

INFORMATION

TAB SECTION: 5

 X ACTION REQUIRED

DATE OF MEETING: 9/24/09

PREPARED BY: Best

DATE MATERIAL PREPARED: 9/16/09

AGENDA ITEM: Recommendations from Client and Family Leadership Committee on the Public Comment Process – First Read

ENCLOSURES:

- Recommendations from CFLC regarding the effectiveness of Public Comment at MHSOAC meetings
- Commissions and Public Comment Document

OTHER MATERIAL RELATED TO ITEM:

Issue:

Public comment is an essential component in all MHSOAC meetings. In order for the MHSOAC to make informed decisions in the best interest of the people they serve, members of the public that attend meetings must feel that certain core values are in place. These values are respect, equality and transparency.

This issue is currently on a “First Read” for this month with a “Second Read” planned for October 2009.

Background:

The CFLC’s Charter charges the CFLC with making recommendations to the MHSOAC on how to improve the effectiveness of public comment at MHSOAC meetings. The Bagley-Keene Act mandates that all meetings must be open to the public and must provide opportunity for members of the public to directly address the Commission on each agenda item. Additionally, the MHSA (W&I Code § 5846(e)) mandates the MHSOAC to take into account the perspective of clients and family members as a guiding influence in all decisions.

The CFLC met on June 26, 2009 and August 28, 2009 to discuss improving the public comment process. The enclosed document, “Recommendations from CFLC regarding the effectiveness of Public Comment at MHSOAC meetings,” was developed from the discussions at these two meetings. Also enclosed for your information is a document that provides an overview of how various boards and commissions ensure public comment.

Staff Recommendations

The CFLC document is a comprehensive list of various aspects of the public comment process. These recommendations have been put into the following table with Staff comments in the next column:

Staff Recommendations

A. Public Comment at Meetings	Staff Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a general public comment section at the end of the morning and afternoon sessions (minimum 15 min) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This may not be necessary since public comment is already offered at the end of the meeting; in addition public comment is offered before voting on each agenda item
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include public comment before any vote • Develop a separate structure for government and stakeholder leadership organizations (CMHDA, CMHPC, CIMH, NAMI, REMHDCO, CNMHC, etc) to provide public comment through a separate agenda item 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Already done per Bagley-Keene • Is there a need to do this in addition to existing public comment? MHSOAC may want to consider periodic updates from these organizations, as done in the past
B. Time Allotted per Speaker/Public Comment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A maximum of two minutes per speaker 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If 20 or more cards received, facilitator may reduce the individual public comment to one minute 	
C. Facilitation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MHSOAC Executive Director (ED) or staff designee facilitate public comment, including time keeping and encouraging speakers to remain on topic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Already in practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use auditory and visual warnings to aid with timeliness (suggestion: a sign indicating the speaker has 30 seconds left. Then a bell tone be used to indicate that the speakers time has elapsed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs already used: "1 minute", "30 seconds", and "please finish"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An announcement at the beginning of each meeting regarding the use of Public Comment Cards 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change the color of Public Comment Cards from Green to Goldenrod and add carbon copy duplicates. The current practice of calling the Public Comment Cards, "Green Cards" could be viewed as offensive. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add a space for the date, email info and notes on the Public Comment Card 	
D. Ways for Providing Public Comment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment Card submitted at meetings 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments submitted via email or regular mail to designated MHSOAC staff prior to meetings 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments received via email or regular mail will, if possible, be included as attachments to the meeting packets if received within ten days prior to the meeting date 	

Staff Recommendations (Cont'd)

E. Access	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide translation services including sign language available at meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agenda currently includes information regarding requesting accommodation per ADA (eg., sign language) Translation services are already offered upon request
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentoring (stakeholders who are experienced in public comment should mentor less experienced stakeholders) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a training to stakeholders on how to give public comment (this could be a brown bag session during lunchtime at a Commission meeting) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make available copies of the MHSOAC Protocol for Meetings and Comment Card in various languages at each MHSOAC meeting 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide real-time captioning with projection, of public comment and entire MHSOAC meeting using a professional captioning service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Costs to do this may be prohibitive in that they range from \$80 to \$195 per hour depending on the service provider and the location of the meeting
F. Follow up	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an evaluation/clarification form (this form would be used as a learning tool to rate the perceived effectiveness and welcoming atmosphere of public comment from the perspective of the public) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a suggestion/feedback box that would be available at all MHSOAC meetings 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designate a staff person to log responses submitted through the suggestion/feedback box and forward those responses to the CFLC for follow-up 	

Proposed Motion:

The MHSOAC adopts the recommendations from the CFLC and incorporates them into its meetings