___ **INFORMATION** **TAB SECTION:** **B**

___ **ACTION REQUIRED:** **DATE OF MEETING:** 10/17/12

PREPARED BY: **Murphy** **DATE MATERIAL PREPARED:** 9/10/12

AGENDA ITEM: **Advocacy Strategy**

ENCLOSURES:
Rose King Editorial- July 7, 2012
CCCMHA FAQs and Comments
NAMI Response to articles
OAC Press Release on PEI Review findings
OAC – MHSA – PEI and INN Report Excerpts, Sept. 2012
"How to Submit a Letter to the Editor"

OTHER MATERIAL RELATED TO ITEM:

ISSUE:

Over the last several months, there have been several negative press items regarding the MHSA programs, specifically the PEI and Innovation programs. Part of this is to be expected when the state reduces funding for so many programs, and the MHSA segment appears to be unaffected (not withstanding the one-time bailout of the EPSDT program during the 2011-12 budget negotiations).

Many of the mental health advocacy organizations have waged a campaign to defend the worth and effectiveness of MHSA programs. Up until now, the CMHPC has not weighed in on the issue. As we have learned from past presentations on the topic of advocacy, the most effective persuasion relies on targeted communications. So, individual letters to the editors of community newspapers are more effective than one letter to a legislative committee. Or, meeting with local and state district representatives, particularly one who may not be familiar with mental health issues, is more effective than sending a support letter to a committee or legislator that already supports it.

Some of the major points that should/could be addressed in the communications are:

- MHSA and two-tier systems – is that a myth?
- The importance of culturally competent outreach methods and the fact that the negative press systematically pointed to communities of color that participate in PEI programs as "wasteful". (example: Hmong Garden, sweat lodges, yoga classes etc.)
- When primary care engages the community in a campaign for preventative measures/steps for optimal health, the medical establishment is not criticized for being wasteful and engaging in discriminatory practices at the detriment and exclusion of others who need services.
- Mental health IS an integral part of physical health and a health community and should not be regarded as a discretionary service, or as one that needs to "triaged". The whole point of prevention and early intervention is to avoid bigger problems down the road.

Committee members should be prepared to answer the criticisms and help frame a response that they can commit to taking to their own communities and representatives.