

The Coalition

www.wacoalition.org

Advocates for Ethical Mental Health Care

Spring-Summer 2006

Editor's Corner

Peter N. Moore, Psy.D.

In recent months print and television reports have focused attention on **Registered Counselors**. News pieces have portrayed the public at risk of harm from this group of professionals. This publicity resulted in Governor Gregoire forming a task force to examine and make recommendations about the Registered Counselor designation. The report is due by the end of September.

The Coalition Board has struggled with this issue from time to time. For now, it has taken no position on the issue. We represent professionals of all stripes and we want to ensure ethical, quality mental health care. We also want to make certain that no group is treated unfairly.

Consequently, the Board seeks your opinion. We would like to hear your thoughts as to whether Registered Counselors need greater regulation or registration requirements. Please share your ideas so that the Board has the collective wisdom of its membership. Call the Helpline or e-mail me at pkt6533@hotmail.com

Coalition Strives to Build Membership

Peter N. Moore, Psy.D.

The Coalition's membership has gradually been declining over the past several years. The Board has been wrestling with how to not only add members but to encourage existing members to stay active.

The Coalition was formed as managed care was becoming an increasing threat to mental health practice. Many therapists were looking for a place of support and a way to combat the rising threats to privacy and confidentiality. The professional organizations ignored the threat, encouraged their membership to accommodate to it, or had their hands full with other matters. The Coalition provided that place where anxious and angry professionals (and consumers) could focus on turning back the tide of what some called the industrialization of mental health. At its height, our organization attracted several hundred souls.

Over the years, managed care has not exactly ended. It nevertheless is arguably much less of an influence. Some companies such as GreenSpring no longer exist. The paper work demands imposed by others such as Value Options are much less onerous.

Further, many therapists have either made their peace with managed care or have found other ways to flourish. Some likely are willing to accept the conditions of the few managed care companies that affect us. Others have removed themselves from depending upon insurance reimbursement and accept only cash on the barrel.

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Who Ya Gonna Call !?!?!?!!

Coalition Helpline: 206-444-4304

Who's My Legislator: 1-800-448-4881 (State and Federal)

Legislative Hotline: 1-100-562-6000

Consequently, the Board surmises that its members see few if any immediate threats to their practices that would galvanize them. Other mental health groups are more actively responding to managed care and other issues affecting our practices. For example, this state's mental health parity legislation was aggressively pushed by not only The Coalition, but by Psychologists, Social Workers and an independent Parity Coalition. HIPAA requirements were also disseminated by the other associations.

Yet, while managed care may not be quite the devil of yore, challenges to our practices continue. Evidence Based Practice requirements are gaining support at the state and national level. The insurance industry will undoubtedly seek to undercut and circumvent the intent of parity mandates. As you read in the previous newsletter (you did read it didn't you?) legislation in Olympia continues to impact our practices.

The Board has more recently devoted more of its meetings to rebuilding our membership. Some of you may have received calls over the past several weeks from Board members asking you to renew your memberships.

The Board also wants to increase the visibility of the Coalition. This could include writing op-ed pieces for the local newspapers. Targeting recent graduates of professional programs is another idea. Newly minted mental health professionals could benefit from an organization that will protect the sanctity of the therapeutic setting and help them navigate the shoals of insurance and managed care. Further, the Board would like to do further outreach with members by having them more involved and informed of the Board's activities.

What are your ideas? What keeps you committed to the Coalition? How could the Coalition better serve you? Please e-mail me at pkt6533@htomail.com or call the Help Line at 206.444.4304.

Get Ready for the National Provider Identifier (NPI)

Eds. Note: This information was adapted from a June 21, 2006 webmail from the American Psychological Association Practice Directorate

About the NPI The NPI is a unique 10-digit number assigned to every health care provider or entity that applies for it. This number will replace other numbers that have been assigned to health care professionals by government and private insurers for use in billing. As of May 23, 2007, all health care professionals will be required to use their NPI when billing electronically any government or private health insurer. Once a health professional receives an NPI, that number will be assigned to that health professional for his or her entire career, regardless of whether the health professional relocates, changes employers or even changes health professions. Unlike identifiers used by the government and insurers in the past, the NPI is a random number. It does not reveal any information about the health professional, such as geographic location or type of practice.

Who Must Apply for an NPI All "covered entities" under HIPAA, which includes all health care professionals who are required to comply with this federal law, must obtain an NPI no later than *the May 23, 2007 deadline*. In addition, any private health insurer can require that health professionals who bill the insurer use an NPI, even if the billing is done by mail rather than electronically. *This means that even practitioners who are not considered "covered entities" under HIPAA may be required to get an NPI.* They should also be aware that sole proprietorships are considered to be individuals for purposes of obtaining an NPI. For that reason, sole proprietorships should apply as individuals, using a social security number, not their employer

identification number (EIN).

You will be able to complete the application quickly, so long as you have all the required information ready before you begin. The list of information needed for individuals applying for an NPI includes:

- Health practitioner name
- Health practitioner date of birth
- Country of Birth
- State of Birth (if birth was in the United States)
- Health practitioner gender
- Social Security Number of other proof of identity
- Mailing address • Practice location and phone number
- Taxonomy (see "Obtaining the Correct Taxonomy Code" below)
- State license information (required for certain taxonomies only)
- Contact person name
- Contact person phone number and e-mail

The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) advises that electronic submission is the fastest way to obtain your NPI.

Paper Application Process For any health care professional who wishes to complete a hard copy version of the application form and send it via regular mail, the application can be downloaded from the website. When you access the site, click on "CMS Forms." Doing so will take you to a list of forms that includes the NPI application – CMS Form #10114. The application form is three pages long, followed by instructions for completing the form. Individuals who render health care services are asked to complete Sections 2A, 3, 4A and 5. *Application Form Submitted by an Employer* In some cases, a psychologist who is employed by a health care entity may find that the entity is willing to submit the NPI application on his or her behalf. For example, a hospital may do so for its employed providers. However, the health care entity is required to obtain your permission before filing an NPI application for you. If applicable, you could check with your billing or human resources department to find out whether your organization is planning to submit NPI applications for its employees.

Steps in the NPI Application Process *Electronic Application Process.* You may complete and submit the NPI application form online by accessing https://nppes.cms.hhs.govwww.cms.hhs.gov/cmsforms_

Mark Your Calendars Now: Coalition Annual Meeting Saturday, November 11
Topic: Ethical Issues in our Practice (CE Pending) - Details to Follow

The Coalition of Mental Health
Professionals and Consumers
PO Box 30087
Seattle, WA 98103

Join or Renew Your Commitment to Protect Mental Health Care

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ - _____ - _____ Fax: _____ - _____ - _____

E-mail _____

Member: \$65

Student: \$15

Consumer: Free

Organization: \$124

Willing to help with specific tasks: YES _____

OK to publish information in a directory ? YES _____

NO _____

