**2011-2012 Wisconsin Legislative Session**

**Summary of Main Bills of Interest to the Mental Health Community**

**The Good**

The following bills supported by Mental Health America of Wisconsin passed the Legislature:

SB353/AB455: Regulation of the use of seclusion and restraints in schools. A very good bill which should go a long ways towards eliminating the use of seclusion and restraints in the schools.

SB42/AB68: Makes all public school employees mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect.

SB380/AB477: Removed the caps on the Family Care program which had been imposed as part of last year’s budget. The Department of Health Services is continuing to review plans to improve the efficiency of the Family Care program. Expansion to new counties will require review by the Joint Finance Committee.

**The Bad**

The following bad bills did not pass the Legislature; and that’s **good**!

SB63: Would have severely reduced the amount of time before a termination of parental rights must be filed for a child placed outside his or her home. For families where the primary caregiver has a mental illness the reunification process may take longer.

AB76: Would have required DOC and a Sheriff to require inmates to pay a deductible, coinsurance or similar charge for prescription drugs. This bill could have had the undesirable effect of causing inmates to stop taking needed medications; bad for the inmate, bad for the safety of the prison.

SB486/AB110: Would have created a special needs scholarship for youth with disabilities to attend a private school or school outside their home district. The bill would have paid for the scholarships using funds taken from the home district on a per pupil basis even though special education is not funded that way. And the private schools that could benefit are not required to meet any special education requirements or even have staff who are qualified to work with students with disabilities.

LRB 1529 and LRB0373: would have created a la carte health insurance plans undermining mandated benefits, including MH/AODA parity.

SB207/AB286: Would have removed certain employment protections for ex-felons.

**The Ugly**

There were a number of bills that passed that we weren’t thrilled with, but this was the worst.

SB107/AB155: Prohibits localities from enacting certain protections for tenants. For instance, landlords could look at criminal history as far as they like. Some folks with mental illnesses have criminal history related to a mental illness that was not well controlled in the past. This could jeopardize their current ability to live in the community even thought their illness is well managed.

**Mixed**

Not all bills that passed are black and white.

SB45/AB62: Various changes related to the administration of medications to pupils in school. Removes cumbersome requirements for packaging and labeling of non-prescription medications. But allows prescription medications to be administered by personnel who may not have appropriate training and qualifications.