

REMHDCO

Racial & Ethnic Mental Health Disparities Coalition

September 2008 Report to the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission

The Racial and Ethnic Mental Health Disparities Coalition or *REMHDCO* is a statewide stakeholder in the mental health community. Several members serve on the OAC's Cultural and Linguistic Competence Committee (CLCC) and other OAC committees. REMHDCO is also an active member of the MHSAC Community Partners group. We are a statewide coalition of non-profit state wide and local organizations, consumers and family members, whose mission is *to reduce mental health disparities for racial and ethnic communities through policy and legislative advocacy.*

REMHDCO objects to inserting the recommendations regarding Stakeholder Improvement into the RFP for the PEI Statewide project for Reducing Disparities.

On February 27, 2008, State DMH conducted a meeting to obtain recommendations on how to improve the MHSAC Stakeholder Process. Cultural brokers, including REMHDCO members, presented a set of recommendations which to our understanding, received informal approval with DMH. It was also our understanding that these recommendations would be put in an RFP. REMHDCO has since learned that DMH intends to place these recommendations in an RFP along with another, larger project to reduce mental health disparities. While REMHDCO commends DMH for showing this commitment to serving racial and ethnic communities, **we do not support combining these two different activities into one RFP.**

REMHDCO members along with other cultural brokers made our concerns and objections known to DMH at a meeting on May 20, 2008. REMHDCO included our concerns and objections on this matter in our June 2008 and July 2008 written reports to the MHSOAC.

The recommendations regarding Stakeholder Improvement are to increase representation of racial, ethnic, and cultural communities in the stakeholder process at all levels. The project to reduce mental health disparities is a statewide project under the PEI component. REMHDCO believes strongly that these efforts would be best served by separate RFP's. While DMH did an excellent job working with the community on the Stakeholder Improvement issue, there was no public meeting or such effort in the design of the proposal for reducing mental health disparities. Racial and ethnic communities have been waiting since the end of February for DMH to act on the recommendations made in good faith. These Stakeholder Improvement recommendations need to be in a separate RFP and released as soon as possible, separate from the PEI Statewide Project to Reducing Disparities. We would be willing to elaborate on our concerns and meet with representatives of DMH and OAC.