

Info



May 2, 2002

MH/MR Coalition

PO Box 60573, Harrisburg, PA 17106-0573

Legislators and Governor Schweiker Need to Hear From You!

Contact your legislators, share our position, and tell us their response
Send us your newspaper articles for features and editorials about
community services
Keep those petitions coming!!!

Apprenticeship Development

Last November, the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Office of Apprenticeship Training, approved the Direct Support Specialist as a new apprenticeable occupation. The Direct Support Specialist (DSS) is an occupation that provides support to individuals with disabilities and others who need assistance with basic services and information to lead self-directed lives, contribute to their society, and support behaviors that enhance inclusion in their communities. Since then, Missouri has developed and implemented an approved apprenticeship program for DSS as one of the numerous ways to assist in recruiting and retaining qualified staff.

The Coalition is working with provider organizations to identify and develop standards including curriculum while exploring potential administrative structures that can maximize the use of an approved apprenticeship in Pennsylvania. More details regarding this Coalition effort will become available by September.

Hill Activities Continue

The 2nd Annual MH/MR Coalition Press Conference and Day on the Hill was held on March 25, 2002. Legislators, family members, and consumers all confirmed the need for essential funding of community mental health and mental retardation services. Legislators addressing the group included: Representative Kathy Manderino, Senator Allen Kukovich, Representative Raymond Bunt, Jr. and Senator Jane Earll. Consumers and family members sharing their stories included Shelly Bishop, Lehigh Bradley and Nancy Murray.

For more information contact Pennsylvania Community Providers Association
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Caucus meetings have been held with MH/MR Coalition representatives and the legislative leadership of both parties and houses. Despite the overwhelming concerns legislators express with the current economic environment, legislators agree that our position is reasonable and worth our continued pursuit.

Exhibits in the Capitol have begun. The MH/MR Coalition is hosting exhibits at the Capitol to help keep the Coalition's Funding Request visible, while educating the administration, legislators, staff and the public about services and supports for persons with mental illness and persons with mental retardation. Coalition exhibits are scheduled for May 8th and June 3rd, 4th, and 5th. Legislators will be in Session during these dates.

The Legislative Edition of the *Working Together Campaign Update* continues to provide ongoing communications with legislators. The Legislative Edition is written specifically for our friends and supporters in the Pennsylvania General Assembly to keep them updated and informed on issues related to the recruitment and retention of direct support staff in community mental health and mental retardation services and supports in Pennsylvania.

The MH/MR Coalition includes all of the major associations that represent mental health and/or mental retardation provider agencies and counties in Pennsylvania: Mental Health Association in PA (717.236.8110), MH/MR Program Administrators of PA (717.232.7554), PA Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (717.657.7608), PA Association of Resources for People with Mental Retardation (717.236.2374), PA Community Providers Association (717.657.7078), The Arc-PA (717.234.2621), and United Cerebral Palsy of PA (717.761.6129). For additional information, contact any of the organizations listed.

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