

# REMHDCO

## Racial & Ethnic Mental Health Disparities Coalition

---

January 7th, 2011

Cliff Allenby  
Department of Mental Health  
1600 9th Street, Room 150  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Allenby,

Congratulations on your recent appointment. The Racial and Ethnic Mental Health Disparities Coalition (REMHDCO) looks forward to continuing our work with your department under your able leadership. This correspondence is in response to a letter addressed to Stephen Mayberg on December 23, 2010, from the California Mental Health Directors Association (CMHDA) signed by Alfredo Aguirre, Chair of the Ethnic Services Committee. REMHDCO would like to clarify the issues raised by this letter in regards to the California MSHA Multicultural Coalition (CMMC).

First and foremost, we want to make clear that the county Ethnic Services Managers (ESMs) *will not be excluded* from the meetings or the work of the CMMC as the letter states. In fact, at the Ethnic Services Managers meeting on December 7, 2010, they were told specifically by REMHDCO Director, Stacie Hiramoto, that their attendance and participation at all CMMC meetings would be welcomed. Yet, CMHDA wrote to Dr. Mayberg on December 23, over two weeks later, that they believed that they were being excluded from participating with the CMMC. Specifically, CMHDA was also promised that the CMMC would work closely and collaboratively with the Ethnic Services Managers on their projects. [It should be noted that for at least the past four years, Stacie Hiramoto has been the only representative from the community that regularly attended the Ethnic Services Managers meetings and that this was on her own accord and at her own organization's expense. This is evidence of REMHDCO's willingness to partner with and include the Ethnic Services Managers with the work of the CMMC.]

The issue at hand is whether County Ethnic Services Managers or other county staff should be voting members of the CMMC whose travel expenses are reimbursed by the grant for this project. The DMH fact sheet on this project states, "DMH is developing a new structure to bring forward diverse multicultural perspectives that have not been adequately represented in the mental health system or in previous efforts to obtain consumer and family member input."

**1127- 11<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 925, Sacramento, CA 95814**  
**(916) 557-1167 [shiramoto@mhac.org](mailto:shiramoto@mhac.org)**

As managers and on their respective county mental health teams, Ethnic Services Managers have opportunities to travel to meetings and conferences statewide in the course of their regular duties. Their recommendations and opinions are present or embedded in all CMHDA policies, procedures, and position papers. Most members of the CMMC will be associated with small community based organizations that likely do not have the resources anywhere close to those of the counties that would allow staff attendance at statewide mental health forums.

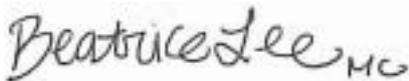
Perhaps an even more important fact, however, is that the Ethnic Services Managers (as well as other county staff) have an inherent conflict of interest regarding aspects of the CMMC. One of the duties of the CMMC will be to make recommendations on approaches and programs that would work towards reducing disparities for underserved communities. County staff would not be able to vote to forward a recommendation that was in conflict with county policies or procedures, even if the approach or program was strongly supported by the targeted underserved communities.

We want to reiterate that we believe the Ethnic Services Managers have experience and knowledge that could contribute to the work of the CMMC and we plan to partner and collaborate with them. We welcome their participation along with other county staff in the discussions and deliberations at the CMMC meetings, or at other forums. What we do not understand is why they believe they are "excluded" because they are not voting, funded members. If this were the case, then their own Ethnic Services Managers meetings as well as other CMHDA entities would be "excluding" all community representatives.

Lastly, although REMHDCO does not speak on behalf of the Strategic Planning Workgroups or SPWs who are also accused of not working with ESMs, we believe that all SPWs have worked with ESMs in the way most appropriate to fulfill the requirements of their contracts.

We are most willing to meet with you in person at any time to discuss these important issues. You can reach our Steering Committee through Stacie Hiramoto at (916) 557-1167. We remain excited about this project and are eager to move forward to "do business differently" as envisioned by the Mental Health Services Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Beatrice Lee" followed by a small mark that appears to be "MC".

Beatrice Lee  
REMHDCO President

cc: C. Rocco Cheng, Pacific Clinics  
Sergio Aquilar-Gaxiola, UC Davis Center for Reducing Health Disparities  
V. Diane Woods, African American Health Institute of San Bernardino County

Daniel Gould, Equality California Institute  
Poshi Mikalson, Equality California Institute  
Kurt Schweigman, Native American Health Center  
Stacie Hiramoto, REMHDCO  
Ruben Cantu, CA Pan Ethnic Health Network  
Marina Augusto, Acting Director, Office of Multicultural Services, California  
Department of Mental Health  
Larry Poaster, Chair, Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability  
Commission (MHSOAC)  
Sherri Gauger, Executive Director, MHSOAC  
CMHDA Ethnic Services Committee