



Targeted Bill Action

Inflationary Index – Talking Points

The Legislative Affairs Committee's theme for this targeted bill action event is to **solidify support for PCPA-sponsored legislation (dedicated alcohol tax initiative, inflationary index) and assure its passage before the close of this session (November 30), preferably prior to the legislative break for the fall elections.** An important tool when speaking with legislators and staff during a coordinated lobby effort is talking points to ensure that all participants are covering the same issues in a similar fashion. This allows the full legislature to have heard similar information from constituents throughout the day.

Below are suggested discussion areas for the **inflationary index** for mental health/mental retardation (MH/MR) services. The House version of the legislation (**House Bill 1813**) is scheduled for a Senate Appropriations Committee vote as this goes to print (September 25). Should it pass the committees, as expected, it would move to the Senate floor for a vote. **Urge senators to contact their leadership to move the bill and then to support House Bill 1813 when it comes up for a floor vote.**

PCPA Position

This legislation would allow for an annual inflationary adjustment (formerly referred to as cost-of-living adjustment or COLA) for MH/MR programs. The inflationary adjustment would be based upon a mechanism known as the Home Health Market Basket Index (HHMBI). PCPA has been supportive of the commonwealth using a mechanism where annual inflationary adjustments would be automatic for the MH/MR system. PCPA spearheaded introduction of this legislation in concert with the MH/MR Coalition.

With increased operational expenses and service costs (and absent any real infusion of money into budgets), businesses and organizations cannot survive and perform to full capacity. Community service providers are no different: we face increased costs, the desire for the provision of best practice and evidence-based services, and the need to recruit and retain qualified staff. **Regardless of whether or not the COLA reached your organization, be sure to thank the legislators for their efforts to include this funding for MH/MR/D&A in recent budgets.**

Points to Highlight During Legislative Visits

- **Deliver a box of *The Provider's Dozen* cookies to the legislator.** Each box should contain a sheet taped to the inside lid explaining the cookie delivery and its meaning. **With each box of cookies, leave both a copy of the inflationary index legislation and the PCPA bill analysis.**
- The state budget neither promotes nor fosters equity in the public health system. For example, in the current budget, there is a 2 percent COLA for MH/MR but a 4 percent COLA for other sectors of the public health system including hospitals, nursing homes, and managed care organizations.
- Discuss business items (refer to district lobby day talking points) – as costs rise in health care and utilities, for example, organization's need to meet those expectations as well as increased services.
- Tying a COLA for MH/MR to a national index such as the HHMBI will better enable providers to meet business costs and strengthen the system. Discuss and/or provide data on uncompensated care, staff lay-offs, and clients and their families affected by downsizing.