



WASHINGTON STATE NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2008
LEGISLATIVE UPDATE EDITION

SSWLHC ADVOCACY, PRIORITIES, ISSUES & ACTIVITIES

- April 2—5 2008
SSWLHC 43rd Annual Meeting & Educational Conference
CROSSING BORDERS, BUILDING BRIDGES, EXPANDING HORIZONS
Hyatt Regency, Montreal, Quebec, Canada
To Register: www.sswlhc.org
- April 11—12, 2008
NASW WA Chapter
"Enhancing Relationships, A Multidimensional Approach to Working with Couples in Distress"
Marshall Jung, DSW
Red Lion Bellevue Inn
- May 3, 2008
NASW WA Chapter
"LASW, LICSW Licensure Prep Course
Jonathan Beard, MSSW, LICSW, CPRP
Highline Medical Center, Burien WA
- June 20—21, 2008
NASW WA Chapter
"From Trauma to Transformation, Working with Negative Experiences in Psychotherapy"
Stephen Gilligan, PhD
Address: TBA

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SOCIAL WORK TITLE PROTECTION, SUPERVISION EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENT, AT TOP OF NASW PROFESSIONAL PRIORITIES

The State is enhancing public safety this year by a number of statutory and regulatory changes to health care professional licensing and regulation standards. NASW and SSWLHC have been closely following these efforts and have testified on a number of bills and needed revisions.

SUPPORT Title Protection for Social Workers

A bill is not being introduced this year, but Senator Hargrove has agreed to sponsor a Work Session in order to educate legislators about our concerns. The work session, on **Title Integrity for Social Workers**, will be held after the second cutoff dates for bills.

In the 2007 Legislative Session, NASW worked with Rep. Erick Pettigrew

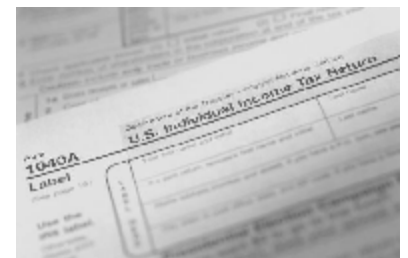
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SENIORS ELIGIBLE FOR \$300 TAX REBATE MUST FILE 2007 INCOME TAX RETURN

Congress passed an economic stimulus package last week that President Bush signed Feb. 14, 2008, which includes one-time tax rebate checks (stimulus payments) to be mailed to tens of millions of Americans. The stimulus package also includes \$300 rebates for 20 million low-income older Americans.

Individuals who might not otherwise be required to file a 2007 tax return will need to file a return this year to receive the stimulus payment. Their 2007 tax return **must** show at least \$3,000 in qualifying income.

Social Security recipients, veterans and retired railroad workers who might not otherwise need to file a tax return must do so to receive the economic stimulus payment.



Continued on Page 8

Social work Professional Priorities, continued from page 1

and Sen. Ed Murray to sponsor HB 2112/SB5950: AN ACT Relating to protecting consumers and agency clients by clarifying the definition of social worker; amending RCW 18.225.010 and .020; and adding a new section to chapter 18.225 RCW. The bill stated "Any individual calling themselves a Social Worker must have graduated from a bachelor's, master's, or doctorate Social Work educational program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education and approved by the Secretary based on nationally recognized standards, and/or, is licensed under RCW 18.225.090 as a licensed advanced Social Worker (LASW) or licensed independent clinical Social Worker (LICSW)."

HB 2112 and Senate Bill 5950 were both heard in Committee in 2007, but NASW was asked to continue working on needed clarifications regarding enforcement and positioning within the law. NASW is developing mechanisms for enforcement of a title protection bill, and considering options such as NASW management of violators with public notices and appeals to the State Attorney General, or certification or multilevel licensure of all social workers in order to secure Dept. of Health regulation.

AMEND HB 2474: Amend the Licensure Requirements for Approved Social Work Supervisors.

SUPPORT HB 2674/SB6456 : Revisions to the registered counselor provisions and social work licensure.

This bill proposes changes to the requirements for registered counselors, eliminating that category within two years and defining a new certified counselor category with higher educational standards, continuing education and supervision requirements, and an option to grandfather in from the registered counselor category those practicing for at least five years in good standing. The bill also creates an agency-affiliated counselor category and a 'licensed social work associate' category for graduate level social workers seeking licensure and under supervision of an LICSW. This new social work category would provide title protection for more social workers, and move clinical social work supervision candidates out of the Certified Counselor Category and under the Social Work Licensure laws. NASW supports this bill but testified that these changes

offered an opportunity to define social workers as those with degrees in social work, and to create categories of licensure for all levels of degreed social workers.

AMEND SB 6891 Hiring & Training practices for Children's Administration Social Workers

Senate Bill 6891 mandates the state to hire an adequate number of 'social worker 1's and 2's' as case aides to fill vacancies and support the work of 'social worker 3's'. While NASW applauds the state's efforts to improve child welfare services and to support case-workers in obtaining their MSW degrees, we believe that only those with social work degrees should be hired into state social work jobs. We ask that the state move those without degrees in social work to other job title classifications, and to rename the SW1 and SW2 classifications, unless they are being filled by BASW's or MSW's only.

This bill follows the DSHS sunset study conducted last summer and fall, which reviewed social worker qualifications. The Joint Legislative Audit Review Committee (JLARC) report of November 2007 compared social work qualifications for DSHS positions in Washington to that of other states but did not adequately report the research supporting the need for degreed social workers in social work positions. We found additional citations from the literature that clarifies the benefits to clients and organizations of having professional, degreed social workers providing service to those most vulnerable and at high risk.

As background, NASW/WA worked successfully with DSHS and the Department of Personnel to prevent the elimination of social work job classifications in 2006, when the DOP proposed converting those classifications into either Social Service Case Manager or Mental Health Counselor positions. We also asked then that only social work graduates be hired into social work positions, and that those with other degrees be moved into the newly proposed categories. We opposed the 1988 decision of DSHS to open the social

Social Work Professional Priorities

work classification to those with other degrees, and continue to request that social work jobs only be filled by those with an education in social work. The bill is being heard in the Senate Human Services and Corrections Committee. A link to the bill can be found at:

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2007-08/Pdf/Bills/Senate%20Bills/6891.pdf>.

SUPPORT CR-102 Mandatory Reporting Proposed Rules:

Requirements for Licensed Professionals to Report Unprofessional Conduct

The State Department of Health (DOH) is proposing changes to the Washington Administrative Code (WAC), beginning with section 246-16-200, to require licensed professionals to self report and report others to DOH for unprofessional conduct or inability to act with reasonable skill and safety. Required reporting includes substance abuse when patient harm results, malpractice settlements, unreasonable risk of harm due to a physical or mental condition, related court actions, convictions, or any disqualification from participation in Medicare or Medicaid programs.

The proposed rule changes also require other entities, such as health care institutions, health service contractors, disability insurers, courts, professional review organizations, and other state and federal agencies, to report patient harm or risk of harm and actual knowledge that a license holder is unable to practice safely

The Department of Health has become the disciplining authority, and in cases of harm DOH reporting supersedes the previous requirement to report to another disciplining authority such as an employee assistance program or substance abuse treatment provider. When no patient harm resulted but impairment and risk is evident, reports may be made to these other authorities or to DOH.

The written comment period began mid-February and the reporting deadline is March 4, 2008. Written comments can be posted on the Department of Health website, <http://www3.doh.wa.gov/policy> review .

A public hearing on these proposed rule changes will be on March 12, 2008, at 9:00 a.m. at the Department of Health, Point Plaza East Room 139, 310 Israel Rd SE, Tumwater, WA 98501. Contact is Margaret Gilbert, DOH, PO Box 47873, Olympia, WA 98504-7873; phone 360-236-4913; fax 360-236-4930; email margaret.gilbert@doh.wa.gov.

While professionals will need to be much more aware of the implications of impaired practice and the scrutiny by multiple agencies required to report misconduct or harm, the public will benefit by this closer attention to the capacity of those who serve them.

*Contributed by Lynn Carrigan, MSW,ltc@u.washington.edu
Chair, SSWLHC & NASW/WA Social Health Policy Comms.*

LATE NEWS

NASW Executive Director Hoyt Suppes called Lynn Carrigan NASW & SSWLHC Social Health Policy Chair on 2/21 after testifying at the Senate Policy Committee about HB 2474 (Amend SW Licensure Laws). The Senate Policy Committee agreed to exempt those who began supervision in 2001-2003 from the newly proposed bill that requires approved supervisors to have 2 years (down from 5) post licensure experience before they can supervise. Thus, those who began supervision towards licensure legally (before there were time requirements for supervisors) will now be able to have those hours counted towards required hours of supervision. The bill will have to be amended, then sent back to the House for a rehearing, and then pass the floor, all before 3/10 end of session. The committee members thought we had time to do that, since we don't want the bill to die. We need this bill to pass, and if it can have the exemption (or grandfathering) we will have gotten everything we wanted on this one. Nice work, Hoyt!

IN FOCUS: LEADERSHIP PROFILE



CASSIE SAUER, MSW

Cassie Sauer, MSW, brings a different set of skills to the social work table, skills that we all need to hone. Cassie is the Vice President for Communications for the Washington State Hospital Association (WSHA) in Seattle where she is responsible for bringing hospitals and community groups together around key health care issues and facilitating contacts between hospital personnel and elected officials.

Cassie has been with the Washington State Hospital Association since 2000. She works with the media as a spokesperson to obtain media coverage on a wide variety of hospital and health care policy issues. She speaks to community groups about key hospital and health care issues, including health care financing, state legislative decisions, health care reform, disaster readiness, and health care quality. She trains hospital trustees and staff on policy advocacy and media relations. She also recruits and organizes hospital trustees and staff in support of hospital association policy and advocacy objectives and works to mobilize hospital association advocacy networks on key policy issues. This ability to bring disparate groups together and to enhance mutual understanding is key to her success. If you have ever attended a SSWLHC Legislative Seminar, you have heard Cassie speak and put health care issues into a perspective that demonstrates the daily challenges that must be dealt with as one tries to impact and change the healthcare system.

Education: Cassie grew up in Houston, Texas and graduated from the University of Virginia in 1990 with a Bachelor of Arts with Honors. She subsequently enrolled in the University of Washington School of Social Work, focusing on Public Policy and Administration. She earned her MSW in 1994.

The subject of healthcare runs through all of Cassie's work history.

As an undergraduate, Cassie took a job as a Program Assistant at the University of Virginia Women's Center. In this capacity, she coordinated the Women's Health Brown Bag Lunch series for students, faculty, staff and

the community. She also provided information and referral to students, faculty, and community. In addition, Cassie wrote and edited the Women's Center newsletter, and publicized the program's events.

She moved from Virginia to Washington as a Jesuit Volunteer, a program like the Peace Corps but with a domestic focus. Her Jesuit Volunteer job was as a Counselor for the YWCA Emergency Family Shelter in Seattle. Here she provided support counseling, advocacy, crisis intervention, information and referral to shelter residents who were primarily single women and women with children needing shelter because of homelessness and domestic violence. She coordinated and facilitated house meetings, including education and training for residents, and responded to community crisis calls. She didn't intend to stay in Seattle, but loved it and has called it home since.

A job as a Family Support Worker for Snohomish County Head Start in Everett found her responsible for home visits and the provision of social services including information and referral, parent education and support, crisis intervention services, and orientation to families and children. She also coordinated an on-site health component, where families and children got health education and some basic health services.

While in graduate school, Cassie spent the summers in Latin America living with families, traveling, and studying Spanish and art – the first summer in Mexico, the second summer in Ecuador. Both experiences were wonderful. In high school, Cassie had spent two summers in France living with families and studying French. She loves foreign languages and wishes she had more opportunity to use them!

From 1993 to 2000, Cassie worked as the Director of Advocacy and Health Policy for the Children's Alliance in Seattle. In this capacity, she analyzed and formed positions on Washington State and Federal public policy affecting the well-being of children, youth, and families and advocated for the improvement of children's health.

Cassie states that she got interested in public policy and advocacy during her work as a direct service social worker. She cited her frustration with having the families she was working with run up against the same systemic problems again and again. "For example, when I worked for Head Start, it was practically impossible to find a dentist who would take Medicaid so we had lots of kids in the class who had really bad teeth. When I went to work for the Children's Alliance, in my second year, we successfully lobbied for millions more in state funding for Medicaid pediatric dental payments and suddenly those kids could get dental care. I see the same results now, that our work can affect thousands of people at once – improving access to mental health care, ensuring all children have health coverage, keeping Washington's hospitals that provide care to everyone open and thriving."

Cassie has a 21 month old son, Sam, "who is an absolute delight" and is expecting a second son in June 2008. While balancing work and family is challenging, WSHA is fortunately a very family-supporting place to work, with the ability to telecommute, flexible schedules, and support for breast pumping! In her free time, Cassie is a big reader, likes to take her 80 pound mutt for walks along the lake, does yoga, and enjoys making art, particularly printmaking and quilting.

Cassie has already involved Sam in public policy – here he is sitting on the Governor's desk as she signed the 'Cover All Kids' bill in 2007!



STATE REVENUE FORECAST DECLINES

. On February 15, the WA State Economic and Revenue Forecast Council released its revised forecast for the state budget. The forecast, a predictor of money available for the State's budget, indicates the revenue forecast is down by \$423 million.

The projected state budget surplus of \$1.2 billion will decline, but how much ultimately will be left in surplus depends on how the legislature chooses to address the declining forecast. The Governor and legislators have pledged to keep a large portion of the surplus in reserves for the 2009-2011 biennium.

The Governor's budget proposal was already considered quite frugal. The decline in the revenue forecast means the already tight state budget grows even tighter.

The WA State House of Representatives released its budget proposal on February 20. Despite the decline in the state's revenue forecast, the following priorities fared well:

- No cuts in hospital funding;
- Funding is provided for Health Options increased for new Medicaid inpatient payment system;
- Adequate funding is included for public hospitals participating in the Certified Public Expenditure program;
- Increases in children's health caseload and Healthy Options pediatric rate increases are funded, but children's mental health and pay-for-performance programs are not;

No funding is provided for other WSHA priorities including tele-health, end of life education, and increasing the health professional loan repayment program.

Information provided by Cassie Sauers, MSW. For further information she can be located at 206-215-2533 or cassies@wsna.org

SSWLHC BOARD SEEKS CHAIR FOR SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE

The Board of the SSWLHC WA Chapter is seeking a chair person for the scholarship committee. This committee is charged with soliciting applications from graduate students who will be entering their second year of a graduate program, for the annual \$2,000 scholarship.

Purpose of Award

- (1) To raise the visibility of the Social Work profession in the area of health care, and
- (2) To honor and support an outstanding student who is committed to pursuing a Social Work career in health care.

This committee is charged with soliciting applications from graduate students who will be entering their second year of a graduate program, and scoring those applications for the annual \$2,000 scholarship.

Contact Sandra Johnson, SSWLHC President-Elect for further information: 206-386-3079 or SandraS.Johnson@swedish.org

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SB 6583: Increase in Medicaid Eligibility Income Supported by the House Ways & Means Committee

Peter Greenfield of Columbia Legal Services is working with human services providers to support a bill to increase the Medicaid eligibility income level. This article is from his email updates.

A unanimous Senate Human Services and Corrections Committee supported SB 6583 in early February. That bill would have increased the categorically needy income level from the current \$637 a month to the federal poverty level (\$851). But the fiscal note on SB 6583 lacked sufficient information to allow for responsible policy judgments about whether such a bill should be funded.

Eighteen other states have set their categorically need income levels at the federal poverty level, but the Department does not appear to have obtained information about the cost or savings experience in these states.

The low income-eligibility levels result in significant periods without access to preventive and other important medical care for thousands of disabled and elderly adults living in poverty. As a result, many wind up in emergency rooms or hospital beds. Such outcomes are bad for affected individuals and costly to the public.

Representative Eileen Cody (D-34) is supporting a budget proviso that would help address a significant barrier to progress in this effort. The barrier is a lack of information about costs and offsetting savings. Without better information than we have now, policy makers are not likely to give serious consideration to any Medicaid expansion proposal in the next biennium. The proposed proviso would require the Department of Social & Health Services to prepare a fiscal analysis that includes both costs and offsetting savings associated with increases in the Medicaid income-eligibility levels (both categorically needy and medically needy). It would be due this July, in the hope that it might influence the Department's budget planning.

Three members of the House leadership will likely determine whether the proviso makes it into the supplemental budget. They are Appropriations Committee Chair Helen Sommers, Appropriations Vice Chair Hans Dunshee and Majority Leader Lynn Kessler.

Rep. Helen Sommers: sommers.helen@leg.wa.gov

Rep. Hans Dunshee: dunshee.hans@leg.wa.gov

Rep. Lynn Kessler: kessler.lynn@leg.wa.gov

Rep. Cody, cody.eileen@leg.wa.gov

LATE NEWS

The House Health Care & Wellness Committee gave a very warm reception to testimony supporting SSB 6583 (increasing the Medicaid income-eligibility level). There was supporting testimony on behalf of the Washington State Psychiatric Association, NAMI, the Senior Citizens' Lobby, the Washington Association of Area Agencies on Aging, the Washington Community Mental Health Council, the WSBA Elder Law Section and two individuals, and many other organizations were signed in support; there was no sign of opposition. Both Committee Chair Cody and ranking minority member Hinkle signaled their strong expectations that the bill would move forward. Its next stop is expected to be the Appropriations Committee (even though no appropriation is needed for the bill in this session), and contacts are in progress with Appropriations Committee members.

*For more information on SSB 6583 contact:
Peter Greenfield, Columbia Legal Services
206-287-9664 or peter.greenfield@columbialegal.org*

\$300 Tax Rebate, Continued from Page 1

Steps to receive stimulus payments

This is an IRS program and specific questions about the stimulus payments should be referred to the IRS, at either its Web site: www.irs.gov/ or 1-800-829-1040.

To receive a payment, **individuals must file a tax return for 2007**. There are approximately 20 million Social Security beneficiaries who would not normally file a tax return for 2007, but who will need to file a tax return for 2007 to receive a stimulus payment.

All Social Security beneficiaries received an SSA-1099 earlier this year related to their 2007 Social Security payments. Some of the 20 million beneficiaries may have discarded their 1099 form. **Beneficiaries should not contact Social Security for a replacement 1099 form**, as they do not need one. The IRS will

accept an estimate of Social Security benefits received in 2007 in line 14A of the 1040A tax form. Clients can just multiply their 2007 monthly benefit amount times the number of months they received benefits in 2007. IRS will match this estimate against the 1099 file that we provide them to determine if the person meets the income threshold.

Receipt of Supplemental Security Income (SSI benefits) does not count in determining eligibility for stimulus payments.

For Additional information, contact:
www.irs.gov.

Information submitted by Suzanna Eller, social worker at Emerald Heights Retirement Community in Redmond, WA and Co-Chair, Social Work Forum, Washington Association of Homes and Services to the Aging. She can be reached at: SuzannaE@emeraldheights.com