



Fall Meeting of National Federation Held in Washington / Key issues: Money, National Advocacy / Government Proposes Reduction in Mental Health Benefits for Federal Employees

Report by Marsha Wineburgh, CSW, President, NYS Chapter

New York, NY, Nov. 15—The National Federation of Societies for Clinical Social Work, Inc. held its fall meeting in Washington, D.C., October 2-4. All State Societies were represented except Tennessee. Robert P. Galardi, the Society's 1st vice president, attended as the NYS delegate.

Two major areas of concern surfaced during the meeting:

- 1) generating new revenues
- 2) national advocacy.

A committee was appointed to explore methods of generating revenue for the National Federation. Membership dues will no longer cover operating expenses even though the Board has cut expenditures to the bone. Although the deficit next year will be minimal, effective planning necessitates developing alternate sources of funds to ensure the continuity of our national organization. Committee members include representatives from New York, California, Louisiana, Washington, D.C. and Illinois.

Advocacy

The most important national advocacy issue at this time concerned the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program. The Office of Personnel Management proposed to reduce mental health benefits for an estimated 96,000 federal employees in order to avoid a 30 percent premium increase which Blue Cross/Blue Shield claims is necessary to maintain current benefits. These cutbacks, if approved, would discriminate against a class of health care receivers and would have repercussions in the entire mental health field.

In response to this proposal the

National Federation mobilized psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses and other national mental health groups to persuade Congress to intervene before OPM again forces consumers of mental health services to hear the brunt of benefit reductions adopted to keep overall premiums at an acceptable level. NYS Society sent mailgrams or letters to all state legislators in Washington; to Donald Devine, Director of OPM; Senator Stevens (Chair, Subcommittee on Civil Service and General Service); and Congresswoman Oakar (Chair, Subcommittee on Compensation and Employee Benefits), urging their intervention to prevent this discrimination. Thus far, Congress has agreed to hold oversight hearings with respect to the FEHBP. Interestingly, the Senate hearings did not include mental health providers on their agenda. National Federation protested and earned the right to submit a statement of its position. In addition, Senator Alfonse D'Amato proposed an amendment to the Postal/Treasury Appropriations Bill upholding the principle of health insurance for the treatment of mental disorders on a basis fully equal and comparable to the coverage provided for the treatment of all other medical disorders. Senator Patrick Moynihan is cosponsoring this amendment.

... Hearings Scheduled

Hearings on S.123 will be held soon. This is the bill amending the Social Security Act to include clinical social workers as independent, qualified mental health providers to those using Medicare/Medicaid. At this time we have eight cosponsors in the Senate—none from New York. Through the efforts of the National

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Family Therapy is Subject at Annual Conference

Gerda Schulman in Session with Family Group

The Society's Education Committee, under the leadership of Alan L. Shanel, provided a unique and interesting program at its Annual Conference, which took place on Saturday, October 31st, at the Barbizon-Plaza Hotel, New York City.

"Family Therapy in Depth"—A Day With Gerda Schulman, LL.D., M.S., was the title of the day-long event. Dr. Schulman, Associate Professor in Masters and Doctoral Program, Adelphi University School of Social Work and Associate Professor, Hunter College School of Social Work, is also the Coordinator of the Family Therapy Sequence in that school's Postmasters Program. Dr. Schulman was assisted for part of the presentation by Selma Petker, CSW, Society member of the Westchester chapter.

At the morning sessions Dr. Schulman explained the theories of basic family structure and the dynamics of any change or interruption in the functioning of the original family. She related the history of the family with whom she would be working in the afternoon; this was done together with Ms. Petker, with whom the core family has been in treatment during the past two years.

The original four-member family consists of the husband, wife and two children; three siblings of the wife's, presently living with the family, had also agreed to participate. None of the group had previously met Dr. Schulman.

The afternoon session consisted of Dr. Schulman's interaction with these family members. She demonstrated that the theories presented at the earlier session were here clearly elucidated; the two-hour

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