



A note from your IMHCA president

Springtime - what an amazing season of transition! Escorting us so gently from the cool, gray shadows of winter into the bright, hot glow of summer. This spring represents numerous "endings" and countless "beginnings" for myself, for the existing and incoming board members, and for IMHCA itself. The seeds that were planted by various board members over the past several months continue to grow; the first combined Annual Conference of the Iowa Mental Health Counselors Association and the Iowa Marriage and Family Therapy Association, a well received "hard copy" newsletter that resulted in countless new members-many of whom are anxious to assume active roles. I, for one, am thrilled at the new level of enthusiasm and am anticipating great things from the onslaught of student members - the future of the Association and the profession in Iowa. It's not hard to imagine tremendous progress on multiple issues with our newly elected President - Molly Wertz.

One key concern has been Blue Cross Blue Shields' omission of LMHCs in their provider networks. Per personal correspondence I have been reassured that the issue will be resolved in the very near future and in our favor. What an accomplishment....further proof that the active efforts of our membership in coordination with marriage and family therapists really can make a difference.

I have so enjoyed the opportunities that the Association has provided me, I am somewhat sad to see it officially end - June 30th. I will gracefully step into the role of Past President, effective July 1, 2006 and offer support, information, and encouragement. I look forward to hosting a "IMHCA Transition Retreat" for outgoing and incoming board members and their families on June 24. Stay tuned for pictures. Until our paths cross again, thank you, **Carol Charles Rohlf**

STATE CONFERENCE A SUCCESS

Iowa Association of Marriage and Family Therapists and the Iowa Mental Health Counselors Association agree: First combined conference effort a success. Planning to begin immediately for next year's conference with all feedback from those in attendance taken into consideration. Thank you to all who helped make this "First" a successful "First."



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The Iowa Mental Health Counselors Association 2006-2008 Leadership
 President
 Molly Wertz
 Secretary
 Erik Oostenink
 Treasurer
 Stephanie Newsom
 Members-at-Large
 Darcie Davis-



Carol, Susan and Neil touch bases



Founding members - Berdena Beach & Audrey Smith



Attendees network and socialize at breaks



Gage
Kelly Wagner
Public Policy and
Legislation
Linda Nebbe
Membership
Bridget
Bencke
Student
Representatives
Tracie Self
Cindy Boyle
Special Liasion to
the Iowa Mental
Health Coalition
Karen Cordes
Special Liasion to
the Iowa Board of
Substance Abuse
Counselors
Isabell Lewis
BlueCross/Blue
Shield: Special
Task Force Chair
Erik Oostenink

**Non-voting
positions of
responsibility**

Web site
coordinator
Cindy Boyle
Database
Manager
Scott
Brockmann
Conference
Coordinators
Bridget
Bencke
Kelly Wagner
Cindy Boyle
Newsletter Editor
Christy
Royston

All members can
be reached via
the imhca.net
web site. For
other contact
information utilize
the member
directory, also
found at
imhca.net.



Networking continues over lunch



Presenter and Board Member, Kelly Wagner



Dr. Barry Duncan

ANNUAL AMHCA CONFERENCE NEWS

Make your reservations for St. Louis soon for the annual American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA) conference July 20-22, 2006, at the Hyatt Regency. Keynote speaker is Dr. David Satcher, the 16th Surgeon General of the United States. Dr. Satcher released a landmark report on mental health and is committed to promoting quality primary care, the elimination of disparities in health and making public health work for all groups in our country.

CREATIVITY ROOM IN ST. LOUIS

Help carry on a tradition from the Heartland

help carry on a tradition from the heartland.

Susan Hoppenworth first introduced the idea of a Creativity Room at the Annual IMHCA Conference in 2001. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and the idea spread to the national level with its debut in Philadelphia last year. The Creativity Room offers refuge for conference attendees from the otherwise hectic and informative conference atmosphere.

What is the Creativity Room? The room incorporates clinicians' creative work that is often related to our profession. We have had exhibitors with paintings, photographs, art quilts, sculpture, pottery, poetry, prose, and more! The exhibits are from state and national association members like YOU! Let the artistic voice of the Iowa Delegation to the national conference soothe everyone who visits the CREATIVITY ROOM in St. Louis. For more information, contact Susan Hoppenworth, Midwest Region Director, AMHCA, at suzanestes@aol.com.

AMHCA SELECTS NEW ORLEANS FOR JULY 2007 CONFERENCE

AMHCA has selected New Orleans as the location for the AMHCA Annual Conference in July 2007. President-elect Dr. Gail Mears welcomed the Board of Director's decision and commented, "We are excited both about going to this wonderful city and also showing our support for the rebuilding of New Orleans." The national Leadership Training for current and future state chapter leaders precedes the AMHCA Annual Conference.

CONTINUING EDUCATION CHANGES FOR MFTs and MHCs

The Iowa Board of Behavioral Science Examiners wants to make you aware of some changes in their administrative rules affecting your practice as a marital and family therapist or a mental health counselor.

Beginning with the September 30, 2006 renewal, each person who is licensed to practice as a marital and family therapist or a mental health counselor shall be required to complete three (3) hours of continuing education in ethics, as it pertains to the practice of marital and family therapy and mental health counseling. The three hours in ethics will be included in the 40 hours of continuing education currently required for renewal and is not an additional three hours.

In addition, the board no longer processes applications for prior and post approval of continuing education, nor does the board approve sponsors. Instead, the board directs its licensees to review the continuing education criteria established in the rules. To determine if your continuing education activity meets the board's criteria, review Iowa Administrative Code, Chapter 32.3, "Standards".

The board has also adopted rules to amend the licensure and fee chapters. The laws and rules governing practice are available on the professional licensure web site. To review laws and rules, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/licensure, using the scroll down bar on the list box, select the board name, then click on laws and rules.

Questions may be directed to:

Application/licensure: 515-281-4422

Continuing education: 515-242-5937

Professional Development sponsored by the Iowa Mental Health Counselors Association

**IMHCA RESPONDS TO NEW RULES WITH ETHICS OFFERING
Ethical Issues in Mental Health Counseling**

Taught by Terry Kottman, Ph.D., LMHC, NCC, RPT-S, this experiential (and believe it or not, FUN) workshop covers selected ethical issues in the practice of mental health counseling. Using a case study approach, we will cover ethical theories and assumptions, ethical decision-making models, and major ethical issues (i.e.,

informed consent, confidentiality, multiple relationships).

Location: The Encouragement Zone, 110 E. 3rd St., Cedar Falls, IA 50613

Date(s): To be announced

Cost: \$50

This will meet the new Board requirement for CEUs in Ethics.

URGENT NMHA LEGISLATIVE ALERT

Major Health-Insurance Deregulation Bill Going to Senate Floor Grassroots Action Needed on Bill Overriding State Parity, Consumer Laws

Summary

With a key Senate Committee having approved sweeping legislation that would override state insurance mandates (including state mental health parity and other laws that protect people with chronic illnesses), a grassroots outcry is needed to defeat S. 1955, a bill being falsely marketed as a solution for uninsured Americans.

Background

The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee last week approved on a party-line vote the so-called "Health Insurance Marketplace Modernization and Affordability Act"² (S.1955), a bill that would override more than 1,000 longstanding, vital state consumer-protection laws (including mental health parity laws) that now regulate the individual, small-group and large-group health insurance markets.

Under this measure, an insurer would have to offer only one (shockingly inadequate) alternative to a "bare-bones" insurance plan. It would have to offer a plan resembling ANY option available to state employees in one of the five largest states. But that option may be grossly inadequate, given the variability among those states' employee-benefit plans. Many of these state employee plans offer very limited coverage and do not provide mental health parity. As a result, beneficiaries who now have strong protections could find themselves with little to no mental health benefits.

Small employers have a true health insurance affordability crisis. But S.1955 could actually make insurance MORE expensive for many (particularly for people with more than minimal healthcare needs). In seeking to provide for lower-cost health insurance, the bill would fail those most in need of good coverage. It would do so by weakening the fundamental protection that insurance provides, that of "pooling" risk. Various state laws currently prohibit insurers from discriminating on the basis of age, gender or health status in setting insurance premium rates. But S. 1955 would override those laws and allow insurers to set far higher rates for those who are older and sicker, thereby driving up costs for those with the greatest needs. To illustrate the problem, when New Hampshire threw out its protections regarding premium costs and adopted the policy proposed in S.1955, premiums rose for 80% of small employers in the state.

Status

The Senate HELP Committee approved S.1955 on a party-line vote after an extremely contentious two-day session. S.1955 may now be considered by the full Senate as soon as March 27.

Action Needed

Most Senators are not yet aware of the sweeping, extremely harmful provisions in S.1955. Senators need to hear from constituents before this dangerous legislation is brought before the full Senate. NMHA urges you to contact your U.S. Senators and urge them to oppose S. 1955 and convey their opposition to Majority Leader First. You can contact your Senator by calling the US Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 or using your Senator's e-mail Webform at http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm. Contact your Governor and urge the Governor's office to oppose S. 1955 and convey that opposition to the Senate.

Talking Points

S. 1955 would allow insurance companies to completely circumvent state mental health parity laws and over 1,000 other state consumer protection laws. S.1955 would override current state laws that prohibit insurers from discriminating against individuals based on health status, geography, age and gender (exposing vulnerable people to exorbitant premiums).

S. 1955 fails to protect those with the greatest health needs. It proposes an altogether ineffective "solution" in requiring only that an insurer offer a health-plan option similar to any plan available to state employees in one of the five largest states. This "solution" is totally inadequate, as there are many very limited health plans (including plans that do not provide mental health parity) available to those state employees, to include high-deductible plans with very few benefits. Further, by siphoning healthier individuals into bare-bones plans, S.1955 would make any more comprehensive plan unaffordable.

If you or a friend would like to receive future NMHA alerts, news releases and other updates please sign up online at <https://secured.nmha.org/secure/emailservices.cfm>.

For more information

Cecilia Arnold, MS, LMHC, NCC
Director, Passages
National Catholic Rural Life Conference
4625 Beaver Ave. Des Moines, IA 50310-2199
Phone: 515.270.2634 Fax: 515.270.9447
www.ncrlc.com/passages.html

UPCOMING EVENTS

Topic: Ethics In Counseling

Date: Thursday, April 13, 2006

Location: State College Room, Maucker Union, University of Northern Iowa

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Cost: \$25.00

Sponsored by the Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Postsecondary Education

To make reservations, send a check payable to:

ELCPE (Attn: Marlene Shea)
Schindler Education Center #508
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614-0604

American Red Cross Foundations of Disaster Mental Health Course
May 6, 2006 • 8:30 am to 5:00 pm
Central Iowa Chapter, 2116 Grand Ave Des Moines

Fee: None

[More information](#)

Topic: AMHCA Annual Conference

Date: July 20-22, 2006

Location: St. Louis

Complete details : www.amhca.org

MEET YOUR BOARD MEMBERS

Your new president

Molly Wertz, MA, NCC

As the incoming President of the Iowa Mental Health Counselors Association, I look forward to meeting new people and working together to continue to promote and build the association. Some of my priorities as president will be to continue building membership and promote member benefits. Another priority will continue to be BCBS reimbursement for mental health counselors.

I am a 2005 graduate of the mental health counseling program at the University of Northern Iowa. My bachelor's degree, also from UNI, is in psychology. I currently work for Mid-Iowa Family Therapy Clinic and have almost completed my hours for licensure. I have been on the IMHCA board since October of 2004. I live in Waterloo with my wonderful husband, Matt. I enjoy outdoor activities, going to Iowa football games, traveling, reading, shopping, spending time with my family, and just having fun.

Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Iowa: IMHCA Special Task Force Chair

Erik Oostenink – Erik is originally from Michigan but moved to Iowa in 1990. He graduated from the University of South Dakota in 1996 with a MA in Counseling and has his BA in Psychology from Dordt College. Most recently, he has been working at Orchard Place's Child Guidance Center in Des Moines as an outpatient therapist with children and adolescents since 2001. Erik recently joined the IMHCA with the interest in working toward LMHCs receiving recognition from Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Iowa (BCBS), for reimbursement and will chairing a task force to work toward that goal.

BCBS Task Force Update

For those that are unaware of the issue, most medical plans under Wellmark's Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Iowa do not recognize LMHCs for reimbursement

for therapy and counseling. This is frustrating in several ways as BCBS in many other states will reimburse LMHCs or LPCs. It also appears from a chart put out by the ACA that 21 states have legislated insurance vendorship for Mental Health Counselors, which seems to indicate that the law essentially requires groups of providers to be eligible for reimbursement.

IMHCA representatives have met with BCBS in the past and this has not changed their policies as of yet. However, there has been a turnover in the positions of some of those at BCBS who were involved in the meeting. We are organizing a task force to continue to work on finding a way to get reimbursement for LMHCs in Iowa. There are several ways of trying to achieve this task.

1.

1. Meeting with the insurance commissioner for the State of Iowa who oversees the insurance business and explain the concerns of discrimination.
2. Work with the Iowa Association of Community Mental Health Providers to also take up the issue in order to increase accessibility for mental health services in the state.
3. Hire a lobbyist or as a group talk with our legislators about the issue

3. Hire a lobbyist or as a group talk with our legislators about the issue and push for legislative insurance vendorship similar to other states.
4. Continue to try to meet with Wellmark BCBS representatives.

What we need to make this happen is for our membership to get involved. We need participants on the task force. It would be helpful to find current research showing the effect on cost of health insurance by adding LMHCs to plans. It would also be useful to find information on what other states did to get the insurance vendorship laws in place as well as to find copies of their laws to possibly present to our legislators. We may also want to show the problems in accessibility in the state for people trying to access services both in the rural and urban areas. Any ideas and information would be greatly appreciated.

If you are interested in participating on the task force, please contact the task force chair, Erik Oostenink, by e-mail at president@imhca.net or by phone during day hours at (515) 244-2267.

The AMHCA Graduate Student Committee needs your help!

As one of the projects for this year's GSC Leadership, our 'President's Day Campaign' needs your support! Our objective is to tie the theme of counselor-related legislation awareness and professional advocacy with a student perspective on their future profession. Additionally, we hope to point out the advantages of joining AMHCA as a student, thereby building a stronger professional community from the start!

Please share the following information with any graduate student programs in your state, or any student organizations of which you may be familiar.

- [Open letter to graduate students](#) to enroll in FLAN (Federal Legislative Advocacy Network), to become advocates for themselves and the profession they are entering, while also inviting them to check out AMHCA
- [List of academic programs](#) in the Counseling field in Iowa

We appreciate your help as your participation will surely deliver a successful enrollment campaign.

If you have any questions or follow-up feedback, please contact Karen F. Griner at kfgriner@gmail.com or Leo Hudzik at leo.hudzik@gmail.com.