

To: MH/MR Administrators
From: Michael D. Chambers
Date: April 28, 2009
Subject: Bullets

Those who expect moments of change to be comfortable and free of conflict have not learned their history. ~Joan Wallach Scott

Toll Roads: Okay, it's not directly MH/MR/EI related, but it could affect your wallet and make travel to MH/MR PAAP meetings more challenging. Rep. Robert W. Godshall (R-Montgomery) has introduced HB 1356, "...further providing for duties of the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission as to other interstate highways." This means the bill instructs the PTC to convert all interstates to toll roads! Does this bill have a shot? I don't know, but it should provide some entertaining controversy. It could represent a way to raise taxes without saying you are raising taxes. From a government perspective, that's always good.

HHS Secretary: Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius was sworn in as the Secretary for Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on Tuesday. Believe it or not, behavioral health was not at the top of her list on her first few days in the job. Something about Swine Flu was apparently the priority. Secretary Sebelius is experienced in healthcare and healthcare reform. As Governor of Kansas, she helped expand health insurance coverage and previously was the Kansas state insurance commissioner. At any rate, we are glad to see the HHS chair filled and hope that other appointments follow including CMS and SAMHSA.

Web Site: This year, we expect to provide you with an enhanced MH/MR PAAP website. CCAP is moving to a new platform that is much more workable and since CCAP hosts our website, we can reap the benefits. We will be doing a critical review and housecleaning of the current site over the next few months, and trying to decide how the site should look and work. We are impressed with what we have seen so far and we think that you will be pleased. We are hoping for a rollout at our fall conference in November.

At last week's conference Kevin indicated that CMS approved the increased PFDS cap. I've received a couple of calls from members who were told by their regional offices (two different regions) that the increased cap has not yet been approved. Clearly something needs to go in writing to the field stating that the status of the cap (and HCSIS capacity). I can only affirm what Kevin stated, but have no idea if there are other issues impacting the increased cap or what all is going on so I am not declaring anything to our members at this time. If you provide me definitive information via e-mail, I will gladly share the information.

The 09-10 State Budget: Rep. Dwight Evans (D-Philadelphia), Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, says he will introduce a budget bill today. That means that the budget process will "officially" begin. The problem is that he and other House Democrats are now projecting a revenue shortfall of \$3 billion for this fiscal year. That's up \$700 million from Governor Rendell's last estimate. Most of us paid our taxes by April 15, so it makes sense to project revenues, now. Have all of your provider CEO's paid up?

Rep. Dwight Evans announced the shortfall estimate in a press release Thursday afternoon, saying the larger budget gap “complicates the budget discussions” and that he will introduce a budget bill Friday. Evans plans to use the Governor’s budget proposal as the basis for the budget.

Meanwhile, Sen. Jake Corman (R-Centre), Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee says that Senate Republicans are preparing their own state budget to present in the next several weeks.

Both sides say that they still hope to pass the 2009-2010 budget by the June 30 constitutional deadline. We shall see.