



STATE OF CALIFORNIA
EDMUND G. BROWN JR., Governor

MHSOAC

Mental Health Services
Oversight and Accountability Commission

LARRY POASTER, PhD
Chair

RICHARD VAN HORN
Vice Chair

WILLIAM BROWN
Sheriff
Commissioner

VICTOR G. CARRION, M.D.
Attorney General
Appointee

LOU CORREA
Senator
Commissioner

MARY HAYASHI
Assemblymember
Commissioner

PATRICK HENNING, JR.
Commissioner

HOWARD A. KAHN
Commissioner

RALPH NELSON, M.D.
Commissioner

DAVID PATING, M.D.
Commissioner

ANDREW POAT
Commissioner

EDUARDO VEGA, M.A.
Commissioner

TINA WOOTON
Commissioner

SHERRI GAUGER
Executive Director

January 23, 2012

Cliff Allenby, Acting Director
Department of Mental Health
1600 9th Street, Room 151
Sacramento, Ca 95823

Toby Douglas, Director
Department of Health Care Services
1501 Capitol Ave, MS 0000
P.O. Box 997413
Sacramento, Ca 95899

Dear Director Allenby and Director Douglas,

The fundamental responsibility of the Mental Health Oversight and Accountability Commission (Commission) is to provide oversight and ensure accountability for the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) and Systems of Care Acts. The primary strategy of the Commission to fulfill this role is through evaluation focusing on outcomes and the appropriate and effective use of MHSA funds. The Commission is dependent on several databases currently maintained by the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to achieve this primary responsibility. This letter is to express our very serious concerns about the adequacy of the state level support provided for these databases and to advocate for sufficient resources and priority be dedicated at the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to ensure timely access to accurate, essential data.

The MHSOAC has adopted a strategy of continuous evaluation to improve quality of care to address three core questions—how was the money used, what was the impact and what could be done to improve efficiency and effectiveness. We are making significant investments in evaluation which are focused on achievement of individual, system and community outcomes specified in the MHSA. Our evaluation efforts are mainly dependent on data provided by the counties and maintained at the state level. Our concern is that these databases are currently insufficiently supported or not yet developed which jeopardizes the Commission's evaluation and achievement of our core functions of oversight and accountability.

We're advocating that sufficient resources be designated for these critical functions as these responsibilities transfer from the DMH to DHCS. We understand that the transition of these responsibilities from one department to another provides many challenges and want to ensure that there is not further erosion in the level of support provided. During this transition period, we have provided some temporary funding (approximately \$700,000) to develop user supports and data quality reports for

counties to improve the accuracy of one database. We have also designed a simplified expenditure report which was implemented by DMH to reflect the goals of realignment and streamlining while maintaining accountability.

We must express the seriousness of our concerns as the deficiencies in the system have and, unless addressed, will continue to compromise the timeliness and integrity of evaluations of the Mental Health Services Act. We are requesting that you help ensure that maintaining and improving these databases is a priority for DHCS as these functions are transferred from DMH. We are available to assist as appropriate in that effort.

Sincerely,

LARRY POASTER, Ph. D.
Chair
Mental Health Services
Oversight and Accountability Commission
916-445-8696