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Congressional Developments: Update
From the NH Community Behavioral Health Association

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It appears that Congress will grant a one-year moratorium on the changes relative to Medicaid Targeted Case Management. As you may be aware, changes to this element of the Medicaid reimbursement for NH's community mental health centers had been initiated by CMS and were likely to take place very soon, and retroactively. The effect of these changes would have been devastating to the state's behavioral health system as they would have likely reduced funding to the centers by as much as 40%.

The moratorium is included in a set of appropriations bills that were passed by the House of Representatives ten days ago, with the support of the White House. At the end of last week, the Senate agreed, and the legislation was presented to the President on Friday.

While this short-term fix is good news, the delay of the new rate-setting method will be short-lived. In fact, the one-year moratorium is actually only a 9-month fix, as the CMS change was imposed in April of 2008, with a retroactive implementation date of June.

Medicaid reimbursement changes, state funding shortfalls and cost shifting of state responsibilities to the non-profit community, combined with reductions in commercial payer participation, continue to create a dark cloud over the future of the current delivery system for behavioral health care in NH's Medicaid system. Over the next several months, the Community Behavioral Health Association will be tackling this problem and working with those affected as well as with the state Bureau of Behavioral Health to prepare for changes required to prevent regional collapse and potential system-wide failure.