



CALIFORNIA NETWORK OF MENTAL HEALTH CLIENTS

2012 - 19th Street, Suite 100, Sacramento, California 95818

Voice: (916) 443-3232 ■ (800) 626-7447 ■ Fax: (916) 443-4089

E-mail: main@californiaclients.org ■ Web: www.californiaclients.org

News Alert – Message from the Interim Executive Director

Going Forward

November 27, 2009

Dear CNMHC Members and friends,

As the Network rebuilds to move forward, there are many issues that deserve our urgent attention and advocacy. Poverty is a monumental challenge in many of our members' lives. As we work to sustain our organization and advocate for social justice and our members' rights, I notice that my strength is sourced in my connection to our movement values.

In our current efforts to restore the activities of the Network, we seek renewed purpose and vibrancy that draws its strengths from our long history, while allowing room for new perspectives and practices. Our organization is built on core values of Choice, Respect, and Freedom. As we move forward, I imagine a future that actualizes Inclusion, Holistic Alternatives (including Trauma-competency) and strong regional roots. I offer these directions in the spirit of renewal; please consider these ideas as food for thought and future dialogue.

In our outreach to new members, we welcome diversity. I see the Network becoming even more richly multicultural, just like the people of California. We will work conscientiously to eliminate practices of discrimination within our organization; we strive to model respect and inclusion.

What will it look like when the Network recognizes and incorporates the value of spirituality in mental health recovery and living well? Can we become an organization that focuses on what works? Holistic alternatives and the full array of choices for healing (real shared decision-making and trauma-informed supports) must become standard resources for people using the public mental health system. Whatever direction our members lead us in, the Network can grow strong by nurturing deep roots in our local and regional affiliates, developing clear roles for local organizations as key contributors and information dissemination partners within our large state.

The needs of the Network for financial stability and accountability are still so critical that a great deal of our staff time is spent on this foundational work. The good news is that the rehiring of program staff means that program activities are beginning to resume. We hope that you, as members, will feel the impact of these efforts! CNMHC Delegates will again be present at major statewide meetings. Our Director of MHSA and Public Policy, Delphine Brody, is calling together the MHSA Client Team and the Public Policy Committee to develop new Network positions and recommendations on pressing current issues. Michele Curran has re-opened the Office for Self-Help: we have client experts available to provide training throughout the state on Client Culture, consumer-providers, developing self-help programs, organizing for advocacy and more. Sue Watson, our Working Well Together Technical Assistance Coordinator, is developing E-Learning materials that will soon be made available through the Working Well Together Collaborative. Her current project is a segment on Building and Maintaining Consumer-Run Businesses as an employment resource.

As the Regional Coordinators resume their roles in developing the regional projects, supporting client involvement in local MHSA planning and implementation, and collaborating with regional self-help groups, the heart of our Network is being restored. Joyce Ott is coordinating efforts in the Far North, Bob Quinn is back on the job in the South Region, and Hope Holland will be resuming her role in the Bay Area. Our mandate to work creatively during these financially tough times has inspired us to develop plans for Regional Mini Forums for 2010 instead of our traditional statewide conference. We hope to provide state of the art trainings that are geared to the specific needs of the regions at these special events coming next spring.

How can the CNMHC better serve our members? We look forward to working with you to integrate your creative ideas and solutions as we address current challenges and develop the Network's future priorities. What do you want more of?

In service,

Sharon
Sharon Kuehn
Interim Executive Director
CA Network of Mental Health Clients

If you want to know more about the experience I bring to this task, read the following.

*Sharon Kuehn shines her light on Client Leadership in California. A passionate educator, she has facilitated Wellness Recovery, Systems Change, Consumer Employment and Healing Trauma in a wide variety of training and technical assistance roles. Since 1999, Sharon has provided Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) and Recovery training throughout California as **Wellness Recovery Educators**. Sharon has provided leadership to the CNMHC in the area of Workforce Education and Training, guiding the development of our Employment and Training Committee. An employment specialist with a background in supported education and consumer empowerment, she has recently worked to develop and implement a strategic plan for empowered consumer employment in Alameda County. She has developed consumer empowerment and/or employment programs in Contra Costa, Santa Barbara, and Alameda Counties. Sharon's recent passion is "Wellness Tools for Healing Trauma," a training that merges ancient wisdom with self-help values for balance and wholeness. Sharon's professional development includes a degree in Community Studies from the University of California at Santa Cruz, continuing studies in Organizational Development at Saybrook Graduate Institute, the study of Trauma and Wellness with the International training organization Capacitar, as well as mentoring from movement leaders Bonnie Schell, Sally Zinman, Jay Mahler, and Mary Ellen Copeland. Sharon was the 2006 recipient of the CNMHC Howie the Harp Award for service, contribution and leadership in the mental health client community. Sharon envisions a future in which healing, heart connections and health are attainable goals in our communities, with "people in recovery leading the way to transformation."*