

What a Relief!

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Approves Restructuring Plan for General Relief Program

On February 11, after nearly a year of research and negotiations, a working group made up of representatives from 11 County departments and 10 community stakeholder groups finally had the opportunity to present their plan for restructuring the General Relief program to the Board of Supervisors. The Los Angeles County General Relief program provides a temporary monthly stipend to low-income individuals who are not being served by the State or Federal government. There are currently over 90,000 individuals participating in the program, an increase of 50% over the past two years of the economic crisis.

Sherrill Martin, Mental Health Advocacy Services' Government Benefits Program Manager, has been a key member of the team since its inception. Her lengthy experience working for the Social Security Administration combined with her tenure managing MHAS' team of Advocates gave her a wealth of insight into the challenges facing people with disabilities as they try to navigate the process of applying for and maintaining benefits.

A keystone of the new plan is to help as many eligible General Relief participants as possible qualify for federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medi-Cal benefits. In this way, the program can save money for the County by maximizing Federal resources. The plan includes an increase in nursing staff employed by the County to help clients track down and complete the complex documentation required for SSI applications. It also calls for enhanced screening of incoming

continued on page 4

Finding the Best of Both Worlds

MHAS fights for effective treatment for dual-diagnosis clients

Until she was ten years old, "Teresa" was a happy, well-adjusted little girl who did well in school and got along with other children. Suddenly one summer, she stopped interacting with her family. Shortly thereafter, she began experiencing terrifying hallucinations. She saw and felt spiders and heard frightening voices.

Teresa was diagnosed with childhood onset schizophrenia, a rare illness affecting only one out of 40,000 children. By the time Teresa was 14, her mother was forced to place her in a residential Department of Mental Health (DMH) facility.

The staff who worked with Te-

resa were concerned that she seemed to have mental retardation and that her condition did not respond to medication. Upon further investigation, they learned that a drowning accident had happened when Teresa was 10 that may have deprived her brain of oxygen. The staff thought she might have brain damage that required the type of treatment provided to people with developmental disabilities, so they contacted the Department of Developmental Services (DDS).

Under DDS guidelines, if Teresa's condition required treatment like mental retardation, she should qualify for services. DDS evaluated Teresa but denied her eligibility, determining that her condition was solely psychiatric.

DMH staff contacted Mental Health Advocacy Services for help, and Attorney Ben Conway took the case. MHAS negotiated a placement for Teresa in a DDS residential facility while the appeals were pending.

continued on page 2



Many children with mental disabilities could benefit from therapies for developmental disabilities, too.

Both Worlds

continued from page 1

The effect on Teresa was astonishing. Mr. Conway describes the difference in her behavior at the new placement as “night and day.” The combination of a new therapeutic approach and an environment where Teresa was living with other children who were at a similar developmental level meant that her communication skills and other symptoms started to improve. For the first time since she was 10, she was able to join her peers on community outings and meaningfully interact with her mother.

In December, the California Superior Court issued a decision in Teresa’s favor, granting her eligibility for the services provided by DDS Regional Centers. DDS has appealed the case to the Court of Appeal, and MHAS will continue to fight for Teresa to receive the services she needs. Equally important, a positive appellate decision could set a precedent for other children with similar conditions to qualify for Regional Center services, granting access for appropriate services for many children with dual diagnoses.

Shopping for Justice

When you link your Ralphs Club Card to Mental Health Advocacy Services, up to 5% of every dollar you spend* will be donated to MHAS. To

link your card, visit www.Ralphs.com and log in to the Ralphs Rewards section. Under Community Contributions, enter NPO # 81317 or search for Mental Health Advocacy Services by name to designate MHAS as your beneficiary.

You can also download a scannable barcode at mhas-la.org that you can take with you to the store. Even if you have registered MHAS as your choice in the past, you must re-register each year. It’s an easy way to make your regular grocery shopping support our work to help people with mental disabilities.

**Some restrictions apply. Contribution amounts are between 1% and 5%.*



MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY SERVICES, INC.

is a private non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation. The mission of MHAS is to protect and advance the legal rights of children and adults with mental disabilities, in order to maximize autonomy, promote equality, and secure the resources needed to thrive in the community.

Mental Health Advocacy Services
3255 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 902
Los Angeles, CA 90010
213-389-2077 www.mhas-la.org

MHAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Catherine Allen, Esq., *Hunton & Williams LLP*
Jane A. Anderson
Taylor S. Ball, Esq., *Mitchell Silberberg & Knupp LLP*
Heidi M. Binford, Esq.
Kathleen Daly, M.D., *Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health*
Houman Ehsan, M.D., Esq., *O’Melveny & Myers LLP*
Lucy Eisenberg, Esq.
Douglas L. Hall, *Wells Fargo Equipment Finance, Inc.*
Shirley L. Kirby, Esq.
Jeromie Park, *Goldman, Sachs & Co.*
Alan R. Polsky, Esq., *The Polsky Law Firm*
Neil A. Rubin, Esq., *Latham & Watkins LLP*
Prof. Elyn Saks, *USC Gould School of Law*
Kristin N. Tahler, Esq., *Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP*
Susan J. Troy, *Martin Linen Supply Company*
Whitney Walters, Esq., *Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP*
Gregory J. Weingart, Esq., *Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP*

Board affiliations are listed for identification purposes only.

ADVISORY BOARD

Alexander M. Capron	Jo Kaplan
Areta Crowell	David Meyer
Edmund D. Edelman	Ralph Shapiro
Arthur N. Greenberg	Richard Van Horn
David H. Guthman	Eduardo Vega
Grover Heyler	

STAFF

James Preis, *Executive Director*

PROGRAM STAFF

Pat Abs, *Staff Advocate*
Maggie Brandow, *Staff Attorney*
John Cisneroz, *Staff Advocate*
Benjamin Conway, *Staff Attorney*
Linda Cormack, *Staff Advocate*
Ruth Cusick, *Staff Attorney - Skadden Fellow*
Sherrill Martin, *Program Manager, Government Benefits*
Pamela Marx, *Supervising Attorney*
Luz A. O’Neil, *Staff Advocate*
Fernando Ramirez, *Staff Advocate*
Nancy M. Shea, *Senior Attorney*
Carey Stone, *Staff Attorney*
Vanessa Torres, *Staff Advocate*
Madeline Walder, *Staff Advocate*
Mary V. Webster, *Staff Advocate*

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Renee Cook, *Director of Administration and Development*
Sarah Gustafson, *Project Manager*
Angel Martinez, *Administrative Assistant*
Jesse Norgaard, *Office Assistant*
Nicole Roberts, *Development Manager*

In a most challenging year, your support made our work possible. Thank you to the following donors for their generous gifts in 2009:

STARS (\$5,000 or more)

James and Imelda Allen
Anonymous
Kathleen Daly
The Carl and Roberta Deutsch
Foundation
Lucy and David Eisenberg
Equal Justice Works
The Los Angeles County Bar
Foundation
The Morrison & Foerster
Foundation
Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP
The Skadden Fellowship
Foundation
Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher &
Flom LLP
The Stuart Foundation
The S. Mark Taper Foundation
Gregory Weingart

CHAMPIONS (\$1,000 - 4,999)

Catherine Allen
Jane and Ken Anderson
Helen Bing
Deborah and Andrew Bogen
Casey Carrington
Areta Crowell
Alexander W. Faust
Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP
Douglas L. Hall
Grover and Caroline Heyler
Hunton & Williams LLP
The Jewish Communal Fund
Shirley and Matthew Kirby
Roger L. Kohn
Marilyn and Marshall Martinez
Prof. Elyn Saks
Ralph and Shirley Shapiro
Sidney Stern Memorial Trust
Susan Troy and Larry Zipursky
Richard and Kay Van Horn
Mary Jane Wagle
The Weingart Foundation
Wells Fargo
Owen and Jami Witte

BENEFACTORS (\$500-999)

Achieving America Family Foundation
Anonymous
Steven Grossman and Jill Baldauf
John H. Binford and Cindy Sherman-
Binford
Heidi M. Binford
Brad and Claire Brian
Connie Bruck and Mel Levine
Stephen R. English
Richard Gruner
Hansen, Jacobson, Teller,
Hoberman, Newman, Warren &
Richman, LLP
Jewish Community Foundation
Mark Kadzielski
Chris and Mary Ellen Kanoff
Family Foundation
Mickey Kantor and Heidi
Schulman
Law Offices of Nora Quinn
Brian Vaughan and Ruth McKeek
Jill and David Meyer
Betty L. Nordwind

Desiree Pierce
Alan R. Polsky
Gary D. Roberts
Larry and Linda Rosenthal
Sandy Sigal
Ann and Christopher Stone
Catherine and Leonard Unger
Evelyn Vodhanel
Whitney Walters
Jill Troy Werner
J.P. Williams



*Jim Preis presents the Advocates
Award to Terri Cheney*

SUPPORTERS (\$150 - 499)

Barbara H. Ackermann
Robert and Sara Adler
Nicholas R. Allis
David Anderson
Attorney Network Services, Inc.
Lupe Ayala
Taylor and Jennifer Ball
Jenna Blaustein and Robert
Leventer
David E. Bower
Phillip Bowman
Anita D. Brandow
Peter D. Brandow
Jody and Richard Chutick
Mr. and Mrs. James P. Clark
Devora S. Cohen and Marc L.
Sallus
Norma J. Cook
Allan B. Cutrow
Jad T. Davis
Bert Deixler
Richard and Nancy Esbenschad
Houman Ehsan
Lori and Miguel Ferrer
Terry Friedman and Elise Karl
Jonathan L. Friedman
Peter B. Gelblum
Arthur and Audrey Greenberg
Paul and Louise Greenberg
John H. Griffith
Byron Gross
David Guthman
Hadsell Stormer Keeny
Richardson & Renick LLP
John S. Hatakeyama
Patti and Kevin Hearst
Margo Herman
John and Suzanne Hollister

Judith Johnson
Robert and Marilyn Johnson
Kawahito & Shraga LLP
Robin Kay
Hon. Clifford L. Klein
Deborah Koeffler
Ann R. Lane
Susan Mandel
Cheryl White Mason
Steven A. McGinty
Buf Meyer and Jonathan Steinberg
Alvin and Lisa Michaelson
Stephen J. Morse
Robert M. Myers
Susan E. Nash
Newman Aaronson Vanaman
Ruth Olson
Patricia B. Oppenheim
Robert and Andrea Ordín
Berta E. Ortiz
Jerome Park
James L. Perzik
Betsy Pfrohm
James Powers
Michael J. Proctor
Nora Quinn
Ralphs Grocery
Marlene and Michael Rapkin
Michael R. Rhames
Rhino Entertainment
Karen Rothberg
Andrew E. Rubin
Herbert C. Rubinstein
David E. Ryu
Linda A. Sallas
Ray Sandona
David I. Schulman
Erika and Oscar Scremin
Kenneth and Mary Simon
Michael E. Soloff and Sue L.
Himmelrich
Arthur and Diane Spring
Alice E. Stevenson
Ann Stone and Dave Pilon
Hon. Maria E. Stratton
Linda and Carl Stude
Kristin N. Tahler
William Temko and Sarah
Bowman
Valerie Vanaman
Anne Von Der Ahe
Madeline Walder
Stephen E. Webber
Malcolm Weiss

FRIENDS (up to \$149)

Fred Alavi
Anonymous
Lawrence R. Apodaca
Ellis M. Balsam
Susie and Stuart Berton
Nancy Bott
Scott Burleigh
JoAnn Clark
Benjamin T. Conway
Renee Cook
Jan Costello and Richard
Rothschild
Ruth Cusick
Judith Daar
Bonnie L. Davis
Robert E. Denham
Theresa Destito
Anita Dymant and Richard
Drooyan
Sharon Dunas
Susan Edelman and Sandor Fuchs
William Edmonson
Fareed Elcott
Marion and Irving Fein
Audrey Fimpler
Gregg Fisch
Barbara Fisher and Michael Scott
Barbara Flicker
Michael Franklin
Georgia Franklin Shutan
Grant Fraser
Joan L. Freeman
Cora Fullmore
G & C Equipment Corporation
Steven and Andrea Gardner
Debra Garvey

Penelope Glass
Megan Goldstein
GoodSearch
Michael Greene
Allen Gross
L. R. Grossman
Michael and Judith Grunstein
Kevin Hanna
Lindsay Harrell
Gordon Hendler
Hirschmann Law Group
Ralph and Karen Hirschmann
Kaaren Hoffman
Dr. and Mrs. E. Carmack Holmes
Andrew Howard
iGive.com
Steaven and Judith Jones
Laurie Judge
Johan A. Julin and Scott P.
Pacheco
Gregory C. Keating
Andrew Keats
James Kirby
Kelly Kirby
Jolene Konnersman
Helen Kozberg
Stephen Kristovich
Scott Kruse
Luis and Lee Lainer
John and Rachel Land
Crystal Lara

Barry E. Shanley
Sam Shapiro
Dana Sherman
Jonathan Shimkus
Ron Sievers
Joan and Alan H. Simon
Adolfo and Carrie Siqueiros
Kathleen Smalley
Janet K. Smith
Carol and Charles Smith
Ed and Pat Stanton
Stephanie Tainsky
Annette Tarsky
Vicki and Rich Tashman
Jana Tether
Sue Toigo
Barbara and Heiman Van Dam
Jonathan and Barbara Varat
Caroline T. Vincent
Lori Waldinger
Belinda Smith Walker
David and Ronnie Weingart
Ron Weintraub
Michael T. Wicen
Dan and Barbara Willick
Jon and Gisele Wine
Stanley and Dorothy Wolpert
Cristin Zeisler
Peter and Cheryl Ziegler
Stuart Zimring



*MHAS clients, staff, and board
members enjoy Dodger Night.*

Sean and Gwen Leonard
Anna Levine
Laura Loofbourrow
Miguel Loza
Mr. and Mrs. Jerome W. Lubin
Mary A. Lulucki
Barbara Demming Lurie
Sherrill Martin
Natalie Matsler
Jane B. Matz
Gary Meisel
Samuel I. Miles
Neal Millard
Gerald Minsk
Hon. Anthony J. Mohr
Carol and Emmett Morava
Berda Morley
David Morris
Tiana Murillo
Allan and Janie Orenstein
Steven Perry and Christine
Madsen
Jerry Persky
Gregory Pleasants
Marc J. Poster
Carolyn Pratt
Peter K. Preis
James Preis
Fernando Ramirez
Diana K. Reid
Julie Reising
Sara Ritter
Nicole Roberts
Claire E. Rogger
Nicole W. and John A. Ruskey
Hon. Philip M. Saeta
Scott and Lori Sale
San Fernando Valley AMI
Nadia Sarkis
Carol Scherfenberg and Bonnie
Dostie
Ron Schraiber

IN-KIND DONORS (Donors of goods or services)

Jane and Ken Anderson
Douglas L. Hall
The Irvine Foundation
Los Angeles County Bar Foundation
Sherrill Martin
Mitchell Silberberg & Knupp LLP
Woodenhead Vintners

TRIBUTES

*Gifts were made in 2009 in
honor of the following:*

Jane and Ken Anderson
Maggie Brandow
Renee Cook
Lucy Eisenberg
Peter Gelblum
David Guthman
Doug Hall
Shirley Kirby
Sherrill Martin
Patt Oppenheim
James Preis
Elyn Saks
Marvin and Carolyn Southard
Susan Troy
Richard Van Horn
Gregory and Juanita Weingart

*Gifts were made in 2009 in
memory of the following:*

Ben Brickman
Katharine Krause
Frank J. Vodhanel

*Every effort has been made to print
correct information. Please notify us of
any errors or omissions.*



MHAS 2009 Summer Clerks

General Relief Restructuring

continued from page 1

participants to quickly move them into the appropriate tracks based on whether they are employable or permanently disabled.

The most dramatic element of the new plan will be a major expansion of a housing subsidy program the County has been testing. When fully implemented, it will extend this additional benefit to 10,000 individuals, providing them with \$400 a month towards housing. During the trial period, the subsidy was provided to 900 people each month, and the County found that every dollar spent resulted in savings of \$3.50 on other services that would have been provided to homeless individuals.



The working group estimates that the program will not only pay for itself but ultimately it will generate a net savings for the County at a time when funding for social services is so scarce. Something as simple as a little extra money for rent and help negotiating the complex strata of benefits applications can make all the difference in the world to a person with a mental disability, as Ms. Martin and her fellow Benefits Advocates know so well. Mental Health Advocacy Services is proud to have been a part of this historic effort!



Sign up for Mental Health Advocacy Services' **Fair Housing Tip of the Month!** Get important consumer information like how to request reasonable accommodations and answer questions from prospective landlords.

Visit mhas-la.org/FairHousingIndex.htm for more information.

The Fair Housing Tip of the Month is funded by a grant from the U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development Fair Housing Initiatives Program (Grant #FH400G08074).

MENTAL HEALTH
ADVOCACY
SERVICES

A nonprofit organization protecting and advancing the legal rights of people with mental disabilities.

3255 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 902
Los Angeles, CA 90010

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED