

CMHDA Proposed Alternative Strategy to Administer Statewide Workforce, Education, and Training (WET) Programs

Issue: During the implementation of Workforce, Education, and Training (WET) statewide programs, a crucial barrier has been identified with the administration of funding: any DMH expenditure for WET funding or contracts will require legislative approval and could further delay the process. In order to better assure timely distribution of resources to communities, and reduce or eliminate the need for DMH to obtain legislative authority for administering the projects, CMHDA is considering an administrative alternative to expedite implementation: statewide programs administered by a single county.

CMHDA wants to work closely with DMH staff to investigate how such an approach can be used for the sole purpose of expediting the process, not to alter the intent or objectives of such programs in any way. Both the MHPA and MHPA WET guidelines recognize that some programs would be best-served by a statewide approach. Yet, considering the potential and unforeseen obstacles imposed by state-administration, we see no harm with taking steps to investigate how a county or counties acting jointly could administer a statewide program.

(The following are relevant sections of the MHPA):

Section 15; 5897 (a) "...the Department of Mental Health shall implement the mental health services provided by Parts 3,3.6 and 4 of this Division through contracts with county mental health programs or counties acting jointly."

Section 3 (e) states the general purpose and intent: "To ensure that all funds are expended in the most cost effective-manner and services are provided in accordance with recommended best practices subject to local and state oversight..."

Taken together, these sections of the Act call for cost effectiveness, dissemination of best practices, and county/state collaborations as the overarching goals for statewide projects. CMHDA believes that individual counties can administer specific programs in accordance with MHPA guidelines in a timely and efficient manner. For example, LA County is currently administering the statewide CalSWEC MSW stipend program for FY 07/08.

Solution: Successful WET plans and implementation need resources allocated for "statewide programs" as soon as possible. While CMHDA recognizes that State DMH is working hard to put these programs into action, we see no reason not to advocate for a single county to administer current FY 07-08 and upcoming FY 08-09 statewide projects which are both critical and time sensitive. To date, the following statewide WET projects have emerged as top priorities for counties:

- 1) Regional Partnerships
- 2) Consumer and Family Member Statewide Technical Assistance Center
- 3) Distance Learning
- 4) MHPA Statewide Loan Assumption Program

Please note that there may be additional programs that might be suited for an individual county to administer, and these should and will be prioritized with input from the California Mental Health Planning Council and other key stakeholders and experts.

ACTION:

CMHDA staff will work to:

1. Identify with DMH what WET statewide programs would most likely benefit from state-administration. If that is good policy, than focus should be how state administration could happen in a timely manner.
2. Seek feedback and input from stakeholders on priorities for program implementation
3. Identify counties that are interested and able to administer individual programs. For example, San Bernardino County is interested and willing to seek strategies to administer all five of the regional partnerships and the Consumer and Family Member Statewide Technical Assistance Center.

Request: CMHDA requests that the OAC support efforts to explore this alternative solution.