



California Stigma & Discrimination Reduction Advisory Committee

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- **What is the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA)?**

The MHSA became California law on January 1, 2005 after being passed by California voters (as Proposition 63) in November 2004. The Act provides funding through a 1 percent surcharge on personal income over \$1 million to expand community-based public mental health services in six areas:

- *Prevention & Early Intervention* to prevent mental illnesses from becoming severe and disabling, including reducing stigma and discrimination;
- *Community Planning* to involve the public in identifying local funding priorities;
- *Community Services & Supports* to provide integrated mental health and other supports to those whose needs are not currently met through other funding sources;
- *Innovative Programs* to improve access to mental health care;
- *Capital Facilities & Technology* to improve the infrastructure of California’s mental health system; and
- *Education & Training* to develop and grow the mental health workforce.

- **How does the MHSA address reducing stigma and discrimination toward people with mental illness?**

In numerous areas, the Act requires and authorizes California to use MHSA resources to reduce stigma and discrimination. Specifically, the Act requires *Prevention & Early Intervention* programs to include “Reduction in stigma associated with either being diagnosed with a mental illness or seeking mental health services” and “Reduction in discrimination against people with mental illness.” The Act also requires *Education & Training* programs to establish regional partnerships among the mental health and educational systems that, among other things, “reduce the stigma associated with mental illness.”

- **What is the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC), and what is its role in implementing the MHSA?**

The MHSOAC was created under the MHSA, and its role is to ensure that services provided pursuant to the MHSA are cost effective and provided in accordance with recommended best practices. The MHSOAC provides the vision and leadership, in collaboration with clients, their family members and underserved communities, to ensure Californians understand mental health is essential to overall health; and to hold public systems accountable and provide oversight for eliminating disparities, promoting mental wellness, recovery and resiliency and ensuring positive outcomes for individuals living with serious mental illness and their families. Particularly of interest is that the Act authorizes the MHSOAC to develop strategies to overcome stigma, and requires the MHSOAC to approve all MHSA *Prevention and Early Intervention* expenditures, which may include activities to reduce stigma and discrimination. For more information about the MHSOAC: www.dmh.ca.gov/MHSOAC

Continued.

- **What is the Department of Mental Health (DMH) role in implementing the MHSA?**

The Act specifies a number of DMH responsibilities for administering the MHSA, including, but not limited to, developing regulations and guidelines for counties' MHSA service plans, contracting with counties to provide MHSA services, administering and distributing MHSA funds, and providing technical assistance to counties implementing MHSA.

For more information about DMH: www.dmh.ca.gov, and for about the MHSA: http://www.dmh.ca.gov/Prop_63/MHSA

- **What other partners are involved in implementing the MHSA?**

In addition to MHSAOAC and DMH, the Act specifies activities for the Mental Health Planning Council, California Mental Health Directors Association, individual counties, providers, and consumers of mental health services and their family members. In addition, a diverse array of other organizations have become involved in county- and state-level MHSA activities, such as schools, ethnic community-based organizations, primary care providers and health clinics, faith-based agencies, tribal organizations, and organizations that help individuals who are homeless or incarcerated.

- **Who directed that a statewide strategic plan be developed to reduce stigma and discrimination toward people with mental illness?**

In Spring 2007, the MHSAOAC convened an Advisory Committee of stakeholders to develop recommendations for reducing stigma and discrimination against people with mental illness. In June 2007, the committee provided a report that recommends developing a comprehensive ten-year strategic plan to guide MHSA activities that reduce stigma and discrimination. In May 2008, the MHSAOAC voted for DMH to reconvene and expand the original committee and develop a strategic plan on reducing mental health stigma and discrimination. DMH is modeling this effort after the success of its Suicide Prevention Plan Advisory Committee, which recently issued the groundbreaking "California Strategic Plan on Suicide Prevention."

- **How will the Strategic Plan be used, and by whom?**

The strategic plan will guide investments made throughout California to address stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness. While the impetus for developing the plan arose from MHSA activities, the plan will be useful to all individuals, organizations, and government entities interested in improving the lives of Californians with a mental illness and those seeking help.