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The Results Group

Subject: Palm Springs Retreat Observations and Summary

The following are some observations and “takeaways” from the Palm Springs Retreat. The fundamental objectives of the Retreat were to:

- I. Craft a strategic planning framework
- II. Examine ways to improve the Commissions operations.
- III. Establish some Core Values and Principles to guide the Commission as it carries out its responsibilities.

Observations:

The Commission

It is clearly evident that there is a high level of commitment and passion to accomplishing the intent and purposes of the MHSOAC. The principle issues are how to achieve that intent and purpose as a commission. It is also evident that the Commissioners represent a broad range of experience and knowledge that will serve them well as they tackle their mission. One difficulty is that they only meet as a group six times during the year. Yet as a new Commission they have some fundamental issues to address that require interaction that would consume the actual Commission meetings. Having retreats are good vehicles for conversations that require a longer time together than can be afforded by regular meetings. However, these events are expensive and could come under scrutiny if they take place more than once or twice a year. An alternative is the use of specific workshops that are designed to educate and/or inform the Commissioners on specific programmatic topics and/or ones significant to the operation of the Commission.

Number One Issue – Organization

By far, the number one strategic issue facing the Commission is organization. The conversations that related to how the Commission is to operate were the most fruitful for the retreat. It will be up to staff to continue to frame the appropriate issues for the Commission to take action on as it establishes its infrastructure, policies, procedures, protocols and communication mechanisms. I would suggest a two hour workshop for your Commissioners exclusively devoted to the mechanics of the Commission. It can follow a scheduled Commission meeting. Items for discussion could include:

- Introduction of staff and explanation of Staff assignments
- Protocols and process and timeline for the setting of Meeting Agendas
- How actual meetings will be conducted and how items will be followed up on and reported back to Commissioners
- Discussion of technical infrastructure, what are the various tools available to staff and commissioners in terms of phone service, computers, personal assistance etc.
- Discussion of necessary policies and procedures.
- Description of Communication strategies with Stakeholders, other government agencies etc.
- Committee and/or work group structure roles and responsibilities.
- Delegation of authority to the CEO and key staff members.

Implementation of the MHSA

In some instances the Act does not include the details needed to parse out the key roles and responsibilities, authorities and accountabilities of the various parties covered by the Act. This includes the Commission, The Department of Mental Health, The Department of Social Services, the Mental Health Council and last but not least the counties. Once again we would suggest a two-hour workshop with invitees from those agencies. All parties must by crystal clear where their authority and roles are distinct, where the lines are blurred and where collaboration is required. One of the topics for this workshop could be around financial accountability. Are there, for example, the appropriate systems in place to ensure proper audits and tracking of expenditures from a fiscal standpoint, and in addition are there the proper controls in place to evaluate actual outcomes resulting from the expenditure of funds? Other suitable topics could include:

- Are the current input vehicles robust enough to ensure that the “inclusiveness” of engagement and diversity of opinion and input intent of the MHSA are being met?
- Is there a need for formal MOU between the various agencies covered by the Act?
- Is the Commission sufficiently independent and thus accountable for specific outcomes?

Setting of Goals

The group struggled with the establishment of its Strategic Goals. There was agreement that a three year planning horizon seemed to make sense and was actually consistent with how some of the original framers of the Proposition and Act envisioned the progression of implementation. The MHSA clearly sets forth a statement of intent that is written in the form of “program goals”. Absent of course is a time frame or vehicle for evaluating success or accomplishment. The “goal” statements, it was determined, could serve as the program goals for the Commission that support the Vision. However, they do not chart a strategic roadmap for the Commission to gauge its progress or evaluate its success. On the program side this could be accomplished by the Commission setting forth specific Objectives or Strategic Outcomes that they would either address themselves in those areas where there authority would support them, or set forth through objectives a set of specific outcome measures they will be looking for in evaluating County plans.

In addition the Commission could set some specific strategic goals for themselves like:

By _____ expend _____% of all available funds in _____# counties.

By _____ have in place a set of policies and procedures for the operation and conduct of Commission Business.

By _____ establish a set of policy criteria/expectations with regard to PEI and/or innovation.

By _____ fully define the various roles and relationships called for in the MHSA.

Summary:

The following attachments contain summaries of various portions of the Retreat proceedings. We have taken the liberty of doing some editing to clarify some points and have also made an

effort to condense the material as appropriate without losing anyone's voice in the process. We will retain the actual flip chart notes until April 8th.

I. Action Plans

A list of tasks identified by staff and the Commission to accomplish in the next 30-90 days.

II. Mount Everest

A summary of each of the participants descriptions of their Mt. Everest with regard to mental health care in California and/or the role of this Commission.

III. Lessons Learned

Is a brief summary of some of the key "lessons learned" during the course of the first three years of the Commission.

IV. Summary of the Challenges and Opportunities

This is a fairly unedited summary of the Challenges and Opportunities the Commission will be facing during the coming three-year planning horizon. Challenges are grouped and appear with related Opportunities.

V. Strategic Plan

This is a draft developed by the facilitators based on discussion during the first day of the retreat on vision, goals and objectives. A suggested Mission Statement is included that attempts to describe the purpose of the Commission. This is the beginning of a draft only, and needs further development followed by formal approval.

VI. List of Core Values and Guiding Principles

Is an edited version of the core values and guiding principles identified by the group placed into active context.

VII. Summary of What is Trending Well and What Still Needs Attention.

This is a synthesis of both the Commissioners and Staffs perspectives on the above. We have identified where there is agreement. Where there is no agreement, the two groups either held different thought or did not consider the topic.

SEE ATTACHED NOTES