



The Cutting Edge

MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION IN NJ

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS UPDATE

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Proposed NJ Medicaid Changes Would Change Delivery of Mental Health Services

The Mental Health Association in NJ, along with other advocates for the behavioral health community, said they welcome many of the proposed changes, but caveats and concerns remain especially *in the very short time frame these reforms are being implemented.*

[Click here for an article about the subject in SPOTLIGHT, an on-line publication.](#)



Majority of States Cut Mental Health Budgets, but Not New Jersey

A new report by National Alliance on Mental Illness found that 28 states and the District of Columbia



Consumer Forums to Address Medicaid Changes Accessing Mental Health Medications

Significant changes surrounding accessing medication from Medicaid for mental health consumers have begun in New Jersey. These changes affect how and what medications will be prescribed for mental health consumers who are on Medicaid and Medicare and those who are dually eligible. The changes are confusing and may alter how consumers access their prescriptions and the type of medication they receive.

The Medicaid Mental Health Coalition, in sponsorship with the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) and Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services (DMAHS), is hosting free Forums to help consumers of mental health services learn about Medicaid medication changes. Speakers include Lynn Kovich, M.Ed., Assistant Commissioner of the DMHAS, and Eugene Azoia, RPh, Pharmacist, DMAHS. Robert Eilers, MD, Medical Director of DMHAS, will be available for questions.

The Medicaid Mental Health Coalition consists of the Mental Health

have reduced mental health funding by nearly \$1.6 billion since fiscal year 2009. New Jersey is one of the few states where the budget for state mental health services has increased over the last few years.

[Click here to read more.](#)

Perceived Racism May Affect Mental Health of Black Americans

According to a study from the American Psychological Association, perceived racism may incite mental health problems that are comparable to trauma and therefore may cause physical health differences between blacks and others in the U.S. The study reports that although other research has identified connections between racism and mental health, this is the first to specifically address black American adults.

The lead author, Alex Pieterse, PhD, of the University at Albany, State University of New York explains that the reason for the focus on black American adults was "because this is a population that has reported, on average, more incidents of racism than other racial minority groups and because of the

Association in NJ (MHANJ), Collaborative Support Programs in NJ (CSPNJ), Coalition of Mental Health Consumer Organizations (COMHCO), Disability Rights of New Jersey (DRNJ) and the NJ Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association (NJPRA).

Carolyn Beauchamp, ACSW, President and CEO of the MHANJ states, "It is imperative that mental health consumers understand the implications of these changes, and just as important that officials of the New Jersey Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse and Medicaid system understand the implications of their actions on consumers. MHANJ and our fellow advocates are committed to insuring that consumers have access to the medications they need."

A Forum is scheduled for December 13th in Freehold. Additional forms will be held in January. Consumers interested in attending are asked to [click here](#) for more information and to register.

Please see the side-bar article for more information about the Medicaid Waiver.



New Jersey Psychiatric Advance Directives Law Enhanced by National Focus

New Jersey is one of about half of the states in the U.S. that has a Psychiatric Advance Directives law in place to help people gain more control over treatment during illness. Although the law was passed several years ago, full implementation has not occurred.

Mental Health America has recently launched My Plan, My Life - My Psychiatric Advance Directive (www.myplanmylife.com) a new online resource to inform consumers with mental illness, their families and health care professionals about the importance of psychiatric advance directives as an opportunity for people, when they are well, to provide instructions regarding treatment or services they wish to have or not have during a mental health crisis.

The public awareness initiative, which is sponsored by Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation, launched during Mental Illness Awareness Week (October 2-8, 2011). [Click here to read more.](#)

Access to Mental Health Care Remains Key Issue

A new report providing state-by-state analysis of the prevalence of any mental illness including serious mental illness (SMI) reveals

potential links between racism and not only mental health, but physical health as well." [Click here to read more.](#)



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significant variation across the country. In New Jersey, the report indicates 19% of the populations suffered from some form of mental illness- over 1.6 million people, while nationally, 44.5 million adults aged 18 or older experienced any mental illness in the past year, corresponding to a rate of 19.7 percent of the adult population. Those with SMI in NJ represented 4.1% of the population, over 360,000 residents of the Garden State. Across the country the rate of serious mental illness in the past year ranged from 3.5 percent in Hawaii and South Dakota to 7.2 percent in Rhode Island. [Click here to read more.](#)

Recession Taking Toll of Physical and Mental Health

The nation's housing crisis, it turns out, is also a major public health crisis. People who lose their homes lose more than just the roof over their heads. They lose economic stability and social ties and many experience mental and physical health issues according to a series of studies by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) scholars. Some may even lose their lives.



In New Jersey, there is a growing number of long-term unemployed. Recent studies have projected that over 150,000 individuals in the state have exhausted their unemployment benefits. [Click here to read more.](#)

Supported Housing Model a Victor in Housing Tax Appeal

The Appellate Division of the New Jersey Courts has reversed an earlier decision of the Tax Court and ordered that Advance Housing be granted tax exemptions for their supportive housing programs in Bergen County. This is a major victory in the development of supportive housing for persons with mental health in NJ. The Tax Court had previously found that Advance Housing's supportive housing projects did not meet the statute's requirement that the property be "exclusively" used for a charitable purpose due to the fact that the supported housing model does not require residents to be engaged in treatment as a condition of continuing residency. Under the supported housing model, residents sign leases for their apartments without any requirement to receive or participate in mental health treatment programs or to receive other services. The Mental Health Association in NJ and the Supported Housing Association in NJ were involved in the case as an amicus along with



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other advocacy organizations.

Study Indicates Scores of Homeless Veterans

According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness in 2010 there were 567 homeless veterans in New Jersey. The Alliance notes that nationally there may 76,000 veterans on a given night. This source of this information was recent a [report from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and Veterans Affairs](#) which has set a goal of ending veterans' homelessness in five years. [Click here to read more.](#)