

CFLC Meeting 6.26.2009

Introductions

Member:

Public:

Staff: Deborah, Beverly, Jose

DMH: Jordan

Update

Stigma and Discrimination Reduction Strategic Plan

DMH incorporated all changes that CFLC suggested, including stronger language related to restraints and seclusion, voluntary services, etc.

We advanced the request that DMH develop a template for people interested in developing a specific strategic plan to reduce stigma and discrimination. This would provide examples of more detailed tasks, timelines, etc.

Richard and Eduardo presented to CFLC on the issue from a personal perspective, including stigma and discrimination within the mental health system. Jordan: Will distribute stigma discrimination prevention plan to counties, other sectors (first responders, etc.), etc. An Executive Summary, to be done shortly, will be distributed more broadly. Everything will be available online. The template we have requested will be available through a PDF. We have hesitated to provide an example because sometimes people take an example as a mandate. But we will provide the template. We will provide copies for CFLC members.

Issue Resolution

Eduardo and Darlene presented two motions: to create a work group and for DMH to provide summary of issues quarterly. MHSOAC didn't vote on either of these motions. The presentation also included a list of the CFLC recommendations, intended to serve as a starting point for the work group's discussion.

However, there was an agreement that co-chairs from CFLC, CLC, and Services Committee, plus Larry Poaster, will get together to discuss next steps for issue resolution. Eduardo expects that from this work there will be several recommendations that the MHSOAC can approve.

Out document has already provided support and basis for discussion by CMHDA Social Justice Committee, charged with addressing local issue resolution.

Donna: What will CFLC role be going forward? Will we get final review of the document? Darlene: CFLC can look at it, but the work group will develop the recommendations.

William Romero, Public: How do you ensure that the resolution is followed through? Do you have a plan for penalties if too many complaints occur or if resolution is not followed? Eduardo: We are going to focus on general principles and are going to focus on the statewide process. The level of detail questions you are asking will mainly apply to the local level. That's a big project. Michael: It should be a consistent process.

Donna: For people from different counties who are presented with immediate issues, what do they do in the interim. Darlene: There is a grievance process in every county now. Donna: I would love to agree with you but I know that for many counties there is no useful grievance process.

Eduardo: There is a lack of understanding of what the local processes are.

Donna: If there is concern about the local process, how do you address it now?

Bev: It can go straight to DMH, through OAC, or through MHPC. If you send to OAC, we will forward to DMH. Contact person at DMH is Patricia Coyle.

Minutes

We don't have any. Deborah will try to do better.

Misc.

Commissioners leaving early is an issue.

Public Comments t MHSOAC Meetings

Bev

Bagley Keen mandates public comment

MHSA mandates OAC to take into account the perspective of clients and family members in everything we do

We are encouraging people to provide written comment

We are trying to find a balanced approach

Darlene

There is stress with one-day meetings

Committee members

Shannon: Organizations select people to speak for organizations. Someone might get tired of hearing the same person, but these people speak for many other people by design. Commissioners need to be educated about this.

Eduardo: **When we met in many communities, we heard from more diverse people with diverse perspectives.** That was valuable for Commissioners and they miss it. When they hear from the same people who are experts in the area, they see these people as organizational messengers. It's not the same as hearing from diverse people. Shannon: True, but it appears that Commissioners don't understand the scope of what organizational representatives reflect.

Donna: I totally agree with Shannon. We have to look at the values that we want to have embedded. In stakeholder communication, whether it's an individual vs. a representative, what values are we talking about. They may represent certain individuals. Our value is not just to have their individual input, which is very important, but to have stakeholders or consumers also available. **I see no problem if it's repetitive.** Having an individual who advocates is valuable regardless of who this person is as an individual. Eduardo: You're getting to the heart of the problem. For every issue, there can be presentations from multiple people in terms of an advocacy agenda. The problem is that if there are five organizations speaking on an issue and each takes five minutes, that is 25 minutes of the MHSOAC meeting. There is always tension between how to hear everything that's important and also make sure public comment is focused and we get work done. Donna: In reviewing how other commissions do it, the Safety Commission asks for a written email, if you have access to a computer, would be useful. Have someone respond to those emails if they are unable to reach MHSOAC meeting.

Carmen: The issue of Commissioners leaving the table during public comment has been happening at the beginning. I am a pit bull and I don't let go. But I'm at the point where I don't want to have anything to do with the MHSOAC or any of their committees. It's going backwards. We understand there is a budget crisis. But where do we actually get heard? We come, we state the problem, and the Commission doesn't respond. There is no way to respond to concerns, even to point people in the right direction.

Richard: I've served on a lot of boards and commissions at various levels. This is almost a **cultural issue**: professional culture that craves efficiency and needs structure vs. the people's voice. It boils down to an issue of access. It is the raw material of democracy. **To the degree that we agree that we need this kind of information, it's clumsy but essential.** We need an intelligent structure. I approach projects like this to manage it because it's a slippery slope. If you start to close that door, who are we excluding because they are not conversant with a professional culture or they're not polished enough. What impact does it have that we don't get the information in its raw form? And what's the value for the person to be able to speak out and get that empowerment and then go back to the community and do great work. If we only listen to the official spokespeople of important organizations, usually those organizations have other ways to communicate. **If we only focus on that, we miss the perspective of the outside people who can jolt us out of our comfort zone.** The frustration that sparks this debate comes with the territory. As people who sit on these commissions, it's our job to separate wheat from chaff. We have to be careful and respectful of everyone as we come up with solutions. Eduardo: I'm not hearing you say that nothing should be done? As an example, I think that when you don't do things, they slide into a sort of middle ground of discontent for everyone. We had some Commission procedures that have disappeared over time, I'm not sure why. We absolutely want to create fairness, transparency and inclusiveness for everyone. Richard: My priority is inclusion. We might not all agree on the colors of the wall,

but we want everyone to live in the house. A certain amount of cognitive dissonance comes with the territory.

Shannon: I am proud of Commission for taking up public comment.

Tracy:

Darlene: Quoting Dede, efficiency doesn't always equal efficacy.

Carmen: When I was on the Commission, it was nice to hear people say that they supported what Commissioner Diaz said. We need to support Commissioners. Yesterday, there was some vote for Commissioners where Darlene, Eduardo, and Linford voted one way and everyone else voted the other way. They need to listen that we support the clients and family members who are Commissioners.

Carmen: I liked it when we had presentations on housing, families that were homeless, etc. The Commission is asking for different people to speak. But where is the time? It needs to be suggested that you want to get understanding of the people who are out there. Then you need to have time to hear from people who are experiencing things. We need to have opportunities to learn, not just action items. When we had the housing discussion, I kept bringing up issues of families. They decided to include families if the adult was mentally ill, not the child. They didn't understand why having a child with a mental illness was a factor in homelessness. It was only when Darryl Steinberg sat down at a meal with families and parents that he came to understand the issue and things changed.

Carmen: The idea that you put everything in writing implies that everyone will read it, which they won't. Bev: It's staff's responsibility to include the written comment in the Tab section. Carmen: I think they need to hear from people. Reading something is not the same as hearing it. Reading things allows for many different interpretations. Hearing and discussing and relating is a different experience.

Richard: Who is the audience? What came to my mind is that these should be conversations where no one defines anyone as the audience. You are both participants. These subtle things cover how we do things and influence these interactions. We've been talking about and focusing on the time involved. The repetition costs time. We want to be efficient but what is the goal? Time is a mechanism but I don't want to over-empower it. The goal is not the time. The goal is access of our constituents, whoever they might be, to the Commission and our access to the information that they can provide us. The time isn't the efficiency goal; the getting that raw material and giving people access is the goal. Richard: These venues can be so user-unfriendly. It is jarring if you're trying to get a point across and you get a 30-second notice. It's one of many cues that we send that you're an outsider, we are tolerating you, but you're not really welcome. How do we handle that? A certain amount of sensitivity on our part about how our behavior and procedures are perceived.

Richard: It would be useful to give some kind of tool or training for people who come to meetings. It could address how to use government, how to address commissions, etc. It could give some ground rules and tools without being heavy-handed about it.

Eduardo: The issue of efficiency is not about access. Are the Commissioners in this conversation? For example, all of us have had the experience of someone talking and not listening. There is access. The appearance of communication is happening, but the message is not being received. By efficiency, I don't mean a mechanical efficiency, but how the public gets the value of the comment and how the public gets the value of giving input. If Commissioners are tuning out and leaving, there is not a real dialog. **Richard: It's kind of our job and we have to do the work.** But when you open the door, there is not guarantee you're going to get what you want. You don't know until you open the door and listen. It's our job to winnow through it, separate the wheat from the chaff. That's part of the work we do, to the degree we're here voluntarily. That is part of our responsibility. But you don't know until you go there. I don't want any assumption before the case. It might be hard to listen to someone say the same thing for the 100th time, but it's part of what I signed on for. There isn't a good way to figure this out before you go there. That's why I fall back on access. We want to make it intelligent. But the listener has to do the work.

Donna: Many **underserved communities** have an **oral tradition**. Many people don't have English as a first language (47% of Californians). That is an access issue. People who are deaf or hard of hearing might not be able to participate; **American Sign Language** should be available. As far as advocacy, the **National Self-Help Clearinghouse has excellent free protocols on advocacy** that can be downloaded and used as a training tool. These could be translated into the primary languages of California.

Carmen: When I heard Richard talking about educating people who go to Commissions, I agree in a sense. A parent was in Sacramento. I keep asking them to come to the Commission. We came up the night before. There were five parents who had never been there before. Three of us asked them what they needed to know. It wasn't training; it was response to their needs and concerns. It's not a big long history. It's just giving them what they can use. We introduced them to Commissioners. **It's more sitting down and having a conversation.** It's also letting them know that there are people available to help them. People who are experienced should mentor new people. Commissioners leaving early is a big problem.

Public comment

Patty Gainer: There are contradictions in commissioners' responses to survey. **Part of education to MHSOAC should be that within the body there are differences of opinion.** If the Commission had listened to us all along, we'd be a lot farther along. The problems that are cropping up now, like issue resolution, goes way back and the Network formally presented that issue long ago. The only time that I've ever noticed an invited presentation by experts that has been rushed along was the client and family member presentation. It was also held to the last while everyone was leaving. I think the basic education the MHSOAC needs is the reasons that clients and family members and the public backed the MHSA is that clients and family members are to provide leadership at every level. That is very difficult for people who are not used to it. That needs to be primary in

education of the commissioners. At every stage and at every level, nothing about us without us. That means that **we need to be able to speak at every action item: not just at the end of the day and not just in writing. Clients and family members also need sufficient time to know about issues, vet issues, and then give better input.**

Delfin: Commissioners said things like move away from formal public comment format and make it an opportunity to say briefly if the support or oppose a measure, as they do in the legislature. These comments presume that people had an opportunity to prepare as a whole group of people. The only way to prepare is with adequate time, such as the proposed 30 day period between when an item is introduced and voted on. **Documents need to be available 30 days in advance. Committee meetings need to be noticed 30 days in advance. If you're going to bring together a group of people to give input, especially in an organized way, it requires adequate time.**

William: Repetition is important. Even if people are saying the same thing, they are adding their unique perspective from their lived experience. With all due respect to organizations representing the client and family voice, it is still important to allow individuals to speak up. If you want a democratic process, you need to allow as many people as possible a voice. **The idea of professional information that focuses on efficiency, actually builds walls under the guise of professionalism.** It assumes that people who don't have those kinds of degrees or culture, don't have valuable input. **A lot of people with direct experience have at least as valuable input, but it's not respected.** When scientists observe an ant, the ant has a lot to contribute. In terms of clients and family members, everyone has the opportunity to be a leader, including people who are shy and quiet. If you ignore people who are overlooked or different, you might be missing very valuable insight.

Stacie: What I missed is the context of this discussion. Did the Commission ask CFLC to weight in? Eduardo: The goal of this discussion is for CFLC to bring recommendations to MHSOAC for improved practices for public comment. One of the big issues, and it should also go to CLC, is that there are not a lot of people from underserved communities, the majority of California, making public comments. To try to get the opinion of people from those communities is very important. **I don't think writing is as effective as speaking.** I was a legislative lobbyist. Yes, writing letters and providing documentation is necessary. But when the vote is taking, having people at the committee is essential. There are fewer people than before, which is sad to me. **They don't seem to understand, and some Government Partners don't understand, that we are not speaking as individuals but on behalf of many people. We are not speaking for everyone. But we are not sufficiently valued as speaking on behalf of many people.** When Carmen talked about presentations at OAC meetings, **they need to come at the beginning of the day, not at the end when people are leaving.** I want to celebrate our newest Commissioner. He was a champion for all communities, all clients and family members, all communities of color when he championed the 30-day notice. He should be recognized and appreciated. He is a champion for

community voice. As a new member and as a Senator, I am very impressed with how he has spoken out.

Steve Leoni: I hope you all address a procedure. If a committee is going to take comment over the phone, there has to be another way to get into the cue without disrupting the meeting.

Steve Leoni: Richard and Carmen and Patty have spoken eloquently and I second everything they said. When you talk about clients and family members coming to a Board like this, we have a culture of participation that might not be understood by many of the more business-oriented Board. Some understanding of our homes, dreams, and culture of participation would be useful.

Steve: Real grass-roots people speak from passion and experience. They usually have no sense of who is responsible for what. This is their one chance to talk to someone who might listen to them. They might be off topic. It is unrealistic to expect them to be on topic if you want grass roots.

Steve: Repetition is essential.

Steve: In the early days of the Commission, the Network showed up in our yellow t-shirts. Darryl said, "You're playing this like outsiders and you're not, you're insiders." That welcoming invitation to be insiders has disappeared somewhere along the line.

Patty: Client Network does this also.

Patty: The Commission is giving mixed messages. We give people scholarships to come and speak. We are funded to give input. We're putting a lot of effort out to get people there. Then we tell people to hurry up and move it on and don't listen to them. Two more people could have spoken in the time we told them to hurry up.

Patty: **It would be useful to do a video presentation on public participation.**

Patty: It is essential to teach the Commission about client culture.

Darlene: Commissioners change.

Delfin: **Location is an issue.** Having all meetings in Sacramento has limited participation. When Commission comes to a new town, the Network can get people from that area to participate.

Delfin: The time limit issues is intimidating. When time limits moves from three minutes to one minute, people feel they can't be that concise. People who are less assertive won't participate. It's somewhere between pit bull and terrier or Chihuahua. You have to be sufficiently assertive to be able to speak.

Darlene: The welcoming is essential.

Darlene: The time limit inhibits participation.

Stacie: The Commission has such a full agenda that it feels as if Commissioners regard it as a chore.

Patty recommends 30-45 days for agenda items.

Patty is very upset about how it's going; at a recent meeting, there were multiple items at end of day. People were asked to limit comments to one minute and stick to one issue. The MHSOAC let out at 4:30. I was very angry.

Patty: Early on in Commission they viewed Network as equivalent to CMHDA and DMH in terms of providing context. It is inappropriate for clients to have to put all their comments into public comments. Darlene is supposed to speak for all

clients, put her comments into three minutes, and then they're angry at her for talking too much.

Patty: Nothing about us without us includes every stage and every level. They need to ask that each time.

Darlene: She wants the "something about us without us" to include family members. It has never included us.

Patty: Put bio at front page of MHSOAC web site.

Values

Issues

Efficiency and efficacy

Efficacy is higher than efficiency.

Cultural difference

Organizational representation

Inclusivity

Focus

Empowerment and leadership and learning opportunities

Time limit, time available

Orientation

It's important to have clarity, welcoming, information, etc. with regard to public comment

Changing agenda items

Sticking to the topic

Language access and ESL

Client Culture vs. Professional Culture

Some cultures empowered by speaking, not writing

Value on face-to-face speaking

Oral tradition

Relevance

Some commissioners are frustrated by comments that don't relate to the topic at hand

Repetition

Carmen: The only way Commissioners listen to anything is if they hear it repeatedly. The repetition is essential to making your point. At MOU, people didn't repeat. Multiple groups had the same perspective. The MHSOAC didn't care and did what they wanted.

Shannon: In San Diego County we had a group called Survivors of Torture, who weren't receiving MHSA funds. They had about 20 people coming up and saying the say thing. They got MHSA funds. It is important not only to hear from spokespeople but to hear the repetition.

Frustration

Responsibility to the public

Government commission vs. people commission

It is very disheartening that the Commission has turned from a people's commission to a government commission. I know there is politics in everything. But when you put the people aside and do what members want to do for their own reasons, that's what I call a political commission. We all have our thoughts. Everyone thinks their own way. But when you have a law that was passed by consumers and parents and family members that is supposed to help us and in the end is the same old same old, what happened to the whole gist of the MHSA?

Location

Logistics

Eduardo: The position of the speaker is a big factor. When I speak to the Commission, I'm uncomfortable about having my back to the people in the room. We can make recommendations about changing the logistics to make it more inclusive.

Knowing your audience

Tracy: It is important to educate and enlighten the Commission about the audience. They need to understand who they are, what their culture is, understanding the passion behind the words. I don't think the Commission is going to get it if they don't understand who is speaking to them.

Deborah: Who is the audience? People have different ideas about who the audience is.

Time limits

Darlene: The efficiency approach pushes time limits. But it hasn't actually been efficient.

Resource Materials

Other Commissions

The Law

MHSOAC

Bev: MHSOAC public comment document is current as of January 2009. We will add that once the discussion of the agenda item has started, no new public comment cards will be accepted. There are public comments for all action items. There also is general public comment at end of day. Any information item can become an action item. And agenda items can be taken out of order. Those provisions can make it difficult for people who want to provide public comment. There generally is a three-minute limit that can be shortened at Chair's discretion. Expectation is that people will focus comments on the relevant agenda item, with the exception of general comments at end of day. At one point, there public comments occurred twice a meeting. We used to have a meditation bell indicating the end of time.

More discussion

Possible Solutions

Information, orientation to people giving comments

Continue pre-meeting orientation but include seasoned stakeholders. Maybe peers, such as CFLC members, could take on this role. This would be a concrete contribution we could make to meeting. This would also provide useful information for CFLC members. Encourage people to participate. Make better use of that pre-meeting. Orientation needs to be very personal, individualized, and responsive.

If person gives comment off topic at wrong section of meeting, refer person to a peer mentor to assist that person in how to provide that comment more effectively.

Network Regional Coordinators could help with the education in how to provide public comment.

Put on web site how to participate in an MHSOAC meeting.

We could also do an orientation lunch. Don't insist that people come so early.

Give "orientation" a more welcome name and tone. Create an informal environment that supports people to participate.

Information, orientation to Commissioners

Stakeholder breakfasts are useful.

Steve: Aim of public comment is often to contextualized issues. People listen to things differently. It's a different skill when you're trying to communicate to groups. Sometimes you have to repeat. Sometimes you have to explain a little more. Bodies often grasp things superficially and want to get it on paper and don't understand the depth of the issue. We're not just trying to get thumbs up or thumbs down but to provide context. Someone like Pat Ryan is brought in not to give thumbs up or down but to give a perspective. Maybe part of what needs to happen is to have people from stakeholder groups to provide a client, family, cultural diversity perspective. Then all that context and education doesn't have to occur in public comment.

Public comment informs the vote.

Cultural shift: need to respond to people (them), not issue (it).

Invite Commissioners to come to orientation and CFLC meetings.

Educate about the representativeness of State advocacy groups and the fact that they have been contracted for this purpose.

MHSOAC should model transformation. They need to do whatever they need to do so they can do their Commission work.

Access

Give option to let someone speak on someone else's behalf.

David: People need multiple ways to give input into Commission meetings. Some people aren't comfortable with public speaking or have to leave. They also need a way to give input. This would require a timeframe to ensure relevance of the comments.

Time for Public Comment at Meeting

Give people at least three minutes for public comment. Don't violate this principle.

Provide option to cede your three minutes to someone else.

Bring back meditation bell.

Timing of Work Product

Give people at least 30 days to comment on any agenda item.

Consider recommending two-day meetings or day and a half.

Content

Keep general comment at every action item and public comment at end of day. Put points on the board; people can see the point expressed and will be more likely to add, not just repeat. It is a form of reflective listening. It also refreshes the issue for the listener. This would also address a different purpose because our audience is differently-abled, some of whom can benefit from visual cue. This is another value for this kind of approach.

Responsiveness

Provide follow-up to the concerns expressed. Ask person to include contact information if they would like follow-up response from staff.

CFLC respond to public comment. Or the comment could go back to the relevant MHSOAC committee. Response can be to the individual and can also be reported back to MHSOAC and posted on the MHSOAC web site. We can also encourage person receiving response to share with others. This gets the word out the MHSOAC is responsive.

Enlist the Network of Mental Health Clients in responding, because they have regional coordinators. If they are at meeting, they might be able to work with person locally.

Timing of CFLC Meeting

Conference Call

Eduardo wants to have the call.

Carmen: The phone conferences don't get us where we want to go. I can't hear. It defeats the purpose.

Regular meeting time

Next Steps