

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

Coalition Briefs

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

The Coalition of Voluntary
Mental Health Agencies
cordially invites you to
celebrate with us at the

22nd
Annual
Mental
Health
Awards
Reception

Coalition to Honor Alan Siskind at 22nd Annual Mental Health Awards Reception



The Coalition is pleased to honor our very own Alan Siskind by presenting him with the Founder's Award. Alan will receive this well deserved award at the 22nd Annual Mental Health

Awards Reception.

Long time board member, Past President and tireless Coalition loyalist, Alan has had a long and distinguished career in mental health. He is currently Executive Vice President and CEO of the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services, which serves over 65,000 clients annually in New York City and its environs. Alan received his B.A. from Boston University, his M.S. in Social Work from Columbia University, his Ph.D. from Smith College, and a post-Doctoral certificate from Harvard Medical School's Laboratory of Community Psychiatry.

Join us as we honor Alan, OMH Commissioner Sharon Carpinello and author Bebe Moore Campbell on June 8, 2006. To buy tickets, please call 212-742-1600 ext. 104 or order online at www.cvmha.org.

U.S. Senate Defeats the Health Insurance Marketplace Modernization and Affordability Act (HIMMA)

On May 11, the U.S. Senate voted to block legislation S. 1955 (HIMMA), a bill that would preempt all state benefit, service and provider mandate laws (including those states that have behavioral health parity laws). HIMMA would also have exempted small business health plans, also known as association health plans, from state benefit, service, and provider mandate laws.

The Senate's vote (55-43) fell five votes short of the 60 needed to end the debate on the proposed bill, which would jeopardize vital health care protections for 85 million Americans. The bill was sponsored by U.S. Representative Mike Enzi (R - Wyo.)

Koplewicz Named Director of Na- than S. Kline Institute For Psychiatric Research

Governor Pataki and OMH Commissioner Sharon Carpinello named Harold S. Koplewicz, MD the new Executive Director of OMH's Nathan S. Kline Institute for Psychiatric Research (NKI).

Dr. Koplewicz is internationally known for his work in child and adolescent psychiatry. He is a graduate of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, and has been a Professor of Psychiatry at New York University School of Medicine since 1996.

The Coalition congratulates Dr. Koplewicz and we look forward to working with him in the future.

Coalition Brings Behavioral Healthcare Funding Concerns to Washington, DC

Coalition staff, accompanied by our President, Peter Campanelli (The Institute for Community Living), Carmen Collado (Jewish Board of Family and Children Services, Inc.) and Pamela Straker (Bronx Psychiatric Centers, Inc.) visited Washington D.C. on May 3rd to advocate for the protection of federal funding for behavioral healthcare. Our efforts were combined with National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare members from around the country. We urged the legislature to reject those elements of the President's budget proposal that will reduce Medicaid funding, decrease substance abuse treatment appropriations, and diminish the Mental Health Services Block Grant. We also asked Congress to support the Community Mental Health Services Improvement Act, developed by the National Council, that will increase the capacity of community providers, promote access to treatment and improve service delivery.

The President's FY 2007 budget proposal makes sharp cuts to a number of programs that provide services to people with mental illnesses and substance abuse disorders. Included in this proposal are: a reduction in the federal matching rate for targeted case management to 50%; tightening allowable services that can be claimed as Medicaid rehabilitation services; limiting Medicaid payments when a third-party may be liable; allowing states to use a more restrictive formulary for prescription drugs; and limiting pharmacy reimbursement for certain drugs.

The Coalition met with Congressman Ed Towns and his staff,

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and staff from Congress Members Eliot Engel and Vito Fossella's offices. We also met with staff from Senator Hillary Clinton and Senator Charles Schumer's offices. The day's meetings were very productive, and we hope that more of the Coalition's members will join us in Washington next year.



Pictured (L to R): Heather Rabinowicz, Peter Campanelli, Michael Polenberg, Carmen Collado, Pamela Straker

Upcoming Training from the Coalition's Center for Rehab and Recovery

"Opening the Door to Recovery", the Center's training series designed to build the core competencies of front-line staff and supervisors, will continue with the installment **Best Practices in Employment**. This two day training is designed for agency staff interested in learning how to motivate, assist and support consumers who are pursuing employment. It will be held at the Coalition on May 23rd and 24th from 9am-4pm. For more information, or to register, please visit www.cvmha.org, or call 212-742-1600, ext. 235.

Assistance for Needy Families Potentially Depleted

Governor Pataki announced in early May that he would implement his proposed block grant, Flexible Fund for Family Services (FFFS), utilizing previously unspent funds from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program or TANF. Surplus TANF funds from previous fiscal years combined with the Governor's current TANF budget amount to a total of \$1.041 billion proposed for FFFS. The goal of the proposal is to allow counties to collapse TANF-funded programs, such as Preventive Services, Supportive Housing for Families and Intensive Case Services, into a block grant. No longer in the form of State budget line-items, this may result in counties diluting the original intent of the programs.

Following attempted negotiations, the legislature is now rejecting the Governor's proposal to create the FFFS block grant. In its place the legislature is proposing specific dollar amounts for programs such as those listed above. Fueled by pending changes to the federal Welfare Reform Act in October, the legislature is concerned about the continued existence of valuable services that support employment outcomes among TANF recipients.

Many advocates believe that the Governor's proposal puts the TANF program at risk. Some believe that additional programs including aid for food pantries and soup kitchens and work-support programs that provide transportation services and employment reinforcements for the disabled could be in jeopardy. It appears that some of the neediest New Yorkers might lose essential services and critical family supports. There is potential for advocacy efforts as the budget process unfolds over the next few months.

ePACES Software Training Opportunity

Computer Science Corporation has scheduled ePACES training courses for Clinics in NYC during May and June. You may register for a course by going to their website: <http://www.emedny.org/training/index.aspx>

Coalition Calendar

Center for Rehab and Recovery - Practices in Employment Training
05/23/06 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
05/24/06 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

For more information, or to register, please call 212-742-1600 ext. 235.

Monthly Membership Meeting
05/25/06 3:30 PM - 5:30PM

The Coalition's 22nd Annual Mental Health Awards

06/08/06 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Honoring SOMH Commissioner Sharon Carpinello, Author Bebe Moore Campbell and Children's Services Alan Siskind. RSVP required: Call 212-742-1600 ext. 104, or order tickets online at www.cvmha.org.

Job Board

Coalition Members advertise for free on The Coalition's Job Board! Non-members may advertise for only \$50. Go to www.cvmha.org and click on 'Job Board' and then 'Add a Job.' Please note the addition of a dedicated Job Board for posting psychiatrist positions. View available positions anytime at www.cvmha.org.