



**MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT**  
**Bill # A.10790 / S. 7254**

The Coalition of Behavioral Health Agencies **supports** bill number A.10790 / S. 7254 to extend the sunset date of Kendra's Law from June 30, 2010 to June 30, 2015. We believe that this extension will allow New York State to continue its analysis of the long term effectiveness of the Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) program. AOT was enacted in 1999, to authorize a system for court-ordered outpatient mental health treatment under Kendra's Law. By extending Kendra's law and not making it permanent, New York State will have an opportunity to examine the usefulness of court-ordered participation in relation to voluntary types of programs.

Researchers are inconclusive on the long term effects of Kendra's Law and the benefits of court-ordered versus voluntary participation. In the latest report on Kendra's Law called "New York State Assisted Outpatient Treatment Program Evaluation," conducted by Duke University in June 2009, improvements were found among recipients after 6 months of AOT treatment. When combined with intensive services, engagement increases after 12 months. However, the report also stated that only a limited amount of data was available to evaluate the efficacy of voluntary alternatives.

Benefits found in the AOT program by the Duke report include a reduction in psychiatric hospitalizations and arrests, greater access to appropriate psychiatric medications and improvements in personal functioning (managing appointments, medications and self-care). However, it did not prove that **court-ordered participation** was more efficacious than **voluntary approaches**. Therefore, The Coalition supports the extension of Kendra's Law for an additional 5 years to allow for further study on this issue. Also, we urge the State to investigate further the geographic discrepancies and overrepresentation of racial minorities that currently exist in the implementation of the AOT program.

The Coalition is the umbrella nonprofit, (501)(c)(3), association and public policy advocacy organization of New York's behavioral health providers, representing over 100 non-profit behavioral health agencies. Taken together, these agencies serve more than 450,000 adults and children and deliver the entire continuum of behavioral health care in every neighborhood of a diverse metropolitan New York City.