

December 30, 2005

MEMORANDUM TO: Carol Hood

FROM: Rose King, consultant to Commissioner Attorney General Bill Lockyer and Designee Tricia Wynne

RE: Attached comments on Fresno County

The attached summarizes the comments of CSS Committee members' review of the Fresno County plan. In addition, for your information, I have attached a detailed commentary from Committee member Delphine Brody, which elaborates upon the Committee comments and recaps many of the issues raised by the department. These will all be addressed when the CSS Committee reviews the revised plans from the county. Please advise the Commission as soon as the material is available.

As you and the DMH review team noted in your correspondence to Fresno County, a great deal of detail remains to be addressed, and the budgets need to be outlined in a manner that allows reviewers to determine how funds are distributed among the many programs included in each workplan. We look forward to additional documents that can provide greater clarity on many fronts.

Comments on Fresno County, Oversight and Accountability Commission
CSS Committee Members: Rose King, Delphine Brody, Paul Geggie, Fred Martin

The CSS Committee affirms many of the findings of DMH regarding the budget and workplan format. Detail is lacking in all of the program descriptions. It was not possible to accurately assess the programs because specific services are not explained and because workplans bundle many programs into one budget. The CSS Committee looks forward to county response that will clarify these plans and the budget information.

Fresno County invested a great deal of staff time and appears to have educated many people in social service departments, in addition to those in mental health, about the population they are serving. They have developed a lot of demographics and good understanding of need, given the number of immigrant and non-English speaking, monolingual individuals in the county—and the number of undocumented residents.

A major demographic flaw that representatives said the county would revise, and provide accurate data, is the report on “fully served, underserved, inappropriately served, etc. The “Chart A” report says, for instance, that about 4,300 children are fully served, while 1,700 are underserved, and the adults numbers are even further disconnected, stating that almost 90 percent are being fully served. !! County representatives acknowledged this mistake in the DMH review team meeting, when OAC observer raised the issue.

Question: Will DMH or Fresno County provide to the CSS Committee accurate estimates in the Chart A report? The Committee asks that the county provide a definition of services for each category. For instance, exactly what services are received by the largest percentage of adults who are termed “fully served?” What is the staff/client ratio for service coordinators, psychiatrists, psychologists or other personal counselors? How frequently does the client have contact with any service personnel?

After stakeholder meetings that involved many advocates and informed constituents, but did not go beyond the traditional participants, the county contracted with a firm to conduct focus groups and succeeded in outreach to many others. Fresno representatives said that they activated people never before involved and they now have a commitment to addressing their priorities, and their implementation has to keep faith with these stakeholders. County representatives state that newly involved people plan to continue to participate in all decision-making and county is very sensitive to this. Contact with individuals in the county suggest that further outreach is necessary; findings by Committee member Delphine Brody specifically reported that rural, Native American, and Hmong American communities were under-represented at meetings, and that promised stipends were not paid to some consumers. The Committee asks that the county address issues raised.

Question: What accounts for some local communities stating that they were not included in outreach process? What is the composition of the five Task Forces, CSO Leadership Committee, Steering Committee, and Stakeholder Group, relative to consumer and family member; participation? Have promised stipends been paid? Are there plans to conduct further outreach to any specific communities?

The county acknowledged major barriers in capacity to delivering culturally competent services to Asian community. They believe they can build upon the staff resources available to Hispanic community, but are really challenged reaching others. The CSS Committee was not assured that the county is prepared to deliver culturally and linguistically competent services in any of the age group workplans—or to develop the resources to do so.

Question: What are county plans to overcome these challenges?

CSS Committee members could not clearly identify a link between community input and strategies chosen to provide Community Services and Supports.

Question: How do the proposed programs reflect the stated priorities in outreach meetings in the community; how do the strategies address identified community needs?

County identifies and expresses great focus on children and youth, numbers in juvenile justice system, not completing school, recidivism, family problems, etc. Again, however, the services to be provided in specific programs are not spelled out—in the SMART model, juvenile justice, TAY programs.

Question: How does the SMART program address identified need? What are the evidence-based screening practices for children and youth? What are the evidence-based treatments and services to be provided in relation to youth in the Juvenile Justice system? What are the protections for rights of youth and families in the court-related services? What are the housing services related to TAY strategy?

Strategies recommend that all law enforcement attend 40 hours of training (pg 108), and call for outreach to law enforcement and rest of the criminal justice system.

Question: How will this take place? How will data collection take place within the criminal justice system? How will this be budgeted?

In Self Help/Peer Support programs for TAY and adult populations, it is not evident that consumers or family members will be recruited or trained for paid positions.

Question: What do these programs look like? Where are they located? How will they be staffed?

Question: How do these peer support programs and other proposed strategies implement wellness, resiliency, and recovery models?

The extensive reference to contracted services made it particularly difficult to envision how collaboration will be enhanced by the proposed strategies? The Committee did note the intent to “integrate” services in reference to some law enforcement and court-related actions and in reference to substance abuse counseling, but this did not indicate any enhanced collaborative efforts overall.

Question: Will the county provide evidence of plans for enhanced collaboration between government and non-government agencies to improve quality, effectiveness, and accessibility of services?

Question: It is not clear what the housing supports objectives are, e.g., what are “emergency housing vouchers?” What is the “Master Lease” plan? What kind of supports are available, and what is the process for screening and identifying individuals with mental illness seeking housing assistance?

Question: What kinds of services will be provided out of county? What are the scope, percentages, and costs of such services?

Question: How do the identified needs, community input, and proposed strategies combine to advance the goal of integrated, comprehensive, and appropriate services accessible to all who need them?

CONCLUSION:

Question: The overarching question for the Oversight and Accountability Commission is:” How will the three-year Community Services and Supports plan move your county system toward the standards of service in the Mental Health Services Act?” The Commission asks that you answer this question in your plan.

At the same time, the Commission recognizes the need to build a more reliable baseline of information available to everyone, so that answers can be understood within a context. To do so, the Commission is seeking to develop a description of the mental health system in your county, and in all counties, including an explanation of the structure of the service delivery system, access policies for all children and adults, and range of services received by those not in a categorical funded program.

The Commission is working to develop a baseline to assess the gaps between existing standards of care in mental health and the comprehensive, integrated services envisioned by the Mental Health Services Act. Statewide and national reports tell us that services have been limited and effectively rationed because funding is not tied to caseloads. The Commission believes it will be advantageous to all of the individuals and the private and public organizations involved in change, and beneficial to the public, to have a realistic understanding of the challenges to transforming the mental health system.

The Commission would like to know the average caseloads for personal service coordinators and/or case managers and for psychiatrists for the largest percentage of people served. We would like to know what percentage of all mental health consumers are receiving or have access to comprehensive, appropriate, and integrated services, such as individual or group therapy, family counseling, routine medical and dental care, educational or vocational training, substance abuse treatment, supportive housing, and other recovery-oriented services.

To begin with, the Commission will compile available data from traditional sources, and utilize the information you have provided in the CSS plan. In this first year of implementation, we will be enlisting your assistance in measuring the magnitude of changes taking place now and the prospective changes for many years to come. The Commission also will be asking you to determine and report on what resources are lacking in your county. The CSS Committee

recognizes the tremendous effort involved in the planning process and commends the county on its many successes.