



CalMHSA Board of Directors
c/o John E. Chaquica, Executive Director, CalMHSA
George Hills Company, Inc.
3043 Gold Canal Drive, Suite 200
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

October 12, 2011

RE: Stigma and Discrimination Consortium Project, SDR Program 1, Component 1

To those concerned, California Mental Health Directors, CalMHSA Executive Leadership and staff:

The following comments are based on my investment as a stakeholder in the MHSAs and as a contract project partner for CalMHSA SDR Programs 2, Component 1 (Resource Development) and Program 3 (Promising Practices and Programs).

- 1) The CalMHSA Board must take action to resolve this contract issue today. The Consortium is a critical element in the design of the SDR Initiative, a component key to many of the other programs. Months have already been lost and additional time cannot be wasted. Failing this, all the SDR contractors are in danger of losing significantly more time to implement these projects as contract scopes of work thoroughly revised.
- 2) CalMHSA made a historic decision a few months back when it selected the CNMHC. I and other colleagues in the consumer community worked to support the CNMHC efforts in this regard. While it is clear that CNMHC is not in a position to assume a contract role at this time, we feel strongly that this project should continue to be guided by the lived expertise of consumers at all levels.

The Board must take action to ensure that consumer/client leadership steers the Consortium. For now that can be achieved by contracting directly with consumer leadership rather than a statewide or state-level consumer organization. However a plan for this process to be moved to a consumer-run organization within one year should be considered equally essential.

I know that CalMHSA's leadership is committed to the vision of a transformed community that has eliminated stigma associated with mental illness, and that you are also certain of the central role that empowered consumers and consumer-run organizations plays in accomplishing this. The Consortium project can be both the messenger and the message of a world free from the burden of stigma. We need it to be implemented in both the right way, and right away.

Thank you for your attention.

Eduardo Vega, M.A.
Executive Director