



***THE GERIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH ALLIANCE OF NEW YORK***  
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**THE GERIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH ACT (A.7672/S.4742)**  
**A SUMMARY OF THE BILL**

**Purpose:** Older adults with mental disorders are currently underserved and will become increasingly underserved as there is a rapid increase in the number of older adults. The purpose of this bill is to *lay the groundwork* for New York State to be able to provide high quality, innovative, and integrated services to meet the current mental health needs of older adults and to prepare for the coming elder boom.

**History:** Thanks to the visionary leadership of a bi-partisan group of legislators in the Assembly and in the Senate, the Act was introduced in April 2005. The primary sponsor in the Senate was Nick Spano, Sr. Assistant Majority Leader. The primary co-sponsors were Thomas Morahan, Chair of the Mental Health Committee, and Martin Golden, Chair of the Aging Committee. The primary sponsor in the Assembly was Peter Rivera, Chair of the Mental Health Committee. The primary co-sponsor was Steven Englebright, Chair of the Aging Committee.

The Act passed the NYS Senate unanimously and the NYS Assembly with only one negative vote at the end of June, 2005. It was signed into law by Governor George Pataki at the end of August.

**Components of the Act:** The Act establishes (1) a services demonstrations grants program and (2) an Interagency Geriatric Mental Health Planning Council.

**Services Demonstration Grants:** Meeting the mental health needs of older adults requires service innovation. The Act calls for the Office of Mental Health to establish a services demonstrations grants program seeking innovation in key areas including among others: supports to enable older adults to remain in the community; improved quality of care in the community; integration of mental health, health, and aging services; enhanced cultural competence; family support; efficient use of professionals, paraprofessionals, and volunteers including peers; and new finance models.

**Interagency Planning:** Readiness for the elder boom requires interagency planning. This bill establishes and Interagency Geriatric Mental Health Planning Council co-chaired by the Commissioner of Mental Health and the Director of the Office for the Aging. Members include representatives of OMH, OFA, OASAS, OMR, the Commission on the Quality of Care, the Department of Health, the Department of Education, the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, the Office of Children and Family Services (which oversees adult protective services), and six individuals to be appointed by the Speaker, the Majority Leader, and the Governor. In addition to providing recommendations to state departments and offices, the Council will submit an annual report to the Governor and the Legislature.