Legislative Briefing

OHA Health Policy Action

Your guide to proposed health legislation, what we think about it, and what we're doing about it.

March 2013

S.B. No. 1085; *An Act Concerning A Pilot Program For the Provision Of Emotional And Behavioral Health Services To Youth*

What is this bill about?

S.B. 1085 will require the Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services, in consultation with the Commissioners of Public Health and Social Services, to establish a pilot program to offer an integrated emotional and behavioral health program for not more than five hundred youth in Hartford and New Haven counties by July 1, 2014.

We recognize timely importance of this piece of legislation in relation to the gross disparity in access to treatment of behavioral health and substance use disorders for youth in Connecticut.

OHA held a hearing in October 2012 about barriers to access that highlighted all of the issues that this proposed bill intends to study. In addition, the Mental Health Services Working Group of the Bipartisan Task Force on Gun Violence Prevention and Children's Safety has recommended the creation of a task force "to conduct a comprehensive study of Connecticut's mental health system and make recommendations for enhancements to the mental health system for 16-25 year olds." The scope of this recommended task force will encompass each of the elements addressed in this proposed bill.

What are the implications of this bill for healthcare consumer advocacy?

Many of the proposed initiatives in this bill are within the scope of our office's authority. We anticipate collaborating and contributing in whatever way necessary to assist with the ultimate work of the task force, consistent with our mission.

Talking Points

1. OHA is aware of this proposed legislation and submitted written public testimony **in support** of this bill.
2. This legislation represents an important step towards appropriate evidence based solutions for the equitable administration of behavioral health services to youth in the state.
3. OHA supports this legislation based on the principles of access to quality healthcare and evidence-based improvements to our healthcare system.

OHA represents the collective voice of 3.5 million healthcare consumers. For our state to be competitive, our people must be healthy. Our mission is to • assure managed care consumers have access to medically necessary healthcare • educate consumers about their rights and responsibilities under health insurance plans • inform legislators of problems consumers face in accessing care and propose solutions to those problems.

Please refer all media, agency, and legislator inquiries to Vicki Veltri