

The Coalition Spearheads Washington Mental Health Treatment Task Force



WASHINGTON STATE COALITION OF
MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND CONSUMERS

Advocates for Ethical Mental Health Care

www.wacoalition.org

Fall 2011

Taking a Stand on Ethical Psychotherapy: The Washington Mental Health Treatment Task Force

by Laura Groshong, LICSW, Coalition Lobbyist

In August 2011, a brief article appeared in the online Regence newsletter stating that Regence intended to begin using the Milliman Behavioral Health Care Guidelines (<http://www.careguidelines.com/products/bhg.shtml>) as the basis for determining frequency and methods for psychotherapy. Previously, Regence has allowed 20 outpatient sessions and used the GAF Axes found in the DSM-IV-TR as the

basis for further sessions.

The Coalition decided this was the kind of issue that was exactly what the Coalition was formed to address—protecting ethical mental health treatment. That is why the Coalition led the charge in terms of creating the Washington Mental Health Treatment Task Force (earlier Regence Task Force) to create an alternative to the Milliman Guidelines.

The Milliman guidelines

affect access to psychotherapy provided by all licensed clinicians. Milliman is primarily an actuarial firm, and not connected to mental health associations or clinicians. The company has been developing guidelines for health care services of all kinds for the past 15 years as part of their consulting work. They recently released their standards for Behavioral Health,

(Continued on page 2)



Laura Groshong

From the Chair

Dear Coalition Members,
Happy Holidays all!
May you enjoy and revel in this busy season with those you love.

I hope you have been able to attend some of the new Washington Mental Health Treatment Task Force meetings, held on the first Tuesday of each month in the Senior Center (basement) of the Good Shepherd Center in Wallingford.

These meetings are a great way to stay on top of current news related to

UMP and other insurance companies and their compliance with parity as well as other issues that affect the delivery of quality mental health. Laura Groshong, LICSW, is chair of this task force, and the meetings are most informative.

Do come by to find out the latest update on the issues of concern and on Task Force activities.

Recently, the Coalition board has been discussing how best we can recruit consumers. This is

important as we are wanting consumer representation and input on issues that strongly affect consumers.

One suggestion is to have some Coalition brochures in clinician's waiting rooms and/or to suggest in clinician's disclosure statements that folks concerned with the protection of quality mental health can join the Coalition at NO COST. The Coalition web site is www.wacoalition.org. Please consider sharing this

Sue Wiedenfeld, PhD
President

www.wacoalition.org

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which they hope to market to insurers at the state and federal levels.

The first agency to adopt these Guidelines was Group Health about five years ago. The second insurer to adopt them will be Regence Blueshield, which will be implementing them on November 1. These Guidelines suggest limiting almost all diagnostic categories to treatment of four to eight sessions per acute mental health “episode” and cover only cognitive behavioral therapy or interpersonal behavioral therapy, a short-term dynamic treatment created by Klerman and Weissman about 10 to 15 years ago. Another problem with the Guidelines is that the 15 diagnostic constellations into which Milliman divides all DSM-IV-TR diagnoses must be requested individually from Regence and cannot be accessed from Milliman directly.

Though Group Health has been using the Guidelines for some time, they have been applied more rigorously in the past couple months to patients seen by out-of-network providers who received coverage for patients on a once- or twice-a-week basis. Clinicians were

suddenly told that they would be able to treat most conditions only once or twice a month.

Clinical understanding of mental health disorders is based on emotional distress and the ways that the treatment relationship relieves that distress, not the medical perspective of returning to baseline functioning, as many insurers define successful treatment. The Mission of the Washington Mental Health Treatment Task Force (“WMHTTF”, originally called the Regence Task Force) is “to develop a coherent approach to insurance reimbursement of mental health treatment that preserves clinical judgment as the driver for clinical decisions.”

There are currently 11 mental health groups, led by the Coalition, who are affiliated with the WMHTTF, and several more considering joining. At the October meeting, WMHTTF elected me as the WMHTTF Chair and Sue Wiedenfeld, Coalition President, as the WMHTTF Vice-Chair. Four subcommittees have been created, and they are working to develop papers on Methods, Diagnosis, and Treatment; Psychotherapy Outcome Tools; Mental Health Benefits; and Mental Health Parity. These papers, due to be completed in

February 2012, will serve as the basis for a book that WMHTTF plans to publish. This book will serve as a clinical response to the Milliman Guidelines and the basis for any action that the Task Force decides to take to stop the use of these Guidelines to restrict needed psychotherapy.

WMHTTF sent a letter to the CEO of Regence on October 21 to protest the use of these Guidelines and met with a Group Health administrator to discuss our concerns about these Guidelines. I will keep you posted on further developments.

Meetings of Task Force representatives are held on the third Thursday of the month and general meetings for all members of affiliated groups are held on the first Tuesday of the month at Good Shepherd Senior Center, 7:30-8:30 p.m. Please consider attending the general meetings and joining one of the subcommittees to make your opinions heard. ♦

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Newsletter

Blake Werner, PsyD Editor
Publisher The Word Shop

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Health Professionals and Consumers

*Join the Coalition
Dues*

Member	\$65
Student	\$15
Consumer	Free
Organization	\$124

IF YOU ARE NOT GETTING E-MAILS ABOUT OUR EVENTS, please E-mail us with your CURRENT E-mail address: wacoalition@frontier.com. This is the best way to get Coalition news.

Meet Janice Hickey

I was one of the early board members for the Coalition along with Sue Wiedenfeld, Mel Knight, Judy Roberts, Richard Miller, and Cristi Lien. That was in 1993 when the threat of Managed Care began was looming large. Others joined in our efforts, particularly Laura Groshong. We all worked very hard and I believe we made a difference in not limiting the quality or quantity of mental health services.

Now, almost 20 years later, there is another battle in front of us: that of determining and potentially challenging if/how the Milliman Behavioral Health Guidelines may be used to limit the kind of treatment and/or how much treatment an insurance enrollee will receive. Once again, The Coalition is the organization that is trying make sure the integrity and delivery of mental health services in our area is protected. Although I haven't been on the board for many years, I am quite proud to be a member of

this group, which represents the spectrum of mental health disciplines and consumers of mental health services.

I currently see individuals and couples in my private practice in the Fremont neighborhood of Seattle, where I have worked for 23 years. Prior to this, I worked for Children's Home Society and Ryther Child Center, working with children and their families. My clinical bent is toward relational psychotherapy though at this point in my career I can call on many different approaches. I am currently in the Somatic Transformation training with Sharon Stanley, where I am learning more about using right brain communication to help heal trauma. I continue to be amazed and delighted and challenged by the important work we do.

Away from the office, I have a little cabin in the Methow Valley that offers me much needed stillness and endless opportunities



for hiking and snowshoeing or just relaxing by the fire. I have started to "play" around with art, mixed media collage, and journaling. My artistic challenge is to accept "beginner's mind" and really allow my self to play. This seems to be harder the older we get, but I welcome the opportunity, the "potential space".

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On-line Directory

To better reflect our dynamic membership as well as to provide members with a quick and easy way of contacting each other, we are preparing an electronic directory of our members. The directory can be accessed via our website, www.wacoalition.org. Members who do not want to be listed in this manner should call us at 206-444-4304. ◇



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

Letters

Dear Seasoned Therapist,

I am interested in getting on insurance panels. Every time I inquire, they tell me they are full! Any advice?

Desperate to Enter the Lion's Den

Dear Desperate,

It can be very frustrating to be told the panels are full. There are several things one can do to become paneled/a preferred provider.

1. Find the direct number for the provider relations of all the insurance companies you are interested in. Keep calling as frequently as you can stand it. I have heard of this working many times.
2. In your letter (and on the phone) identify your unique skills and

niche (i.e., eating disorders, working with small children, a male therapist, oppositional adolescents, EMDR, only therapist in this area doing this work, dual diagnosis...). Figure out how to differentiate your practice from the 200 other therapists in Madison Valley.

3. Contract with an EAP (employee assistance program), for example Wellspring, First Choice, Aetna, Cigna, Value Options, Tri Care, etc. These contracts pay poorly and are usually very time-limited. BUT they can connect you with people who may need ongoing treatment and who might be willing to talk to their HR department and request that you, their new favorite therapist, be admitted onto the insurance panel.

4. Talk to your referral sources, particularly medical providers and psychiatrists. Ask them to write a recommendation letter for you to the insurance company, explaining they want to be able to refer more patients to you but are unable to without preferred provider status.
5. Let your colleagues know that you are interested in this process; they may have an in or know something.

It is also worth talking to therapists who are determinedly NOT preferred or impaneled, who proudly say "I don't take insurance!" Find out how they are doing, what they are doing.

Yours,

Seasoned
but not Cooked

Have a practice question? Let us know! ◇



From the Chair, continued from page 1

with new clients and having it available for existing clients to join.

This is a time of interest and concern regarding issues that are central to the Coalition, especially as several insurance companies are making decisions that may limit mental health access. We always appreciate more good energy in these efforts. Please let us know (swiedenfeld@me.com) if you might have some time/energy to share.

Annual Coalition dues will be coming up in January. Watch for an email. We are grateful for each member. Do recall that dues provide our operating budget.

Thanks for your continuing dedication to ethical mental health treatment!

Sue Wiedenfeld, PhD
Coalition Chair ◇



Board Members Needed

The Coalition represents a multidisciplinary group of professionals and consumers addressing a broad range of mental health needs in children, adolescents, and adults.

Our board is equally diverse. Board members have included psychiatrists, psychologists, MFTs, LCSW, LMHC, and other professionals. They also bring a wide range of experience and special interests that serve to broaden the knowledge base of our members, such as skills with special populations, use of

the Internet, and understanding of legal and ethical issues associated with mental health.

From time to time, we have a need to replace a board member. Are you interested in:

- Preserving choice, confidentiality, integrity, and quality in our mental health services?
- Lobbying to educate legislators about quality mental health care?
- Educating and supporting mental health professionals and

consumers?

- Influencing political and insurance industry policy to include mental health as a vital component of health care?

- Empowering mental health consumers to influence health care reform?

If so, please consider becoming a member of the Coalition Board! No pay, but great rewards! Please contact Sue Wiedenfeld, Coalition Chair, 206-323-6909 or swiedenfeld@earthlink.net. ◇



Don't forget to attend the WMHTTF General Meetings on the first Tuesday of the month at Good Shepherd Senior Center, 7:30-8:30 p.m. Make your voice heard on ethical psychotherapy benefits!



Coalition members and friends!

Renew your membership today! Keep yourself up to date regarding changes in mental health related to health care reform, and state issues like the changes in the Uniform Medical Plan. Read the several articles in this newsletter about these topics. Don't miss a future Newsletter! This is a time when you will want to track what the Coalition is doing to preserve and protect quality psychotherapy.

Invite a friend to join the Coalition. Forward the on-line newsletter that describes what we do. Remember, The Coalition represents all disciplines. **More members strengthen our message.** ◇

RENEW TODAY!!

Be sure to give us all your information so we can update our membership for the new directory. Renewal form, page 6

It's Time to Renew Your Membership

The Coalition

of Mental Health Professionals and Consumers

P. O. Box 30087 • Seattle, Washington 98113-2087

206-444-4304 • <http://www.wacoalition.org>

Your dues support the Coalition's efforts to preserve ethical mental health treatment. Your dues also provide funding that supports legislative efforts, continuing education programs, our website, a Helpline, the newsletter, brochures, and our on-line member directory.

Thank you for your continued support! It makes possible what we do. Please renew promptly. With this year's renewal, you will be included in our on-line directory.

Send this form to:

THE COALITION, ATTN: MEMBERSHIP

P. O. Box 30087 • Seattle, WA 98113-2087

NAME _____ Degree _____ Type of License _____

ADDRESS (if different from last renewal) _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

PHONE Work (_____) _____ - _____ Email _____

LOCATION OF PRACTICE

City _____

Neighborhood _____

PROBLEMS TREATED

- ___ Abuse
- ___ Addiction
- ___ Anxiety/Depression
- ___ Bipolar
- ___ Grief and Loss
- ___ LBGTQ
- ___ Learning Issue
- ___ Medical Issues/Pain Managements
- ___ PTSD
- ___ Relationships
- ___ Stress
- ___ Work/Career

SPECIALTIES

- ___ Elders
- ___ Adults
- ___ Adolescents
- ___ Children
- ___ Infants
- ___ Family
- ___ Couples

PREFERRED TREATMENTS

- ___ Psychoanalytic
- ___ Cognitive-Behavioral
- ___ Interpersonal
- ___ Eclectic
- ___ EMDR
- ___ Somatic Transformation

___ Please check if you do not want to be included in the directory

___ Please check if you are willing to volunteer for the Coalition

___ occasional time-limited tasks

___ I will help with political efforts

___ ask me about other needs you have

___ I will help with newsletter or membership (circle)

Legislative District: WA: _____ National: _____ Don't know? Call 1-800-448-4881

I/WE can support the Coalition at the following level:

Organizational Membership:

___ \$125 ___ \$175 ___ \$225

Professional Membership:

___ \$65 ___ \$115 ___ \$250

Student Membership:

___ \$15 ___ \$25 ___ \$65

Consumer Membership:

FREE!

THANK YOU for supporting THE COALITION

Fall 2011

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Seattle, WA 98113-2087

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