

NASW-NYS Political Post

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Governor's Executive Budget Proposal Sets the Pace - As stock markets around the globe plunged violently Tuesday, Governor Eliot Spitzer released his second Executive budget proposal and despite the world stage that seems set for a recession and New York's reported budget gap of \$4.4 billion, the Governor's proposal valued at \$124.3 billion, calls for a five percent increase over last year's budget (which came in just over \$118 billion).

While we are still in the process of pouring over the voluminous budget bills, the broad brush strokes are as follows...The Governor's proposal focuses on preventative care as opposed to primary care with respect to New York's \$46.3 billion Medicaid program. Primary among the Governor's Medicaid refocus is a restructuring of Medicaid reimbursement rates based on procedure based billing systems, updating reimbursement rates and cutting hospital inpatient rates.

Specific to mental health services, which saw as reported at the Office of Mental Health Budget Briefing, elements of the Governor's multi-year plan include, phasing out Comprehensive Outpatient Program Services (COPS) rates, removing the Medicaid neutrality cap for mental health clinic services, and revising Article 28 Hospital Inpatient Psychiatric Rates (which is slated to include reimbursement for social work services provided to children under the age of 19 and pregnant women).

Other mental health related initiatives include (just to name a few): additional funding for Family Support Services under the Child and Family Clinic Plus program, expanding the Children's Rural Telepsychiatry initiative to include an additional 10 counties, expanding Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) slots by 180, and implementing the final year of the current three year Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for certain locally operated mental health programs. For a more detailed look at OMH funding in the Governor's proposal simply log onto <http://www.omh.state.ny.us/omhweb/budget/2008-2009/>

The Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) received a \$91 million bump over last year's budget, an increase that will fund initiatives such as enhancing community based services, expansion of the Compulsive Gambling Prevention program and continuation and extension of a COLA for localities and non-for-profit providers to recruit and retain direct care staff. For additional details on the OASAS Budget, and other agency budgets, such as OMRDD, OCFS, DOH, etc., simply log onto the following site <http://publications.budget.state.ny.us/eBudget0809/agencyPresentations/appropData/index.html>

On the national front - As we head into South Carolina's Primary scheduled for Saturday, Senators Clinton and Obama continue to be neck in neck in their race for the Democratic nomination. Fresh off her win in Nevada last weekend, Senator Clinton holds 36 delegates while Senator Obama holds 38. Senator Edwards continues to fall behind with only 18. On the Republican side, Mitt Romney currently leads the pack with 59 delegates, Mike Huckabee holds second place with 40 delegates, and John McCain is a close third with 36. However, such standings are subject to shift dramatically after Florida's winner takes all (57 delegates) primary on Tuesday the 29th. Several polls are currently showing McCain with a slight lead.