

county of ventura

ANIMAL REGULATION DEPARTMENT

R.A.I.N. PROJECT

Transitional Living Center

August 13, 1998

M. L. Lin Koester
Chief Administrative Officer
County of Ventura
800 So. Victoria Ave.
Ventura, CA 93009

RESPONSE TO THE 1997-1998 VENTURA COUNTY GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT ON THE R.A.I.N. PROJECT

Recommendation 1: Establish an integrated, effective and coordinated plan that addresses housing, support services, transportation, health services and employment opportunities to prevent and reduce homelessness in Ventura County.

Response: The Ventura County Homeless and Housing Coalition, an organization comprised of government and private non-profit homeless service providers, has researched, written, revised and to a certain extent, implemented such a plan. That plan forms the basis for the County Continuum of Care plan, which is an integral component of Countywide funding from HUD.

Recommendation 2: Establish an integrated continuum of care system to replace current homeless services, which are delivered through a loosely linked network of agencies.

Recommendation 3: Establish a coordinated information system for housing, health care, employment and support services for homeless persons, providers and the public; establish a common intake form and centralized intake system for emergency, transitional and permanent housing to provide integrated care.

Recommendation 4: Provide accessibility to, and increase mental health and primary health care sites; develop a mobile medical/dental team; establish multi-service centers within each city.

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Center Location: Camarillo Airport
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Response: The final report regarding the R.A.I.N. Project went far afield of the actual function and purpose of R.A.I.N. and targeted issues and ideas that have been bandied about for many years by government and non-profit homeless service providers. Recommendations 2 through 4 are all issues that are being studied and addressed as the Human Services Agency / Behavioral Health Department merger and reorganization plan unfolds. Since the majority of County homeless programs now exist within that Agency it is reasonable to assume that service access and delivery will be streamlined and improved.

The accessibility and delivery of medical and dental care continue to be among the greatest unmet needs of the homeless population. State and Federal funding for such programs is virtually non-existent and grant opportunities for such services are extremely limited. The Ventura County Health Care Agency continues to provide outstanding services to the target population with very little outside financial assistance. Non-profit service providers rely upon the generosity of the H.C.A. staff to fulfill the medical needs of their clients and all service providers rely on volunteer efforts to provide vision, podiatric, chiropractic and dental care. Very few homeless residents qualify for Medicare, Medi-Cal or other health insurance and ultimately rely on costly VCMC emergency services in lieu of primary medical care facilities.

Recommendation 5: Develop a plan to provide year-round emergency shelters and increase transitional housing opportunities.

Response: Year-round emergency sheltering is provided through the County Behavioral Health Department voucher program and by a number of non-profit service providers. Any additional year-round sheltering could have the unwanted effect of enabling and encouraging non-County resident homeless persons to move into the area seeking services not available within their local jurisdictions. It is anticipated that the R.A.I.N. Project will maintain 5-10 emergency beds for short-term emergency housing for client referrals from other Government agencies and private, non-profit providers.

Each city is responsible for cold weather emergency sheltering within their boundaries and model programs have been successfully operated in the cities of Ojai, Thousand Oaks and Simi Valley. Prior to FY 1998-99, the County operated an emergency cold weather shelter for the cities of Oxnard and San Buenaventura but with the County opting to discontinue the contract service, each of those cities are planning their own programs for the upcoming cold-weather season. The remaining cities have not identified or recognized significant homeless populations and have not addressed the issue to date.

Recommendation 6: Develop a plan to provide permanent housing opportunities for very low-income individuals and families; identify financing sources.

Response: County staff continues to work closely with local housing authority personnel in an effort to increase allotments of federally funded housing certificates and identify potential sources of new housing programs. Modification of existing federal programs will be needed to optimize the availability of housing assistance to a rapidly increasing low-income population.

Recommendation 7: Increase and integrate job training and employment programs for homeless persons.


Response: The implementation of welfare reform and specifically, Cal-Works has substantially increased the number of job training programs available to the homeless population. However, the addition of such a large number of job seekers into the market has made job development a critically unmet need. Much work is going to be needed to encourage, cajole and convince private employers to take a chance on the hiring of this population. Grant funding is being sought by R.A.I.N. to pay the cost of staff for such a purpose.

Recommendation 8: The County should continue to be involved in temporary, transitional and affordable housing.

Response: The Board of Supervisors has demonstrated a willingness and commitment to the ongoing provision of temporary transitional housing through its continuation of the R.A.I.N. Project. Grant applications for R.A.I.N. funding are pending and the Cities are being asked to contribute to the ongoing operational cost of the program. A permanent site that will allow for the housing of up to 150 homeless individuals has been identified and operational plans are being finalized.

The Board of Supervisors continually support and encourage all viable programs that are designed to provide affordable housing in the areas in which they have jurisdiction. Resource Management Agency staff provide support and assistance to potential developers of low-cost housing projects and Chief Administrative Office staff place high priority on such projects for grant funding that they administer. As with everything related to the homeless, the indigent and the poor, money, or the lack thereof, is the major stumbling block to successful program administration.

Respectfully Submitted,



Kathy Jenks,
Director