

National Call Summary
Services in Supportive Housing: Efforts to Garner New Federal Resources
February, 2008

The Alliance, along with Enterprise Community Partners, the Corporation for Supportive Housing, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and the National AIDS Housing Coalition hosted a national call, *Services in Supportive Housing: Efforts to Garner New Federal Resources*, with 28 participants on **February 12 at 2pm ET**.

Summary of the Call Agenda:

- Peggy Bailey with the National Alliance to End Homelessness discussed the status of, and efforts to increase, federal resources for supportive services (more information below).
 - Carol Wilkins with the Corporation for Supportive Housing discussed efforts at the local and state level to secure additional resources for supportive services.
 - Sarah Kahn with the Alliance discussed this year's appropriations strategy and immediate next steps for advocates.
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FY 2009 Services Appropriations Request

The national coalition of organizations listed above will work with local and state partners to secure additional federal funding for supportive services in the FY 2009 Appropriations Bill for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). More specifically we will ask Congress to:

Include a \$44 million increase in SAMHSA Homeless Programs for essential mental health and substance use treatment services linked to permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless individuals and families, and other housing programs targeted to homeless families, youth and individuals.

This Year's Appropriations Strategy:

Each year, Members of Congress formally submit their appropriations priorities by writing a letter to the chair and ranking member of each appropriations subcommittee with a list of what they want included in that subcommittee's appropriations bill.

We will ask Members of Congress to include the above services appropriations request in their priority letter being sent to the chair and ranking member of the House / Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education (Labor-HHS) due March 19.

- House Labor HHS Subcommittee: Chair, David Obey (D-WI);
Ranking Member, James Walsh (R-NY)
- Senate Labor HHS Subcommittee: Chair, Tom Harkin (D-IA);
Ranking Member, Arlen Specter (R-PA)

Immediate Next Steps for Advocates:

- Fax a letter (sample attached) to your Member (s) of Congress and the staff person who works on health and human services appropriations issues asking them to include this services request in their letter of appropriations priorities.
- Ask 5 other organizations to send similar letters in support.
- Report back to Sarah (skahn@naeh.org) by **Wednesday, February 27**.
- We are currently working out a strategy for moving SAMHSA reauthorization forward in the Senate and we will let you know if and when there are additional actions to take.

More Information about the Services Request:

- Last year we requested an increase in funding for the Grants for the Benefit of Homeless Individuals Program (GBHI) (a program within the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)), but this year we are asking for an increase for “SAMHSA homeless programs” to avoid confusion due to name changes in SAMHSA’s budget lines. So, “SAMHSA homeless programs” includes GBHI and the Treatment for Homeless Individuals Program (THI).
- Last year we won a \$9 million increase targeted to services in permanent supportive housing for SAMHSA homeless programs.
- This year the president proposed funding SAMHSA homeless programs at \$35 million, a \$20 million decrease over last year’s funding level.
- We are asking for a \$44 million increase over the FY 2008 level for SAMHSA homeless programs for services targeted to permanent supportive housing in the FY 2009 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill.
- This funding request will help provide mental health substance use treatment and other services necessary for someone to maintain housing such as outreach and engagement, housing retention supports, financial management, intensive case management, assertive community treatment team interaction and income support.

Status of Other Federal Policy Issues

** These are detailed notes from the information Peggy provided on the call.*

- **Services in Permanent Supportive Housing Grants**

In March 2007, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) released a request for applications (RFA) for services funding in permanent supportive housing. There was only \$3 million available. SAMHSA received over 100 applications and could only award 9. Peggy mentioned that from talking to SAMHSA staff, the problem was not the quality of programs that applied, but having enough money to fund them.

- **Appropriations in SAMHSA**

Last year we received a \$9 million increase in funding for the Grants for the Benefit of Homeless Individuals (GBHI) program targeted to services in permanent supportive housing. This was great considering that other health and human services program were cut and Congress having to secede to the President's budget numbers.

As most everyone knows, last week the President released his FY 2009 budget proposal. Within SAMHSA, overall it cuts homeless services funding by \$14 million. There is good news – PATH (Programs for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness) received a \$7 million increase. However, funding for the Center for Mental Health Services and the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment was cut even below 2007 numbers. This is primarily because several current grants expire in 2008 and the President's budget recommends no new grants.

- **SAMHSA Reauthorization**

The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee included SELHA – the Services for Ending Long-Term Homelessness Act – as part of draft legislation to reauthorize SAMHSA last year (SELHA would create a program within SAMHSA to specifically fund services in permanent supportive housing). Everything looked good until a wrench was thrown in the mix and has stalled passage of the bill.

Some Democrats want the charitable choice provision within HHS programs to be discontinued and they want this bill to be the vehicle for this. Charitable choice protects faith based programs in applying for federal funds, allows faith based programs the right to hire based on religion, allows faith based programs to incorporate faith in services, but protects clients from having to adhere to religious beliefs when receiving services.

We are still working with Senate staff to figure out a strategy for moving the legislation forward in the Senate and we will let you know if there is anything else we can do.

- **Medicaid**

Changing policy through regulations has become standard practice in the current Administration. Last year two more regulations that effect homeless populations were created. One on the rehabilitation option and one on targeted case management.

The rehabilitation option allows states to use Medicaid funds for services that traditionally are not covered (such as therapy outside a normal clinic setting) and these services can be delivered by non-traditional practitioners. The Administration's regulation tried to limit allowable services and providers. However, at the end of last year, Congress passed a 6 month moratorium on changes to the rule.

The targeted case management regulation allows states to fund case management services. It is supposed to be final March 4. Advocacy groups are asking for a moratorium for this rule also. We will keep you updated.

As far as other Medicaid issues, it is important to watch the budget process because any entitlement spending or policy changes will be introduced at that time.