

Fund Supportive Housing & Community Services!



KEEP THE PROMISE

March 2010
Edition

Legislative Update 2010, by Cheri Bragg, Coordinator

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Serious cuts to mental health care are on the table just as Connecticut is poised to receive \$66 million under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), specifically intended to prevent cuts to our state's Medicaid programs and to protect drug coverage for people on Medicare and Medicaid (people who are dually eligible). Despite multiple cuts that have already begun to affect low-income older adults and people with disabilities, further cuts are being proposed in the Governor's recent Deficit Mitigation and Mid-term budget proposals.



(Photo by Cheri Bragg)

"In the know..."
 Next KTP
 Monthly Meetings:
 04/21/10 and 05/19/10
 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

Some of the recent cuts impacting low-income people with mental illness, older adults and people with other disabilities include new co-pays for dual eligibles on Medicare Part D (up to \$15 per month), restrictions on psychiatric medications for people receiving drug coverage through Medicaid or SAGA, and the elimination of drug coverage for medications not on a person's private Medicare Part D plan (the state used to pick up the cost of these drugs for people who also have Medicaid or ConnPACE).

Additional cuts proposed include increasing co-pays for those who are "dually eligible" to \$20 per month, co-pays for the entire Medicaid population, and removing the hard-won protection that the Legislature just put in place for people on Medicaid and SAGA who are stable on psychiatric medications. This protection would have exempted any mental health related prescription that had been filled or re-filled in the last 12 months from prior authorization.

All of these cuts have been proven to result in increased emergency care and medication disruptions and could wind up costing the state significantly more. Additionally, the proposed cuts could easily be off-set by utilizing the ARRA funds for their intended purpose: to preserve Medicaid and medication coverage for low-income citizens. The Federal Government recognizes the importance of protecting Medicaid. Connecticut must ensure that these funds are used to protect low-income people as well as Connecticut's bottom line. **Please call your legislators and tell them to: "Preserve Medicaid and access to medications by utilizing the \$66 million in ARRA funds as intended".**

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 ★ **KTP gratefully** ★
 ★ **acknowledges the** ★
 ★ **generous support** ★
 ★ **of the Melville** ★
 ★ **Charitable Trust.** ★
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ATTENTION! MEDICATION ACCESS CHANGES

On January 1, 2010, state policy changes impacting prescription drug access were implemented and will affect people on MEDICAID, (INCLUDING HUSKY A), SAGA, CONNPACE AND THOSE ON MEDICARE PART D. More changes will go into effect on April 1st.

If you or someone you know or work with has trouble getting medication prescribed by their doctor resulting in disruption and/or other adverse consequences, please contact Keep the Promise Coalition or NAMI-CT at 1-800-215-3021 to report it.

It is critical that we document any harm resulting from these restrictive policies. Problems at the pharmacy may include: 1) The program won't pay for the drug and the person does not have the money to cover the cost, 2) The pharmacy tells them their doctor has to ask for prior authorization, 3) The person does not have the money for the co-pay (only applies to people on both Medicare and Medicaid).

Please join us in our effort to document medication disruptions and humanize the harm and cost of creating barriers to needed treatment.

Thank you for sharing your story!



Southwest Regional Mental Health Board Hosts Legislative Breakfasts, By Kim O'Reilly, Executive Director



During the month of January, the Southwest Regional Mental Health Board hosted two legislative breakfasts that featured Young Adult Services (YAS). One event was held for representatives from the Greater Bridgeport area and one for representatives from the Stamford-Norwalk-Greenwich area.



A wonderful group of young adults participated from Greater Bridgeport Community Mental Health Center and Bridge House and spoke about how their lives have been transformed by participating in YAS. They gave insightful and moving testimony regarding why having specialized young adult services is so important and what else they need to support them in their recovery journeys. One young adult spoke about his transition from DCF to DMHAS saying "DMHAS has had better things for me and has done more for me than DCF ever had done. YAS has helped me to be more independent, helped me with social skills and in making friendships." Many young adults spoke about the support they have received, expressing that "YAS is like the family I never knew."

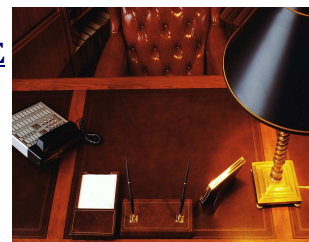
The event also included a display of young adult art and an overview of young adult activities, including the very popular Low Key Café. Representative Chris Caruso was very inspired by the young adults and has offered to help them plan and host future legislative events.

REGION II REGIONAL MENTAL HEALTH BOARD INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR HIRED!

The Region II Regional Mental Health Board recently hired Kristie Barber as the interim Executive Director. She started on January 8th and will continue until a permanent Executive Director is hired.

Kristie was a Corporate Trainer and educator at Yale New Haven Health Services. Also, her area of studies included Communications and Psychology.

Her contact information is as follows: Phone: 860-262-5029, email: execdir@rmhb2.org.





2010 Legislative Breakfasts

A glimpse at several mental health & related breakfasts held in CT!

January 14th— New Haven Juvenile Justice Community Breakfast at Gateway Community College

January 19th—SWRMHB—Focus on Young Adults

January 21st- Middlesex Coalition for Children and the Middlesex Area Interagency Council

January 26th- SWRMHB Focus on Young Adults –Human Services Council, Norwalk, CT

January 27th – “No More Crumbs Coalition”, New Haven

February 1st – NAMI- Fairfield and Stamford/Greenwich

February 1st - Options , Branford, CT

February 17th—Gilead Community Services, Middletown, CT

March 3rd– Sponsored by CT Juvenile Justice Alliance at Mount St John, Deep River, CT

March 3rd—CT Family Support Council, Legislative Office Building, Hartford, CT

March 9th—Common Ground Social Club, East Hartford, CT

March 9th– Sponsored by CT Juvenile Justice Alliance at First Congregation Church Willimantic, CT

March 16th - NCRMHB, Legislative Dining Room, Hartford, CT

March 23rd— Prime Time House, Torrington, CT



Closure of Cedar Ridge Hospital approved with Conditions

On March 1st, the Office of Health Care Access (OHCA) approved the closure of Cedar Ridge Hospital (the mental health portion of the Cedar Crest campus) in Newington. The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services had to apply for termination of acute psychiatric care and residential step down services. It was approved with conditions set by OHCA:

- Legislative approval for DMHAS to certify intermediate care beds at private hospitals for inpatient psychiatric care.

- Federal approval of a state plan amendment allowing the state to bill Medicaid for intermediate psychiatric inpatient care at private hospitals.

- Signed agreements between DMHAS and the providers that will develop appropriate services and housing in the community for all individuals at Cedar Ridge for are ready for discharge.

- Letters from providers expressing their plans to develop additional capacity in necessary community services and housing for the future demand of such services that will prevent gridlock in acute inpatient psychiatric beds.

- Reports from a new utilization management process that demonstrate that individuals are evaluated regularly and appropriately; and that patients experience less of a delay when they are ready for discharge.

- A comprehensive plan that identifies the current demand and capacity to meet that demand by service category, including, but not limited to, inpatient, step-down, and community-level services. The plan shall make assumptions and support such assumptions with evidence, as to future demand by service category and how the CT mental health addictions service system will meet that future demand.

CT must not repeat past mistakes in closing psychiatric hospitals of failing to provide comprehensive, community mental health services, housing, and supports to those leaving hospitals and those already in the community.

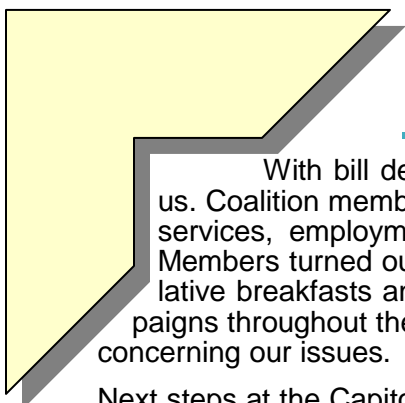


Keep the Promise
 241 Main Street, 5th Floor
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The Keep the Promise Coalition is dedicated to advocating for the “Blue Ribbon Solutions” needed to maintain and expand critical mental health services for adults and children. We hope you will join us in building the bridge to support, respect and recovery. Together we can create change!



Coordinator’s Corner by Cheri Bragg

With bill deadlines looming and most hearings coming to an end, our work is still before us. Coalition members have done a wonderful job of testifying on Supportive Housing, young adult services, employment, agency budgets, medication access, Medicaid, Medical Necessity, etc. Members turned out at hearings, submitted written testimony, met with their legislators, held legislative breakfasts and events locally, published newspaper articles and participated in call-in campaigns throughout the state. We need to continue to look for opportunities to engage with legislators concerning our issues.

Next steps at the Capitol will include opportunities to meet with legislators while the House and Senate are in session. Please call Cheri or Maura to set up a time to do this in the near future, either individually or in groups. Our message continues to be: “Keep the Promise to fund a comprehensive, community mental health system, including housing, in CT and protect Medicaid and medication access.”

With an eye to the future, we must also start strategizing for the Fall 2010 elections. Many state positions are up for re-election, including Connecticut Senators and Representatives and the Governor. Governor Rell will not be running and the primary races have already begun to be broadcast. This is an additional opportunity for Coalition members to make community mental health a priority by following the election process, attending events whenever possible, hosting candidate forums, and making mental health an issue by asking questions and looking for media opportunities. The future of mental health in CT depends upon it!



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