

## Amidst national and state budget crises, local mental health authorities share expertise and exchange resources



*Bob Keller, McLean County Health Department Director, explains his procedures for conducting financial analyses of providers.*

In these times of economic uncertainty and budget crises, ACMHAI members can count on one thing: the collective expertise and network of support among the membership. On September 9, ACMHAI members shared their experiences and resources with each other on many key aspects of mental health board administration. The training, which was conducted entirely by Illinois local mental health authority directors, included presentations on the changing compliance environment, financial analysis and other monitoring procedures, and discussions on funding guidelines and applications, outcome measurement, purchase of service conversion and contracting issues. *(cont'd on p. 2)*

"This is a civil-rights issue. With passage of this bill, fundamental justice arrives for millions of our fellow Americans who deal with mental illness. Today, the United States Senate says to them loud and clear, you will no longer have to suffer in the shadows."

—*Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.)*  
*In reference to the **Mental Health and Addictions Parity Bill** passed on September 23, 2008*

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### *From the President...*

#### **The Importance of Local Resources**

The current economic rollercoaster, the recent potential state funding cuts and contract reserves to community provider agencies serve as excellent reminders of the need and purpose of mental health authorities (MHA's). Local 708 (mental health, developmental disability and substance abuse) and 377 (developmental disability) boards are charged with administering that portion of your local tax levy designated for those services. Citizens appointed to these boards by their local elected officials, represent the epitome of local control of necessary resources.

Because of the stable nature of the real estate tax levy, local funding for these services tends to be consistent and supportive from year to year. Unlike sales tax or other variable sources of revenue, real estate values provide a strong basis for local services. Community providers have come to rely on their local 708 or 377 boards. In counties and townships that do not have the referendum-initiated levy, providers rely more heavily on state funding and charitable contributions, both of which are vulnerable to economic downturns. There is no doubt that areas served by local MHA's have additional resources and a larger array of services available to them and their families.

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*(cont'd from p. 1)*

ACMHAI members came away from the training with a renewed appreciation for their colleagues and a sense of pride that local mental health authorities, as stewards of the mental health tax levy, are integral to the community system of care and can be relied upon by providers and the families they serve for consistent financial support.

Now it is my considerable challenge to capture the information that was shared at this training and convert the topics we covered into a useful manual for our members to reference as needed. Thanks for the great work that you do! —Cherryl Ramirez

*(From the President, cont'd from p. 1)*

Our association is devoted to the establishment and support of local MHA's throughout Illinois, in order to better serve as the solid foundation for our local service system and the residents they serve on a daily basis. We at ACMHAI are here to encourage the efforts of any current or future mental health authorities. Please feel free to contact our Executive Director, Cherryl Ramirez or any of our association members for more information.

—Jerry J. Murphy  
President

## News from De Witt County MHB

### **Anti-Stigma Initiative**

Our anti-stigma/mental wellness group is now called: *Heads Up! Community Advocates for Mental Wellness*. Our event on schizophrenia will be November 20, 2008, 6:30-8:30 pm, Warner Library, Clinton. The event is called, "Schizophrenia Unraveled: Personal and Professional Perspectives on Survival and Recovery." It is free and open to public. Our panel will feature Ed Wollet (recovering from schizophrenia), Dr. Nancy Merbitz (his psychologist), Mayor Ed and Judy Wollet (his parents), and a NAMI representative. We also hope to obtain some equipment that visually and audibly mimics what someone with schizophrenia might experience for demonstration that night.

### **Prevention**

The Clinton CUSD 15 is working to start a girls' program, to be based on the "Salvaging Sisterhood" program.

### **Jail Diversion**

We will be working this fall to begin discussion with key individuals in De Witt County on drug and mental health courts. We are also looking into some training on mental health topics for law enforcement. The 708 board has paid for production of business card magnets featuring services of HRC, our primary mental health provider, to highlight their crisis intervention, mental health counseling, addictions, and developmental disabilities services.

— Sharon Mills, De Witt County MHB

## CHAMPAIGN COUNTY MHB and DDB

"The FY09 State of Illinois budget for mental health, substance abuse and developmental disabilities is despicable, destructive and heartless. Prior to the FY09 budget, Illinois was ranked 51st in the nation in developmental disabilities services, and received an "F" from the National Alliance for the Mentally III (NAMI). We thought we had hit bottom, but we were wrong. The FY09 budget has taken us to a new low-point and has destroyed the hard work of our service providers, and the hopes and dreams of families and consumers of services." — Peter Tracy

Fueled by this outrage, Peter Tracy, Champaign County Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Boards Executive Director, decided to express his disillusionment of Illinois legislature funding priorities by hosting a public forum on September 17th. Hundreds of people—consumers, families, agency personnel, and other community members, crowded the Brookens gymnasium to echo Peter's sentiments regarding three main issues: 1) FY09 human services budget cuts, particularly devastating substance abuse services; 2) extreme delays and inconsistencies in payment to providers; and 3) prescriptive, line-by-line, contract-driven requirements to cut programs, including mandatory percentages for "reserves".

The event was, by all accounts a success, bringing in three of the district's legislators, Representatives Jakobsson and Black, and Senator Frerichs to respond to Champaign County's impassioned pleas to restore funding. It was clear that CCMHB got its point across that the current policies run counter to a transformation vision of a community-based system of care, and to the recommendations of the President's New Freedom Commission's Report on Mental Health.

*(cont'd on p. 4)*

### **Hanover Township Mental Health Board Network of Care Website**

The Hanover Township Mental Health Board is pleased to announce the official launch date for our Network of Care Website for Mental/Behavioral Health. On Wednesday, October 15<sup>th</sup>, the Hanover Township Mental Health Board Network of Care site will be introduced to the public during the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Mental Health Recovery Conference in Elgin. In addition to introducing the site to residents of Hanover Township, the site will be introduced to the state of Illinois as a whole. The Hanover Township Mental Health Board has become Illinois' pioneer for the Network of Care site which features information on available mental health related services, a 7 language translation, a current library on mental health related articles, links to local, state and federal resources, information on pending state and federal mental health related legislation, a community calendar and a myriad of resources for consumers and professionals alike. "Feedback on the site has been overwhelmingly positive," says Danise Habun, Executive Director of the Hanover Township Mental Health Board. " Now that the site is launched, the next step will be to make sure the community knows of its existence and availability for use." Go to [www.networkofcare.org](http://www.networkofcare.org). Click on Mental/Behavioral Health. Click on Illinois and access the site.

### **Life Changes: Disability Expo**

The Hanover Township Mental Health Board, along with local collaborators, will sponsor an all day Expo for families in which there are children and adult children with disabilities, primarily developmental disabilities. This Expo which will be held on Saturday, October 25, features key note speakers, concurrent workshops on an array of issues affecting families, and vendor booths. It is anticipated that 100 people will be in attendance at this all day affair. For more information, please contact Danise Habun @ (630) 837-0301.

### **Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act Reauthorized**

On September 26, 2008, the U.S. Senate passed the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Reauthorization and Improvement Act, S. 2304. The bill is expected to be taken up in the House this weekend for final approval and then be sent to the President for his signature.

S. 2304 reauthorizes the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act (MIOTCRA) for an additional five years at \$50 million per year. The bill also expands training for law enforcement to identify and respond appropriately to individuals with mental illnesses and supports the development of law enforcement receiving centers to assess individuals in custody for mental health and substance abuse treatment needs. MIOTCRA, PL 108-414, created the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Grant Program (JMHCP) in 2004 to help states and counties design and implement collaborative efforts between criminal justice and mental health systems.

People with mental illnesses are overrepresented in all parts of the criminal justice system -- in their contact with law enforcement, in the courts, in jails and prisons, and in parole and probation caseloads across the country. Prevalence estimates of serious mental illnesses in correctional facilities range from 7 to 16 percent, or rates four times higher for men and eight times higher for women than found in the general population. The U.S. Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics estimates that the prevalence of youth with mental disorders in juvenile justice facilities is even higher. In many cases, these individuals are not violent criminals, but rather low-level offenders. In addition, it typically costs far more to treat individuals with serious mental illnesses in jail or prison than it does in community-based settings. — *Excerpts from Criminal Justice Consensus Project, News Alert, Sept. 26, 2008.*



John Ryan accepts the ACMHAI Lifetime Achievement in Behavioral Health Award at a banquet held in his honor on June 25, 2008 in Bloomington.

# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

By Terry Steczo

## Dysfunction in Springfield ... The Saga Continues

When we last left the General Assembly it was the end of May as they were about to approve a budget that, ostensibly, would keep the state of Illinois from plunging into a fiscal abyss. In reality, they cobbled together a budget that was estimated to be between \$1.5 and \$2 billion out of whack and sent it to the Governor, forcing him to make very unpopular program reductions and unleashing a storm of criticism. And the result? More contentiousness, more summer sessions and little accomplishment.

The legislature was back in Springfield for short periods in each of the months since May trying to address budget items, ethics legislation and funding for a long needed capital program. As of October 1 there has been a restoration of funding for alcohol and substance abuse that the Governor had cut, a successful override of an amendatory veto of ethics legislation, and some discussion to fund a capital project by leasing the Lottery. With no further anticipated sessions prior to the November elections, the scheduled post-election veto session in mid-November will have a healthy agenda.

## Court Nixes Governor's Health Care Expansion

The Governor's attempt to expand his Family Care program without legislative consent has been thwarted by a state appellate court. Last year, after failing to receive approval for the program expansion from both the General Assembly and the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR), the administration decided to move forward anyway and implement the program. In a recent ruling, an appellate court panel put the brakes on the expansion, stating that the position of the administration to be able to implement the program on its own "suffers from several flaws". The Governor may be considering an appeal to the Illinois Supreme Court.

## Autism Coverage Legislation Approved by Senate

An apparent agreement has been reached in discussions intended to try to provide insurance coverage for individuals with autism. The legislation, expected to receive final approval in November, mandates insurance coverage for those under the age of 21 with autism spectrum disorders not already covered by a policy or plan. The maximum yearly benefit will be capped at \$36,000 but is not subject to any limits on the number of visits to an autism service provider.

House Bill 2070 was amended and approved by the Senate (47-6) in September. The House will take final action when it reconvenes in November.

## Senate President Jones Announces Retirement

Senate President Emil Jones, Jr. recently announced his intention not to seek reelection, meaning the race is on to try to replace him. Assuming Democrats will maintain their majority, a number of Democratic senators have announced their candidacies but early speculation revolves around three that presumably have the best prospects: Sen. James F. Clayborne, Jr., (D-East St. Louis), Sen. John Cullerton (D-Chicago) and Sen. Don Harmon (D-Oak Park).

Legislative leadership elections can often be contentious and may not be resolved easily. In 1978 it took 187 ballots over many weeks until a Senate President was elected in mid-February. Look for discussions to heat up in November and continue with hopes of a candidate emerging by the time the new General Assembly begins in January. But, you may want to get your pencils and scorecards ready just in case ...

*(cont'd on p. 5)*



## *(Spotlight on Champaign County cont'd from p. 2)*

As of this writing, the Senate did go into General Session and voted to restore \$221 million in human services cuts, supporting the House's proposal. Now it is in the Governor's hands. For short-term crisis management, if the Governor approves the budget restorations, this will save some providers from closing their doors and will help others to re-open their detox centers.

What about the future of human services funding? How do we push lifeline supports up to a decent priority level among our legislators and state government officials? We need to start doing some long-term planning so that we no longer settle for the crumbs from the table and we must demand adequate funding for services for the most vulnerable citizens in Illinois.

Let's ask our legislators and state officials some tough questions, generated by Peter Tracy and Terry Steczo:

- What responsibility and actions will you take to restore funding cuts and provide for a cost-of-living increase for substance abuse, mental health, and developmental disabilities agencies and workers?
- What are your specific proposals to fix the outrageously delayed payment cycle?
- What actions will you take to remove "reserve" provisions from the terms and conditions of DHS contracts with community-based providers?
- What actions are you going to take to rebuild our community-based mental health, developmental disabilities, substance abuse and other human service systems, and move Illinois away from our current status of "51st and Failing?"

— Cheryl Ramirez



**MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

<b>November 4</b>	Election Day	
<b>November 12-14, 19-21</b>	Illinois State Legislature Veto Session	Springfield
<b>November 18-19</b>	Women's Health Conference	Chicago
<b>December 4</b>	ACMHAI Quarterly Meeting	Oak Brook Double Tree Hotel
<b>December 15-16</b>	CBHA Winter Conference	Chicago Fairmont Hotel

*(Legislative Update, cont'd from p. 5)*

**Constitutional Convention Question on November Ballot**

In the next few weeks the Secretary of State will be sending each registered voter in Illinois a pamphlet containing the pros and cons on the question of holding a state Constitutional Convention. The Illinois Constitution mandates that voters should be given the opportunity to decide on holding a Constitutional Convention every 20 years. Our current 1970 Constitution replaced one that was 100 years old and extremely outdated and limiting. In the opinion of most, framers of our current constitution succeeded in providing a document that is modern, flexible and is still extremely functional.

In 1988, when the question of holding a Constitutional Convention was last considered, it was defeated overwhelmingly. In 2008, individuals, groups and associations from every side of the political spectrum have voiced opposition to the ballot question and have recommended a "no" vote. — *Terry Steczo*

\*\*If you would like additional information about any of the articles, please call 217-369-5168 or email [acmhai@shout.net](mailto:acmhai@shout.net).\*\*  
Also check out the ACMHAI website, [www.acmhai.org](http://www.acmhai.org).