

Winter 2012

## PUBLIC POLICY UPDATES

### FROM THE NATIONAL COUNCIL

The National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare provided several public policy updates earlier this month. They include:

- Five Health Policy Battles and Trends to Watch in 2012
- Five Major Health Policy Successes of 2011
- Three Things YOU Can Do Today to Kick-Start Our Policy Successes in 2012

Click here to read these complete reports. [[http://www.thenationalcouncil.org/cs/latest\\_issue](http://www.thenationalcouncil.org/cs/latest_issue)]

### ADDICTIONS NEWS NOW

The National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare, in partnership with Hazelden and MTM Services, is participating in a new initiative designed to help organizations provide effective integrated and comprehensive care to individuals with co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders. The initiative involves ten community behavioral health organizations, which are participating in a Co-Occurring Disorder Learning Community. Through February 2013, these organizations will receive technical assistance, aiding them in developing clinical processes designed to better serve individuals with both mental illness and addictions.

READ THE COMPLETE REPORT [[http://www.thenationalcouncil.org/cs/current\\_issue](http://www.thenationalcouncil.org/cs/current_issue)]

## SEND TO A FRIEND

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## Is Change on the Horizon?

### *The state of the U.S. health care system in 2012*

As we begin the New Year, politics are at the forefront in 2012 when America will choose a president to lead us forward in challenging times. A big part of the political discussion is sure to be centered on health care, and specifically, whether the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act signed into law in 2010 is the right plan for the country.

Regardless of political preference, almost every American would agree that the U.S. health care system needs to change. More money per person is spent on health care in the U.S. than in any other nation in the world, yet we lag way behind other wealthy nations in measures including infant mortality and life expectancy (50th in the world). The U.S. is the only wealthy, industrialized nation that does not ensure that all citizens have some kind of private or public health insurance. The U.S. Census Bureau reported that a record 51 million residents (17% of the population) were uninsured in 2009. It comes as no surprise that nearly two-thirds of filers for bankruptcies in 2007 claimed high medical expenses as the main cause.

Spiraling health care costs in the U.S. are a significant economic problem, and there is no end in sight. By 2019 health-care spending is expected to double to \$5 trillion and it will comprise almost 20 percent of our gross domestic product, and most of this spending is public dollars (primarily Medicaid and Medicare).

Behavioral health care is right in the center of our "health care crisis". Despite the fact that a report by the U.S. Surgeon General found that mental illnesses are the second leading cause of disability in the nation and affect 20 percent of all Americans, behavioral health remains largely misunderstood relative to other medical and surgical procedures. The Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 went a long way in bringing parity of insurance coverage for behavioral health care, but these are certainly difficult times to pursue increased funding and access to care in a branch of medicine that many still see as "not medically necessary".



It is impossible to know what health care reforms lie on the horizon, but maintaining the status quo is definitely not going to work for most Americans. It will take an unprecedented level of collaboration, reform, and vision to fix our broken health care system. It is also apparent that behavioral health care will have to be included in whatever plan is developed if we are to have a truly viable health care system in this country.

**Quality Health Care for All:  
Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Disparities through Integrated Health Care**  
February 7, 8 a.m.-4:15 p.m.  
Hilton Austin Airport

The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health in partnership with the federal Office of Minority Health [<http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/>] is hosting a one-day conference to promote integrated health care as a means of eliminating health disparities in racial and ethnic minority populations and persons with limited English proficiency.

Click here to learn more or to register. [<http://www.hogg.utexas.edu/detail/244/Quality-Health-Care-for-All-Free-Conference.html>]

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## What's Driving Increased Demand for Behavioral Health Care Services?

- Increased illicit drug use – up from 8 percent of Americans in 2008 to 9 percent in 2010.
- Prescription drug abuse explosion – pain killer use is up over 600 percent since 1997.
- Prison overcrowding – drug courts, alternatives to incarceration programs.
- 2 million U.S. troops deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan over last 10 yrs – about one-third of returning veterans have experienced a co-occurring substance use disorder and mental illness.
- Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 – required mental health and addiction treatment to be covered equally with other medical coverage by health insurance companies.
- In 2014, 32 million more people will be eligible for health coverage through the Affordable Care Act of 2010.



## Do One Thing Join the fight

February 26th through March 3rd is National Eating Disorder Awareness Week.

This year, NEDA, the National Eating Disorders Association [[www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org)] is once again asking everyone to do just one thing to help raise awareness and provide accurate information about eating disorders. The Empire State Building will be lit up in blue and green on Feb. 28th to light the way in the fight against eating disorders during the 25th Anniversary of National Eating Disorders Awareness week.



## Events Calendar Save the date

Come and meet with the NSM program team at the following upcoming events:

### **PLUS (Professional Liability Underwriting Society)**

**Medical Professional Liability Symposium**  
March 29-30

*Sheraton Chicago Hotel & Towers, Chicago, Illinois*  
[[www.plusweb.org](http://www.plusweb.org)]

### **NCCBH (National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare)** **Annual Conference on Mental Health and Addictions**

April 15-17  
*Hilton Chicago, Chicago, Illinois*  
[[www.thenationalcouncil.org](http://www.thenationalcouncil.org)]

### **AATOD (American Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence)** **2012 National Conference**

April 21-25  
*The Venetian Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada*  
[[www.aatod.org](http://www.aatod.org)]

