

R E M H D C O

Racial & Ethnic Mental Health Disparities Coalition

May 20, 2008

The Mental Health Services Oversight and
Accountability Commission
1300 17th Street, Suite 1000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Commissioners,

The Racial and Ethnic Mental Health Disparities Coalition (REMHDCO) regularly participates in meetings related to the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) including your Commission meetings. In addition, we participate in meetings and conference calls between the MHSA Government Partners and the MHSA Community Partners.

However, we were still caught off guard at the Commission meeting in Bakersfield last month when Commissioners were asked to vote on specific proposals regarding the administration of PEI statewide projects. Neither the concepts nor the proposed language had been discussed with the MHSA Community Partners. Although we did receive a power point presentation in an email two days before the Commission meeting, this was not enough time to have a meaningful discussion with the Government Partners let alone with members of our respective organizations or coalitions.

In general, REMHDCO believes in the following principles regarding Commission votes:

- Any proposal requiring the vote of the MHSOAC must be available for public review at least 30 days prior to the scheduled vote.
- Before any actionable issue is presented to the MHSOAC, there should be discussion among stakeholders (both government AND the mental health community) in an attempt to reach a consensus.
- The MHSOAC should not vote on issues about which there is not consensus between the government and community partners, unless there is an emergency.

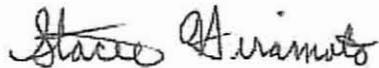
These principles notwithstanding, we do support the proposal that Senator Darrell Steinberg outlines in his letter to Stephen Mayberg regarding the strategy for expediting funding for Prevention and Early Intervention Statewide Projects. This letter was shared with Community Partners by Senator Steinberg's staff and discussed at a meeting between the MHSA Community Partners and Government Partners. No one expressed opposition to what was outlined in the letter.

1127 - 11th Street, Suite 925, Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 557-1167 shiramoto@mhac.org

Mental Health Services Oversight and
Accountability Commission
May 20, 2008
Page 2

While we recognize that in regards to the MHSA, people would like to “get the money on the streets” as quickly as possible, we believe it is equally important to change “business as usual”. Shared decision-making and a transparent process are cornerstones to changing business as usual. REMHDCO would be willing to provide a more detailed explanation of our concerns and will attend the Commission meeting on May 29th.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stacie Hiramoto".

Stacie Hiramoto, MSW
REMHDCO Facilitator