

MEMORANDUM

TO: California Mental Health Directors Association
Social Justice Advisory Committee

FROM: Rusty Selix, Executive Director

Arnulfo Medina, Director of Special Programs for Transition Age Youth,
California Youth Empowerment Network (CAYEN), Local Program
Coordination and Accessing Mental Health HMO benefits

Stacie Hiramoto, Director of Special Programs Racial and Ethnic Mental
Health Disparities Coalition (REMHDCO)

RE: Local Partnership Opportunities to Build on Mental Health Association in
California Programs to Advance Social Justice Mission

The Mental Health Association in California is pleased to announce new developments regarding 3 important projects that require state and local partnerships to maximize outreach, education, and advocacy results.

We have attached materials for each of these programs and are hoping to work with counties and stakeholders to establish local model programs ideally led by a local community based organization – either a local MHA where one exists or another community based organization (where an MHA does not exist or the MHA is either not interested or not qualified) to lead these efforts. Except for possibly the largest counties, with our support, the level of local staff being required should be modest enough that one organization should be able to do all three with a single professional staff person and support.

Briefly the three projects are as follows:

1. REMHDCO (Racial and Ethnic Mental Health Disparities Coalition)

The purpose of this coalition is to ensure that the voices and views of each racial and ethnic mental health community is heard and considered and ideally also reflected in public policy decisions – primarily those of the Mental Health Services Act but also all public mental health decisions.

Presently REMHDCO exists only as a statewide coalition and is focused on state activities. However, in light of the fact that the majority of mental health policy decisions are made by counties and not the state we envision replicating the REMHDCO in as many counties as is feasible and will provide staff support from our Sacramento office to travel to other counties and work with counties and stakeholders to develop a REMHDCO affiliate.

2. CAYEN (California Youth Empowerment Network)

Transition age youth 16 to 25 is the key age that which all people must move from dependence on parents to independence as adults. One of the most important measures of success in mental health care is enabling people to achieve that independence by the time they are 25 as statistics show that if it is not achieved by that time the chances of achieving it anytime in one's life are significantly diminished.

Only thirty percent of the transition age youth population in California is Caucasian. Fifty percent is Latino; twenty percent is other people of color. It is clear that we need to design and develop effective tools to outreach and engage transition age youth as well as designing appropriate care at all levels that reflects the unique cultural needs of this population which is not likely to be served well in either a children's or an adult's type of program.

The purpose of CAYEN is to make sure that this happens in an effective way and that reflects the views and perspectives of the youth themselves (of all ethnicities), families of the youth, and professionals who work to provide services. CAYEN is a membership organization with three categories of membership and we are hoping that all mental health organizations will encourage everyone who fits any of the three categories to join CAYEN and help us build a strong organization. The work of the MHA in California will be similar to the REMHDCO in that it will be an advocacy voice for state public policy decisions. Similar to the REMHDCO we also hope to replicate it in each county again recognizing that the majority of decisions are made by counties and not by the state.

3. DMHC OPA Support (Department of Managed Health Care Office of Patient Advocate) support for consumers seeking access to health benefits.

Attached is the new mental health card that is now included in the HMO guide book that the Department of Managed Health Care's Office of Patient Advocate makes broadly available.

MHAC has had a grant for the past year to develop this program and has just received a second two year grant with the primary purpose being to rewrite and distribute this card and other materials in English terms that will be culturally appropriate to each of the major special populations for whom the general language would not be viewed as speaking to them effectively. This would include all the members of all the different racial and ethnic groups participating in REMHDCO as well as transition age youth.

Two of our local MHA Affiliates San Diego and Los Angeles also received grants from OPA among 15 regional groups to take OPA materials, get them out into the community and make people aware of the reasons they might seek mental health services and what to do in order to make sure you get the services that you need and most importantly to make people aware of the fact that OPA exists and if people are having trouble accessing benefits that there is state assistance for them. We will be supporting these two regional projects, working with other regional grantees in other parts of the state and similar to the REMHDCO and CAYEN also working to have an organizational partner that can work to get out OPA materials and increase awareness and efforts to obtain mental health services throughout the state.

Our staff is available to answer questions as well as to provide support for counties interested in developing any of these three projects locally.

Stacie Hiramoto Shiramoto@mhac.org and Arnulfo Medina Amedina@mhac.org. Office phone number (916) 557-1167