

Alcoholic Units Meeting To Establish Consortium

By NED THOMAS
Staff Reporter

A group of 10 agencies is meeting today at the Connecticut Hospital Association in Wallingford to try to establish a consortium of alcohol service providers.

Impetus for the establishment of the proposed consortium has come from the Alcohol Council of Greater New Haven.

Mrs. Eva Hunt, president of the council, said,

"Very often the alcoholic client and his family fall through gaps and go through a revolving door process. In many such instances the client does not know where to go for help or what to do."

She asserted that the alcoholic client, his family and the taxpayer will be the beneficiaries of the proposed consortium, which would promote inter-agency cooperation.

The purpose of the consortium, said Mrs. Katherine Battista, executive director of the council, is to improve inter-agency coordination in the delivery of alcohol services by providers and to reduce the per capita costs of providing these services.

In addition, the consortium will attempt to facilitate a continuum of care for the alcoholic and his or her family through joint planning and coordination of the alcohol service agencies.

In the past, explained Mrs. Battista, the big problem has been the poor follow-up of alcoholics, because of the lack of communications by the various alcohol service agencies.

She said that a better inter-agency referral system will be developed to include written referral forms and procedures for referrals into specific program components.

The overall aim of the consortium, she said, is to help reduce the number of revolving door alcoholics, some of whom are treated for their illness only to reappear later as an uncontrolled alcoholic at the same or other alcohol service agency.

Other functions of the proposed consortium will be: the provision of continuity and coordination of care for alcoholics and their families, covering patient care and planning, and monitoring and evaluation processes.

If agreement can be reached today in the meeting of the 10 agencies, the consortium would go into full operation by September.

Current plans call for hiring a project coordinator for the consortium. The coordinator would function under the direction of the council.

The board of directors of the council recently approved the council making an application for \$50,000 to the State Alcohol Council to fund the operations of the consortium.

Showing interest in being included in the consortium are the following organizations and agencies: Alcohol Council of Greater New Haven, the Hill Health Center, the Connecticut Mental Health Center, the State Department of Mental Health—Orange Street Clinic, Dixwell Opposes Alcohol, the Shirley Frank Foundation, the Hospital of St. Raphael, the North Haven Alcohol Education Service, the Connecticut Valley Hospital and the John McGee (halfway) House.

All the agencies and organizations have signed letters of intent, indicating their desire to participate in and be part of the consortium.

Mrs. Battista said other optional members of the consortium may include family and individual counseling organizations and any agency that deals with alcohol-related problems.

Each participating agency or organization in the consortium will retain its board of directors and its autonomy, but will come together as a federation for the purpose of cooperation, coordination, planning, data collection, and insuring a comprehensive approach to the treatment of alcoholism and related problems.

Contributors To Alcohol Program Due Awards

The Shirley Frank Foundation, now operating two alcoholism rehabilitation programs for Greater New Haven, will hold its second annual awards dinner Sept. 28 at the Ambassador Restaurant in Hamden.

At the dinner the foundation will select for special recognition those whose contributions to the work of the foundation have been extraordinary. The initial recipient of this honor was John M. Christoforo, M.D., one of the founders of the organization and its first president.

Richard Benfer, president, said Mrs. Sylvia G. Rennieke of North Haven and Edward J. Drew of New Haven are co-chairing the planning committee for the awards dinner. Other committee members are: James L. Dahill of North Haven, Mrs. Lucille LaRocco of New Haven, Mrs. Sheila Wellington of New Haven, Mrs. Jean Admopoz of Hamden, William E. Keish of New Haven, Francis J. Rizzolo of

Hamden, Bruce R. Crowther of West Haven and Mrs. Betty L. Shanley of Hamden.

The foundation's Alcohol Detoxification Unit in North Haven treated more than 1,000 admissions since it opened its 17-bed program in April 1976. The new Shelter Program, opened at the Hospital of St. Raphael on May 8 of this year, offers a 12-bed facility for patients who have first undergone detoxification in North

Haven. Benfer noted that the non-profit Foundation has received grant support from the State Alcohol Council, the Department of Mental Health and the New Haven Foundation.

Information about tickets and reservations to the awards dinner may be obtained by calling Mrs. Shanley.

Alcohol Council Has 'Crisis' In Funding Cutoff

The Alcohol Council of Greater New Haven is facing "a crisis of lack of funds," according to Mrs. Edith Jaquiere, the council's director of education and alcoholism prevention, and Mrs. Catherine Battista, its executive director.

For the past two years, the council has been funded by the State Alcohol Council at \$10,500 per year to provide educational services about alcohol and alcoholism in the Greater New Haven area, which includes 12 surrounding towns in addition to the Elm City.

As of Thursday the state's funding will be stopped. This may have a serious effect on the services that the council provides, including a wide range of educational services to public school students from the fifth grade up through those attending college.

These services have been provided free to the recipients. The council has also provided films, library materials, speakers and general information to the public.

It is estimated that there are some 120,000 alcoholics in Connecticut, and about 9,000 of them live in the Greater New Haven area.

Some of these persons started using alcohol at age 12, when they were in the sixth grade.

The problem with the loss of the state funding, Mrs. Jaquiere and Mrs. Battista said, is that these services may also be ending, or drastically curtailed.

They noted that traditionally, alcoholism has been treated after the symptoms of the disease have appeared. The council has been trying to prevent alcoholism from occurring through the education of young people, before the disease has a chance to become ingrained in them.

The council has been encouraging alcoholics to accept treatment before they suffer chronic symptoms of alcoholism.

It is estimated that at least four other closely related persons are affected by each alcoholic, which means that some 45,000 persons in the Greater New Haven area are being affected directly by the 9,000 alcoholics in the area.

Many other persons are affected indirectly. It costs the community and state thousands of dollars in welfare and public assistance.

It is believed that 80 per cent of welfare recipients have problems related to alcoholism, which has resulted in many highway fatalities, auto accident injuries, suicides, abused children, battered wives, and crimes in general, at an unknown cost to persons and industry at large.

The council's service is inexpensive. Reaching some 5,000 persons a year for the past two years with its educational programs and referrals of alcoholics for treatment, it averages out to about \$2 for each person educated about alcoholism, not to mention the thousands more reached by school teachers and councilors.

The council is currently attempting to raise funds from other sources, such as the United Way, service clubs, municipalities in the area and private foundations.