

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

November 19, 2021

Kevin Rice, LCSW, CCHP-MH
PRESIDENT

Dear IST Solutions Workgroup:

Sam Knudsen, JD
VICE PRESIDENT

I write on behalf of the Forensic Mental Health Association of California (FMHAC) in support of draft recommendations focused on providing training and technical assistance to court appointed evaluators and other criminal justice stakeholders, and recommendations to improve access to community-based restoration, CONREP, and diversion programs. We applaud the Workgroup for recognizing that a well-trained workforce and efficient processes for connecting people to timely treatment and services in the community are vital first steps in addressing the State's IST population.

Deanna Adams, JD
SECRETARY

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DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Many of the draft recommendations focus on training for court appointed evaluators, jail staff, and professionals who serve in specific service areas, such as housing providers and CalAIM stakeholders. In addition to these professionals, it is important that the Workgroup also consider training and technical assistance for all professionals who may touch the IST and potentially IST populations, including 911 dispatchers, community supervision agencies such as probation departments and other county and non-governmental agencies tasked locally with supervising justice-involved populations, and service providers who deliver wraparound services that address social determinants of mental health.

Moreover, forensic basics or other targeted training should be funded and prioritized for clinicians responsible for providing treatment or case management, defense attorneys, and prosecutors. As an organization dedicated to advancing the provision of mental health services to people involved in the criminal justice system and to providing educational opportunities to the professionals involved in the delivery of these services, FMHAC regularly provides its Signature Training, *Forensic Mental Health 101* and other introductory through advanced training to these said professionals. Dedicated training for these professionals is essential for encouraging effective responses to highly vulnerable populations throughout the criminal justice continuum.

Additionally, providing training to these professionals may improve access to Penal Code § 1001.36 diversion routed through nontraditional programs, such as mental health courts, pre-trial release programs, and other alternative to incarceration programs currently in place in some counties.

As you move forward with considering the draft recommendations, we also urge you to consider developing an infrastructure that leverages the expertise of organizations that provide education, training, and technical assistance to the professionals and agencies identified by the Workgroup. These organizations can provide subject matter expertise that can assist the State in effectively implementing recommendations and with incorporating appropriate mechanisms to ensure the sustainability of the Workgroup's efforts.

The IST Solutions Workgroup draft recommendations present a promising start for moving the State in the right direction. We look forward to the Workgroup's final report.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Isidro', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Catherina Isidro, Executive Director
FORENSIC MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA