



## Southeast Asian Assistance Center

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October 12, 2009

Andrew Poat, Chairman  
Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission  
1300 17<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 1000  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: MHSAOC October Meeting - Public Comment at MHSOAC Meetings

Dear Chairman Poat,

At the September meeting, the Client and Family Leadership Committee (CFLC) of the MHSOAC presented a paper and recommendations regarding public comment at your Commission meetings. As the Director of Southeast Asian Assistance Center and a member of the Hmong Health Collaborative, I support these recommendations in general and wish to commend the CFLC for doing such a thorough job in discussing these issues.

There are two recommendations that I would like to address: I am concerned that the OAC is considering a limit on public comment to two minutes. I believe that the current limit for public comment to at least three minutes is reasonable and fair to members of underserved communities who are not experienced in addressing public commissions, but who still wish to have their input heard.

Members of the Hmong Health Collaborative have attended and presented at two OAC meetings and to the Cultural and Language Competence Committee. I can assure you that hours of meetings, planning and preparation have been contributed by all collaborative partners, who take this type of advocacy action very seriously. Two minutes of time does not allow for the use of interpreters, or does not accommodate the slower speech of someone whose first language is not English.

The second issue is the timing of the public comments. I believe that a reasonable amount of time, say up to 15 minutes, for public comment should be allowed both in the morning and in the afternoon, not just at the end of the day. This will keep public comments relevant and will provide more direct feedback to the Commissioners.

SAAC and the Hmong Health Collaborative participate in our local County MHSA planning processes, and our members are very supportive of the Mental Health Services Act. Thank you for your attention and consideration of these concerns.

Sincerely,

Laura Leonelli, Executive Director