



September 2, 2005

Dear Mental Health Director:

The enclosed edition of the *Framework for Eliminating Cultural, Linguistic, Racial and Ethnic Behavioral Health Disparities (The Framework)* adopted by CHMDA in March 2005 represents the first major revision since it was drafted 15 years ago. While *The Framework* retains its original focus on identifying and alleviating mental health disparities differentially suffered by ethnic communities, it now encompasses a wider perspective to include the manner in which communities are disserved and under-served regardless of culture or ethnicity. We signal the expansion of our perspective by embracing the title of Cultural Competence/Ethnic Services Manager to reflect the evolution of our county systems in assuring appropriate and equitable care to all consumers.

With this current edition, we underscore the importance of accepting the challenges of the times. As our knowledge base on issues related to cultural competence, health disparities and equitable outcomes of applied evidence-based practices becomes more sophisticated, it is critical that our guiding documents also grow in sophistication. We are committed to working together with all key stakeholders toward a process of regular revision of *The Framework*. We understand that *The Framework* must be a living document that both guides our work and is, itself, modified and enhanced by the expanding knowledge base produced by our work. We are looking forward to collaborating with our stakeholders to keep *The Framework* timely, vital and useful.

Throughout the body of the text there are many recommendations related to the culturally competent practice of our systems of care. *The Framework* should not be read as a platform of minimum standards. Each county will need to assess the current needs of its consumer groups and apply the vision and recommendations contained in *The Framework* in accordance to available resources and capacities. Undoubtedly, the continued growth and expansion of culturally competent services will be challenging. Among other available resources, we urge each county to utilize the expertise of its Cultural Competence/Ethnic Services Manager to aid, guide and nurture culturally appropriate care. In addition, the Ethnic Services Committee of CMHDA remains available to assist and consult on matters related to the application of *The Framework* and its recommendations.

Sincerely,

Rudy Lopez

Rudy Lopez
Co-Chair, Ethnic Services Committee

Alfredo Aguirre

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Co-Chair, Ethnic Services Committee

Enclosures