



NEWSLETTER

NEW YORK STATE SOCIETY OF CLINICAL SOCIAL WORK PSYCHOTHERAPISTS, INC.

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Five Year Struggle Ends In Victory As Parity Bill Becomes Law

Governor Cuomo Signs Bill, "Increases Access To Mental Health Care"

By Marsha Wineburgh, CSW

The Society's 5-year campaign ended successfully on Tuesday, December 18, 1984, at 5 PM when Governor Mario Cuomo signed into law Bill S6222-A/A7620-B. In his memorandum filed in support of this action, the Governor noted that this bill "recognizes the important role played by certified social workers in providing mental health care and eliminates unfair and unwarranted discrimination against these qualified professionals." The bill maximizes "client choice in the purchase of mental health services and increases access to mental health care." The Governor faced strong opposition from insurance, business and medical interests.

This legislation amends the insurance law to require group health insurance policies that already provide psychotherapy to extend such coverage to qualified social workers. The bill became effective January 1, 1985, but it is expected to take several months to

develop regulations for the application procedure. The Society has been invited to comment as these regulations evolve.

Assemblywoman May W. Newburger (Nassau) and Senator John E. Flynn (Yonkers), the primary sponsors of this legislation, have been consistently active on our behalf. Senator Manfred Ohrenstein (Manhattan) has been a tireless advocate

throughout this process. To convey the Society's deep appreciation of their unwavering efforts, a reception took place on Sunday afternoon, March 10th, at Tavern on the Green in New York City.

Appreciation also goes to the many Society members whose efforts contributed to the massive campaign for passage of this

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Conference Honors Blancks

Society Presents First Clinical Achievement Award

*Edited by Barbara Pichler, CSW
and A.J. Collier*

On Saturday, November 17th, close to 200 attended the NYS Society's Conference and Award Presentation. The day-long event, which took place at Fordham University's Pope Auditorium, culminated in the presentation of the Society's first Award for

Outstanding Contributions to the Field of Clinical Social Work to Gertrude Blanck, Ph.D., and Rubin Blanck, MSW.

The morning program consisted of a moderator and six panelists who presented, within actual patient histories, the application of an aspect of the Blancks' theories and techniques involving ego development. The high quality of the presentations provided a stimulating base for discussion.

After a buffet lunch in the university's dining room, the afternoon program featured remarks by the Blancks and the presentation of the award plaque by Society president, Dr. Jacinta Lu (Cindy) Costello.

A special guest in the audience was Dr. Margaret S. Mahler, who noted particularly that the Blancks had done more to disseminate her theories than any other professionals—that their work had done much "to make me famous."

Micki McCabe, Society education chair, introduced the day's program, after which moderator Patsy Turrini presented an overview of the Blancks' work, focusing on their unique contributions to theory and practice, highlighting these as reflections of the tenets of the social work code of ethics. She noted that Freud had remarked the importance of ethics and values to the health of a society:

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*Senator
Manfred Ohrenstein*



*Assemblywoman
May W. Newburger*



*Senator
John E. Flynn*

legislation. Those who were especially active as chapter parity chairs include: Diana Calhoun, Jacinta Lu (Cindy) Costello, Ph.D., Andrew Daly, Edward L. Feldman, Susan N. Finkelstein, Victor J. Goldman, Roslyn Goldner, Phyllis Gordon, Adele T. Halpern, Bill Hartman, Kenneth J. Herrmann, Jr., Evelyn M. (Lyn) Hill, Eileen W. Hunter, Helen H. Krackow, Phyllis L. LaBella, Roslyn Lader, Maralyn Lowenheim, Rosemary Lukton, Gregory Mavrides, James D. Monaco, Joy Perlow, Martin E. Pollens, Stephen Richter, Shirley Ross, Ed Siegel, Andrew M. Stromberg, Joseph A. Ventimiglia, Joseph M. Walsh and Barry Mallin, Esq., the Society's attorney, who drafted the initial legislation in 1980.

Acknowledgment and thanks extend to the following New York State agencies: Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities; Office for the Aging; Department of Health; Office of Employee Relations; Conference of Mental Hygiene Directors; Court Officers Association. Other organizations offering their endorsement include the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services; District Council 37; Federation of Jewish Philanthropies; Nassau County Democratic Committee; Catholic Charities of Brooklyn; 92nd Street "Y"; Deans of Schools of Social Work; Planned Parenthood, AFL-CIO; the Catholic Family Center of the Diocese of Rochester.

Those groups opposing passage included the NYS Office of Mental Health, Health Planning Commission and a variety of groups of physicians, psychiatrists, insurance associations and business organizations. □



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EXECUTIVE REPORT

Parity Now, What Next!



The passage of the parity bill gives cause for celebration and an opportunity to congratulate and thank all those who have worked so hard to see it happen. At the same time, the bill's passage raises issues and concerns that clinical social workers must address.

A primary area of concern relates to the unrelenting opposition to parity from both the American Psychiatric Association and insurance companies. Clearly, both groups have their own interests at heart, doubtless fearing a potential loss of income. Presently both groups maintain strong lobbying ability, and there is nothing to stop either group from starting a campaign to either repeal the bill or initiate legislation which would severely alter the intent and/or gains made to date. It thus behooves us to continue in our efforts to promote and protect our

position legislatively. Therefore, while the Society will retain lobbyist Brian Meara and his firm, he cannot do it alone. Your support of the political action committee and continued involvement with the legislative committee are essential.

A second area of concern relates to the implementation of the bill. Although the Society and NASW have already submitted recommendations for regulations, the process for their approval is a lengthy one requiring close scrutiny and continued input from clinical social workers. Of specific concern were what constituted six years of postmasters' clinical experience; what type and how much supervision should be required; what if any measure of competence should be required at six years; and what should be the fate of the 3-year credentialing bill.

The Society's board intends to monitor and provide continued input to this process; we need greater involvement from all members to insure that we are heard. Members are encouraged to participate at both the chapter and state level to review the issues and provide the data and effort required for an effective campaign.

Jacinta L. Costello, Ph.D.
President

Mental Health For Flatbush, Too

A psychiatrist is a fully trained medical doctor who specializes in mental illness. In New York City a psychiatrist's service now costs \$80 an hour or more. Yet many mental health problems don't call for that level of care or expense. Those arising from marital troubles, a child's difficulty in school or a crisis at work may require no more than a few months of sessions with a psychiatric social worker, who charges less than half as much.

Despite the need, access to the more affordable therapy in New York has been limited because psychiatrists, insurers and business groups held up legislation to require medical insurance to cover social workers' fees. Governor Cuomo, however, has faced down the lobbyists and signed such a requirement into law. It's a small step that could ease the troubles of many.

Psychiatrists feared the competition, and

insurers and business groups were afraid that insurance coverage would cause a large, and ultimately costly, increase in the use of such therapy. They also disparaged the quality of social workers' treatment.

Those arguments were never persuasive. About half the mental health plans in the state already cover social-worker therapy. That large sample produced no dramatic increase in costs, nor has it produced complaints of malpractice.

The law will permit reimbursement only to social workers with at least six years of supervised experience. It might well encourage more people to seek help, but that need not mean a financial loss. Any additional costs to employers for mental health insurance might well be offset by savings from reduced psychosomatic illness and alcoholism.

Psychotherapy for common anxieties used to be a Park Avenue affectation. The new law will make it easier to find on Flatbush Avenue, where the need is at least as great.

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