



National Eating Disorders Association
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STAR Program Event in Sacramento: February 23, 2009

Approximately 30 people—family members, treatment providers, individuals, and a few legislative staffers--gathered on the morning of Feb 23rd, an incredibly rainy Monday, in Sacramento to raise awareness about eating disorders, to launch the Worldwide Charter for Action on Eating Disorders, and to make policy recommendations. We had three panel speakers—Sari Shepphird, Ph.D., Clinical Psychologist, Eating Disorders Specialist; Connie Sobczak, Co-Founder and Executive Director, The Body Positive; and Doris Smeltzer, MA, President, Andrea's Voice Foundation.

Two legislators, Assemblywoman Fiona Ma and Senator Pat Wiggins, co-authors of a resolution to make this National Eating Disorder Awareness Week in California, were each in attendance, and spoke in support of combating eating disorders. Both women, despite initially reporting their inability to stay throughout the session, not only stayed until the end, but were visibly moved by the comments of each of the panel speakers. The legislators even stayed after to speak with panelists, as well as many of the people in attendance. Both expressed dedicated interest in doing whatever necessary to prevent additional suffering from eating disorders in CA. Assemblywoman Ma even offered to introduce another bill in the next couple of weeks! We hope to move forward with additional legislation immediately.

It was clear that not only was the day inspiring for many of the families who have been desperately seeking a voice, and solutions to their struggles, but that the event also eye-opening, and perhaps life changing for the legislators as well. We clearly now have some strong advocates in the CA legislature, which promises much hope for future legislative change.