

CIMH Center for Multicultural Development Newsletter

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THE CIMH CENTER FOR MULTICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AWARDED AN 18-MONTH CULTURAL COMPETENCE PLANNING GRANT FROM THE CALIFORNIA ENDOWMENT

CULTURAL COMPETENCE PLANNING GRANT

The CIMH Center for Multicultural Development (CMD) has received a grant from The California Endowment to support its work to promote cultural competence in California's County Mental Health systems. The purpose of this 18-month project is to develop a statewide training and technical assistance plan to enhance the cultural competence of the public mental health system.

As with the work of the CMD to date, the focus of this project is on supporting county efforts to enhance the cultural competence of county mental health systems. This funding will enable the CIMH CMD to address many of the strategies and recommendations developed by the participants of the February 2002 California Mental Health Directors Full Association Conference in Santa Barbara, CA. The project will increase our understanding of how culturally competent systems develop, identify training needs, and gather and disseminate information on best practices currently being implemented in California. Summarizing the objectives of the grant, CIMH will:

- Inventory local demographic, social, and mental health environmental factors, and identify local and statewide resources for cultural competence.
- Conduct an analysis of the cultural competence planning and implementation efforts of seven case study counties.
- Develop a template to guide the enhancement of cultural competence in counties and a related plan for providing technical assistance to assist their development efforts.

Our successful proposal was developed through a participatory approach, in which many committed individuals and agencies contributed their time and effort to the project design. We will continue this high level of stakeholder involvement throughout the implementation of the project. As with the Santa Barbara Convening, the success of this project will be a product of the participation and combined perspectives and efforts of Mental Health Directors and Ethnic Services Managers, contract agencies and researchers, and consumers and family members.

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We invite your participation in this project. We will use a variety of venues to communicate our progress, products and schedules of upcoming events, including our website (www.cimh.org). We will also provide a variety of mechanisms to solicit your feedback on and involvement in our work.

Among our initial implementation steps, we are recruiting a program manager, an evaluation consultant, and a resource development specialist to work on this project. Your interest in these positions or assistance in the recruitment effort is appreciated. The position descriptions will soon be posted on the CIMH website, under the CMD page.

FEBRUARY CONFERENCE

On February 6-7, 2002, in Santa Barbara, CA. the California Mental Health Directors Association devoted its Full Association Conference to cultural competence, but with a unique goal and approach. This convening was the setting for dialogue and an exchange of ideas among Mental Health Directors, consumers, family members, community-based service providers, contract agencies, Ethnic Service Managers, researchers, and the California Department of Mental Health, all facilitated by the Center for Multicultural Development from CIMH. Collectively, they addressed the task of identifying the steps needed to move cultural competence from concept to operation and from isolated practice to an embedded system-wide standard of practice.

Four of the five science editors of the widely recognized and acclaimed ethnic-specific supplement which sprang from the first ever Surgeon General's report on mental health, *Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity*, focused on Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Americans, African Americans, Latino/Hispanic Americans, and American Indians and Alaska Natives. These science editors were active participants for most of the proceedings and assisted in the planning of the conference. These researchers took part in an important discourse with Directors as we discuss the significant issues related to mental health disparities for culturally diverse communities, possible solutions, and the action steps necessary to confront this national issue so prominent in California. A report to the California Mental Health Community will be developed from the conference proceedings.

The primary purpose of the report will be to promote positive change in County Mental Health Systems by capturing and memorializing the recommendations for action developed by the Mental Health Directors and other system stakeholders who participated in the February Conference in Santa Barbara. As with the Convening, this report will not be a beginning; it is intended to build on the work of many people and entities that have championed the cause of cultural competence over the past decade. Nor will this report mark an end point; it will point the direction for overcoming barriers faced by County Mental Health Systems and provide the groundwork for developing, reaching, and sustaining consensus among stakeholders for the accepted coordinated course of future action.