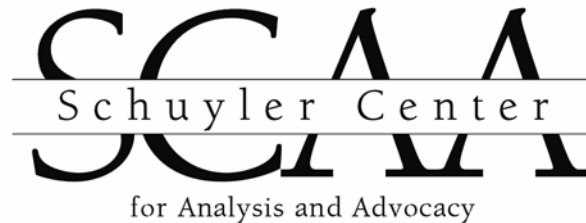


**Testimony for the Joint Fiscal Committees
on the SFY 2009-10 *Executive Budget*
Mental Health Hearing
January 29, 2009**

**Submitted by Karen Schimke, President and CEO
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy**



*Shaping New York State public policy
for people in need since 1872*

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The Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy (SCAA), on behalf of itself and as the convener of the New York Children's Action Network (CAN), believes that the emotional well-being of children and young adults is imperative to their healthy and successful development—both academically and socially.

We know that children and youth living with mental health concerns have a harder time in school and in life. In fact, New York State data shows that students with emotional disturbances graduate at a rate of only 32%, compared to their peers with developmental delays (49%) and those with physical disabilities (67%).¹ Dropping out of school puts them at a greater risk for disconnection from society. In addition, an alarming 52% of children and youth placed in juvenile justice facilities present with mental health needs.²

We are pleased that the Executive Budget includes funding for implementation of certain aspects of The Children's Plan, which we see as a positive step forward for mental health services in New York State.

However, we do have a concern that, while it falls under the jurisdiction of the Human Services Committee, it pertains to mental health and must be addressed here.

SCAA is worried about the proposed cuts to Community Optional Preventive Services (COPS) funding. **We urge you to restore COPS as a category of spending within the child welfare "65/35" spending**, thereby assuring stable funding for a wide variety of important services. These services include children's mental health services that prevent both foster care and juvenile justice placements.

The elimination of COPS spending would seriously impact some of the most vulnerable children and youth in New York State. The children and families who are currently benefiting from innovative interventions supported with COPS funding will be at tremendous risk of losing the evidence-based supportive services that are keeping children and youth out of foster care and jail while keeping families together. This cut is made worse by the fact that it is retroactive to October 2008 when expenditures have already accrued.

Please restore COPS funding and continue to provide much-needed services for children and youth with mental health needs.

¹ *Growing Up In new York*; SCAA; August 2006.

² *Ibid.*

On the issue of adult mental health, we urge you to preserve and protect funding for adult home residences. Data shows that 12,000, or over 40%, of people living in adult care facilities have psychiatric disabilities. 80% of the people on SSI living in adult homes are people with psychiatric disabilities.³ These people are among New York State's most vulnerable and must be assured safe, comfortable living conditions.

We ask that the \$2.1 million in the Office of Mental Health budget to provide independent case management services to adult home resident be protected as the budget process moves forward. These services promote rehabilitation and recovery in the adult home population.

Thank you.

³ 2001 data.