

News Alert End of June 2005

Mental Health Services Act Update

California Clients Tokenized, Marginalized and Misrepresented in Governor's Appointments to Oversight and Accountability Commission

On June 21, Governor Schwarzenegger announced the appointment of twelve people to the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC).

The Oversight and Accountability Commission “shall annually review and approve each county mental health program for expenditures pursuant to Parts 3.2 for Innovative programs and Part 3.6 for Prevention and Early Intervention.” The Commission shall also, “develop strategies to overcome stigma—” among many other Commission’s duties.)

Among the mandated 16 voting members on the Commission are: Two persons with a “severe mental illness”, a family member of an adult or senior with a severe mental illness, and a family member of a child who has or has had a severe mental illness. In making appointments, the Governor “shall seek individuals who have had personal or family experience with mental illness.”

The two appointed persons who have publicly described themselves as consumers and have, for the purpose of appointment to the Commission, been identified as “with a severe mental illness” are Linford Gayle and Karen Henry. Linford is a CNMHC member, has attended and presented at the CNMHC’s Client Forums and Rallies, and is currently the Consumer Affairs Coordinator for San Mateo County. In San Mateo, he has advocated that MHSA funds be used to hire consumers to work both in the mental health system and in consumer-run self-help services, and the need for self-help centers in communities of color, staffed by peers who are bilingual and culturally diverse. Identifying him as a mental health specialist of San Mateo County, the Governor’s press release ignores Linford’s job title, and thus his consumer connections. Karen Henry is the Chair of NAMI’s Legislative Committee, writes NAMI’s legislative and policy positions, and advocates for NAMI’s positions to legislators and others. She is also a member of the Board of Directors of NAMI-CA. Karen has publicly supported the expansion of forced treatment and the use of Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funds for forced treatment.

Karen’s selection, and the manner in which Linford is described, model stigma and discrimination. The message sent by the Governor’s actions speaks to the deep and pervasive stereotypes that the public holds about people diagnosed with mental illness. It implies that others must speak for us, lending a false air of legitimacy to the harmful and discredited myth that we can't speak for ourselves, and it invalidates mental health consumer identity. Gov. Schwarzenegger, whose appointees on the Commission are charged with the responsibility of approving programs to reduce stigma and

discrimination, exemplifies stigma and discrimination in both his selection and promotion of appointees.

**First Oversight and Accountability Commission meeting scheduled:
Let's Begin the Stigma Busting and Education**

The first MHSOAC meeting will be held on July 7 at the Cal/EPA Headquarters Building Auditorium from 1 pm to 5 pm. The Cal/EPA Headquarters Building is located at 1001 "I" Street in Sacramento.

Join us to begin the dialogue and educate the majority of the Commissioners about our existence as a movement, our principles, and our passion. It is our challenge and largely our responsibility to bring the concepts of client-driven and person-centered services, recovery and self-determination for all mental health consumers, to the Commissioners who represent the public at large

There will be a Public Comment period at the end of the Agenda.

We need to show a strong identifiable presence, to underscore our essential role in mental health planning, implementation, oversight, and evaluation. **Nothing about us, without us.**

The next MHSOAC meeting is tentatively scheduled for July 22. We are expecting that the CNMHC (and other stakeholder groups) will have time to formally present our vision of the Mental Health Services Act. Please mark July 22 on your calendars!

Contact the CNMHC for more information.

CNMHC Contact information:.

Mental Health Services Act information can be found at: