



Coalition Briefs

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

Half-Fare Fairness Update

The Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) is still playing hard-to-get with the half-fare fairness implementation, but time is running out for them. After a ten-year struggle, the complaint brought against the MTA by the Staten Island Association for the Mentally Ill (SIAMI) under the New York Human Rights Law has finally become "hot!" A judge has stopped granting the MTA delay measures and is now holding them to strict deadlines. A hearing is scheduled for September 29, 2000 after which more information will be available. The purpose of the SIAMI complaint is to force the MTA to provide the Half-Fare to people with mental illness on the same terms available to people with other disabilities.

The Half-Fare Fairness Coalition, in coordination with the law firm of Debevoise and Plimpton, is waging

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Coalition joins Brad H. lawsuit

In mid July the Supreme Court of New York ruled in favor of inmate plaintiffs who filed a class action lawsuit seeking injunctive relief requiring the city to provide discharge planning for inmates treated in city jails for mental illness. The city appealed the Court's ruling and the parties filed their respective appellate briefs on Tuesday, September 16, 2000. The Coalition signed on to support a brief amicus curiae (friend of the court) at the invitation of The National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) and The Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law.

The amicus brief addresses many of the social service concerns that require the New York City jail system to provide an appropriate level of discharge planning to inmates upon their release from city jails. These concerns included arguments that the jails have become the primary health care provider for persons with mental illness; that discharge planning is an essential component of mental health treatment; that without discharge planning, inmates with mental illness will be unlikely to receive continued treatment; that failure to provide discharge treatment can result in severe consequences and higher recidivism; that the city is able to provide adequate discharge planning; and that ethical and professional standards of various professional organizations whose standards have been developed specifically in the jail context require that adequate discharge planning provided to released inmates.

If you would like a copy of the papers filed in this appeal, please call Ed Smith at the Coalition at (212) 742-1600x103.©

Welcome to the Board

The Coalition is proud to announce the appointment of our two newest board members, Dr. John Rosslund, the Executive Director of the **Bleuler Psychotherapy Center**, and Dr. Pamela Straker, the Executive Director of the **Brooklyn Psychiatric Centers, Inc.** They will be replacing Julia Stewart and Vince Valentino who left the board to pursue other opportunities.

Dr. Rosslund has been practicing psychotherapy for 24 years and has been the Executive Director of the **Bleuler Center** for 52 years. He is the current President of the Federation of Mental Health Centers and the former director of a substance abuse treatment program. He is a New York native and has his Ph.D. from Yeshiva University.

Dr. Straker has been with **Brooklyn Psychiatric Centers** since 1999 and has been in the psychiatric field for over 20 years. She has a Ph.D. in School-Community-Clinical Psychology from Hofstra University and is a graduate of Columbia University's Executive Level Institute for Non-Profit Management. She worked with such organizations as the State Council for Exceptional Children, the City University of New York, and the Child Welfare

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Corporate compliance training

On September 26th, The Professional Learning Center hosted an all day program on corporate compliance. The presenter, Mary Thornton, BSRN, MBA, educated participants about Federally sponsored investigations and the potential risks to behavioral health providers. Ms. Thornton informed the group of the laws being used to investigate and prosecute fraud, abuse and waste and spent a considerable portion of the day noting the measures providers can take to protect themselves and their organizations. Ms.

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Gervey signs on

The New York Work Exchange has had an admittedly bumpy first year of operation. The Coalition, the umbrella organization for the New York Work Exchange relocated its offices at the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services on 57th Street in Manhattan to new, modernly equipped, office space at 90 Broad Street.

While the move initially hampered the start-up effort for the Work Exchange, in the long run, the move will no doubt facilitate the work conducted at Work Exchange. In addition, the Work Exchange operated several months without the leadership of a Director. The lack of leadership made it very difficult to operationalize the goals and objectives envisioned by the State Office of Mental Health in its innovative grant award to the Coalition.

We are very pleased therefore to announce that a new Director has been hired. Robert Gervey, Psy.D. assumed the responsibilities of Director as of August 28th, 2000. Dr. Gervey is a clinical psychologist with long-standing research and clinical interest in the employment needs of persons with

mental illness and the integration of clinical and rehabilitation services. He began his career in 1987 at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine conducting clinical research on supported employment practices with youth and adults with psychiatric disabilities. In 1995, he was invited to The Cambridge Hospital where he joined the faculty within the Department of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School to establish a psychosocial research program. While in Massachusetts, Dr. Gervey developed supported employment and assertive case management programs. He also was involved in the implementation of a single point of entry for Boston's community residential programs. In 1999, Dr. Gervey returned with his family to their home in New Rochelle, where he was employed at the Guidance Center as Director of Rehabilitation Services. During the past year, he led a conversion of a sheltered workshop to supported employment services and helped redesign the Intensive Psychiatric Rehabilitation Program into an intensive, short-term, mobile program.

Dr. Gervey will be presenting a comprehensive work plan to the New York Work Exchange Steering Committee on October 3rd, which he says "provides the foundation for work that will be conducted over the next year or two." We look forward to printing a summary of this work plan in our next issue of Briefs. ©

Prompt pay survey

In response to inquiries from our membership concerning insurance companies' and HMO's compliance with New York State's prompt payment law, The Coalition issued a survey asking members to respond to certain questions concerning prompt payment with insurance companies and HMOs with whom they do business. So far, 12 agencies have responded and two have expressed that they have frequent difficulty receiving prompt payment within a 45-day turn around period.

The result of our sample (that the majority of agencies are not having prompt payment difficulty) is consistent with the information recently learned from Crain's Health Pulse. According to Crain's, even though 4 out of 5 complaints filed with the Department of Insurance (DOI) last year involved payment delays, the complaints dropped by 24% and the DOI reversed an average of 48% of HMO's denials of coverage. Despite this drop in complaints and the current result of our sample, The Coalition remains interested in obtaining its own data

NYC among worst in nation in uninsured population

The UCLA Center for Health Policy Research reported in its July 2000 Policy Brief that New York City's rate of health insurance coverage is among the worst five of the more than eighty metropolitan areas they surveyed, with 27% of its population uninsured. Of those in the low- to moderate-income bracket with no usual source of care, fully 43% were uninsured, and of those who had seen a doctor in the last year, 39% lacked insurance.

In metropolitan areas, individuals with low to moderate incomes who lack insurance are less likely to have regular health care than their insured counterparts. Furthermore, the higher the percentage of this population that is uninsured, the higher the percentage of those with no regular source of health care. The percentage of the entire population that is uninsured varied from a low of 10% in Minneapolis, MN to a high of 31% in Los Angeles, CA.

There is likely a statistical correlation between high-uninsured levels among entire city populations, and high levels of uninsured among low- to moderate-income residents of those same cities.

It comes as no surprise that the Center for Health Policy Research recommends better coverage for the low- to moderate-income population. As they say, "states can help these urban centers by expanding coverage to more of their uninsured populations." The Coalition agrees with this assessment and will continue to work with our allies in government to extend health insurance to all low and moderate income New Yorkers. ©

concerning this subject in order to acquire a better understanding of our members' experiences with prompt payment. We would, therefore, like to receive more responses to the survey and will continue to accept comments so that we can determine if this is a problem that requires advocacy or if training on prompt payment laws is necessary.

If you would like to participate in the survey, please return the survey to Ed Smith by fax at (212) 742-2080 or contact him by phone at (212) 742-1600x103. ©

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The Medicine Program helps patients access medications

As drug costs steadily increase, more of the population find themselves in the predicament formerly faced by the indigent and destitute alone. The unemployed, low to middle income families, and many now living on social security benefits are under increasing financial pressure to provide for their basic needs and afford their daily prescription medicine as well.

Cynthia and Dan Hogg co-founded The Medicine Program in 1994, in an effort to help qualified patients access many "patient assistance programs" now being sponsored by the major drug manufacturers. These programs have proven lifesaving for thousands who are left with no alternatives in their ongoing efforts to afford their daily prescription medication.

The Medicine Program advocates for patients who have no

other place to turn, and helps to inform them of the availability and merits of the programs. It also assists the qualified in the sometimes complicated application process required to become eligible for enrollment.

The patient's doctor must be a willing participant in the application process, and the Hogg's report that most providers are willing to spend a moment to prepare and send forms to the appropriate manufacturer for their patient's consideration.

The Medicine Program's brochures, including the necessary form to begin the application process, are available in quantity by contacting: The Medicine Program, P.O. Box 4182, Poplar Bluff, MO, 63902-2126. Tel: (573) 778-1118, help@themedicineprogram.com or www.themedicineprogram.com. ©

Half-fare fairness

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this war on multiple fronts. Our efforts to open the eligibility requirements to people with Mental Illness took a big step forward this last spring when the legislature closed a major loophole that allowed the MTA to discriminate against people with Mental Illness who are eligible for SSI. The loophole was supposed to be closed on July 17, 2000. (See *Briefs* 7/24/00)

Despite the additional hoops the MTA is making people with mental illness jump through (which we are also fighting against), people receiving SSI or SSDI benefits are now eligible for the half-fare program. Unfortunately, veterans and others with mental illness are not eligible for the program. If you work with consumers who cannot participate in the half-fare program because they are not eligible for SSI/SSDI, we want to know them because they could play a critical role in helping to fight the MTA's discriminatory application of the Half-Fare program! Contact David Bergman at ext. 102 or dbergman@cvmha.org ©

New Board members

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League of America.

We welcome them to the board and commend them on their continued commitment to the Mental Health Community. ©

We Have Volunteers

The 92nd Street Y Teen Program has hundreds of high-school age volunteers who will do your organization's dirty work. On Sunday, November 12th, 10:30-2:00, we will cook, clean, paint, visit, shelve, stuff, or anything else that benefits your agency. Contact Sharon Goldman at (212)415-5614. ©

Corporate compliance

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Thornton, a business operations specialist with more than 20 years experience as a senior manager in for-profit and non-profit organizations, delineated all the elements needed to design and implement an effective compliance plan as required by the Department of Health and Human Services.

If you missed this important presentation, The Coalition, in conjunction with the New York State Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare, will repeat the session on:

- October 31, 2000 at South Oaks Hospital in Amityville, NY
- November 1, 2000 at Holiday Inn in Fishkill, NY
- November 2, 2000 at Rehabilitation Support Services in Guilderland, NY
- November 3, 2000 at Rochester Rehabilitation Center in Rochester, NY

For more information regarding these sessions please contact Patricia Gallo Goldstein at (212) 742-1600x106. ©

Upcoming Events

September 28	Special Executive Committee Meeting at The Coalition Joint meeting of the Government Relations Committee and the General Membership at The Coalition
September 29	Emergency Meeting on the Collapse of Negotiations with OMH on Supported Housing Stipends
October 3	New York Work Exchange Steering Committee at The Coalition
October 11	Government Relations Committee with Norman Brier at The Coalition
October 12	Finance Committee at The Coalition Board of Directors at The Coalition
October 17	PLC: Managing Change in the New World Order of Managed Care at The Coalition
November 15	Big Apple Circus

*PLC = Professional Learning Center

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— Help Wanted —

Brooklyn Psychiatric Centers, Inc. seeks Liaison Project Director, CSW – 5 yrs. exp. to supervise & administer new innovative AOT Program – SPMI population. Must have excellent clinical and communication skills. Spanish speaking a plus. Psychiatrist for AOT program, 7/14 hrs. Board Certified or Board Eligible w/in 2 yrs. NYS License. Exc. salary & benefits. CSW for AOT Program provide assessments, case management, individual & family treatment. Spanish speaking a plus. CSW for Geriatric Day Program providing milieu therapy to adults. CSW for School Based Program to provide indiv/group/family psychotherapy in a school setting. Bi-lingual/Spanish/Creole. Exc. Union benefits. Case Manager w/CSW; BA in a high school setting 3-5 days/wk. Minorities encouraged to apply. EOE. For all above positions send resume to: Marie Kelleher, ACSW, Director of Clinical Operations, **Brooklyn Psychiatric Centers, Inc.** 189 Montague St., Brooklyn, NY 11201. FAX (718) 875-5672. ©

Supportive Housing Network of New York seeks Member Services Coordinator to build Network membership, develop and coordinate services to member agencies, disseminate information on community resources, Network activities and relevant policy issues. Will also organize workshops and trainings, produce monthly new bulletin. BA min., exc. writing and presentation skills, min. 3 yrs. in housing & homeless issues. MS Word, Access, Outlook, and Internet. Sal: mid 30s depending upon exp. Exc. benefits. Send resume & cover by Oct. 1 to Wendy Seligson, Supportive Housing Network, 475 Riverside Dr., Ste. 250, NY, NY 10115. Fax: (212) 870-3334. ©

Safe Horizon seeks Director of Development to assist with private fundraising, enhance visibility leading to special events that generate revenue for Safe Horizon programs. Work w/ Board, Exec. Dir., oversee day-to-day operation of development office, supervise administrative staff and outside consultants when necessary. Will also assist and spearhead special projects to further agency fundraising, programmatic and advocacy objectives. BA and a min. 5 yrs. exp. in development or equivalent field. Solicitation exp. w/individuals, corporations & foundations is needed. Computer literate. Excellent communication & research skills. Please send resume/cover letter/writing samples/salary req. to: Jill Clark, Sr. VP, Development & External Affairs, 2 Lafayette Street, 3rd Floor, NY, NY 10007; Fax (212) 577-3897. ©

Weston United Community Renewal seeks Quality Assurance Manager for motivated individual. Responsibilities include: updating policies & procedures, training, internal audits, trends & outcome analysis & compliance. Exp. in OMH, DMH & DHS audit req. & MICA residential programs a +. Management position reports to ED. College Degree w/ 3 yrs. of related exp. Computer literate. exc. written & interpersonal skills. Salary commensurate w/exp. Great benefits. Fax cover letter w/salary req. to (212) 316-0789. ©

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