

NASW-NYS Political Post

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All things Budget - Deborah Bachrach, Deputy Commissioner for the Office of Health Insurance Programs, New York State Department of Health, recently briefed NASW-NYS staff on the governor's 2008-9 Department of Health budget. There are a number of important items in the DOH budget this year that will positively impact New Yorkers throughout the state, particularly in the areas of preventive and primary care. One item of great importance is the allowance of Medicaid reimbursement for Licensed Clinical Social Workers working with children, adolescents, and pregnant women in Article 28 clinics. Article 28 status is conferred to hospitals and school-based health clinics. This is a great step toward recognition of our profession in providing mental health care in New York State. NASW-NYS will work hard from now through April to ensure that this piece of the budget remains while it is negotiated with the Legislature and a final budget is enacted in the spring.

In other news from the DOH budget, the Medicaid Inspector General, James Sheehan testified this week before a joint Senate/Assembly committee on upcoming initiatives from this recently created office designed to increase efficiency in Medicaid in New York State. While there was of course mention of consumer and provider fraud; members of the legislative panel also raised the issue of deceptive practices by managed care organizations billing Medicaid in New York State. Mr. Sheehan stated that his office will be increasingly focusing on the practices of managed care organizations, such as sweeping and summary denials of claims, and failure to reimburse providers, who depend on such reimbursement for income.

Senator Thomas Morahan (R-Orange / Rockland) - recently sponsored a bill that NASW-NYS supports to "establish an employee health care enhancement program within the Office of Mental Health, similar to an existing program in the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, that would provide funds to either establish health benefits or reduce employee out-of-pocket health related expenses for mental health workers." This bill is slated for the Senate Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities committee this Wednesday.

On the National Front - The race for the White House continues to be neck and neck and though the delegate count varies from source to source it's clear that Obama and Clinton came out of Super Tuesday in a virtual dead heat. On the Republican side, John McCain emerged as the frontrunner with 720 delegates; Mitt Romney (who just suspended his bid) came in at a distant second place with 256 delegates and Mike Huckabee brought up the rear with only 194. However, given Huckabee's appeal with southern conservatives (a demographic McCain has had trouble wooing) rumors are bubbling about a McCain / Huckabee ticket. Stay tuned!