

TO: NAMI California Global Email Distribution List

FROM: Ralph E. Nelson, Jr. MD, President-NAMI California Board of Directors

Hello All

Hopefully the court ordered state hospital pay raise will stop the drain of mental health care providers from the state hospitals to the prisons and beds will become available once again at the California state hospitals. With beds at our state hospitals not being used because there is no one to take care of the patients is untenable. This is especially horrific because consumers who have been deemed incompetent to stand trial have been languishing in our county jails since January of 2007 when most admissions to the state hospitals were severely curtailed.

However, this does not address the root of this evil. The state of California is remiss in not assuring the mental and physical health care of its mentally ill citizens not only in the prisons and state hospitals, but in our communities. It is the governor's and the state legislature's responsibility to assure that there are adequate training institutions and faculty to train enough mental health providers to meet the needs of our state. Raising wages for the mental health care providers in the state hospitals and the prisons will only steal more of these people from the local communities which do not have enough mental health providers to meet their needs. This should have been addressed long before the Mental Health Services Act was passed and now we are in the middle of one of the worst mental health care crises this state has ever seen.

Not only has the lack of state resources caused many of our mentally ill adolescent and adult children to become residents of jails, prisons and forensic portions of the state hospitals, but once they are incarcerated, they usually end up suffering inadequate or life threatening care. This type of treatment of mentally ill consumers is simply not acceptable!

**Ralph E Nelson Jr MD
President, NAMI California**