



**Analysis and Recommendations Re:
Accessibility of MHSOAC Meetings for Clients and Family Members**

Submitted to MHSOAC by the Client and Family Leadership Committee (CFLC)

March 23, 2012

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Background:

- A committee activity included in the 2012 CFLC Charter is:

“continue deliberation and provide recommendations regarding accessibility of MHSOAC meetings for clients, family members and the public, and promote their effective participation.”

- This report and the recommendations included represent the current thinking of the CFLC regarding ways to improve the accessibility of Commission meetings for clients, parents and family members.

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Background: (contd.)

- There was significant CFLC discussion about what is meant by “accessibility to MHSOAC meetings.”
- As a result of committee discussion this report focuses on both physical accessibility and other types of accessibility necessary to promote the effective participation of clients and family members.
- This report addresses:
 1. Findings related to choosing a meeting location
 2. Principles to consider in choosing a meeting location
 3. Other essential and/or desirable provisions necessary to effective participation of clients and family members at Commission meetings

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Findings Related to Choosing Meeting Location:

- The Committee discussed and acknowledged the many attributes of holding Commission meetings at CiMH including:
 1. No cost parking
 2. Reasonable access to public transportation
 3. Excellent sound system
 4. Good access to a market and other low cost food purveyors (within walking distance)
 5. Convenient to persons already located downtown
 6. Access to water
 7. Coffee (provided sometimes)
 8. Excellent CiMH staff resources

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Findings Related to Choosing Meeting Location: (contd.)

• **Although the CFLC recognizes the benefit of holding Commission meetings at CiMH and considers that it is an acceptable meeting location – two accessibility issues have been identified as follows:**

1. Wheelchair access is limited in both the lobby area and meeting room. Space does not provide enough room for a person in a wheelchair to move about freely.
2. Space for the audience is fairly confined and can be a barrier for those not at ease in crowded spaces. Other than leaving the meeting room there is no place for persons to stretch their legs or move slightly away from the crowd if they desire.

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Principles to be Considered When Choosing MHSOAC Meeting Locations:

1. Convenient, low to no-cost parking
2. Easy access to public transportation
3. Easy access to a market and/or low cost food purveyors (accessibility by foot preferred)
4. Excellent sound system including ability for interested parties to listen and hear clearly
5. Easy availability of water
6. Wheelchair access that provides enough space for persons in wheelchairs to maneuver easily:
 - a. outside the main meeting space
 - b. within the meeting room
 - c. in the space where meeting resource materials are provided
7. Meeting room space that provides both space for the seated audience and for persons to remain in the room, move about, and stretch their legs

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Other Essential Meeting Provisions:

- **The availability of a stipend or reimbursement for child or dependent care to promote the effective participation of clients, family members, parents and caregivers at Commission meetings.**
- For many clients, parents and family members, their ability to attend a Commission meeting hinges on whether or not they have a way to pay for child or dependent care.
- Currently the Commission includes reimbursement provisions intended for child care, for a client or family member who is a parent of a minor child, and meets the identified contract criteria in the Commission's stakeholder contracts.
- Currently, the Commission's contracts with stakeholder organizations do not include a reimbursement provision for dependent care.
- There is concern that most clients, parents and family members are not aware of the availability of reimbursement for child care if needed to attend a Commission meeting.

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Other Desirable Meeting Provisions:

- **The following meeting provisions have been identified by the CFLC to expand the effective participation of clients, parents, family members and other stakeholders including:**
 1. Record MHSOAC meetings
 2. Archive recordings
 3. Stream MHSOAC meetings
 4. Provide outreach to persons from the hard-of-hearing community to promote their attendance and participation at MHSOAC meetings. Provide American Sign Language interpreters as needed.
 5. Provide outreach to other disabled communities to promote their attendance and participation at MHSOAC meetings.

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Commission adopts the CFLC "Principles to be Considered When Choosing MHSOAC Meeting Locations."
2. The Commission will ensure that its contracts with stakeholder organizations include reimbursement provisions for both child care and dependent care.
3. The Commission will support efforts to better inform clients, family members, parents and caregivers about the availability of reimbursement for child care and dependent care when needed to attend a Commission meeting.