

GOVERNOR'S EXECUTIVE BUDGET

By Jeff Wise, NYSRA President & CEO

The Governor's Executive Budget, in our overall view, demonstrates support for people within this vulnerable population MR/DD and MH populations and for the workers and agencies who provide them with services.

The Governor's budget appears to recognize the social value of assisting people in need, a role for government in helping people be truly productive and integrated members of society, and a sense of compassion for people who face – and with the proper assistance – surmount remarkable challenges in life.



We believe the Governor has proposed budget elements that further his theme of One New York, a theme all of us in the disabilities system can embrace.

Another theme we see in the Executive Budget's treatment of our programs is the notion of a strong and effective workforce in our industry. Our not-for-profit members are constantly struggling to ensure that fiscal constraints do not erode their ability to attract and employ quality direct-care staff. Those who work in our field are dedicated people who help make huge differences in the lives of New Yorkers facing extra challenges. We join with the Governor and others who recognize the strength of this workforce, of the importance of keeping it at highest levels of service, and of the challenges that workforce – and our not-for-profit providers who employ them – face in maintaining and ensuring delivery of high-quality services. NYSRA welcomes the views of how best to continue these services, and stands ready to work with all policy-makers and decision-makers to find ways to maintain the continuity and stability of the workforce in the areas of developmental disabilities, mental health, substance abuse, and in all our disabilities disciplines.

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

The Executive Budget includes important support for New Yorkers whose services are delivered through the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. Among notable features of the proposal are these:

- § Overall OMR support will rise \$245 million to \$3.67 billion.

- § A NYS CARES III initiative is included. A total of 1,000 new residential spots are planned, along with 2,500 at-home residential habilitation spots, and 200 new day spots are funded.

- § The aging out program gains 140 new beds and 890 day opportunities.

- § Some \$3 million in new money for "restructuring" of Supported Employment programs, which the agency says will provide competitive work opportunities for 750 new individuals as well as 500 individuals currently in non-competitive employment programs.

- § The trend factor is set at 2.97 percent. This is a lowered rate, but it is noted that programs in other disciplines lost trends altogether.

- § The second installment of the COLA for eligible untended programs that was adopted last year by the Legislature from the 2006-2007 Executive Budget proposal, is funded at 2.5 percent, effective April 1, 2007. This may actually, according to a funding formula, translate into something greater than 2.5 percent.

- § There is \$35 million in new funding for the Health Care Enhancement Program for OMRDD providers to assist direct-care staff with health coverage. This is an innovative program started two years ago that assists agencies in the area of staff retention and development.

- § There is \$7.9 million in new funding for Family Support Services to expand the program to another 5,000 families, including respite services.

OMRDD will be expected to find approximately \$8 million in cuts through the two rate issues — adjusting agency administrative reimbursements for new programs and converting to a more "waiver-wide" surplus-loss analysis. Also, a budget efficiency of \$4.5 million must be realized out of 24-hour residential programs (ICFs, and IRA/CRs). This is proposed to be done through eliminating reimbursement for certain "medical supplies." We intend to further analyze this specific proposal when we receive better detail, although we have been assured that this would not encompass durable medical equipment.

MENTAL HEALTH

We welcome the Executive Budget’s continued support for programs already operating, and further applaud its recognition of the need for additional services, particularly in the area of housing.

The OMH budget calls for the following, welcome commitments:

- § Overall OMH support rises \$298 million to \$3.06 billion.
- § The second installment of the COLA for untrended programs begun in last year’s budget is funded at 2.5 percent effective April 1.
- § Implementation of the final year of a three-year stipend increase for supported housing programs, as well as \$12.6 million in increased annual funding for existing adult and child Community Residence and Family-Based Treatment programs, effective January 1, 2008
- § Funding for 1,000 new supported housing beds — spots not already in the housing unit pipeline.
- § Funding for another 1,000 congregate care beds in various programs.
- § Creation of 180 new Home and Community Based Waiver slots for children at
- § \$1.2 million.
- § Demonstration projects to improve and integrate health and mental health care (with DOH), at \$1.2 million, growing to \$4.7 million.

We are concerned with the proposal of savings to be taken by changes to medication policies – notably the removal of the exemption of anti-depressants from the Preferred Drug List and tighter management of the PSYCKES medication program, for total savings of \$4.3 million. If a physician over-ride feature is permitted for the PDL change, this mitigates our concern, though we are always unsure of the wisdom of a PDL program for many types of medications.

We also note that there is a planned expansion of quality management and compliance monitoring, in conjunction with Medicaid Inspector General for savings of \$7.7 million. NYSRA and its member agencies stand strongly for quality service and for adherence to all compliance issues. However, we would note that increased monitoring, should it include an ever-increasing frequency of fiscal and other audits, at some point defeats the purpose of finding system efficiencies, since agencies must dedicate more and more staff time and other resources to demonstrate compliance in the same areas over and over again. Moreover, we always remain concerned that such savings are given a target number before-the-fact; while we understand the need to projected savings for the purpose of budgeting principles, there is always a danger that efforts will be geared toward hitting the target number even if true savings do not reach it.

NYSRA acknowledges and supports the need to work with government to see that New Yorkers receive the highest quality service and the greatest of efficiencies, but the entire system must ensure that administrative and bureaucratic repetition does not weaken agencies’ capacity to focus on service delivery.

We also would wish to add our voice to those others who call for funding of \$3 million under the Geriatric Mental Health Act. Issues of aging and mental health take on many facets, and we are keenly aware of the challenges faced by providers in dealing with geriatric individuals who have special needs, such as developmental disabilities. The work done under the GMHA is essential to understanding the needs of an ever-increasing older New York population and the special needs within that population.

VESID PROGRAMS

VESID-funded programs will see funding at the same levels as in the current fiscal year. NYSRA and its member agencies would merely point out that the rehabilitation programs funded through the State Education Department are often pivotal in the lives of those receiving services in our state’s schools, and we urge the Legislature to always support these services.

FEDERAL UPDATE

MEDICARE PART D

In Washington, Legislation unanimously passed by the state House on in January that would pay any copayments under Medicare Part D for state residents who are dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid. The legislation (H.B. 1095), requested by Gov. Christine Gregoire (D), is aimed at preventing any dual-eligibles from falling through the cracks in Medicare Part D. The governor has included \$6 million in her proposed 2007-2009 operating budget to ensure that Medicare Part D drug coverage is available for the low-income elderly, disabled adults, and other qualifying state residents. The Medicare Part D coverage would begin July 1, according to a digest of the legislation. S.B. 5091, the companion bill to H.B. 1095, is in the Senate Health and Long-Term Care Committee.



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Technical Assistance Coordinator for the New York State Industries for the Disabled, Inc., a fast growing not-for-profit corporation is seeking a Technical Assistance Coordinator. Responsibilities include providing support for our Technical Assistance and Quality Management Program through the development and implementation of training programs. This position is also responsible for assisting in the maintenance of member agency employment data, as well as assisting in maintaining and updating the NYSID Member Manual. Bachelor's degree in Business Administration or related study. Knowledge of and experience in rehabilitation field preferred, with special emphasis on vocational workshop requirements a plus. Ability to research, work independently, organize and make formal presentations, and knowledge of Microsoft Office Suite are required. Competitive salary and excellent benefits offered. Send resume with salary requirements to NYSID Human Resources, 155 Washington Avenue, Suite 400, Albany, NY 12210. Or fax to 518-455-0319. EOE.

Program Director-Residential Services: Mountain Lake Services seeks an experienced, results oriented senior management professional to join a progressive management team providing services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Port Henry, Moriah and Westport. The incumbent reports to the Regional Director and shall have strong leadership capabilities with a background in program operations in a health care/human services setting. Responsibilities include ensuring quality of care and staff development, fiscal management, and physical plant management in a residential environment. Master's degree in Human Services or a related field with 7-10 years experience in positions of increasing responsibility required. Bachelor's degree with significant management/administrative accomplishments may be considered in lieu of a master's degree. Salary commensurate with experience. Excellent fringe benefit package. Apply to Human Resource Office, Mountain Lake Services, 10 St. Patrick's Place, Port Henry, NY 12974 www.mountainlakeservices.org EOE.

Associate Director of Adult Services: The Associate Director of Adult Services is a senior management position with operational oversight of all of the agency's day and residential programs for adults. This position will report directly to the Director of Adults Services. Responsibilities will include oversight of the delivery of all program services as well as the areas of staffing, budgeting, billing, certification and clinical support. We are seeking a seasoned manager with no less than five years of upper level management experience in the OMRDD field. The successful candidate will also have at least a Bachelor's Degree in a human services field, but a Master's degree is preferred. ABA and/or BCBA certification are highly desirable. [Salary range: \$100K - \$110K]. For information about this position contact Susan Walls at 631-366-5833. Resumes can be emailed to jobs@ddiinfo.org or faxed to 631-366-2966.

Admissions Liaison: The Shepherd Center is an Atlanta-based specialty Hospital for persons with brain injury, spinal cord injuries, and neuromuscular diseases. We have been recognized by US News & World Report as one of the top Rehabilitation facilities in the country and are expanding our staff of regionally-based Admissions Liaisons by adding a position based in New York/New England to cover our growing volume of referrals from this region.

We are seeking candidates with nursing, therapy, or social work backgrounds who have experience in neuro-rehabilitation and excellent clinical, communication and customer service skills. The role does include a moderate amount of travel to trauma centers located in this territory.

Unlike most facilities that serve a more traditional Medicare population, Shepherd Center services younger patients in what has been described by our patients, families and referring physicians as a very upbeat, life-changing environment that returns the majority of our patients to home, school or work.

To learn more, visit our website at www.shepherd.org and watch our online video, and apply online. We offer a complete, low-cost benefit package that includes health, dental and 403b retirement plans and company car. Email perryann_williams@shepherd.org with specific questions. Apply online or fax your resume to 404-350-7346. EOE

NYSRA CALENDAR

March 2007

March 6

Vocational Rehabilitation Division Meeting & Lobby Day
Albany

March 7

Developmental Disabilities Division Meeting & Lobby Day
Albany

March 8

Mental Health Division Meeting & Lobby Day
Albany

June 2007

June 5 & 6

NYSRA's Executive Team Management Institute

September 2007

September 24 - 26

NYSRA's Leadership Training Summit, The Desmond,
Albany

DO YOU HAVE INFORMATION YOU'D LIKE
PUBLISHED IN THE RESOURCE?
EMAIL: JENNIFER@NYREHAB.ORG