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MHSOAC
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY COMMISSION

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(Date)

Department of Mental Health
1600 9th Street
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Subject: Recommendations on DMH Proposed Issue Resolution Process

The Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) has reviewed the Department of Mental Health's (DMH) proposed Issue Resolution Process (IRP) and is providing recommendations for your consideration. A Commissioner Workgroup met on September 8, 2009 to develop recommendations to DMH. Based on the workgroup's comments, the MHSOAC recommends the following clarifications, recommendations and/or improvements to the proposed IRP plan:

1. DMH should designate and publicly identify a specific office and/or individual at DMH who will receive unresolved issue/complaints and provide IRP resolution information to the public
2. The DMH IRP plan should clarify how an individual can file a complaint anonymously
3. DMH should initiate a toll-free number to provide instructions, clarification and assistance or referral as necessary on how to file an issue at the state level
4. DMH should provide specific timeframes for responses in the IRP Process, including the following:
   - Provide a written response within one week acknowledging receipt of an issue
   - Within 30 days of receipt make a determination regarding complaints filed or direct the issue filer to the appropriate entity
5. DMH should post procedures relevant to the IRP on the DMH website.
6. DMH should include a commitment to client and family member involvement in the statewide IRP process
7. Regarding the first sentence of # 3 in the "Proposed DMH MHSA Issue Resolution Process" (Updated 1/22/09), this language appears to cast doubt on the issue filer's credibility and presents a burden to the filer. We propose the language be amended to read "DMH will ask you to describe the steps you took to resolve your issue at the local level," rather than asking the filer to provide evidence that the local process was exhausted.

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8. Regarding the IRP at the local level, the MHSOAC agrees with DMH that issues regarding the MHSA should be addressed at the local level first. The MHSOAC suggests that this local IRP should mirror the state process.

   The MHSOAC agrees with the four general principles for the local process stated in the "Proposed DMH MHSA Issue Resolution Process" document and suggests the following two additional principles be added:

   - DMH will insure the inclusion of client and family members at the decision making level
   - Each County should make available in a printed format, information and assistance regarding the local IRP process to an Issue Filer

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback and we look forward to continued collaboration in the future.

Sincerely,

Beverly J Whitcomb
Interim Executive Director