



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shirley L. Huntley

3/1/2011: Press Conference on Eating Disorders

SHIRLEY L. HUNTLEY February 28, 2011

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New York State Legislature

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CALL FOR AN ONLINE TRAINING FOR PHYSICIANS ON EATING DISORDER PREVENTION

Assemblyman Peter M. Rivera, Speaker Pro Tempore and Former Chair of Assembly Mental Health Committee, Senator Shirley L. Huntley, Ranking Member of the Senate Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Committee, other elected officials, people affected with eating disorders, their families, and professionals across New York in call for the adoption of bill A. 4413 RiveraP/S. 3142 Huntley to require healthcare professionals to complete training on eating disorder recognition and prevention.

Albany, New York (03/01/2011): Assemblyman Peter M. Rivera, Speaker Pro Tempore and Former Chair of Assembly Mental Health Committee, Senator Shirley L. Huntley, Ranking Member of the Senate Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Committee were joined by children affected by eating disorders, their families and healthcare professionals to call on legislators to act to prevent the spread of eating disorders among youth and women.

According to the National Eating Disorder Association, there are as many as 10 million females and 1 million males in the United States fighting a life and death battle with anorexia or bulimia and another 25 million with binge-eating disorder. Millions practice disordered eating due to an obsession with dieting. Over the years these numbers have continued to rise, along with the stigma and lack of awareness of eating disorders.

“Protecting and helping women and men who battle eating disorders is critical in maintaining the health and mental health of the residents of New York State, said New York State Senator Shirley L. Huntley (D-Jamaica). Eating disorders happen for a myriad of reasons including low-self esteem, and compulsive dieting. We must ensure that Physicians and Physician Assistants are trained in how to identify the symptoms of an eating disorder and that those who may have the disorder receive immediate attention and help.”

The peak onset of eating disorders occurs during puberty and the late teen/early adult years, but symptoms can occur as young as kindergarten. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, eating disorders are serious illnesses with a biological basis modified and influenced by emotional and cultural factors. Eating disorders are preventable and treatable, yet hundreds of people die from them each year. Anorexia has the highest mortality rate of any mental illness.

Eating disorders are serious mental illnesses with often severe physical consequences. They also cross all racial lines. A recent 10 year study found that African American girls are 50% more likely to be bulimic than are white girls. Sadly, many of these and other cases go undetected and untreated.

The bill will require physicians and physician assistants to take an online training on the early recognition of and intervention for eating disorders. The training will include information on emotional, physical and behavioral indicators of eating disorder. The bill also requires that a hospital or a healthcare facility receives documentation of appropriate training when granting or renewing privileges. New York State must take the next step and pass this bill to ensure that our health care professionals are given the appropriate training and resources to adequately identify eating disorders and intervene so that these diseases are caught early and lives are saved.