



Communications Draft Work Plan 2008

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Background:

The OAC communications unit has a vital and crucial role to play in helping to ensure the success of the Mental Health Services Act. In California and beyond, the Act is seen as no less than groundbreaking by those with the vision to imagine its best outcomes. It is our job to spread word of this vision, report the progress of those outcomes and assist in achieving specific goals mandated by the MHSA -- such as stigma reduction and community outreach.

Toward this end, we envision a high-energy campaign that communicates to the public the MHSA's successes and ongoing potential to help communities solve problems by providing mental health care on parity with physical health care.

We also envision a stepped-up role in communications with Commissioners, providing Commissioners with contextual briefings on important topics to be discussed in public meetings. In addition, we plan to be in closer contact with Commissioners regarding staff work plans, additions to the staff and information that is relevant to the mission of the Commission and the MHSA.

Examples:

- There is a goal to develop a means of keeping Commissioners informed and apprised of complex issues coming before the Commission. One solution might be to develop newsletters to brief the Commission on such topics, attempting to give framework and background to issues. These could provide concise summaries and highlight the significance of upcoming topics. Commissioner input on such proposals will shape the final projects.
- There is also a recognition that it might be useful to provide Commissioners with more information about what staff is working on in the OAC Sacramento office. Again, one method to consider might be a newsletter of sorts to familiarize Commissioners with staff skills and areas of expertise – and also introduce new staff members as they come on board. This type of newsletter or information tool might also feature news about Commissioners themselves.

Some other possibilities for Commissioners to discuss and consider include the following:

- Develop consistent **messages and themes** anchored to the highlights of the MHSA goals:
 - Transforming California's mental health system
 - Expanding successful programs and highlighting innovation
 - Serving the underserved with cultural and linguistic competence
 - Busting stigma and discrimination
 - Holding the system accountable through transparency

- Release an updated version of the **OAC Website**, with story-telling features
- designed to attract a public that reaches beyond centralized stakeholder groups, policymakers and mental health care professionals. The site will contain video stories, audio stories, a blog with links to news reports and research. It will engage the public through interactive features allowing people to converse, participate, share and contribute on mental health issues.

- Plan a series of **press events** to highlight positive results, potential and MHSA outcomes. These would be strategically linked to relevant events or programs in various parts of California.

- Publish a general **publication** about mental health best practices to reach people without access to the Internet. This could repurpose some of the OAC Website content and include success stories reported throughout California by various counties. County Mental Health Departments would be one distribution stream for this newsletter.

- Publish a **targeted publication** to reach various age groups or at-risk groups.

- Publish **publications translated in threshold languages** to reach various ethnic communities, also identifying and inviting ethnic media to re-publish some of the articles or use the information in their news reports, with appropriate credit.

- Publish a 2008 (and beyond) **wall calendar** that can serve as a constant reminder to the public about the importance of mental health. The content of the calendar could include month themes and resources (such as Suicide Prevention Month, with the Office of Suicide Prevention phone lines and website referenced.) The main message, or focus, of the calendar would highlight success stories of recovery, thereby helping remove stigma and discrimination.

- Provide **media training** for commissioners and staff regarding open records laws, open meetings laws, proper ways to speak to the press "off the record" and tips for speaking to the press on the record.

- Use traditional **media tools** to reach audiences, including press events and
 - Press Releases
 - Fact Sheets
 - Media advisories
 - Reports
 - Biographies
 - Expert lists
 - Press clippings
 - Pictures
 - Press Packets
 - Reports
 - Interviews with Press (OAC and Executive Director)
 - Audio and Video News Releases
 - Editorial Board Meetings
 - Care and Feeding of Media Relations

Timeline

Evaluation of Communications Draft Work Plan