

**DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES**

1600 NINTH STREET, Room 240, MS 2-13  
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814  
TDD 654-2054 (For the Hearing Impaired)  
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TO: REGIONAL CENTER EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: COLLABORATION WITH COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH AGENCIES

On December 2, 2003, representatives from the Department of Mental Health (DMH) and the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) met to discuss issues regarding services and supports to individuals with developmental disabilities who have mental health diagnoses (dually diagnosed). Representatives at this meeting included:

- Cliff Allenby, Director, DDS
- Stephen W. Mayberg, Ph.D., Director, DMH
- Ken Buono, Acting Chief Deputy Director, DDS
- Julie Jackson, Deputy Director, DDS
- Dale Sorbello, Deputy Director, DDS
- Carol Hood, Deputy Director, DMH

This meeting revitalized the commitment of both departments to serve this challenging population. Legislation is clear regarding the collaboration and cooperation between regional centers and county mental health agencies. Section 4696.1 of the Welfare and Institutions Code mandates that:

*“(a) The Legislature finds and declares that improved cooperative efforts between regional centers and county mental health agencies are necessary in order to achieve each of the following:*

- (1) Increased leadership, communication, and organizational effectiveness between regional centers and county mental health agencies.*
- (2) Decreased costs and minimized fiscal risk in serving persons who are dually diagnosed with mental illness and developmental disabilities.*
- (3) Continuity of services.*
- (4) Improved quality of mental health outcomes for persons who are dually diagnosed.*
- (5) Optimized utilization of agency resources by building on the strengths of each organization.*
- (6) Timely resolution of conflicts.*

**"Building Partnerships, Supporting Choices"**

*(b) In order to achieve the outcomes specified in subdivision (a), by July 1, 1999, each regional center and county mental health agency shall develop a memorandum of understanding to do all of the following:*

- (1) Identify staff who will be responsible for all of the following:
  - (A) Coordinate service activity between the two agencies.*
  - (B) Identify dually diagnosed consumers of mutual concern.*
  - (C) Conduct problem resolution for those consumers serviced by both systems.**
- (2) Develop a general plan for crisis intervention for persons serviced by both systems. The plan shall include after-hours emergency response systems, interagency notification guidelines, and follow-up protocols.*
- (3) Develop a procedure by which each dually diagnosed consumer shall be the subject of a case conference conducted jointly by both regional center staff and county mental health as soon as possible after admission into a county operated or contracted acute, inpatient mental health facility. The case conference shall confirm the diagnosis and the treatment plan.*
- (4) Develop a procedure by which planning for dually diagnosed consumers admitted to a mental health inpatient facility shall be conducted collaboratively by both the regional center and the local mental health agency and shall commence as soon as possible or as deemed appropriate by the treatment staff. The discharge plan shall include subsequent treatment needs and the agency responsible for those services.*
- (5) Develop a procedure by which regional center staff and county mental health staff shall collaborate to plan and provide training to community service providers, including day programs, residential facilities, and intermediate care facilities, regarding effective services to persons who are dually diagnosed. This training shall include crisis prevention with a focus on proactively recognizing crisis and intervening effectively with consumers who are dually diagnosed.*
- (6) Develop a procedure by which the regional center and the county mental health agency shall work toward agreement on a consumer-by-consumer basis on the presenting diagnosis and medical necessity, as defined by regulations of the State Department of Mental Health.*

*(c) The department and the State Department of Mental Health shall collaborate to provide a statewide perspective and technical assistance to local service regions when local problem resolution mechanisms have been exhausted and state level participation has been requested by both local agencies.*

Regional Center Executive Directors

Page three

*(d) The director of the local regional center and the director of the county mental health agency or their designees shall meet as needed but no less than annually to do all of the following:*

- (1) Review the effectiveness of the interagency collaboration.*
- (2) Address any outstanding policy issues between the two agencies.*
- (3) Establish the direction and priorities for ongoing collaboration efforts between the two agencies..."*

As both state agencies have renewed their dedication to individuals who are dually diagnosed (enclosure), I recommend that regional centers review Section 4696.1 of the Welfare and Institutions Code to ensure that the intent of the legislation is met. Collaboration and cooperation between regional centers and county mental health agencies is imperative. In order to establish effective treatment and provide appropriate services for consumers who are dually diagnosed, this mandate must be implemented to the fullest capability of each regional center and county mental health agency. Thank you for your attention to this extremely important matter.

Cordially,

*Original signed by*

CLIFF ALLENBY  
Director

Enclosure

cc: Stephen W. Mayberg, Ph.D., Director, DMH  
Ken Buono, Acting Chief Deputy Director, DDS  
Julie Jackson, Deputy Director, DDS  
Dale Sorbello, Deputy Director, DDS  
Carol Hood, Deputy Director, DMH