



**National Association  
of Mental Health  
Planning and  
Advisory Councils**

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The National Association of Mental Health Planning and Advisory Councils (NAMHPAC) represents 57 State and territory mental health planning councils, attached to the public mental health system and offering guidance to that system and the Governor of each state on the status of the mental health system. On behalf of NAMHPAC, thank you for the opportunity to provide information on how the federal government can utilize planning councils in the process of developing more effective community-based systems of care for persons with serious mental illness and children and adolescents with serious emotional disturbance.

Beginning with the passage of Public Law 99-660 in 1986, and continuing through the re-authorization of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in P.L. 106-310 (2000), the federal government has mandated mental health planning as a condition for receipt of federal mental health block grant funds, and has mandated participation by mental health planning and advisory councils, including clients and families, in the planning process. Inclusion of consumers and family members is essential in any review and modification of the existing systems of care.

Section 300x-3(c) of the law requires that planning councils include representatives of State agencies representing Mental Health, Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Criminal Justice, Housing, Social Services and the state Medicaid Agency. Because of this composition, planning councils are well suited to address the fragmentation in the system of care that the Commission so clearly outlines in its interim report to the President. Planning councils already bring together consumers, family members, providers, and advocates, as well as representatives of the systems that must improve their collaboration in order to reduce barriers to receiving quality services, and should be the locus for State-level planning to improve the comprehensive system of care.

Further, planning councils are required by Section 300x-3(b) to “monitor, review, and evaluate, not less than once each year, the allocation and adequacy of mental health services within the State.” This mandate addresses the entire mental health system within the State, including both public and private systems. Planning councils can be instrumental in reviewing existing systems of care and in formulating strategies to overcome barriers and eliminate gaps in services. Planning councils should be empowered to use data gathered during this annual review to drive changes and improvements in services, including increased access to evidence-based services.

Planning councils are also charged to serve as advocates for persons with serious mental illness and for children with serious emotional disturbance, and that mandate can include advocating for the adoption of a Continuous Quality Improvement model for evaluating the efficacy and effectiveness of services, based on consumer and family member evaluations of the quality of services received and their satisfaction with those services.

Because planning councils are already established to monitor and evaluate mental

health services in the States, and because planning councils are composed of the consumers, family members, providers, advocates and social service agencies that will need to be represented in changing and reducing fragmentation in the mental health system of care, NAMHPAC strongly urges the Commission to:

- Recommend that the Administrator of SAMHSA use the established planning councils as the primary locus for reviewing the existing system and for planning and implementing changes in the mental health systems of the States and territories.
- Recommend that the Administrator of SAMHSA strengthen the role of planning councils in the SAMHSA Performance Partnership Performance Grant currently being proposed, and
- Recommend that Congress provide for permanent funding for the operation of planning councils.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact either of us.

Sincerely,

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