VNA COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE

Submission from: VNA Community Healthcare, Guilford, CT
Date: February 11, 2010
Regarding Bill No. 32 Section 35(c)

Dear Appropriations Committee Members,

I am the manager of a behavioral home health program at VNA Community Healthcare in Guilford. On January 1, 2010 changes were made to the pharmacy benefit for the dual eligible population. I want you to be aware of the negative impact that this has had on the population we serve and our increased concern that the Governor is now recommending the co-pay be increased to $20.00 per month. Most of our clients have a severe chronic mental illness and are living on a very low income. One component of our service is to ensure that they comply with their medication regime. As you have heard before, medication compliance is a critical element in maintaining this population in the community. The implementation of the co-pay has led to problems with obtaining the prescribed medications. Adding another increase may result in further harm.

The illnesses experienced by our clients cause behaviors such as paranoia, extreme disorganization and medication non-compliance. These clients do not understand why they are now required to pay for their prescriptions. A few clients exhibited an escalation of paranoid behavior. They claimed that someone was "punishing" them by imposing a "penalty" on them. We also found that those who managed their own finances did not have the ability to allocate money appropriately. Last month most clients had already spent their money without setting anything aside for the new co-pay. Some clients did not understand the importance of taking medications and refused to spend money for copayments. Several clients actually went without medication for several days before a plan was put in place to pay the co-pay. The resulting gaps in medication administration are likely to result in significant behavioral problems and subsequent hospitalizations to stabilize these clients We expect to see delays each month as we attempt to refill current prescriptions and/or add new medications.

We hope that you will not increase the copayment amount to $20.00 and that you will reconsider the $15.00 copayment that is now in place. The copayment is a hardship for those behavioral health clients who are managed in their homes.

Respectfully submitted by,

Donna Persak, MS, RN
Clinical Program Manager