



C A L I F O R N I A D E P A R T M E N T O F
Mental Health

1600 9th Street, Sacramento, CA 95814
(Area Code) Phone Number

January 14, 2011

Alfredo Aguirre, LCSW
California Mental Health Directors Association (CMHDA)
Ethnic Services Committee
2125 19th Street, 2nd Floor
Sacramento, CA 95818

Dear Mr. Alfredo Aguirre,

On behalf of the California Department of Mental Health (DMH), I would like to thank you for outlining CMHDA's concerns relative to the meaningful involvement and participation of Cultural Competence/ Ethnic Service Managers (CC/ESMs) in the California Reducing Disparities Project (CRDP). The CRDP is an unprecedented opportunity for California's public mental health system to improve access to services and quality of care for historically un-served and underserved communities. As you noted in your letter, according to the California Mental Health Services Act Multicultural Coalition (CMMC), Request for Proposal (RFP), "the CMMC's primary goal will be to work toward the integration of racial, ethnic, cultural and linguistic competence into the public mental health system. The CMMC will provide a new platform for racial, ethnic, and cultural communities to come together to address historical system and community barriers and work collaboratively to seek solutions to eliminate barriers and mental health disparities." The relationship between the CRDP and county's is critical to this process and every effort to partner and collaborate should be encouraged.

I would like to take this opportunity to address the concerns and CMHDA's recommendations for moving forward highlighted in the letter, dated December 23, 2010. Please see the responses below:

- *Disseminate meeting and event information to county ESMs in a timely manner, and that it be posted on one central website. CMHDA staff can help with dissemination efforts through the ESC email roster.*

The DMH Office of Multicultural Services (OMS) is currently working with the CRDP Facilitator/Writer, CA Pan Ethnic Health Network, to ensure the creation of a centralized website for the CRDP. In the meantime, OMS will continue to post all CRDP related

information on its website, www.dmh.ca.gov/Multicultural_Services/CRDP.asp. Additionally, OMS staff regularly share updates about the project, including upcoming activities for each of the Strategic Planning Workgroups and the CMMC, with the CC/ESMs during the regional meetings. We appreciate the on-going cooperation of the CC/ESM Regional Chairs in disseminating this information as it becomes available.

- *Participate in regional CC/ESM conference calls and meetings. Attached to this letter is the contact information for the regional ESC chairs. Regional meetings are an excellent forum for information exchange and creative strategy development. We encourage contractors to contact the regional chairs about participating in an upcoming conference call or meeting.*

As noted above, OMS staff members regularly participate in the regional CC/ESM conference calls and meetings. All CRDP contractors and sub-contractors are encouraged to participate in these meetings; however, their participation is not required as a part of the CRDP contracts. To my knowledge, CRDP contractors have participated in all instances they have been invited to attend and share project updates. OMS will share the calendar of upcoming regional CC/ESM meetings in order to facilitate their future participation, as their time and schedules permit.

- *Use CC/ESMs to provide and support extensive outreach to communities in their regions.*

DMH recognizes the rich experience of the CC/ESMs and welcomes their participation in the CRDP project. Several individual CC/ESMs are regular participants on the five SPWs. Furthermore, all five SPW have outlined plans to work with the CC/ESMs at various points in the process of developing their Reducing Disparities Population Reports. The CRDP Facilitator/Writer also intends to work closely with the ESC to incorporate the county perspective into the comprehensive CA Reducing Disparities Strategic Plan. OMS also continues to encourage all CC/ESMs to get involved in the project by contacting the SPW contractors. The roster of all CRDP contractors is available on the OMS website.

- *Engage with and inform CMHDA members by attending ESC quarterly meetings.*

Please see response above.

- *Support the involvement of applicants/members on the CMMC based on expertise in cultural competency and a commitment to reducing disparities, including government employees. There are numerous CC/ESMs, MHSA coordinators and county mental health directors who would be valuable participants on the CMMC. We hope that this*

recommendation is considered immediately, considering that the current application process will be closing January 14, 2011.

With the formation of the CMMC, DMH intended to create a new structure to bring forward diverse multicultural perspectives, from a community driven approach that supports the development and adaptation of new and more effective strategies that are culturally relevant and responsive. To achieve this outcome, the contractor for the CMMC, Mental Health Association in California (MHAC)/REMHDCO, and the CMMC's transition team proposed to limit the voting membership of the CMMC to community members representing un-served and underserved populations and community based organizations working with these communities.

According to the terms of the contract, MHAC/REMHDCO is required to, "Foster relationships between government entities and organizations (i.e., DMH, California Mental Health Directors Association (CMHDA), Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC), California Mental Health Planning Council (CMHPC), County Mental Health Departments, and communities to build bridges and improve communication and mutual understanding." The contract does not stipulate the manner in which this relationship building is to take place. Since the inception of this project, OMS has served as a liaison to the CRDP Strategic Planning Workgroups (SPW), the CMMC, and the CRDP Facilitator/Writer contractors to communicate the concerns of constituency groups and discuss avenues to resolve them. OMS is eager to continue this dialogue and will continue to stress the vital nature of the meaningful participation of the CC/ESMs. However, as stated in the Request for Proposal and the contract for the CMMC, the CMMC transition team will determine the composition of the coalition.

The CMMC project manager has stated that the CMMC will welcome the active participation of the CC/ESMs. It is not the CMMC's intention to exclude government representatives. In a letter to Acting Director Cliff Allenby, dated January 7, 2011, Beatrice Lee, President of REMHDCO, states, "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." Although government representatives will not be granted voting privileges as CMMC members according to the CMMC application package, DMH and the CMMC understand the important role played by CC/ESMs. This role may continue to be defined through further dialogue and collaboration.

The purpose of the California Reducing Disparities Project is to bring the knowledge, experience, and recommendations from un-served, underserved, and inappropriately served communities to the forefront. The CMMC represents an opportunity to accomplish

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this goal. DMH will continue to serve as a liaison to foster the partnership between communities and state and local governments through the CRDP. Through this partnership and collaboration, we can work together to reduce disparities and improve access to and the quality of services for California's historically un-served, underserved, and inappropriately served communities.

Sincerely,



STAN BAJORIN
Chief Deputy, California Department of Mental Health

Enclosures:

Request for Proposal, California Reducing Disparities Project, CA MHSA Multicultural Coalition

cc: Cliff Allenby, Acting Director, California Department of Mental Health
Giang Nguyen, Executive Assignment, Community Services Division, DMH
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
Ellen Wu, CA Pan Ethnic Health Network
Larry Poaster, Chair, Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC)
Sherri Gauger, Executive Director, MHSOAC
CMHDA Ethnic Services Committee