutions.

This information is particularly timely for those agencies considering becoming an Employment Network, or for those who want to better understand how consumers will be impacted by the ticket program.

For more information on these and other trainings, contact Deborah Short at x235.

Coming Soon! Look for The New York Work Exchange Spring Program of Study brochure announcing more upcoming trainings. □

City Council

(Continued from page 1)

facilitate the relationship between Council Members and their constituents who are Coalition members," said Phillip Saperia, Executive Director of The Coalition. "We were pleased that so many Council members chose to spend their morning with us."

More than 100 Coalition members were in attendance from every borough and virtually every council district.

Thanks to all Council members who attended! □

Pfizer offers a 'Share'

Pfizer recently initiated a new program to provide prescription drugs to low income individuals at a very low cost. Eligible enrollees will be able to get a 30-day supply of medications for only \$15.

The "Share Card," is for people enrolled in Medicaid with no prescription drug benefit, and with income of less than \$18K (\$24K for couples).

To request applications or brochures, call Pfizer at (800) 717-0855; questions should be directed to (800) 717-6005. □