

Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
Office of the Attorney General
California Department of Justice
Attn: Public Inquiry Unit
P.O. Box 944255
Sacramento, CA 94244-2550

08April2009

Dear Staff Member:

I am a physician-psychiatrist with a practice focused on treating the public-sector mentally ill in Sacramento County (“the County”). The County is embarking on a course of action which is unethical and immoral. I believe, though I am not a lawyer, that the plan is also unlawful. Specifically, the County is diverting Mental Health Services Act (“MHSA”) funds which were allocated to new and innovative programs, and using those funds to pay for obligations unrelated to the programs for which the MHSA funds were awarded.

There is one example with which I am intimately familiar. I am a psychiatrist at TCORE, one such MHSA-sponsored program. We are budgeted and staffed for 250 patients. We have been recognized as a remarkably successful program. The County is now closing most of their outpatient services and proposing to “refer” 1,500 patients to our program without a commensurate increase in funding. These patients are not those for whom TCORE was designed. TCORE has neither the budget, nor the staff, nor the facilities to handle these patients. The County is cynically shifting a population of non-qualifying patients to a program funded by MHSA in order to indirectly divert MHSA funding to cover their general fund obligations. Of course, the population targeted by our program under our MHSA-approved funding will no longer be able to receive the services they need. Neither will the 1,500 patients being thrown at TCORE be able to receive mental health care even remotely approaching community care standards.

I further believe that the County’s MHSA steering committee was misled into approving this theft by being told that there were no alternatives when, in fact, viable alternatives exist which would allow the County to provide their patient population with care exceeding community standards at a cost well within their budget.

On behalf of the patients currently served by TCORE, the patients being heartlessly abandoned by the County, and the providers being displaced, I ask you to look into this situation.

Thank you for any attention you can spare.

Sincerely,



Ron Risley MD
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