



MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY COMMISSION

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 29, 2008

**New Executive Director for State Mental Health
Commission is Sworn In**

State Mental Health Director Stephen Mayberg today administered the oath of office to Sheri Whitt, who will assume the position of Executive Director of the state Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC). Ms. Whitt has been serving as the Interim Executive Director of the MHSOAC since June 2007.

Ms. Whitt, of Eureka, brings a broad range of experience to the position. She has more than 25 years working in a variety of settings – non-profit, county government, state government and in tribal health programs – and has worked with a variety of racial, ethnic and cultural communities in California. A licensed marriage and family therapist, Ms. Whitt has been a domestic violence counselor, a parenting and youth counselor and has provided mental health counseling to the Native American community.

She has a B.S. in psychology from the University of California, Santa Cruz, and a M.S. in clinical counseling psychology from California State University, San Bernardino.

“I am so pleased to accept this position,” said Ms. Whitt. “This work comes from my heart and I am very dedicated to support this commission’s work in implementing the Mental Health Services Act.”

The 16-member MHSOAC was formed by voter approval of Proposition 63, the Mental Health Services Act, in November 2004. The MHSOAC, in collaboration with the state Department of Mental Health, is responsible for oversight and accountability for implementation of the MHSA. MHSA programs include direct services to mental health clients through contracts with California counties, programs for prevention and early intervention and housing for individuals with mental illness

MHSOAC Chair Linford Gayle applauded the selection of Ms. Whitt, who as Interim Director has presided over the growth of commission staff from three to 19. “I am so pleased that we have got this finalized,” said Chair Gayle. “Sheri Whitt has the compassion, vision and executive skills to take the Commission’s work to the highest level.”

The MHSA, co-authored by Sacramento area state Senator Darrell Steinberg, was the result of a groundswell of movement to improve mental health care in California. It is funded by a 1 percent tax on individuals who earn personal annual income of at least \$1 million.

Contact:

Cynthia Craft

916-445-8797