



Mental Health Association in Los Angeles County

An affiliate of the
National Mental Health Association,
ranked by Money Magazine as one
of the nation's top health charities

— November 2000

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October 1, 2002

Supervisor Michael Antonovich
500 West Temple St., Room 869
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Supervisor Antonovich:

I am writing to seek your support for an L.A. County Commission on Men.

Men's lack of mental health treatment is tied to many of our social ills including homelessness, incarceration, suicide and delinquency. In fact treatment disparities are even larger by sex than by race. In local jails, mentally ill males are 18% less likely than females to be treated (38% vs. 57%) while mentally ill blacks are 11% less likely than whites to be treated (34% vs. 45%).¹

Men's lack of treatment stems largely from the male social role. Even in dual-income families, men are usually expected to be the primary source of income. This can mean longer hours, longer commutes and more out-of-town travel, often resulting in less family social support. This not only strains men's mental health but also creates barriers and time constraints on getting treated.

One recent study verified that men are more affected by work-related stress than women are.² And yet the same role that makes men more sensitive to work stress also makes them more dependent on a job for self-esteem. Losing a job doubles men's suicide rate, but not women's.

Gender roles also harm men's mental health by attaching powerful *stigmas* to receiving treatment. I have too often worked with men who avoid treatment for fear of their boss or wife finding out.

Men's mental health also affects their lower life expectancy and higher mortality rate for each of the 10 leading causes of death. Studies show that depression, for instance, increases coronary artery disease in men,³ and feeling hopeless increases cardiovascular disease in men.⁴

Please support the formation of a Commission for Men to look into these issues. Thank you.

Respectfully,


Richard Van Horn
Executive Director

¹ Ditton (1999). Mental health and treatment of inmates and probationers (BJS, NCJ-174463, p. 9). U.S. DoJ.

² Kendler, Thornton, Prescott. Gender differences in the rates of exposure to stressful life events and sensitivity to their depressogenic effects. American Journal of Psychiatry 2001; 158: 587-593.

³ Simon. Depression and coronary artery disease: A heartbreak for men. Harvard Men's Health Watch. November 1999.

⁴ Everson, Kaplan, Goldberg, et al. Hopelessness and 4-year progression of carotid arteriosclerosis. Arterioscler Thromb Vascular Biology 1997; 17: 1490-1495.

MHA Programs:

MHA Village Integrated Service Agency
Antelope Valley Services
Homeless Assistance Programs

Advocacy

Training and Consultation
Human Services Academy
Public Information and Assistance

A United Way Agency

Project Return: The Next Step
Clifford Beers Housing Corporation
Planned Lifetime Assistance Network

