## Keeping an Eye on THE STATES

## Monitoring Initiatives that Impact People with AD/HD

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BY PAUL J. SEIFERT, J.D.

s readers of Attention! magazine, you know that CHADD keeps a close watch on federal policies affecting people with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD). Among the many programs and legislative initiatives CHADD follows for you are the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and healthcare policies like mental health parity legislation that would ensure that mental health benefits aren't treated differently than physical health benefits.

Not all the legislative action is confined to Washington, D.C., however. In nearly every state we see legislative efforts that could impact people with AD/HD and related disorders-some positive, others not. CHADD is focusing more attention now than ever before on what is happening in the states.

Many states are considering mental health parity laws of their own. For example, at the close of 2006, New York and Ohio passed laws that would put mental health benefits on par with physical health benefits.

## Responding to initiatives

Not all action at the state level is favorable, however. Anti-treatment special interest groups are pushing their misguided agenda in state capitals around the country. Just this year, we have seen legislation introduced that would interfere with parent-teacher communication, and create so-called "parental consent forms" with misleading and biased information about treatment. One bill would even place locations of all children taking

AD/HD medication, the type of medica-

tion and the physician's name on the Web-fully accessible to the public!

In response, CHADD National is actively working with CHADD members in states where these dangerous legislative initiatives threaten effective treatment for AD/HD. CHADD is also working with several national organizations, including the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Mental Health America (MHA), the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP), and others to coordinate action against offensive legislative initiatives as they are identified.

## Sponsoring legislative activities

CHADD has helped to sponsor three state legislative activities in 2007. In Utah, CHADD joined with the Legislative Coalition for People with Disabilities in sponsoring a legislative reception that was attended by over 300 people, including 70 CHADD members, and numerous

Utah state senators and representatives. CHADD-Utah Coordinator Linda Smith and Jan Ferre of the Legislative Coalition for People with Disabilities worked hard to make this reception a huge success.

In Georgia, CHADD sponsored a legislative reception that was attended by over 100 attendees and over a dozen state senators and representatives. CHADD was joined by the

Learning Disabilities Association of Georgia and the Georgia Chapter of the International Dyslexic Association. Former CHADD board member Joan Teach, Ph.D., and Suzan Thornton were our leaders in Georgia and invaluable in making this first-ever event in Georgia happen.

In Florida, CHADD was a partner in Children's Week, a week-long event in Tallahassee to attract attention to the needs of Florida's children. CHADD sponsored a legislative breakfast and took part in the many Children's Week events. Our thanks go out to CHADD-Tampa Coordinator Nancy Gonsalves, current CHADD board member Brenda Johnson, Vicki Spitzer and Corinne Mixon for their tireless efforts on this event.

CHADD National will continue to work with CHADD coordinators and members in the states to make sure legislation that helps children receive better services is passed, and legislation that puts barriers between parents and their children's health care is defeated.

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