

Claire-Elizabeth DeSophia MFT

Dear colleague,

I am an EBC Board member this year (and other years in the past, although not last year), and an active member of the SaveCAMFT movement which ultimately failed to reform the culture of the CAMFT Board and leadership. I have been very attentive to both the state and local CAMFT organizations' ways of operating and actions taken. I also write this as a citizen and psychotherapist (for over 30 years, during which I was a CAMFT member), who is passionately interested in social justice issues, especially as they affect our field.

I believe that the East Bay Chapter of CAMFT (EBC) should end its affiliation with CAMFT for the following reasons:

— *Freed from the constraints and requirements placed upon all chapters, a revitalized independent EBC could do many things, including lobby for anti-trust restrictions to be lifted so that psychotherapists (of all disciplines, perhaps; the new org's members would have a say in whether it becomes multi-disciplinary, unlike CAMFT) could come together and collectively seek raises from insurance companies, as well as use our collective power to force them be responsive to our concerns about dealing with them (payment issues, required clinical reviews, billing difficulties, etc etc.) We would learn from what has been done about this by some pioneering Massachusetts clinicians for the past several years; see Clinicians United for more info.*

Currently the Chapter is not permitted by CAMFT to lobby or take independent actions like these. The CAMFT Board and ED have been consistently non-responsive to requests to actively take on managed care issues. (Knowing we'd be voting soon, their eblast last week was, I believe, strategically timed to convince our members that CAMFT is finally going to do something about all this. After being stonewalled for years, I don't believe that will happen.)

— *The non-affiliated EBC could advocate for single payer (improved MediCare for everyone), which is currently being considered right now in the CA state legislature and introduced at the national level. If single payer passes in CA, it will impact our work dramatically. And yet, what have you heard about it from CAMFT?*

We therapists need to be prepared to be at the table where payment rates and rules are determined.

Given CAMFT's lack of interest and non-efforts on this issue, we need to take it on ourselves. While it would have been great for CAMFT to be involved, it has shown it to be spectacularly uninterested in anything to do with single payer.

—Other social justice issues of concern to our membership could be actively worked on, now and in the future, including but not limited to LGBTQI concerns; mental health needs of prisoners and former inmates; supporting diversity in our organization and profession; funding cuts for mental health services for the homeless, the poor, and for Planned Parenthood; becoming MediCare providers so we can directly serve clients over 65; and so much more. Again, member input would drive the organization's agenda, unlike CAMFT.

—The pressing needs of interns and trainees could be addressed, including a requirement that internships are always paid and at some minimum rate; scholarships for trainees; aiding intern placements (like the Intern Job Fair we just held); special trainings to help interns prepare for post-licensure careers in either private practice or at agencies; continuing our Mentorship program; and so much more. Interns would have full representation as members and on the Board (unlike CAMFT). We would actively ask interns and trainees what they need and help them get it.

—Growing the membership, and thereby increasing funds and ability to hire staff and attract volunteers for such activities. There are many MFTs who left CAMFT or would never join it because they don't like what the organization has done or has become, who have already approached the Board to let us know they'd love to be part of an independent organization. See also the letter of interest in aligning in some way from Bay Area AAMFT that will be sent to you in the next few days. And a huge percentage of CAMFT members are not affiliated with any chapter; if we were doing something for them, perhaps they'd join us.

We could expand our territory throughout the Bay Area (and beyond) and also connect to the large San Francisco and Marin therapist communities. We could also consider opening full membership to other licenses. Member input on these and all other major decisions would, of course, be sought (again, unlike CAMFT does).

—Key driving forces behind the desire of many of us for the Chapter to leave CAMFT are CAMFT's consistent lack of transparency and lack of responsiveness and accountability to members. We are members of CAMFT but we don't know what is going on behind the scenes! Our primary goal with the new EBC is to be responsive to the needs and wishes of our members, and the needs of our clients and our communities.

The ethical bankruptcy and administrative malfeasance of CAMFT leadership has been carefully hidden from view by a very legalistic interpretation of what can be shared with members and by a deliberate effort to hide its actions and decisions. You would be shocked at what you would learn if former CAMFT Board members could speak about what they know and have suffered. Perhaps you would like to require CAMFT to allow them to do so without severe personal penalties that would now be imposed.

Transparency, democracy and ethics will be cornerstones of the newly revitalized organization now called EBC.

Please note: your individual membership in CAMFT or EBC will not be affected in any way if the Chapter leaves CAMFT. And EBC would continue the networking, social and continuing education events as always. (We have not been able to offer CE events for some time because of the change in BBS rules and the uncertainty about whether we would have a new organizational name to apply for the ability to offer CE's.)

For over 5 years, the SaveCAMFT movement tried valiantly to shed light and reform CAMFT, to little or no avail. It is time to move on and take our needs and our future into our own hands.

I urge you to join those of us who see a big and exciting future for EBC once free from CAMFT's heavy hand. Please vote **YES** to the Chapter becoming independent of CAMFT.

Thank you.

Claire-Elizabeth DeSophia MFT
East Bay CAMFT Board Member
[510/652-3311](tel:5106523311) * Berkeley

desophia.ebc@earthlink.net