

Press Release #3
Department of Health Targets
Hale Na`au Pono for Double Standard Treatment

Hale Na`au Pono's Outpatient services have been carried on for two decades under contract with the State Department of Health. One of its services had been provided by a Licensed Social Worker (Master Degree in Social Work and Licensed by the State of Hawai'i.) Hawai'i law allows an LSW to perform seven out of 8 social work defined task, with the 8th task reserved to a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) or higher (HRS §467E-1.5).

By the end of FY 2007 (June 30, 2007), AMHD had not contracted, nor offered to Hale Na`au Pono a contract for Outpatient services. Similar to the prior year, Hale Na`au Pono was forced to maintain its services without a contract, in the interest of preserving the health and services to its consumer base. Hale Na`au Pono expended over \$400 thousand without being reimbursed by the State. One point of contention was whether or not a Licensed Social Worker was eligible to perform social work services under this contract, the State taking a position that a Licensed Clinical Social Worker or higher was required. This was a change in prior State position.

Hale Na`au Pono had pointed out that AMHD's community mental health centers used and continue to use that level of license for those services described in the law. Hale Na`au Pono pointed out that its prior years of OPS services were delivered with the LSW on the team. Hale Na`au Pono pointed out that AMHD was denying people from the practice of social work to which they were licensed and declared competent to perform by Hawai'i law. The state initially agreed to allow the LSW as a State reimbursable member of the team.

After numerous meetings with AMHD, Hale Na`au Pono was offered a "take it or leave it" proposal from the State which refused to permit the use of an LSW for those seven areas the Hawai'i law recognizes their qualification to practice. AMHD declared that they would not reimburse for the past months for the work performed by that level of license.

Hale Na`au Pono could not accept this unfair contract which discriminated against this Waianae based community mental health center and opted not to sign with the State.

The State has asked Hale Na`au Pono to produce the names of all of its consumers serviced under its Outpatient Services program. Hale Na`au Pono has expressed to the State that it would receive its consumer list upon the State's agreement to reimburse for all of its legitimate OPS costs, and with the consumers' consent to release their names to the State. To date, the State still owes Hale Na`au Pono approximately \$100,000. Hale Na`au Pono has not turned over a consumers listing to the State and will not until fully paid as previously agreed.

Hale Na`au Pono has continued to serve consumers under its OPS program without reimbursement from the State.

Because the State has tied a Clubhouse service to the OPS contract, Hale Na`au Pono has not been able to obtain reimbursement for its extensive Clubhouse program which has operated for over a decade, addressing the need for social interaction, employment training, and healthy daily meals of its seriously mentally ill members. Members continue to participate daily at Hale Na`au Pono's Clubhouse, but with dwindling resources, it is questionable how long this service can continue.

For further information, contact Hale Na`au Pono at 696-4211 (Alvina Kaopuiki or Bernie Downey) or go to www.wccmhc.org.