

Jurgen Braungardt, MFT, Ph.D
President, East Bay CAMFT
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Dear Members,

I am recommending that you support our chapter's separation from CAMFT. Claire-Elizabeth and Ben Jones have summarized the arguments very well, so I just want to add a little bit of perspective on the future.

Becoming an independent organization will allow us to grow, because the bottleneck of having to be a CAMFT member in order to join our local organization will fall away. You will not lose your CAMFT membership if we separate. You will gain the freedom to choose your "roof organization," or live without one. As you can see from the Bay Area AAMFT Support Letter, many other local therapists are very interested in joining us, but only if we are an independent organization. We currently have the **historic opportunity** to unify CAMFT and AAMFT groups in the Bay Area and become truly independent. I think this is the most democratic way forward: it frees us from the dependency on hierarchies that often do not work in the best interests of their constituents.

Given the interest of local AAMFT therapists, I am fairly certain that we will quickly grow to more than a 1000 members. We will also have more money and expertise to create better member services, and to represent therapists more effectively in the economic and political domains. We will continue to interact and possibly cooperate with CAMFT when it comes to the interests for our profession, but now we can speak more clearly and as an independent group on behalf of psychotherapists.

I have always felt that it is on us therapists to form organizations that reflect the deep ethical stance of our profession. We should be transparent, democratic, and ethical. We should be responsive to the needs of our members, and the community. Our work and our professional organizations should be rooted in the larger concepts of social justice, especially in a world that is changing rapidly and in unpredictable ways. I am confident that a new and diverse therapist organization, centered in the Bay Area with its startup mentality, will do a pretty good job in renewing and redefining our profession in the 21st Century.

It is imperative for the future of psychotherapy that we fight for better reimbursement from third parties, and that we keep the process of therapy free from the interference of insurance companies. I am convinced that an independent Bay Area organization with more than a thousand members and good leadership will have the potential to substantially improve the professional and economic well-being of its members.

If you read all the pros and cons, and still feel skeptical about our future as an independent therapist organization, consider this: You can either vote for the status quo (and how well has this worked for us so far?) or you can create the opportunity for change by voting YES.

The future of this organization now lies in the hands of its members.

Sincerely,

Jurgen Braungardt, MFT, Ph.D.
President, East Bay CAMFT.