



1300 17th Street, Suite 1000
Sacramento, CA 95811
(916) 445-8696
FAX: (916) 445-4927

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After extensive debate today, the California commission responsible for mental health services oversight chose a new Chair, Linford Gayle of Pacifica, and a Vice-Chair, Andrew Poat of San Diego. At its meeting in Sacramento, the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) picked its new leadership team by unanimous votes.

The 16-member MHSOAC was formed by the passage of Proposition 63, the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), in November 2004. The MHSOAC is responsible for overarching oversight and accountability for implementation of the MHSA.

Gayle, himself a mental health consumer, has worked in supervisory and case management positions in the supportive housing, homeless and substance abuse fields for over 14 years. Mr. Gayle is presently a mental health program specialist for San Mateo County Mental Health Services.

Gayle has prior experience as health program coordinator for San Francisco Behavioral Health Services and as a substance abuse counselor for Resolve to Stop the Violence Program.

“Having formerly been homeless, mentally ill, and in several locked facilities, I find it an honor and privilege to be selected as chair of the MHSOAC,” said Gayle, who has served as vice-chair of the Commission since 2005. “I believe that the Commission is demonstrating transformation of the mental health system in California for all the world to see,” said Gayle.

The Vice-chair, Andrew Poat, works as the Director of Government Relations for the City of San Diego. Poat has previously served as chief deputy director of the California Department of Transportation, deputy cabinet secretary to Governor Pete Wilson, undersecretary of the State and Consumer services Agency and deputy director of the United States Office of Consumer Affairs.

“I’m honored to be teamed with Linford Gayle in the Commission leadership,” Poat said. “I hope that Linford’s personal experience and my organizational and management experience can lead consumers, family members, and providers to a transformed mental health system,” Poat said.

Poat is a member of the board of directors for LEAD San Diego and the past chair of the San Diego Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee. He is also a mentor at Monarch High School in San Diego, a member of the Downtown Rotary and a member of the public policy committee for the San Diego Gay and Lesbian Center.

Poat fills the seat on the MHSOAC of a representative of an employer with more than 500 employees. Poat is a Republican.

Gayle is registered decline-to-state. He fills the seat on the MHSOAC as a person living with a mental illness. Members of the MHSOAC serve without compensation.

Contact: Cynthia Craft
(916) 445-8797
(530) 363-5702