



Coalition Briefs

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

Interim list to open

SOMH's Associate Commissioner for Children & Families, Michael P. Zuber, has announced that OMH intends to amend regulations governing Designated Children's Interim Specialty Clinics and remove the cap on the number of designated clinics ("the interim list").

The Coalition applauds the removal of unnecessary barriers to access by children and adolescents to experienced children's mental health clinicians and providers of services to SED children. We also have expressed our concerns that the new formula may actually penalize agencies and proposed some alternatives that might help to avoid possible undercounting of the numbers of Medicaid eligible clients.

Also of concern to us is that additional criteria added by New York City's Department of Mental Health may be too strict and unfairly disqualify clinics capable of providing fully appropriate services to children and families in New York City. In addition, The Coalition seeks a regulatory provision for appealing any exclusions from the list. □

15th Annual Mental Health Awards

If you have not yet purchased tickets for the 15th Annual Mental Health Awards on June 10th at Pfizer world headquarters, you are running out of time. If you have not yet placed an order for an advertisement in our commemorative journal you are in an even bigger hurry. If you are interested in tickets or ads you should contact Judeth Podell at (212) 586-4555x18. □

Kendra's Laws

On May 19 Governor Pataki and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver both introduced involuntary outpatient commitment (IOC) bills entitled Kendra's Law, in honor of Buffalo native Kendra Webdale who died tragically in a subway pushing, allegedly at the hands of Andrew Goldstein, a young man diagnosed with schizophrenia. The bills are very similar; both based on the "Assisted Outpatient Treatment" bill proposed by Attorney General Eliot Spitzer.

Speaker Silver announced his bill at an Albany press conference where he was joined by the parents and sisters of Kendra Webdale, Assembly Mental Hygiene Committee Chair James Brennan of Brooklyn and Assemblywoman Elizabeth Connelly from Staten Island. Governor Pataki was joined in introducing his bill by State Office of Mental Health (OMH) Commissioner James Stone.

Key differences in the bills include:

- Governor Pataki's bill places oversight responsibility for IOC with the counties and psychiatric hospitals. The Speaker's bill requires the State OMH to "establish or fund" the programs.
- The Governor's bill includes a provision for blood and urine tests to ensure compliance; the Speaker's bill has no such provision.
- The Speaker's bill includes a provision entitling persons discharged from inpatient psychiatric facilities, jails and prisons to presumptive Medicaid eligibility for 180 days, something for which The Coalition has long advocated. The Governor's bill makes no provision for presumptive Medicaid eligibility.
- Although both bills look for a history of "serious violent behavior" as a criterion for IOC, the Speaker's bill looks into the previous 36 months (excluding periods of hospitalization) while the Governor's bill has no time limit.
- Governor Pataki's bill clarifies the ability of all OMH licensed hospitals to share clinical information. There is no similar provision in the Speaker's bill.
- The Governor's bill authorizes family members and patients to participate in the drafting of a court-ordered treatment plan. No similar provision appears in the Speaker's bill.
- Physicians can order involuntary transport to a hospital for failure to comply with court-ordered treatment if s/he believes the person may need either emergency or involuntary hospitalization under the Governor's bill. In the Speaker's bill involuntary transport can be ordered only if the person potentially needs emergency hospitalization, a higher standard.
- Speaker Silver's bill applies only to adults, while the Governor's bill applies to anyone over the age of 16.

These two "Kendra's Laws" are the latest addition to a field already crowded with six other IOC bills that have been introduced this session. Senate Mental Hygiene Committee chair Tom Libous is expected to release an "alternatives to IOC" bill within the next weeks. □

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SAMHSA and Open Minds at Coalition conference

Open Minds, a renowned consultancy company in behavioral health business development, and SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration), the federal agency responsible for research and development in the delivery of behavioral healthcare, have both agreed to provide experts and conduct hands-on training for participants in Business and Practice Imperatives: A Future Look at Behavioral Healthcare.

The second annual conference presented by The Coalition and the New York State Council for Behavioral Healthcare in cooperation with the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare and supported by Janssen Pharmaceutica, will be held at Fordham University.

Survival in a changing health care economic environment is the biggest issue facing voluntary providers today across the country and especially in New York. The conference presenters plan to provide information in strategic planning, costing and marketing of services as well as pertinent clinical issues in the delivery of mental health and addiction services in a health reform climate. An exhibition hall will also be open to all participants. The two-day conference is aimed at administrators, policy makers and practitioners. For more information on the conference contact Pat Goldstein at (212) 586-4555x12. ■

Member Notes

On Wednesday, May 26, 1999, at 9:30 A.M., Lenox Hill Neighborhood House will be hosting an open house for their Early Childhood Center. The Open House will be held at 331 East 70th Street in the Auditorium and will include tours of facilities and information sessions on the various programs provided at the Center.

The Head Start Program at the Early Childhood Center provides a range of programs for any child 2.9 to 6 years of age whose family lives on the Upper East Side, between 59th St and 96th St. from York Avenue to 5th. Fees are based on a sliding scale. RSVP to (212) 744-5022 ext. 290, 310, 375. ■

Winning website

The Coalition's website (www.cvmha.org) has been certified by Medinex. Based on a review of the ethics of our website we have been granted certification by medinex.com. Medinex is a health related search engine that prioritizes websites that adhere to a standard of medical ethics. This is the second such recognition our website has received. In April 1998 cvmha.org was the recipient of the Health A to Z four star award. In recognition of our multiple awards we have added a special page to the site to display our honors. They can be found at www.cvmha.org/awards.html. ■

MIS technical assistance moves to phase III

The Coalition's MIS technical assistance project is moving forward very well. Our RFP for a comprehensive MIS system for community-based providers of mental health services garnered eight responses.

Now in phase III we are selecting the best-fit vendors and products. Coalition consultant Jim Chiang, members of the Technical Assistance Committee and Coalition staff members are carefully evaluating the responses that we have received. A short list of potential vendors will be developed at which time we will conduct further assessments and identify finalists. Many thanks to the members of the Technical Assistance Committee for each wading through 38 pounds of responses. ■

Free legal assistance available

New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI) offers a free legal referral service for community-based agencies. Agencies who are experiencing a problem with which they need legal assistance should contact Wendy Brennan at (212) 244-4664. Agencies that qualify will be added to a monthly memo that is read by 78 NYLPI member law firms who are willing to take cases pro bono for community-based agencies. ■

— Help Wanted —

Social worker, CSW: **League School** a nationally recognized agency providing treatment to developmentally disabled children & their families seeks a CSW for their school age program. Successful candidate must have exp working with severely emotionally disturbed children. Bilingual Spanish a plus. Be a part of our multidisciplinary treatment team offering exceptional growth opportunities along with a comprehensive benefit package & a competitive salary. Resume to JB/AB 567 Kingston Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11203. Fax: (718) 778-4018. EOE M/F/D/V/SO Minority candidates encouraged to apply. ■

Upcoming Events

May 25	MCTA: Systems Integration at CSS
May 31	Memorial Day - Coalition closed
June 1	membership Committee at PRFI
June 7	MICA Committee at The Bridge
June 8	MCTA: Clinical Pathways at CSS
June 10	Finance Committee at CVMHA Board of Directors at CVMHA
	Mental Health Awards at Pfizer World Headquarters
June 16	Children's Committee at CVMHA
June 22-23	Best Practices Conference at Fordham