

2020 Advocacy Leadership Awards

Award for Organizational Achievement in Advocacy



ABOUT LAURI

Lauri Cole, MSW, is the executive director of the [New York State Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare \(NYS Council\)](#), a position she has held since 2003. She is an advocate and lobbyist for underserved individuals and the organizations that serve them, bringing new policy and programmatic initiatives, as well as innovative reforms, to the behavioral health service delivery system.

Lauri has spent much of her career focused on advocacy strategies designed to achieve policy and programmatic reforms that preserve and enhance access to and continuity of care for New Yorkers who rely on mental health and substance use disorder/addiction services, to include recovery-focused treatment services, housing and critical social determinants of health.

Under her leadership, the NYS Council has led many successful efforts, resulting in such wins as enacting budget language that seeks to preserve and enhance New York's behavioral health continuum of care. Lauri previously served as executive director of the Council on Homeless Policies and Services in New York City, and worked for the Association for Community Living.

Lauri has served on various nonprofit boards, including – for three years each – as a member of the National Council's board of directors, a member of Planned Parenthood of Upper Hudson's board of directors and as co-chair of the Medicaid Matters-NYS Coalition. Lauri received her Master of Social Welfare and Bachelor of Arts in psychology from the State University of New York at Albany.

MAKING A MARK

As part of the effort to contain Medicaid spending in New York State, publicly funded behavioral health services were largely moved to a managed care model. Lauri recognized that individual providers, of

varying sizes and financial/contracting sophistication, would be hard-pressed to negotiate on their own behalves for rates that would allow their doors to stay open. Lauri, leading the NYS Council, worked tirelessly to educate and advocate with legislative and regulatory communities to establish rates – APG rates – that MCOs would be required to pay to providers.

A sustainable fee structure was needed to keep the doors open and services available. Lauri and the NYS Council educated legislators and communicated what the ripple effect in their own communities would be if clinics’ doors closed. They spoke about the need for required reporting on key metrics; lobbied the regulatory agencies for their support; drew in the behavioral health advocacy groups; and marshalled them to create a critical mass of advocacy organizations and providers lobbying for these changes. The result: APG rates and required metrics reporting were established. Subsequent advocacy led to the requirement for timely and full payment whenever a rate change is enacted.

Lauri recognized the potential threat to the continuity of care for individuals that might occur in the transition to Medicaid Managed Care, and she conceptualized how to address the potential problem. Lauri can simultaneously focus on the micro and macro levels, and “see” how decisions at the federal level trickle down to the state level, to the counties and to communities where the impact of those decisions are felt acutely. Setting a consistent government rate that approximated the cost of care and was required to be paid by each MCO was a remarkable change.

Thank you, Lauri, for making a difference in and beyond your community. And a special thanks to our generous sponsor, [Sunovion Pharmaceuticals](#), for their ongoing support.