

R E M H D C O

Racial & Ethnic Mental Health Disparities Coalition

Position Paper

Governor's 2012-13 Proposed Budget Trailer Bill Language - Transfer Non-Medical Mental Health Programs to Other Departments (4/17/12)

The Racial and Ethnic Mental Health Disparities Coalition (REMHDCO) is a statewide coalition of non-profit statewide and local organizations whose mission is to work to reduce mental health disparities through advocacy for racial and ethnic communities. Below are REMHDCO's policy positions in response to the Governor's Trailer Bill Language in section 601 regarding transfer of non-medical mental health programs to other departments.

1. \$60 MILLION SET ASIDE FOR PEI STATEWIDE REDUCING DISPARITIES PROJECT

REMHDCO supports the Governor's plan to set aside \$60 million for the California Reducing Disparities Project (CRDP); and, also supports the State Department of Public Health (DPH) administering this project. Our support of DPH administering this project is contingent upon the Office of Multicultural Services (OMS) within DPH being directly responsible for the administration of the CRDP, including the administration and distribution of the \$60 million set aside for this purpose.

The OMS has the experience, knowledge, and commitment to reducing mental health disparities that will ensure continuity and effectiveness of the CRDP. In addition, OMS has the trust and respect of the underserved racial, ethnic, and cultural communities in California.

REMHDCO supports involvement of all stakeholders representing both community and government entities including the current partners of the CRDP, the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (through their Cultural and Linguistic Competence Committee), and the California Mental Health Directors Association (through their Ethnic Services Managers/Social Justice Advisory Committee), in providing input to the design of the completion of CRDP.

2. OVERSIGHT OF THE PROVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

REMHDCO strongly opposes removal of county mental health performance contracts

and their review from statute. Oversight and accountability must not be limited to the local level. We support local community stakeholder processes, but these in addition to approval by County Boards of Supervisors, are not enough to ensure adequate oversight and accountability.

We strongly support another state department or another state entity (other than the State Department of Mental Health) to be in charge of these contracts. We also support amending these statutes to provide more oversight and accountability of the contracts, rather than just a review by the state entity. This is in line with the priorities of the AB 100 workgroup, especially those regarding assuring county compliance with the MHPA values and making sure county plans comply with the law.

REMHDCO supports language added to the statutes that clarifies what state entity reviews the counties' MHPA plans and annual updates. We support further clarification in statute that would give authority to the state entity to hold counties accountable regarding their MHPA plans and annual updates.

3. TRANSFER OF THE OFFICE OF MULTICULTURAL SERVICES

REMHDCO has changed its position on the Administration's proposal to divide the functions of the Office of Multicultural Services (OMS) due to the lack of clarity regarding the duties proposed for OMS staff under the proposed reorganization.

REMHDCO now strongly urges that both the positions and functions of the current OMS remain intact and under the Department of Public Health. While we appreciate our meeting with Dr. Ron Chapman, Director of the Department of Public Health, to discuss our issues, we remain concerned as many of our questions remain unanswered regarding the merging of OMS positions into a new Office of Health Equity.

- REMHDCO supports the experienced OMS staff being responsible for the CRDP, including the administration of the \$60 million for the PEI Statewide Project. OMS staff should not receive additional duties that would interfere with their ability to carry out the duties they currently perform.
- While REMHDCO supports the function of the review of County Cultural Competence Plan Requirements remaining with OMS staff at DPH, if this function and position went to the Department of Health Care Services, how would support and coordination between Departments take place?
- We find it problematic that under the proposed OMS transfer to the Department of Public Health, the head of OMS does not report directly to the Director of that department (as was the case originally at DMH.) This lessens the access and visibility for OMS and their projects to the Director.
- The Cultural Competence Advisory Committee (CCAC) formerly housed at the Department of Mental Health should not be disbanded, but retained and expanded to include more representatives from the community.