

Fund Supportive Housing & Community Services!



# KEEP THE PROMISE

Volume 2  
Issue 4  
September 2009

## Legislative Update 2009, by Cheri Bragg, Coordinator

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CT finally has a budget for the 2009-2011 biennium. The House and Senate passed a budget (HB6802) in the wee hours of August 31st/September 1st. Governor Rell chose to let the budget become law rather than sign or veto it. The legislature will soon go into session to enact budget implementer language, some of which can affect people with mental illnesses.



(Photo by Cheri Bragg)

Unfortunately, many of the budget cuts advocates feared were realized: psychiatric medications, previously exempt, will now be subject to the PDL (the Department of Social Services' preferred drug list). Of equal concern is the elimination of the Medicare Part D State wraparound. The State of CT previously picked up the cost of medications not covered by the Medicare Part D plan. Advocates will fight to ensure that this change does not result in people with mental illness leaving the pharmacy without any medication, but at least with a temporary supply, so that they have adequate time to work with their doctor to switch to a covered medication or request an exception. Budget language also demands that the DSS definition of "medically necessary" used in the administration of Medicaid be changed no later than July 1, 2010 to "reduce inefficiencies in administration" while preserving quality of care provided to beneficiaries. Advocates will continue to monitor this. Adolescent mental health was not moved from DCF to DMHAS. On a positive note, money was included in the budget to open six new Family Support Centers and to bring 16 year olds into the juvenile justice system from the adult system.

Ongoing advocacy includes monitoring plans for the closure of Cedarcrest to ensure preservation of needed inpatient capacity while investing in community mental health services and supports. Coalition members are encouraged to work with their providers to answer personal care questions. In addition, people can call **CHOICES** for questions regarding state health insurance programs and Medicare Part D at: **800-994-7422**. Also, please see page 2 of this newsletter for information about upcoming advocacy trainings, including one on "Access to Medications and Housing: Current Status and Future Advocacy" for additional information and personal advocacy tools. Keep the Promise will continue to advocate with people in recovery, their family members, and advocates to ensure that CT creates and maintains a comprehensive, community mental health system and supports.

### "In the know..."

Next KTP  
Monthly Meetings:

10/21/09 and 11/18/09  
10am-12 pm  
at CVH  
Page Hall in Room 217

Sign up to receive KTP  
email alerts:

keepthepromise@namict.org  
or call 1-800-215-3021 or  
860-882-0236

Check out our new

WEBSITE and BLOG at  
[www.ctkeepthepromise.org](http://www.ctkeepthepromise.org)

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 ★ KTP gratefully ★  
 ★ acknowledges the ★  
 ★ generous support ★  
 ★ of the Melville ★  
 ★ Charitable Trust. ★  
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## **SAVE THE DATES:**

We have a number of trainings and events coming up soon! So mark your calendar and get ready for some great information to step up your advocacy skills, increase your knowledge on access to medications and housing, be creative, and celebrate 10 years of advocacy with KTP!



### ***ESSENTIALS OF LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY***

This two-day training will be held **October 1st and 8th, 2009** at the Legislative Office Building, 300 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT in Room 2E. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. in the Atrium on the second floor. Coffee and breakfast snacks as well as box lunches will be available. Class starts at 9:00 and ends at 3:30. All participants are expected to attend both days. Cost is \$10. Scholarships and travel/family care reimbursements are available with preapproval as cost should not be a barrier to attending the training.

### ***LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP TRAINING***

Pre-requisite: Essentials training. Also a two-day training that will take place **December 3rd and 10th, 2009** at the Legislative Office Building, 300 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT in Room 2E. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. in the Atrium on the second floor. Coffee and breakfast snacks as well as lunch will be available. Class begins at 9:00 and ends at 3:30. All participants are expected to attend both days. Cost of the training is \$10. Scholarships and travel/family care reimbursements are available with preapproval as cost should not be a barrier to attend.

Both trainings are co-facilitated by Jan VanTassel, Esq., Executive Director of CT Legal Rights Project and Doreen DelBianco, Legislative Program Director for DMHAS.

### ***ACCESS TO MEDICATIONS & HOUSING: CURRENT STATUS & FUTURE ADVOCACY***

Research shows that access to medications and housing are intrinsic to successful recovery, stability, health and community integration for people with mental illness in CT.

Please join us for one of these two regional KTP trainings co-sponsored by CT Legal Rights Project and NAMI-CT. The first will be held Thursday, **October 22, 2009**, 1:30–4:00 pm, at the Old Judiciary Room, State Capitol, Hartford, and the next, on Tuesday, **October 27, 2009**, from 10:00 am –12:30 pm, at Fairfield Public Library, 1080 Old Post Road, Fairfield, CT 06824. Co-facilitators are KTP Co-Chairs, Jan VanTassel, Esq., Executive Director of CT Legal Rights Project and Alicia Woodsby, Public Policy Director of NAMI-CT.

**To register for any of the above trainings, please contact Cheri or Maura at 1-800-215-3021 or email [keepthepromise@namict.org](mailto:keepthepromise@namict.org). Training binders and advocacy resource booklets will be provided.**

### **AWARDS CEREMONY & 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY!**

If you testified, wrote a letter to the editor that was published, got interviewed by a newspaper, television/radio station, advocated locally, signed someone up to testify or acted as Visibility Patrol, get ready to celebrate. Mark your calendars for November 5, 2009, and join us for a gala event at Saint Thomas Seminary, 467 Bloomfield Avenue, Bloomfield, CT, 06002, from 11:30–3:00. We will have a buffet lunch, with exceptional entertainment, and well-deserved awards. We want to include everyone in this year's celebration, so be sure to let us know about any local efforts of which we may be unaware.



We are also looking for any memorabilia, photos, articles, etc to include in the ceremony. Call us today!

### **WINTER HOLIDAY AND NOTE CARD CONTEST TIME!**



Over the years KTP has seen lots of artistic talent from our members and has received lots of inquiries about the cards. We would like to extend the theme of the card contest to include not only Winter Holiday but general designs such as thank you, flowers, and portraits as well.

Interested parties can submit a winter holiday card design, **which must be secular**, and/or a general theme design **NO LATER THAN OCTOBER 16TH, 2009.**

The KTP Card Committee will choose winning designs. The holiday cards will be professionally printed with the KTP logo and artist's name (if desired) on the back of the card. They will be available in November to coalition members to send to their legislators during the holidays.

A variety of note cards, in packs of eight, will be available for sale as a KTP fundraiser. All designs will become property of Keep the Promise Coalition. Please mail entries to: Keep the Promise Coalition, 241 Main Street, 5th Floor, Hartford, CT 06106, by **October 16th!** Contact Cheri or Maura at 1-800-215-3021 or [keepthepromise@namict.org](mailto:keepthepromise@namict.org) with any questions. We can't wait to see your designs!

## Supportive Housing: Next Steps

Supportive housing was one of four KTP priorities picked for the 2009 legislative session. KTP has continually supported this initiative and sees access to safe, affordable housing as one of the keys to ending mental health system gridlock. People are stuck in psychiatric hospitals and nursing facilities when they do not require those levels of care simply because they cannot access community housing. Supportive housing is a critical type of housing that provides people with mental illnesses the opportunity to move from restrictive, expensive settings into independent apartments with accessible supports, either on-site or near-by, and is proven to reduce the need for more expensive facility and emergency care. It is a proven solution for taxpayers costing an average of \$54 per day as compared to \$183 per day in prison, \$218 per day for nursing facility care or \$1200 per day for inpatient psychiatric care.

Supportive housing was quickly threatened early in the session as the Governor's budget not only neglected to include any new units of supportive housing, thereby failing to invest in the creation of housing for veterans, families with children, and people with disabilities, but also pulling existing funding for 150 "shovel ready" units of Next Steps/Round III supportive housing. The final budget agreement restored partial funding, but advocates continue to fight for solid investment in supportive housing, an investment that will save the State of CT money in the near future, something the State desperately needs during financially strapped times like these. We cannot continue to do business in fiscally irresponsible ways which "save money" on paper today, but cost money and lives tomorrow. We need to continue to advocate for investment in Supportive Housing!

## CT's Youth & Young Adult Consortium for Mental Health

**Saturday, September 26 & Saturday, October 3, 2009  
9:30 am—7 pm at Central CT State University.**

**Have Your Voices Heard by joining youth and young adults (aged 16 – 30) for a fun, interactive 2-day event! The Consortium aims to provide peer support and advocacy opportunities youth and young adults can use to change their lives and the lives of others in positive ways. Join us and meet your peers from around the state and share your ideas for how the Consortium can best serve your needs!**

**Sign-Up! Contact Sadie to register and for more information at 203-569-7531 or [ct.yyaconsortium@gmail.com](mailto:ct.yyaconsortium@gmail.com) by September 11th. Space is limited. Meals provided. Transportation available.**

*Supported by the CT Workforce Collaborative on Behavioral Health, Families United for Children's Mental Health, North Central Regional Mental Health Board & the National Alliance on Mental Illness of CT (NAMI-CT)*

## QuIC (Quality Improvement Collaborative)

The QuIC was funded by a Federal Mental Health Transformation grant awarded to the Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services. The mission of QuIC is to "develop and implement standards for the involvement of consumers, youth and family members in improving mental health care for the state of Connecticut." QuIC partners include: CT's five Regional Mental Health Board Directors, Advocacy Unlimited, NAMI-CT (National Alliance on Mental Illness-CT), and FAVOR (a children's mental health advocacy organization). Local input has been refined into Standards and pilot surveys by the partners and the QuIC's Central Coordinating Council (CCC) made up of consumers, youth and family members from across the State. For more information about the QuIC and to learn how you can be involved, please call Kalan Ross, QuIC Project Coordinator, at: (860) 667-6388 X16.



Keep the Promise  
 241 Main Street, 5th Floor  
 Hartford, CT 06106

Phone: 860-882-0236 or  
 800-215-3021  
 Fax: 860-882-0240

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KTP Monthly Meeting:  
 10/21/09, 11/18/09 10am-12pm  
 CVH, Page Hall, Room 217

Call or Email to RSVP  
 —lunch included—

Non-Profit Org.  
 U.S. Postage  
 PAID  
 Hartford, CT  
 Permit No. 3441



*The Keep the Promise Coalition is dedicated to advocating for the “Blue Ribbon Solutions” needed to maintain and expand critical mental health services for adults and children. We hope you will join us in building the bridge to support, respect and recovery. Together we can create change!*

## Coordinator’s Corner by Cheri Bragg

Although they are still putting the “final touches” on the 2010-2011 budget, it is time to start thinking about the Coalition’s 2010 legislative priorities. KTP’s Steering Committee\* will meet on **September 24, 2009**, to start the process of picking legislative priorities to propose to the larger Coalition. If you have specific suggestions, you can speak to one or more of the Steering Committee members or call Maura or me directly at (800) 215-3021 or (860) 882-0236 with your feedback. Finally, Coalition members will be presented with proposed legislative priorities at the October 21st KTP meeting and have a chance to vote on the priorities at the November 18th KTP meeting at CVH with an opportunity for feedback in between those dates. Last year’s four priorities were: 1) Supportive Housing 2) Youth/Young Adult Transition Services 3) Raising the Medicaid Income Limit and 4) Non-profit mental health provider funding. These priorities may continue to play a dominant role going forward. Members are strongly encouraged to participate in this important Coalition process.

\*KTP Coalition co-chair Sheila Amdur announced at the 8/27 Steering Committee meeting that she is stepping down and appointed Alicia Woodsby, NAMI-CT’s Public Policy Director, as the new co-chair. Please join us in congratulating Alicia! Thank you does not seem to do justice to our gratitude for Sheila’s contributions to the Keep the Promise Coalition as a member and co-chair. Sheila was one of the original members of KTP and has contributed to KTP’s evolution and success. Please join us in thanking Sheila for her tireless efforts on behalf of KTP!

