



COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Based on the findings from the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis performed by an outside communications consultant, which helped identify any issues facing the communications program of the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC or Commission), the MHSOAC Communications Director identified five key themes for the communications plan to focus on:

1. The Commission can greatly benefit by increasing stakeholder and media communications that articulate its priorities, cadence of work, plans, activities, policy challenges, and achievements. Given the size of the public investment, the challenges and success stories are underreported by the media and largely unknown to the public.
2. The Commission generates and receives a wealth of community information on mental health services which should be shared efficiently and effectively, reaching as many people as possible.
3. One of the Commission's top priorities is the development and launching of a state-of-the-art county plan data retrieval system. While this work is ongoing, the Commission needs to continue to mine the data it has to tell the Proposition 63 story and share it with state and local media.
4. Assembly and State Senate legislators do not receive regular reports on Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funds by district. Setting up an information dissemination program to meet this need would be beneficial.
5. The Commission's website is its public front door, and as such is one of its most valuable tools for displaying and disseminating information to local and statewide stakeholders, state and national policymakers, the media, and the general public. It should be frequently refreshed with current content and enhanced with useful navigational tools that make information retrieval easier.

OVERVIEW OF GOALS AND TARGET AUDIENCES

- **Achieve Greater Public Understanding** of mental health and the California mental health system.
- **Understand the Commission's Role** as a collaborator and convener to advance progress in the mental health system.
- **Drive the Narrative** of oversight, accountability, and unmet needs in support of the transformation of California's mental health system.
- **Enhance Speed and Reach** of information dissemination, providing target audiences with relevant content.
- **Put a Face on Mental Health Successes and Challenges** by proactively identifying and promoting personal stories.

The Commission serves all Californians. There are four key categories of outward facing audiences:

1. **The general public;**
2. **Statewide and local policymakers;**
3. **California's mental health community;**
4. **The media (to reach each of these audiences).**

Strategies for communication must include a multifaceted and multichannel approach.

THE PLAN: STRATEGIES & TACTICS

1. **Media Relations and Outreach.** The Communications Staff will enhance and expand its media relations program with frequent news releases, utilize press conferences when appropriate, pitch reporters with story ideas, offer up issue experts, and write commentaries.

Some examples:

Staff recommends a press release, statewide press conference, editorial board tour, and developing commentaries for publication in news outlets on the Commission policy research project, when approved, including the Children's Crisis Services Report upon adoption.

Staff will develop media reports on the Commission's triage investment.

Staff will issue regular press releases on approved Innovation plans and related trend reports and evaluations.

Pitching stories is another key way to increase the likelihood of balanced news reporting reaching Californians. In 2015, the Commission issued a series of weekly "spotlights" on behavioral health care in the community. Staff will leverage the value of this year's reports, supplement them with other information, and provide them to selected reporters in the region. A pitch will be made to encourage TV, radio, or newspapers to re-tell the story. Staff will continue to monitor news coverage and actively respond to media inquiries and reports where appropriate.

Finally, in an effort to motivate reporters in the state to write expansive stories on the use of Proposition 63 dollars, staff will embark upon an exploratory project, investigating whether there are suitable foundations or colleges the Commission could partner with to develop mental health reporting expertise in California. Staff will complete research and make recommendations on this as a strategy in late 2016.

2. **Enhancing and Expanding the Commission's Public Information Products.** This includes updating, enhancing, and increasing fact sheets as appropriate, developing newspaper inserts for targeted distribution on topics such as homelessness, children's crisis services, triage, Innovation, Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI), peer certification, jail navigators, mental health first aid, and others as they arise.
3. **Managing the MHSOAC Website.** In early 2016, the MHSOAC will launch a new website with improved navigation that enhances usability. Staff will publicize the updated website to all key target audiences. Efforts to keep content refreshed will be a priority, ensuring that existing and newly developed communications products – words, images, and display of information – are as compelling as possible. The goal of website work will be to build upon what we have, and to ensure that the website will become the "go to" resource for the public, stakeholders, and the media.
4. **Expand Stakeholder Communications.** Staff will continue to use its communications expertise to develop a monthly e-newsletter to stakeholders. The e-newsletter will give a heads up on significant issues, accomplishments, challenges, and other news of interest to stakeholders.

5. **Research Ways to Provide Public Information around Annual County Updates.**
Recognizing the desire to heighten awareness of the elements in counties' annual updates, staff will develop a proposal specific to communicating trends found within them. In addition, staff will explore the feasibility of creating fact sheets for each legislative district to heighten awareness of how funding is deployed.
6. **Support Commission Work and Create Educational Products With Wide Reach.**
Staff will support the organization of webinars for PEI, Innovation, and triage training, and for technical assistance. Staff also will create and launch a radio campaign to targeted demographics to include messages of stigma and discrimination reduction (SDR) by using short interviews with consumers, counties/providers, and Commissioners.

Staff will continue to sponsor "Art with Impact" events at high schools and colleges to raise awareness of mental health and mental illness. Staff expects to fund 15-25 of these events in 2016.

Staff also will participate in several key Mental Health Fairs, walks, and other events. One of the highest profile events Staff will be co-partnering with is a special event on the Capitol lawn commemorating Mental Health Month on May 24, 2016.

A variety of video productions also are planned, including completion of a major documentary on the mental health challenges of veterans, including homelessness. In addition, Staff expects to develop video content for posting to the MHSOAC website on such topics as PEI, Innovation, Community Services and Supports (CSS), triage, and housing.

Staff will continue to air public service announcements (PSAs) and a half hour show that airs throughout the year on Crossings TV, which reaches a range of communities, including Chinese, Filipino, Hmong, Vietnamese, South Asian, and Russian. These PSAs address stigma and encourage people to seek mental health treatment.

Staff also will explore new communications opportunities, which may include sharing best practices and establishing an Award for Excellence, all intended to recognize counties, providers, and organizations for their work with Proposition 63.