

Summer Newsletter – 2009

Hello WIMHCA members:

I hope all of you are doing well and enjoying the summer season. Last January, we developed a strategic action plan for the association. This plan lists goals that the president of the association strives toward achieving in order to ensure the continued growth of WIMHCA. In this newsletter, I would like to cover several of the goals that have been accomplished.

* The first goal accomplished this year has been providing regional opportunities for Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs) to gather on a local basis through network meetings. The purpose of these gatherings is to promote a network of communication among mental health professionals. Relevant issues to our profession can be discussed, along with association information. The first meeting was held in Madison on June 20th, and the second meeting was on July 18th, in Oconomowoc. Although few counselors attended these first two meetings, very important issues were discussed. One issue brought up at both meetings was having a low cost workshop/conference for members. Several conference topics of interest include: PTSD, adolescent depression, and couples therapy. Other issues discussed at the networking meeting include: status of the Mental Health Access/Vendorship Bill, and Medicare reimbursement initiative.

The next two networking meetings are in Oshkosh (August 29th), from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm at Perkins Restaurant (2005 W. 9th Avenue), and in Eau Claire (September 26th), from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm at the Green Mill Restaurant. I would like to thank the members who came to the Madison and Oconomowoc meeting. In addition, I will be setting up two additional sites in October, Wausau and Brookfield. I hope to meet each one of you at the networking meetings.

* The second goal accomplished in the strategic plan has been supporting legislative activities which benefit mental health consumers. The recent passing of the Vendorship Amendment in Wisconsin is a wonderful accomplishment for LPCs and mental health consumers. The following update on legislative news is from Deborah Schingen, board member and committee member for legislative and policy issues.

LEGISLATIVE NEWS

2009 is shaping up to be very positive for LPCs and all of our Mental Health colleagues. HFS 35 is now reality. This refers to the outpatient clinic rules. The new rules make life much easier for those who wish to maintain clinic status. For those of you wishing to have a copy of the rules feel free to contact me at jschingen@wi.rr.com. Vendorship is reality. This allows LPCs, LMFTs, and LCSWs to bill insurance companies independently. By January 2010 all of the insurance companies will be on board. Some of the companies are currently (July 2009) able to reimburse directly the rest will be reimbursing by January 2010.

In January 2011, there will be the opportunity to bill MA/T-19 directly. You will not need to be involved with a certified outpatient clinic. This is a major benefit.

It was through the hard work of NASW and several LPCs and LMFTs that Vendorship and MA/T-19 inclusion were made possible. We on the WIMHCA board are very appreciative of all the hard work.

Our next major cause is to gain inclusion in Medicare. As you know, LPCs and LMFTs have been excluded from being able to bill Medicare. This needs to change and our national leadership continues to work very diligently to get this changed. It would be greatly appreciated if all WIMHCA members would write your legislators and request that they support the efforts to get LPCs included.

We came very close to be included in the last legislative session but NASW waged war and we were excluded. NASW has a strong political faction that we need to stand up to. This may be the year to get included since President Obama is pushing for Health Care reform. When sending a letter to your legislators, let them know you are addressing SB 671 or HR 1693. Use personal stories if you have them regarding clients who have wanted to see you but could not because you are unable to bill Medicare. With the number of baby boomers who will be accessing their benefits it is crucial that LPCs are included so there is freedom of choice. Your letter can be short and to the point of requesting their support for the bill.

Feel free to access the AMHCA website for information that applies to you and your profession. Respectfully, Deborah Schingen

If you have any questions about Medicare inclusion, please contact Julie Clements, AMHCA director of Legislative Affairs.

*Two strategic goals I am currently working on are setting up a reduced fee conference in the spring of 2010 and increasing membership of graduate students. I have been visiting graduate schools in the past several months and either distributing information about AMHCA/WIMCHA or giving a brief presentation about the benefits of joining the Association. Regarding the Spring conference, I am in the process of interviewing several professional speakers. I will continue to email members with any updates.

Congratulations to Phyllis Eisenberg who has decided to become a board member for WIMHCA. Her areas of interest include advocating and policy issues. We are still looking to fill several board member positions. If you have any time available and are interested in becoming involve with WIMHCA, please contact me at 608-443-6808.

Sincerely,

Tammy Zinser-Minocha, WIMHCA President