

September 11, 2001

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

Board of Supervisors' Response to the 2000-01 Grand Jury Report on: "Mental Health Services"

Dear Judge Melville:

During its regular meeting of September 11, the Board of Supervisors adopted the following responses as their responses to the 2000-01 Grand Jury report on "Mental Health Services". The Board of Supervisors thanks the Grand Jury for its work on this report.

FINDING 1a: The Grand Jury found that management has failed to communicate adequately with staff, perceive and anticipate problems, work to resolve problems brought to its attention by staff, and, in general, deal proactively with the care and handling of staff and clients.

Response: The Board disagrees partially with the finding. The Board agrees that there has been a communication breakdown between management and staff, particularly in the Adult Services Division. However, as the Grand Jury noted in Finding 1b, a number of initiatives were launched to address the issues raised in the finding. Management and staff, working through the Labor-Management Collaborative, have met regularly since November 2000 to resolve issues raised by staff. A system of care project team comprised of staff and management was established in May 2000 and has been charged with making recommendations on a system of care.

FINDING 1b: The beginnings of solutions to these problems are in place: A well-managed recruitment process has led to the selection of a new ADMHS Director. A Labor-Management Project Team has been created in Adult Programs. More emphasis and effort have been placed

on employee recruitment and retention. Better management of clinical operations is being facilitated by the new ADMHS structure. A contract with the Auditor-Controller for fiscal management of ADMHS clarifies the fiscal situation and should lead to more informed and confident decision-making.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (agree).

FINDING 1c: The Labor-Management Project Team has accomplished much in the seven months that it has been in existence. This Project Team, in combination with the thoughtful and comprehensive search and research done by the Personnel Department and the County Administrator's Office, participated in the evaluation and choice of the new ADMHS Director.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (agree).

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Labor-Management Project Team should continue to meet until all processes proposed by the group are underway.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (the recommendation has been implemented and will continue to be implemented).

The Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response reads in part: The Labor-Management Project Team is scheduled to meet on the 4th Monday of each month, unless otherwise determined by the Project Team.

FINDING 2: After a lengthy process involving major stake holders including the Labor Management Project Team, the Mental Health Commission, the Advisory Board on Drug and Alcohol Problems, ADMHS management, and the Auditor-Controller's office, the Department's restructuring proposal was presented in May 2001 by the Department to the Board of Supervisors. This restructuring should benefit clients by facilitating an integration of service delivery among the ADMHS staff serving adults, children, and alcohol/drug clients. Creating a supervisory level between program managers and their staffs will resolve the presently large span of control being dealt with by the program managers.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (agree).

RECOMMENDATION 2: The restructuring proposed by the Department with input from the Auditor-Controller and the County Administrator is necessary in order to improve ADMHS services in the County. The incoming Director should review and act on the proposal's key ideas.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's as its response. (has been implemented).

FINDING 3: Morale is low. People feel stressed and many are unhappy enough to seriously consider leaving ADMHS or even the mental health profession. Failures in communication contribute to this stress and unhappiness.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (disagree partially).

RECOMMENDATION 3a: Current and new management must signal that it will listen to staff and do what it takes to improve conditions and boost morale. The leadership capacities and expectations of the managers and executives in the Department should be enhanced. Resources are available from the County Director of Organization Effectiveness to assist ADMHS with these critical tasks. Managers should be held responsible for demonstrating improved leadership practices.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's as its response (has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented).

RECOMMENDATION 3b: Following the success and example of the Labor-Management Project Team, programs and activities that promote openness should be evaluated and, if believed to have promise, implemented.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented).

FINDING 4a: Clinicians and other line staff might fail to understand fully the difficult and complex problems facing management. Unfocused, imprecise complaints about job dissatisfaction are not sufficient to enable busy decision-makers to perceive that a real problem might exist. In any case, the lack of specificity is a communication failure.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's as its response (agree).

FINDING 4b: The Labor-Management and System of Care Project Teams are appropriate vehicles for error-free and timely dissemination of information throughout this geographically far-flung Department.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's as its response (disagree partially).

RECOMMENDATION 4: Staff should take pains to assure that the complaints they voice and the recommendations they make are real, specific, and appropriately directed. Management, in turn, should create a climate that encourages candor and assures that every complaint or

recommendation is given attention and follow-up. Staff members should extend a climate of good will to new management and, particularly important, should allow sufficient time for new management to form an agenda to address problems. A climate of patience, openness, and willingness to listen should be demonstrated from the start by staff and management.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's as its response.

FINDING 5a: Heavy caseloads were reported and appear to be a major source of staff concern: Adult Services Long-Term Care clinicians have too many clients. Each client needs more attention (time) than is often available to the clinician. Paperwork, required for funding purposes, takes a large fraction of clinician time. Lack of management attention can create a sense of isolation, which can make an already heavy caseload become unbearable.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's as its response (agree).

FINDING 5b: The interdisciplinary System-of-Care Project Team is well suited to research and propose a comprehensive plan that addresses some of the broader issues involved in high case loads. This should help to assure that those served by ADMHS—within the resources available—receive quality services in a timely manner.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's as its response (agree).

RECOMMENDATION 5a: Assessments done by ADMHS professionals in the Main Jail for the Mental Health Treatment Court (MHTC) should be aligned with the types of assessments done in the Long-Term Treatment clinics.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable).

RECOMMENDATION 5b: The caseload situation, specifically as a result of the MHTC, needs to be assessed by management or, preferably, by the System-of-Care Project Team. Management should recognize that a perceived problem is a real problem. It is not enough to try to prove that the caseload is manageable if many members of the clinical staff are having trouble dealing with their caseloads.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's as its response (recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be implemented).

FINDING 6: Most clinicians favor a return to the four-person intake team, which was abandoned in favor of the change to a call-in (1-800) client-intake access system in which prospective clients are interviewed and triaged by telephone. A call-in system omits information that would be obtained by seeing the client and noting facial expressions, body language, demeanor, dress, hygiene, stress-level, etc.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's as its response (agree).

RECOMMENDATION 6: Management should return to the four-person intake team as a more effective way of assessing clients and distributing work.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response, as its response (requires further analysis).

FINDING 7: Having to share offices impedes clinicians' counseling efforts and could compromise clinician-client confidentiality.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (agree).

RECOMMENDATION 7: This problem must be resolved by providing private interview areas, if not private offices, that are available for all interviews at all times:

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as it pertains to providing private interview areas for all interviews at all times (has been implemented).

FINDING 8: Many clients have difficulty finding their way to the centralized mental health facilities.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (disagree partially).

RECOMMENDATION 8: ADMHS should locate some satellite counseling sites in downtown Santa Barbara and Santa Maria that are closer to where clients live.

Response from the Board of Supervisors: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response, as its response (will not be implemented in the near future because it cannot be accomplished without an identified source of funding).

ADMHS response reads: This recommendation

FINDING 9a: Too much paperwork is a universal complaint because clinicians feel that they need to spend more time with their clients.

Response from the Board of Supervisors: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (agree).

FINDING 9b: Despite all the paperwork, client information is not readily available to assist a clinician in designing urgently needed services.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (disagree).

RECOMMENDATION 9a: Redundant data collection should be minimized.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (has been implemented).

RECOMMENDATION 9b: Patient data, respecting all confidentiality laws, should be easily available to those professionals who need to provide urgent client care, and appropriately authorized professionals system-wide should have access to client data both during and outside of regular clinic hours, especially at the Jail.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response.

ADMHS response: The first segment of the recommendation requires further analysis. The segment of the recommendation pertaining to the Jail has been implemented.

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: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (disagree).

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 Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response, as its response (requires further analysis).

FINDING 11: Staffing vacancies in ADMHS add to the casework overload of the current staff.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (agree).

RECOMMENDATION 11: In addition to staff recruitment, proposals on caseload redistribution developed by the Labor-Management and System of Care Project Teams should be evaluated and, if found to be useful, implemented.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (will be implemented).

FINDING 12a: There has been a lack of management commitment to job training and career advancement for the staff.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (disagree partially).

FINDING 12b: A career path to supervisory positions may be unavailable to most of the staff due to what appears to be a requirement to have supervisory experience in order to qualify for a supervisory position.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (agree).

RECOMMENDATION 12a: Management should encourage staff to advance professionally, increase their knowledge, and keep up-to-date via courses, seminars, workshops, and related activities.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (has been implemented).

RECOMMENDATION 12b: In combination with the restructuring of ADMHS, efforts introduced by the Labor-Management Project Team are valuable toward addressing employee career advancement concerns. These include the evaluation of grades within the clinical

classifications and by the addition of working supervisor assignments within the clinics. These efforts should continue to be supported and advanced by management.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented).

FINDING 13: No incentives are provided to recruit staff members proficient in needed foreign languages.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (disagree).

RECOMMENDATION 13: In view of the ethnic makeup of the communities being served, the recruitment and retention of adequate numbers of clinicians fluent in languages in addition to English should be made a priority.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response.

FINDING 14: Many clinicians don't understand Department funding, funding mechanisms, and funding planning, and are uninformed about the long-term and near-term planning of ADMHS.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (agree).

RECOMMENDATION 14a: New management must find ways to explain ADMHS financing so that it is readily understood. The leadership in the Labor-Management and System-of-Care Project Teams should educate colleagues as the new system of care is designed.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented over the next three to six months).

RECOMMENDATION 14b: The System of Care Project Team should ensure that all stakeholders have an opportunity to review and comment on their work before final recommendations are made.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented).

FINDING 15: Three specific challenges face the new ADMHS Director:

- Staff concerns for whom they are providing services and the way in which they serve their clients.
- The sustainability of ADMHS funding.
- The necessity of communicating staff concerns to administrators and, in turn, communicating administrators' concerns to the staff.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (agree).

RECOMMENDATION 15: The new Director should enlist the support of all employees as well as the Labor-Management and System-of-Care Project Teams in dealing with these important issues.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response.

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

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's and Auditor Controller's response as its response (agree).

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

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (agree).

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: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (has been implemented).

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: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response, as its response (requires further analysis).

FINDING 17: The need to upgrade ADMHS facilities, especially the Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF), is one of Santa Barbara County's most pressing space problems.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health department's response as its response (agree). However, the Board also wishes to point out, as the General Services department noted in their response, that the County has a significant space shortage as documented in the North and South County Space Utilization reports.

RECOMMENDATION 17: ADMHS facilities need to be evaluated and immediate action taken to recondition or replace existing buildings as necessary.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response, as its response (requires further analysis).

FINDING 18: The public has little knowledge of the work done by ADMHS and how this work benefits the community.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (partially disagree).

RECOMMENDATION 18: The public should be made aware of the efforts of ADMHS via better public relations efforts that take advantage of all media. Publicity could be obtained through efforts to involve civic organizations, social service groups, and philanthropic organizations committed to the best interests of the people of Santa Barbara County.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response, as its response (requires further analysis).

FINDING 19a: Thus far, the Alcohol/Drug services component of ADMHS has been poorly integrated into the Department's mental health system of care.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (agree).

FINDING 19b: The dually diagnosed comprises the largest single group of clients in ADMHS.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (disagree partially).

FINDING 19c: Based on the SEARCH survey, and managerial and staff interviews, the dually diagnosed is a client group on which more focus should be placed.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (agree).

FINDING 19d: The System-of-Care Project Team is chartered to identify and address the needs of the community and to assess the resources of the Department to design appropriate programs. The assessment will necessarily include the Alcohol Drug Programs.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (agree).

RECOMMENDATION 19a: The expertise of experienced alcohol and drug therapists in the County should be incorporated in the design of a comprehensive system of care. Such a system should particularly address the needs of dually diagnosed individuals.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented).

RECOMMENDATION 19b: ADMHS management and the commissions (Mental Health and Drug & Alcohol) must continue to embrace and support the work of the System-of-Care Project Team, and fully commit to implementing its recommendations.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (requires further analysis).

The department commits to supporting and embracing the Project Team's work, will carefully consider their recommendations which will be analyzed when the team completes its work.

FINDING 20: A sustainable system of care cannot be designed and funded without clearly defining the clients who are to be served. Client definition (e.g., dual diagnosed, acute only, preventive services, etc.) is the foundation on which all administrative decisions should be based.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (agree).

RECOMMENDATION 20: The system of care, and the funding to support it, should be consistent with the definition of the client. In order for the system to be sustainable, there must be uniform understanding of who ADMHS is expected to serve, what services will be provided, how those services will be provided, and how those services will be funded.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health (the recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented within each Division of the Department).

FINDING 21: Comprehensive plans and projects, specifically SEARCH and the Five-Year Plan for Adult Services, took a substantial amount of professional time and energy to create. Leaving them "on the shelf" costs taxpayer money and leads to staff frustration.

Response: The Board adopted the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Department's response as its response (disagree).

The findings from these two planning processes have been incorporated into many aspects of the Department, and will continue as funding becomes available.

RECOMMENDATION 21: The County Administrator and the Board of Supervisors should monitor, on a regular basis, specific ADMHS plans and the adherence to and progress of such plans. Some internal ADMHS mechanism, perhaps an evolution of the Labor-Management Project Team, should be involved.

Response: The Board adopted the County Administrator's response as its response (has been and will continue to be implemented).

The County Administrator meets with the Department Director and key staff on a quarterly basis at the Operations Review Meeting. The County Administrator's Office also meets with the department on a monthly basis to review the department's financial status and projection for the future, and recommends adjustments accordingly. The Board of Supervisors will receive a financial update in November 2001. In addition, there is ongoing discussion with the County Administrator's Office on the progress of the department's plans to provide services, manage its budget, and address various issues within the Department.

Please accept our appreciation for the time and effort that the Grand Jury has put into preparing this report.

Sincerely,

Joni Gray
Chair, Board of Supervisors

Attachments:

Table of Responses by Department
Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Department's Responses
County Administrator's Responses
Auditor Controller's Responses
General Services Department's Responses