

## **Recommendations from the CFLC on How to Improve the Effectiveness of Public Comment at MHSOAC Meetings**

Stakeholder input is essential to the operation of the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC). Providing a standardized public comment structure for MHSOAC meetings would provide equality for public participants making public comments. The CFLC suggests the following recommendations.

### **I. Values**

- Establish a welcoming atmosphere
- Establish transparency and clarity of expectations
- Equality (an equal amount of time be allotted for each speaker)
- Respect
  1. Commissioners are requested to be present during PC
  2. Repetitive presentations of views and ideas are important for individual perspectives and may sometimes occur

### **II. Proposed CFLC Guidelines for Public Comment:**

#### **A. Public Comment at Meetings**

- Include a general public comment section at the end of the morning and afternoon sessions (a minimum of 15 minutes to be allotted per public comment section)
- Include public comment before any vote on an action item (per Bagley-Keene)
- Develop a separate structure for government and stakeholder leadership organizations (CMHDA, CMHPC, CIMH, NAMI, REMHDCA, CA Network etc.) to provide public comment. A designated agenda item for this separate structure would be placed at all MHSOAC meetings and would not be part of the regular public comment.

#### **B. Time Allotted per Speaker for Public Comment**

- A maximum of two minutes per speaker
- If ten or more Comment Cards are received for a specific action item, the facilitator, (at their discretion), can reduce the individual public comment to one minute

### C. Facilitation

- The MHSOAC Executive Director (ED) or staff designee facilitate public comment, including time keeping and encouraging speakers to remain on topic.
- 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)
- An announcement at the beginning of each meeting regarding the use of Public Comment Cards
- 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.
- Add a space for the date, email info and notes on the Public Comment Card

### D. Ways for Providing Public Comment

- Comment Card submitted at meetings
- Comments submitted via email to the designated MHSOAC staff prior to meetings
- Comments submitted via regular mail to the designated MHSOAC staff prior to meetings
- 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

### E. Access

- Provide translation services including sign language available at meetings
- Mentoring (stakeholders who are experienced in PC should mentor less experienced stakeholders)
- Provide a training to stakeholders on how to give public comment (this could be a brown bag session during lunchtime at a Commission meeting)
- Make available copies of the MHSOAC Protocol for Meetings and Comment Card in various languages at each MHSOAC meeting
- Provide real-time captioning with projection, of public comment and entire MHSOAC meeting using a professional captioning service

### F. Follow-up

- 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)
- Provide a suggestion/feedback box that would be available at all MHSOAC meetings
- Designate a staff person to log responses submitted through the suggestion/feedback box and forward those responses to the CFLC for follow-up