

## Therapeutic Communities of America

# Reforming the Healthcare Delivery System: Understanding Healthcare Reform and Addiction and Mental Health Parity

The passage of the Wellstone/Domenici Parity bill last year provided a good foundation and helped to position substance abuse and mental health treatment, prevention and recovery advocates to have a significant impact on healthcare reform. For the first time substance abuse and mental health advocates joined forces to educate Congress and promote the same message – to provide substance use disorder (SUD) and mental health (MH) coverage in a non-discriminatory manner at equal coverage provided for physical health benefits. Together in partnership, the mental health and addiction field was able to successfully represent how

- SUD and MH coverage should be part of any healthcare plan. Another positive outcome of parity is that it created a minimum standard of inclusion and equality for addiction and mental health – which health reform was able to later build on.
- In March, President Obama signed landmark healthcare legislation, which will allow 32 million uninsured Americans access to health insurance coverage that includes mental health and substance use disorder treatment at parity. The newly passed health reform legislation will have a profound effect on the health and economic well being of many American fami-

- lies, businesses and the economy.
- TCA provided comments to the U.S. House of Representatives, Ways and Means Committee last April that stated “in order for healthcare to be effective one must first understand that substance abuse and co-occurring treatment, recovery, and prevention is an integral part of any health reform dialogue and policy reform”.
- After a 17 year effort, addiction treatment is finally recognized as an integral part of the healthcare delivery system, and a new partnership between the substance abuse field and primary healthcare will finally be established.

*Continued on page 3*

## Unemployment and Addiction

By David Kerr

In January according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Newark's unemployment rate reached nearly 16%. This one issue has done more harm in encouraging the spread the drug trade in Newark than has any other single social problem – my opinion. Our young people in different parts of our City that some call “the hood” can always find good paying employment. This employment requires no training or schooling, but it capitalizes on the inherent ability of many of our street youth who know how to ‘get over’ and to hustle. The job that always has openings is *Drug Dealing*.

It's a simple formula and I believe there is a direct relationship between the

- rise in unemployment and the increase in drug dealing on the streets. I have no hard data to prove this but from the many contacts we have with “the streets” and our pattern of intake, drug dealing is a major problem.
- In the world of a 14 year old male drug dealer, dollars are essential to help support his grandmother and 5 other family members with money left over for jewelry, girlfriends and clothes. The clothes are not hand me downs either. They are top of the line and exactly what's in style in “the hood.” There is a certain respect the young drug dealer earns with the money he brings in and the money he shows off.

- The spread and roots of the drug culture grow especially as the unemployment rate grows. Yet I know that there are many young drug dealers who would take a lower paying job after school rather than to be involved in the illegal drug trade. Many see no opportunity for employment as the 16% rate would corroborate. Also, once a young man becomes a drug dealer he gains respect but is subject to strict rules of his group or gang. Violation of these rules can be painful and even cause his death.

- It is a vicious and deadly business that is now burgeoning in cities like Newark,

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## Across the Nation

*Continued from Page 5*

Gateway assisted TCU/IBR in the development of the Automated Data Collection (ADC) system for administering the Criminal Justice Client Evaluation of Self and Treatment (CEST) and the Criminal Thinking Scales (CTS), and is the only provider who has over 7 years of experience collecting and using this information for treatment improvement within our programs.

Although Gateway established the formal Internal Evaluation Protocol (IEP) in its New Jersey programs several years ago, last year Gateway began to implement its IEP in all corrections programs nation-wide. The TCU assessment component of the evaluation protocol is now fully in place within all Texas and New Jersey programs, and has recently been launched within the Missouri and Cook County, Illinois programs. To date, nearly 10,000 Gateway clients have completed the TCU assessments at treatment intake, with nearly two-thirds completing the full battery of TCU assessments at discharge. This sample includes 3,500 clients in the New Jersey programs and 6,000 clients in the Texas programs, and provides Gateway with the unique opportunity for "normative" data on its own programs.

The results from Gateway's IEP continue to document the positive impact that Gateway programs are having on the clients. For example, recent findings from the New Jersey programs revealed that nearly all of the problems clients report at treatment intake (e.g., low motivation, poor psychosocial functioning, high criminal thinking) improve to more acceptable levels by the time they are discharged from the program. In addition to being used to document client changes over time, the Internal Evaluation Protocol is playing a significant role in providing Gateway with key client information for treatment plan development, as well as providing the means to iden-

tify clients at risk of being discharged unsuccessfully. For example, evaluation results have demonstrated that Gateway clients who score low on motivation for treatment at intake are less likely to engage in and successfully complete the treatment program than are their peers who report being motivated for treatment. As a result, many of the Gateway programs are now identifying these less motivated clients and providing them with targeted brief motivational enhancement interventions as a way to "adapt" treatment to better meet their needs.

## Integrity House NEWARK, NJ

### *Integrity House Opens Women's Outpatient Treatment Facility*

Recently, Integrity House celebrated the opening of a new Women's Outpatient Treatment Facility in Newark, NJ. After \$1 million in renovations and support from the Oprah Winfrey foundation, Newark Mayor Cory Booker joined Integrity House staff to cut the ribbon and offi-



*Dave Kerr, CEO of Integrity House, Mayor Corey Booker, and Integrity staff at the ribbon cutting ceremony*

cially open the facility. Over 100 women will be served annually in this building and it has become the hub for treatment and supportive services for women. Launched in 2005, the Integrity Initiative for Women and Children aims to address each woman's unique needs through a program of family stabilization, substance abuse and mental health treatment, long-term transitional housing, and wrap around services. Through the Initiative, Integrity House plans to open two additional facilities dedicated to women's treatment and recovery support within the next three years. Once completed, the agency's capacity to service women will double. Renovations are currently underway at the Women's Transitional Housing Facility which will open in September 2010.

## *"Recovery Through Positive Growth and Holistic Client Centered Care"*

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- **Represents the interest** of its member programs and their thousands of dedicated staff workers
- **Works year-round** to keep members informed by receiving updates on funding sources, research and current trends
- **Creates opportunities** for learning and networking
- **Advocates for public policy** that supports substance abuse prevention, treatment and research.

**Contact TCA today!**

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