

Human Services Network – Announcements – September 2007

HSN Agency Announcements

- **Kellie Schiller of LifeWays** announced that a program will begin for teens in Hillsdale County called **Multi-Systemic Therapy**. MST will focus on teens that are having serious problems with the law and other issues – school, substance abuse, etc. A meeting will be held at 11am today (September 18) at the ISD to further explain MST. Please contact Kellie for more information (800-284-8288).
- **Lucy Booth of United Way** announced that **Make a Difference Day** will be October 13. To participate, please contact the UW office at 439-5050.
- **Lucy Booth of United Way** also announced that **Youth Younted**, the leadership group for teens, is accepting members – contact UW at 439-5050
- **Jane Munson of Key Opportunities** announced that the Job Access Transportation money has been spent. Money for medical transportation from the Community Foundation has also been spent – Key will be reapplying for those funds for next year.
- **Julie Carey** announced that **Samaritan Place** has openings at this time for homeless women with children. Please refer clients to Nancy Armstrong at CAA.
- **Steve Todd** announced that flu shots will be available at a **Health Fair** at the Senior Center on October 20 for \$30, not \$20 as originally advertised.
- **Steve Todd** also announced that, on October 30, the Community Health Agency will be holding a **Healthy Community meeting** in Coldwater (Branch County) for all three counties to brainstorm about health issues for rural youth, with invitations going to schools, faith-based organizations, government, and medical fields. A grant was received from Johnson Foundation to cover the costs. The goal is to form a steering committee to lead to a program to address youth obesity.
- **Ginny Wood-Bailey** announced that **Region 2 Area Agency on Aging** has a little bit of unmet needs money left before their fiscal year ends September 30 for seniors 60 and over for utility shut-off or durable medical equipment. There also are some respite-care funds available (caregiver or patient must be 60 or over) before the end of the fiscal year.
- **Lesia Pikaart** reported that the **MPRI (Michigan Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative)** plan has been submitted, and the service plan has been approved. Final approval of the plan is expected in writing in a few weeks.
- **Amber Yoder of Hillsdale County Community Foundation** reported that there will be a College Night at Hillsdale College on October 8 at 6:30pm at the Sports Complex. Approximately 50 colleges will be attending with information for high school juniors and seniors, and the Foundation's scholarship packets will be available for the first time that night.
- The **Youth Committee of the Foundation** is holding a fundraiser called Battle of the Marching Bands on Saturday, October 20, at the Hillsdale College football field. All area marching bands have been invited.
- The grant cycle for the **Youth grants** at the Foundation has been changed to two cycles, to match up with the Adult grants.
- **Roy Vargas** announced that, in conjunction with the Prosecutor's Office, there is a program now for youth who are ticketed for MIP (minor in possession) or DUI (driving under the influence). Efforts are also being made by LifeWays and McCullough Vargas to address the high incidences of alcohol-related crashes (highest in the ten-county region) and other issues of concern to the county using SPF-SEG funding.
- **Nancy Miller of LifeWays** gave an update on the state budget process, indicating that there might be cuts to mental health and others. She encouraged all HSN members to work together to serve those most needy.
- **Jane Munson** announced that support is still needed for **2-1-1** funding. There will be a local committee to address the funding – please contact Jane Munson if you are willing to serve.
- **Terry Vear** of the **Senior Center** announced:

- Perennial Park is hosting “**Universe Story**” – tapestries created by African women, telling their life stories. The panels will be on display in September.
 - The **commodities distribution** site will be changing – stay tuned for further details.
 - **Karaoke** is available at the Center on Thursdays from 5:00-7:00pm – open to everyone – free!
 - **Health Fair** at the Senior Center on October 20 from 9:00am – 1:00pm. The theme is “Treat Yourself to Better Health.”
 - **Weight Watchers at Work** is starting a 13-week program on Wednesday mornings at 7:00am.
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Other Information Related to Human Services

For detailed information on the State budget and how it will affect families and children, go to the website below:



http://www.michiganschildren.org/images/stories/BudgetBasics/2007/9_20budgetupdate.pdf

MSHDA has granted Hillsdale County an additional five (5) Housing Choice Vouchers. These vouchers are available for homeless singles or families with a qualifying disability. Nancy Armstrong of CAA will be working with our Section 8 Voucher friends, Dana and Justin Ramus, to process applications for these vouchers.

VA's Suicide Hot Line Begins Operations

Jul 31, 2007

To ensure veterans with emotional crises have round-the-clock access to trained professionals, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has begun operation of a national suicide prevention hot line for veterans.

“Veterans need to know these VA professionals are literally a phone call away,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. “All service members who experience the stresses of combat can have wounds on their minds as well as their bodies. Veterans should see mental health services as another benefit they have earned, which the men and women of VA are honored to provide.”

The toll-free hot line number is 1-800-273-TALK (8255). VA's hot line will be staffed by mental health professionals in Canandaigua, N.Y. They will take toll-free calls from across the country and work closely with local VA mental health providers to help callers.

To operate the national hot line, VA is partnering with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

“The hot line will put veterans in touch – any time of the day or night, any day of the week, from anywhere in the country – with trained, caring professionals who can help,” added Nicholson. “This is another example of the VA's commitment to provide world-class health care for our nation's veterans, especially combat veterans newly returned from Iraq and Afghanistan.”

The suicide hot line is among several enhancements to mental health care that Nicholson has announced this year. In mid July, the Department's top mental health professionals convened in the Washington, D.C., area to review the services provided to veterans of the Global War on Terror.

VA is the largest provider of mental health care in the nation. This year, the Department will spend about \$3 billion for mental health. More than 9,000 mental health professionals, backed up by primary care physicians and other health professionals in every VA medical center and outpatient clinic, provide mental health care to about 1 million veterans each year.

Source: Department of Veterans Affairs Press Release

Congress Approaching SCHIP Compromise, House Vote Expected Soon

After discussion between the House and Senate, and significant meeting in the middle--especially from House Democrats who were pushing for a larger package--Congress appears to be nearing a deal to reauthorize the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) in time to get it to the President's desk before the program's September 30 expiration.

Each state has an SCHIP; combined, they provide much-needed health insurance to more than 6 million low-income children whose families earn too much to qualify for Medicaid, those who are either not offered or cannot afford private coverage, and some lower income adults. At press time, details of the compromise bill were largely still being withheld, but it will most likely be closer to the version the Senate passed by a veto-proof majority of 68-31. Providing approximately \$35 billion additional dollars for the successful program, the Senate bill (S. 1893/H.R. 976) would encompass 4 million children who otherwise would go uninsured. CWLA and other national groups have been heavily advocating for Section 814 of the House bill (H.R. 3162) to be included, which would ward off for one year a proposed regulation that would restrict access to the [Medicaid rehabilitative services option](#).

The House is expected to vote on the compromise package September 25, and the Senate shortly thereafter. Congress is coming together for the sake of children and their well-being to try and meet the September 30 deadline, but even if and when the compromise passes, SCHIP still faces a threatened Presidential veto. The *New York Times* quoted White House spokesperson Tony Fratto cautioning, "The House and the Senate still appear to be far away from legislation that we would find acceptable."

Should a presidential veto occur and SCHIP not officially be reauthorized, a short-term extension is possible, most likely at current funding levels. The Congressional Research Service (CRS) has reported that in that situation, many states would, not surprisingly, run into severe financial hardship. CRS believes 35 states would exhaust their federal SCHIP funds in FY 2008--12 of them facing shortfalls immediately--requiring them to either draw down Medicaid dollars instead or wait for HHS to redistribute FY 2005 allotments.

Also at issue is whether the recent policies announced by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) affecting states that already use or plan to use SCHIP to cover children in families who earn over 250% of the federal poverty level (250% of FPL is \$51,625 for a family of four) will be addressed as part of SCHIP reauthorization. To cover children in families above 250% FPL through SCHIP, CMS has said states would have to meet certain requirements, including proving that the beneficiaries--in this case, children--have been uninsured for at least an entire year. Such states would also have to show they have enrolled at least 95% of their children below 200% FPL who are eligible for either SCHIP or Medicaid. These policies seem next to impossible to meet, and individuals at the state and federal levels have expressed opposition. If not taken care of during reauthorization, Senators Ted Kennedy (D-MA), Gordon Smith (R-OR), Jay Rockefeller (D-WV), Olympia Snowe (R-ME), Robert Menendez (D-NJ), and John Kerry (D-MA) are backing stand-alone legislation (S. 2049) that would block them.

With votes expected soon, CWLA will be providing updates and issuing action alerts in the coming days. If the President vetoes the legislation as has been indicated, the votes to override will likely be close.

Source: Children's Monitor Online, Sept. 24, 2007

Mental Health Parity Passes Senate, House Version Clears Committee

On September 18, the Senate passed by unanimous consent its mental health parity legislation, S. 558, which would erase discriminatory limitations by requiring group health plans with 50 or more enrollees who choose to offer mental health benefits to provide them on the same terms as other medical conditions. As it had announced shortly before the August recess, the Senate dropped its special preemption rule, bringing it much closer to the House parity legislation (H.R. 1424), making it a floor by preempting only existing state mental health parity laws that are lower than the federal law, while permitting state mental health parity laws that are stronger and more protective of consumer rights to stand.

Differences do still exist, however. The House bill, for example, has a broader definition of what insurers must cover, whereas the Senate bill would leave it up to employers and insurers to negotiate covered conditions. Championed in a bipartisan fashion by Representatives Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) and Jim Ramstad (R-MN), the House bill has an impressive 270 cosponsors and managed to easily pass the Ways and Means Health Subcommittee on September 19 by a vote of 10-3. The entire House hopes to vote in the near future, making passage of mental health parity legislation a realistic measure for this Congress.

Source: Children's Monitor Online, Sept. 24, 2007



Human Services Network (HSN)
Laurie Brandes, Coordinator
20 Care Drive
Hillsdale, MI 49242
brandesl@bhsj.org
(517)437-7395 x-106