



*Recommendation 1d.* Replace large windows with safety glass and secure them.

Response: The Oxnard, Ventura and Simi district offices all have large plate glass windows. Through the years of PSSA occupation these windows have never needed replacing. The only way to secure windows of this size would be to put up protective bars, resulting in the appearance of an "armed camp". This is not our desire.

*Recommendation 1e.* Add smoke/fire detector alarms.

Response: Smoke alarms were purchased by this agency and turned over to GSA for installation. Installation took place in June 1996.

*Recommendation 1f.* Repair sidewalk and parking lot.

Response: PSSA has requested that the City of Santa Paula, which is responsible for the sidewalk, make necessary repairs. PSSA has requested that the landlord make repairs to the parking lot.

*Recommendation 2.* A transparent "vision panel" should be inserted in the interior door.

Response: It needs to be determined if this is a "fire" door. If that is the case, it must remain in tact. A request for such a determination has been sent to the Building and Safety Department.

*Recommendation 3.* A "panic button" device should be provided to employees using the most distant interview rooms.

Response: A panic button system is in place in this facility. It needs to be hooked up and three additional interview rooms need to be added to the system. A work order has been initiated through GSA to give PSSA a cost estimate to hook up the existing system, make any repairs, and add the three additional interview rooms. PSSA will have the work done as soon as GSA can schedule it.

*Recommendation 4.* The CAO should make every effort to obtain better housing immediately. Mobile office buildings should be set up if a permanent site cannot be obtained within the next two months.

Response: PSSA concurs that every effort should be made to obtain better housing. No site on which to place mobile offices has been available.

*Recommendation 5.* The office be relocated to an "upgraded and larger building".

Response: PSSA has been in numerous planning meetings with the county's Facility Use Committee, City Manager of Santa Paula, GSA and Public Works Real Estate Services Division over the past fifteen months with no resolution to the problem of available space in the east end

of the city. Existing property in the west end was considered, but in each case the buildings were either in such a state of disrepair, non-reinforced masonry, or riddled with asbestos (all common problems with property of this vintage) that it would not be cost effective to attempt renovation. The city of Santa Paula indicated that possible redevelopment funds might be available if property could be identified for this effort. PSSA will continue to actively explore options to move to a different facility.

*Recommendation 6.* That employees be provided with decent surroundings in which to work.

Response: PSSA agrees fully that both employees and citizens deserve a safe and pleasant facility. The Oxnard and Ventura offices are county-owned facilities. Traditionally, these facilities are maintained at a high degree to protect the investment of the county. Unfortunately, the building housing the Santa Paula office is a leased facility. To date, all attempts on the part of PSSA, GSA and Real Estate Services to have the buildings' deficiencies corrected, have been unsuccessful. GSA has addressed many of the issues and resolved them at county expense. PSSA is continuing to request improvements to the facility and to pursue other options (e.g. moving to another facility).

Addendum to Santa Paula PSSA Office Reports (page 72)

*Recommendation 1.* Fire drills should be held on a regular basis.

Response: The agency has aggressively undertaken preparedness training for all offices and continues to be proactive in this effort. The recently formed safety committee will schedule fire drills.

*Recommendation 2.* Emergency evacuation schematic plans designating escape routes, fire extinguisher locations and exit doors should be posted at strategic locations throughout the facility.

Response: The actions necessary to comply with this recommendation are currently in progress.

*Recommendation 3.* In conjunction with recommendations 1 and 2, employees should be trained in their designated escape routes, proper use of fire extinguisher, and what to do in an emergency.

Response: The office manager or his/her designated representative sees that these notices and posters are properly displayed in a prominent place. The newly formed safety committee is making plans and schedules to affect this training.

*Recommendation 4.* All required posters, such as CAL/OSHA safety & health, should be conspicuously posted on employee bulletin boards.

Response: The office manager or his/her designated representative sees to it that these posters are properly displayed.

*Recommendation 5.* Injuries and illnesses recorded on the CAL OSHA 200 log should be maintained on a calendar year only and filed for five years.

Response: The Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP) clearly states instructions for the upkeep and posting of the 200 log. The office manager has responsibility for the IIPP.

*Recommendation 6.* The hallway leading to the east side exit door should be kept clear and unobstructed at all times.

Response: The obstructions have been removed.

*Recommendation 7.* Key personnel should be selected to attend the Employee Security and Awareness training program.

Response: PSSA has taken advantage of this training and have sent thirty-eight employees to the training.

*Recommendation 8.* Recommendations submitted as a result of the ergonomic survey should be implemented.

Response: With very few exceptions, this building is comprised of conventional free standing furniture. The modifications that can be made to this furniture is very limited. The only way to properly adjust/fit a work station to an individual is to install modular furniture. Unfortunately, this office does not lend itself to this application due to the configuration of the walls and the number of staff housed at this facility.

*Recommendation 9.* The sprayed-on ceiling material in the warehouse should be tested for asbestos and the extent of exposure determined.

Response: Art Schrope of GSA Risk Management did extensive testing in this building. His findings did not indicate any asbestos threat to employees or the public.

*Recommendation 10.* The GSA Health and Safety Division should immediately conduct a safety audit of this facility for occupational health, life, safety and disaster hazards.

Response: In March 1996, GSA conducted a safety inspection (WO# 133086) of this facility. As a result of this inspection, twenty-six work orders were initiated and completed by GSA. The remaining items on their safety inspection list were items outside their jurisdiction.

Ventura Welfare Offices' Labor Intensive System (pages 74 & 75)

*Recommendation 1.* County Supervisors should determine the accountability for the continued problems with welfare eligibility and payments operations reported by two previous grand juries.

Response: The Board of Supervisors and PSSA are committed to changing the whole system of welfare eligibility and payments to provide more cost-effective and meaningful temporary assistance to those in need. Ventura County's Partnerships to Restore Independence and Dignity through Employment (PRIDE) Program, in conjunction with federal welfare reform, will dramatically reshape the previous welfare system, resulting in many improvements.

*Recommendation 2.* PSSA should work with ISD to study documentation, paper flow and procedures, and then build a district office business model for forms automation, record keeping and case information system.

Response: PSSA continually meets with ISD to discuss the issues in this recommendation and will continue to seek ways to improve the processes.

*Recommendation 3.* PSSA should fund ISD to add justifiable enhancements to the WICAR system beyond just maintaining the system.

Response: Our ability to fund ISD at a higher level is controlled by the state and federal governments, as well as the county budget process. For the past eight to ten years, the state and federal governments have declined to financially participate at a higher level, citing plans for a statewide automated welfare system (SAWS). Ventura County should be on-line in the year 2000. Any enhancements would be at the county's expense. To date, the necessary financial resources for such enhancements have not been available.

*Recommendation 4.* PSSA should purchase additional WICAR terminals until they can be replaced with PCs as requested by district offices. The terminals, at \$700 a piece with telephone line charges and mainframe hook up costs, should be justified with direct labor savings.

Response: PSSA has purchased ten additional WICAR terminals and they will be installed early in FY 1996-97.

*Recommendation 5.* California's plan to develop a statewide welfare automation system should not deter PSSA from implementing the above measures as soon as possible.

Response: PSSA agrees with this recommendation, within PSSA fiscal constraints.

*Recommendation 6.* PSSA should allocate money for more PCs.

Response: Currently PSSA has 450 PCs with ninety additional units on order.

NOTE: All of the recommendations regarding automation are well accepted. The Grand Jury should be aware, however, that the federal welfare reform signed into law (HR 3734), will have an (as yet) unknown impact on California Counties. If we are to be effective, we need to plan for the future, not focus on shortcomings of the existing programs.

PSSA Children's Protective Services Division (pages 87 & 88)

As with many reports, sometimes the communications are not as effective as we think and some information may be not be responsive to the request or may be heard incorrectly. There are a few items that we would like to correct. In 1995, over 18,000 calls were received by Protective Services. Approximately 6,500 of those were legitimate referrals of child abuse or neglect, and about 60% of those we were able to assign to a worker and make a response. The Protective Services Division averages 370 children in foster family homes, 70 in group homes, 225 placed in relatives' homes, and supervises 250 in their own homes at any given time.

*Recommendation 1.* Add staff to the evening emergency response shift.

Response: Approximately two years ago PSSA initiated a second shift for emergency response because our historic practice of utilizing standby was no longer effective and was overly burdensome to staff who had already worked a full day. Three people were assigned to the shift (each assigned a bank of hours), who work from their homes on a continuous hour basis outside business hours. Each handles far fewer cases per worker than the day shift because the referral rate in the evening is much lower. Additionally, they are not able to complete a full investigation because collateral resources are often not available; therefore, many of their investigations are completed by the people who work normal business hours. The ratio of cases between the regular emergency response shift and the night/weekend shift is 16 to 3. The recommendation for additional evening staff was generated from a complaint made by law enforcement that not enough people were available in the evening, late night, and weekend hours to respond to the referrals or their requests for interventions. PSSA staff has met with the agency and offices that made the complaint, to discuss the most effective use of staff for emergency response. It was explained that, although a shortage may occur on a few occasions during the year, based on current resources and referral patterns, we would create additional problems in handling the caseload by shifting existing resources to the late night and weekend shifts. If additional staff is obtained in the future, we could look at them working an afternoon and evening shift which might alleviate some of the concerns and pressures.

*Recommendation 2.* Gather statistics to track hours and types of calls.

Response: We do keep a daily log of all calls received. It lists the time and nature of the referral. It is a manual log, so it is difficult for us to work from for statistical purposes. We will look at entering it on a data base to make it easier and more useful.

*Recommendation 3.* Set more programs of cooperation and information sharing with local police departments.

Response: It has been a number of years since we have had a joint conference or discussion group with local police departments. We plan meet with various local police departments.

*Recommendation 4.* Revise procedures to allow social workers to contact police in certain situations instead of going through the supervisors.

Response: This policy was established several years ago as a means of providing guidance to social workers. It was a reaction to a series of incidents and a means of establishing consistency. The regular night shift emergency response workers are lead workers and are not required to contact a supervisor prior to contacting the police. A procedural manual, to give workers better written guidelines, is now being developed and will be completed during the fiscal year.

*Recommendation 5.* Provide cellular phones.

Response: We have a limited number of cellular phones. The night shift workers each have one assigned and the day time emergency response workers have a bank of phones which they can sign out and utilize. We will purchase more phones as our budget allows and we develop guidelines for their use.

*Recommendation 6.* Recruit more shelter homes that can be used on short notice.

Response: The county has expended a great deal of money in developing Casa Pacifica as our primary shelter care facility. With that development, we discontinued the use of contracting with foster parents to be shelter homes. We still have occasional use for shelter homes for children who have specialized needs or for overflow and we contact foster parents that have agreed to accept children on short notice, but they are not on call. Our policy for emergency placements is to first consider relatives, second Casa Pacifica, and lastly foster homes.

*Recommendation 7.* Obtain fully qualified community/county service providers in sexual abuse counseling.

Response: Both the County Mental Health Department and the Public Social Services Agency for sometime were lead agencies in supporting and managing the Parents United program. Both agencies had to discontinue the role as their resources were reduced. An effort was made by the parents involved to continue the organization but were unable to sustain the commitment. There is a private agency in the community which does offer support services and there are individual providers. The problem is the ability of the clients to pay for the service.

*Recommendation 8.* Recruit more community/county service providers for professional family counseling coordinated with personal counseling and classes in parent education.

Response: We do fund through birth certificate monies counseling services by Interface and parent aides through CAAN. Additionally, Mental Health offers individual counseling to both the child and the parents when they are medical eligible and come within their target populations.

*Recommendation 9.* Increase the efficiency of foster home licensing so the public is better informed of the need for foster homes.

Response: A member of the licensing unit has just completed working with the colleges and other people to prepare short public information notices for use on television and radio to recruit family foster homes. Additionally, we did a large mail out to local churches this year to recruit foster parents. We continue this effort on a regular basis, but no single approach has a large pay off. We keep trying.

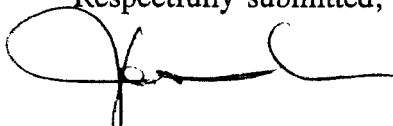
*Recommendation 10.* Review adoption services procedures to shorten individual children's time in foster care.

Response: This is a major problem throughout the state and several initiatives will be attempted this year. Legislation has been introduced to authorize new approaches to termination of parental rights and relative adoptions. New guidelines are being sought on legal permanence, adoption consideration for certain ages, and limits on reasons for not adopting children. More stress will be placed on the availability of financial and medical assistance for children who are adopted through Children's Protective Services. An enhanced linkage of the computer systems between adoptions and Children's Protective Services will be developed. At the local level, we will be looking at concurrent planning for family reunification and adoptions to better prepare families and children. We will also be making an effort to let parents know that relinquishing a child for adoption is an option that they have available to them.

*Recommendation 11.* Parents who have inflicted serious injuries to their child should be limited to less than the 12 to 18 months of family reunification.

Response: These time periods are established by law and cannot be waived. The law does allow for shortened time frames in specific cases such as when there is an established pattern with siblings or there is abandonment such as "trash can" babies. There will be statewide efforts this year aimed at judges and social workers to overcome some of the inherent resistance within the system to termination of parental rights and adoption.

Respectfully submitted,



**JAMES E. ISOM**  
Director