



Testimony of

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At the Hearing on the
FY10 Preliminary Budget Hearing

The Committee on Mental Health, Mental Retardation,
Alcoholism, Drug Abuse and Disability Services
Hon. G. Oliver Koppell, Chair

The Committee on Finance
Hon. David Weprin, Chair

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THE COALITION'S PROFESSIONAL LEARNING CENTER INITIATIVE

Chairman Koppell, Chairman Weprin, distinguished members of the Committees, thank you for affording us the opportunity to testify before you today on the Mayor's Fiscal 2010 Preliminary Budget. My name is Jason Lippman, and I am the Senior Associate for Policy and Advocacy of the Coalition of Behavioral Health Agencies, the umbrella advocacy organization of New York's behavioral health community, representing over 120 non-profit community-based mental health and substance abuse agencies in metropolitan New York City. Our members constitute a broad cross section of service providers – all sizes from very small to very large; treatment and rehabilitation-oriented; outpatient and residential; focused on linguistically and culturally specific populations and on many special-needs – serving more than 350,000 individuals each day in the five boroughs of New York City and in neighboring counties.

For the past eleven years, the City Council has allocated funding to The Coalition for our Professional Learning Center. This funding allows the Coalition to provide “hands-on” technical assistance and training to New York City's community behavioral health providers on issues that have direct financial and regulatory consequences to them and, consequently, to the people they serve. It is this education and training that keeps agencies current and functioning as they continue to operate in new and ever-changing regulatory, funding and legal environments. We are grateful to the City Council for this allocation, and for its yearly restoration of the Professional Learning Center's funding to the budget each spring.

Over this past year, The Coalition offered training to providers on how to comply with a myriad of complex Medicaid rules in order to get reimbursed for the services they deliver, including Case Management and ACT services. Approximately 65% of the children, teens and

adults served by our member agencies are Medicaid eligible. Even the most capable agencies can lose 10% of their Medicaid billings to miscoding or incomplete record keeping – others have rejection rates as high as 15%, resulting in lost dollars for program services. One of our workshops focused on researching, appealing and resubmitting denied claims. Agencies that rely on Medicaid reimbursement must be able to “audit proof” their work through proper record keeping and high quality billing systems. When done right, billing and documentation can stave off unnecessary losses, ensure a more reliable income stream, and rescue much needed dollars for the system – dollars that ultimately benefit behavioral health consumers.

Through our compliance training series, agencies learned how to protect themselves and their clients in circumstances of potential conflict by complying with state and federal guidelines such as those connected with DRA False Claims Acts; NY State Department of Health’s new Compliance for Medical Assistance Providers; the new Federal 990; and the new stricter HIPAA requirements passed in the Stimulus Package. Our documentation training series reviewed a range of cutting edge methods of medical record documentation, including guidelines, state-specific requirements and what providers can do in circumstances where there is little guidance from either the state or federal government. The workshops included a focus on how to determine medical necessity in the delivery of care to individuals with serious and persistent mental illnesses.

In the year ahead, The Coalition will provide training to agencies, most of whose staff is neither bi-lingual nor bi-cultural, which are seeking to deliver services that are responsive to the needs of New York’s diverse racial and ethnic communities. The training will teach the current workforce ways to examine how the cultures of racial and ethnic minorities influence aspects of

mental illness. These include how patients communicate and manifest their symptoms, their coping styles, family and community supports, and styles or receptivity to seeking treatment.

The Coalition will also focus a series of trainings directed to community behavioral health clinic providers to help them learn and understand how the new State Office of Mental Health (OMH) clinic restructuring program will affect them by changing billing procedures, documentation requirements, and clinic operations. So that we may continue to help mental health and substance abuse agencies provide effective and empowering care to New Yorkers in need, we are asking the City Council to restore \$100,000 to The Coalition's Professional Learning Center. Over the years, the Council has recognized the value of The Coalition's Professional Learning Center, and we are counting on your support once again in the upcoming budget negotiations.

I thank you for your time today, and am available to answer any questions you may have.