

R E M H D C O

Racial & Ethnic Mental Health Disparities Coalition

July 30, 2009

Stephen W. Mayberg, Ph.D.
Director
California State Department of Mental Health
1600 – 9th Street, Room 151
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: MHSAs Issue Resolution Process

Dear Dr. Mayberg,

The Racial and Ethnic Mental Health Disparities Coalition (REMHDCO) represents many underserved communities through the state. We first want to thank the Department for extending the deadline for comment on the MHSAs Issue Resolution Process to July 31st.

After discussion among our membership and attending meetings held by the California Mental Health Planning Council, the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (OAC), and others, we believe the state MHSAs Issue Resolution Process must be addressed in a broad context. This broader area includes the MHSAs Issue Resolution Processes at the local level and the very real issue of the fear of retaliation that many of our members have if making complaints at the local level.

We urge that the Department, in conjunction with the OAC and in collaboration with the other stakeholders including the Community Partners, tackle the entire MHSAs issue resolution process from local to statewide. Both the Department and OAC could play an important role in ensuring that the local processes are created and implemented in a consistent way that protects consumers, family members, providers, and any members of the public who wish to make a complaint or file a grievance.

However, in order to make this month's deadline for the narrow focus of the state level MHSAs Issue Resolution Process, REMHDCO would like to

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

support all the recommendations made by the letter of July 31st, 2009 sent by the Community Partners to the Department regarding the MHSA Issue Resolution Process.

Although we support all seven recommendations, as REMHDCO, we want to highlight the ones most important to us:

- Consumers, family members, and or anyone making a complaint should not be required to exhaust a local process before bringing the issue to the state level. Currently, there is not enough trust in the local or county processes, and many counties do not have a well-developed or well-publicized issue resolution process in place. We recommend a compromise of a 1 year exception that allows consumers, family members, or providers to bring MHSA issues directly to the state without having to exhaust the local process; to be revisited and evaluated yearly to determine the continued need for the exception. This would give counties time to develop their formal process with adequate community input.
- Adequate protections against retaliation must be in place for people making a complaint. There continues to be an unacceptable level of fear among consumers, family members, providers, and potential providers that prevents them from speaking freely about concerns they have including matters about individuals, treatment, processes, policies, etc.
- All information regarding the MHSA Issue Resolution Process needs to be in threshold languages at both the state and county levels so more culturally diverse community will be able to understand the process.

Thank you for considering our recommendations for the MHSA Issue Resolution Process at the state level and in the broader context of the integrated mental health system.

Sincerely,

Beatrice Lee
IS/RA

Beatrice Lee
President

CC: Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission