



May 14, 2008

Linford Gayle, Chairman
Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission
Department of Mental Health
1600 9th Street, Room 151
Sacramento CA, 95814

Re: Statewide Projects Grant Funding/Student Mental Health Initiative

Dear Chairman Gayle:

The California Community Colleges have been eagerly awaiting the release of the Request for Applications (RFAs) for the Student Mental Health Initiative (SMHI) since the Mental Health Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) approved the SMHI in January. That proposal, which was designed to meet the critical need for mental health services for students from K-12 through higher education, allowed for statewide, regionally collaborative, and individual institution grants, and would have facilitated the wide variety of mental health service needs of students in California.

It is with a great deal of concern that we have seen this project significantly delayed and the options now presented for moving forward create barriers to achieving the policy goals of the SMHI that the initial workgroup of diverse stakeholders achieved through consensus, under the direction of Senator Darrell Steinberg's (then MHSOAC Chair) staff. None of the options recently presented by the MHSOAC regarding statewide projects will be able to provide the flexibility needed to meet the goals of the SMHI or provide for the RFA process and implementation of the grant program to occur by the beginning of the 2008-09 school year, as originally approved by the Commission.

We are also concerned that administration of this initiative by counties as recommended by choices one, three and four on the document the MHSOAC distributed will poorly align with educational institutions, including the community colleges. While some colleges have service areas that align with county boundaries, many more serve several counties and many counties have several community colleges within their boundaries. These variances, even greater at the university level, make it unworkable to use the counties as a vehicle for the distribution of SMHI funds which is why this project was designated as a statewide initiative.

Fortunately, Senator Steinberg's letter of May 8, 2008 offers a potential solution which we would like to endorse to facilitate the necessary state administration of these statewide projects. This proposal would have counties reassign the funds back to the state for county projects described in Requests for Qualifications (RFQs). Our main concern with Senator Steinberg's proposal is that these RFQs *not* be restricted in scope to county boundaries. Clearly, after projects have been awarded, each County Mental Health (CMH) director should know about and work with all projects funded within their county boundaries. However, to meet the policy goals of the SMHI, the RFQ's must be broad enough to allow for individual school, college and university grants, collaboratives within and across institutions and systems in a region, and statewide projects. We are hopeful that through education and advocacy we may be able to assist counties in developing more flexible RFQs that will allow our system to compete, collaborate, and innovate to best serve student mental health needs.

Chairman Linford Gayle

May 14, 2008

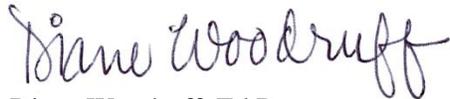
Page 2

I would also like to request that other possible solutions to this problem be considered. Originally, for example, the workgroup assumed that a nonprofit agency like the California Institute of Mental Health or another private grant administration agency could be contracted to distribute the funds. I hope this is still an option that the Department of Mental Health (DMH) is considering if the counties agree to reassign funds back to the state in order to expedite the funding of this grant program.

Another option could be having the CMH directors choose one of the states larger counties to operate the SMHI on behalf of all counties for an administrative fee. This would allow for a single point of contact for the colleges and districts and still have the money going to the county to address the DMH and CMH concerns about the Mental Health Services Act requirements.

In closing, let me state that it is my fervent hope that the impediments to the implementation of the SMHI can be quickly resolved. The mental health of our State's students is too vital an issue for us to delay this needed initiative any longer. Thank you for your consideration of our concerns and ideas. For further information, please contact Jeff Spano, Dean of Student Services at (916) 327-7252 or by email JSpano@cccco.edu or Scott Berenson, Disabled Students Program and Services Coordinator, at (916) 322-3234 or by email SBerenson@cccco.edu.

Sincerely,



Diane Woodruff, Ed.D.
Chancellor

cc: The Honorable Wesley Chesbro, California Senate (former)
The Honorable Mark Ridley-Thomas, California Senate
The Honorable Darrell Steinberg, California Senate
The Honorable Mary Hayashi, California Assembly
Saul Feldman, Member, MHSOAC
Tom Greene, Member, MHSOAC
Beth Gould, Member, MHSOAC
Patrick Henning, Member, MHSOAC
William Kolender, Member, MHSOAC
David Pating, M.D., Member, MHSOAC
Larry Poaster, Ph.D., Member, MHSOAC
Andrew Poat, Member, MHSOAC
Darlene Prettyman, Member, MHSOAC
Larry Trujillo, Member, MHSOAC
Eduardo Vega, Member, MHSOAC
Stephen W. Mayberg, Ph.D., Director, DMH
SMHI Stakeholder Work Group
Sharon Manakas, RN, MSN, President, Health Services Association California Community Colleges
Bob Hughlett, Ed.D., President, California Association of Post Secondary Educators of the Disabled
Linda Michalowski, Vice Chancellor, Student Services, System Office
Jeff Spano, Dean, Student Services, System Office
Catherine Campisi, Specialist, DSP&S, System Office
Scott Berenson, Coordinator, DSP&S, System Office