



# The Cutting Edge

MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION IN NJ

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS UPDATE

Carolyn Beauchamp, President and CEO

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## Federal Sandy Aid and Its Potential Impact on Low-Income, Mental Health and Disabled Households

Monarch Housing has been tracking and providing updates on the Sandy recovery and rebuilding process on its website and is particularly concerned about how low-income and disabled households will be assisted in the process. On February 3, 2013, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development announced that New Jersey will receive a first installment of [\\$1.82 billion in aid to recover and rebuild from Hurricane Sandy](#). But a [recent article](#) raised concerns including those of Kevin Walsh of the Fair Share Housing Center about how this funding will be spent. "Walsh advocates for the housing needs of low-income New Jerseyans, and he said that although CDBGs are intended to benefit poor people, Christie failed to mention them Wednesday." According to the Governor, more than 40,000 New

## Governor Christie Acts on Violence Prevention

Governor Christie has created the NJ SAFE Task Force to take a full and comprehensive look at the intersection of gun control, addiction, mental health and school safety in New Jersey, according to



a [press release on the Governor's Office website](#). The release states that, "The Task Force (is) chaired by two former attorneys general of New Jersey, a Democrat and a Republican, with a membership of individuals with expertise in the fields of mental health diagnosis and treatment, addiction services and treatment, gun control and law enforcement, and school safety."

James Romer, the Director of Psychiatric Emergency Services at Monmouth Medical Center in Long Branch, represents the field of mental health. Romer has over 30 years of experience working with psychiatric outreach and screening services for adults and youth.

The Task Force is expected to provide a report with recommendations for the Governor within 60 days of when its work began in late January.

## MHANJ Submits Testimony to Governor Christie's SAFE Task Force

The Mental Health Association in New Jersey submitted testimony to Governor Christie's SAFE Task Force as a component of its advocacy efforts.

"We must begin to change the conversation away from the incorrect idea that people with mental illness are more violent, they are not. 95% of all violent crimes are committed by people who do not have mental illness," stated Carolyn Beauchamp, President and CEO of the Mental Health Association in New Jersey. "We must ensure that localities, schools and health systems are ending discrimination and marginalization through compliance with the American Disabilities Act,

Jersey families were displaced from Sandy. But according to Walsh, many of these families are renters. These households may not be eligible for the assistance to homeowners that the Governor discussed when the federal aid was announced.

### **Important Information for Those Receiving Medicaid and Medicare**

The New Jersey Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services (DMAHS) announced an opportunity for Medicare and Medicaid-eligible beneficiaries (Dual Eligible) to sign up for Special Needs Plans (D-SNPs). A Dual Eligible D-SNP serves consumers with Medicare and Medicaid. A group of New Jersey consumer advocates has been evaluating the feasibility of D-SNP for persons with a mental health diagnosis. [Please click here](#) for or advice about how to research the plan to assure that it will appropriately meet individual needs.

### **Nominations are Now Being Accepted**

Nominations are being accepted for the Mental

the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the Olmstead Decision." [Click here to read the full testimony.](#)

### **25% of Adults with Mental Illness are Victims of Violence**

"One in four people with mental illness experience violence of some type in a given year," according to an article in *Medpage Today* (February 2012). This rate is much higher than the general population. The article notes many problems inherent to mental health problems that may contribute to this victimization, including interpersonal difficulties, exclusion from education and employment opportunities and social stigma. Staff training and violence prevention programs for those who work with people who have mental health challenges were cited as two potential solutions. [Click here to read the article.](#)

### **The Bazelon Center Analyzes Psychiatric Hospital Bed Availability and Firearms Homicides**



As incidences of mass violence have unfolded in the U.S., connections have been drawn to a lack of mental health services. Some say that deinstitutionalization, elimination of state hospitals and disability rights are partially to blame for the shootings. They may be unaware of the limited resources available for community mental health services intended to replace state hospitals. Nonetheless, expanding the number of psychiatric hospital beds is suggested as a potential solution.

The Washington, D.C. based Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law's analysis found, however, that, "If expanding the number of psychiatric beds is a meaningful remedy to firearm related murders in this country, one would expect a clear inverse relationship, showing that states with low per capita numbers of psychiatric hospital beds have higher rates of firearm-related homicides or higher rates of incarceration. Correlations among these factors were found to be strikingly low and not statistically significant. These data suggest that, to the extent that unaddressed needs of people with serious mental illness contribute to the nation's homicide rate, the public policy answer is not in increasing the number of psychiatric hospital beds, but is elsewhere." [Click here to read the Bazelon Report.](#)

Health Association in New Jersey's 2013 Golden Bell Leadership Awards Recognizing Outstanding Contributions to Improving the Mental Health of

Hurricane Sandy Survivors. The awards will be presented at the June 18, 2013 Evening of Excellence. [Click here for the nomination form.](#)

Would you like to help MHANJ continue its advocacy initiatives?



New Jersey  
**MentalHealthCares**  
24/7 HELPLINE  
866-202-HELP



## FYI: Opinions and Information about Violence and Mental Health

[Support for Mental Health as a Priority in Obama Gun Violence Initiative](#) -- Carolyn Beauchamp, President and CEO of the Mental Health Association in New Jersey

[Focus on Mental Health Laws to Curb Violence is Unfair, Some Say](#) -- Erica Goode and Jack Healy, *The New York Times*

[It Shouldn't Take a Tragedy to Improve Treatment](#) -- Harvey Rosenthal, Executive Director of the New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services, a member of New York's Medicaid Redesign Team and a person in recovery from a mental illness

[Don't Make Scapegoats of People with Mental Illness](#) -- Ellyn Jaeger, Director of Policy and Advocacy for Mental Health America of Georgia

## Strong Support for Medicaid Expansion

Most New Jerseyans want Governor Chris Christie to accept federal funds to cover more people with Medicaid, according to a new poll by the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. The poll showed that 70 percent of registered voters say the state should accept the federal Medicaid funds available under the Affordable Care Act, which will pay for 100 percent coverage of about 233,000 uninsured adults beginning in 2014, eventually decreasing to about 90 percent coverage.

"With the funding, many of these people will have access to mental health and substance abuse treatment for their first time. The Governor has not yet decided whether he will expand Medicaid coverage for people up to 138% of the federal poverty level. A majority are working adults who today have no access to medical insurance. These needed federal dollars will be an essential ingredient if New Jersey hopes to meet the demand for appropriate mental health care in the future," stated Carolyn Beauchamp, President and CEO of the Mental Health Association in New Jersey.

The National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) has issued a report that provides analysis of the potential impacts that would accrue to states that chose to accept the Medicaid expansion and the potential lost opportunities if it is rejected. [Click here for more information and access to the full report.](#)



**Mental Health  
Association  
in New Jersey, Inc.**

[www.mhanj.org](http://www.mhanj.org)

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[MHANJ's Government Affairs](#) efforts.

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