

Honorable Rodney S. Melville
Presiding Judge, Santa Barbara Superior Court
312-C East Cook Street
Santa Maria, CA 93456-5369

June 26, 2001

Grand Jury Foreperson
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In accordance with statutory requirements, we are responding to the findings and recommendations designated by the Grand Jury in their report entitled "Mental Health Services", dated June 2001.

Finding 10: Reimbursement problems created in the budget might have been avoidable if there had been a way to cross-check service data between Departments prior to submitting the services information to the State, or any other granting agency.

Response: We agree that the ability to cross-check service data between Departments would be helpful in preparing service-units estimates at the beginning of the fiscal year, although we believe that such action alone would not cause reimbursement problems to be 'avoided'.

Recommendation 10: ADMHS Management should undertake data sharing with other Departments partnered in client services to assure that the most accurate information is being used to design client services and to create reports.

Response: The ADMHS fiscal group has begun a project with a goal to document, analyze, and share data among MISC Departments (Social Services, Public Health, Probation, and ADMHS) pertaining to services provided by those departments to ADMHS clients. It is intended that this information will help ADMHS in assessing the populations served, the needs of those populations, and the number of service-units required annually.

Finding 16a: ADMHS has contracted with the Auditor-Controller to provide fiscal management services.

Response: The contract for fiscal services was approved by the Board of Supervisors on January 23, 2001 for an initial term expiring June 30, 2003.

Recommendation 16a: Complete the work that remains to be done to streamline financial processes for clinical staff and to increase the accuracy of records and billings.

Response: We agree with the recommendation. It is our intent to increase the accuracy of records and billings and to improve financial and accounting processes over which we have control. The ability to streamline financial procedures in the clinics will require the support of ADMHS management and clinic personnel.

Finding 16b: While fiscal matters are important, the mission of ADMHS is the delivery of mental health services within the county.

Response: We agree with both assertions – fiscal matters are important and the mission of ADMHS is the delivery of mental health services within the county.

Recommendation 16b: Before any reductions in programs are proposed, the restructuring and streamlining of the Department should be allowed to go into operation and take hold.

Response: While we agree that the primary focus of ADMHS is the delivery of mental health services, any and all services provided need to be, of necessity, delivered within the available fiscal resources of the department. Design and implementation of a plan to effectively restructure and streamline operations of the department is a longterm proposition, which we estimate could take three to five years to have a significant financial impact. As the Grand Jury points out, “ADMHS must develop a comprehensive and system-wide approach to its system of care. There must be uniform understanding of what, for whom, and how services will be provided and how they will be funded.” Until these actions are accomplished, and desired services are matched to available funding, current financial constraints will be a significant factor in the level of services ADMHS is able to deliver.

The Auditor-Controller’s office appreciates the challenging task faced by the Grand Jury in their analysis of ADMHS. We will do our best to provide ADMHS management and others with accurate, timely, and pertinent financial data to facilitate a fully informed management decision-making process.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert W. Geis, CPA
County Auditor-Controller