

HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY RESPONSE TO  
FY 1998-99 GRAND JURY RECOMMENDATIONS

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OCT 01 1999

**CONCLUSIONS:**

*The Human Services Agency provides care to the needy citizens of Ventura County. Ninety-five percent of its funds come from Federal and State appropriations. In spite of the money available, the dedicated HSA staff deals with serious problems daily.*

- 1. In the CalWORKs program, convenient, reliable transportation to jobs, shopping and childcare is needed. A better fit between the needs of parents for quality childcare and available sites is also needed. Although the CalWORKs program seems well set up for preparing former welfare recipients for training and obtaining jobs, the Humans Services Agency is aware that there needs to be support system for the continuation of gainful employment, and is considering mentors.*

**Response: Partial concurrence.**

The Human Services Agency (HSA) is developing strategies to increase the availability of convenient, reliable transportation for CalWORKs families to jobs and child care. Providing transportation for CalWORKs families to shopping, despite the need, is not currently identified by HSA as a priority due to the scarcity of transportation resources and the more pressing transportation needs to employment and child care.

Major strategies currently implemented and/or planned by HSA to develop convenient, reliable transportation for CalWORKs families to jobs and child care include:

- CalWORKs Transportation Planning Committee. A CalWORKs Transportation Planning Committee, which began in April 1998, meets regularly to identify transportation issues and design strategies for improving transportation resources available to CalWORKs families.
- Van Pools. HSA and the General Services Agency (GSA) submitted a joint \$1,017,750 Congestion Management and Air Quality (CMAQ) grant application to the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) in December 1998, to purchase nine compressed natural gas (CNG) 9-12 passenger vans and a CNG fueling facility at the County Government Center. The CMAQ grant application was approved for full funding. HSA currently anticipates receiving 18-21 vans as a result of cost savings achieved by purchasing these vans through a CalTRANS Statewide procurement process. The vans may be available for purchase by December 1999. These vans will be located at the seven Job and Career Centers Countywide and will provide transportation for CalWORKs families to employment, job interviews, and childcare.
- Many Motors Program. The self-funded "Many Motors Program" (originally referred to as the "Job Opportunity Transportation Program") developed by Supervisor Frank Schillo's Office provides CalWORKs families with access to affordable auto loans enabling them to purchase used,

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economy cars for transportation to employment and childcare. The County recently transferred the program to a non-profit corporation (Many Mansions) to operate. Many Mansions seeks to expand the program considerably in FY 1999-00 by acquiring additional vehicles. The Many Motors Program serves as a nationally recognized model transportation program for welfare families that is being replicated in other counties and states.

- **Smart Card Machines.** With the assistance of VCTC, HSA will acquire and install seven "Smart Card Machines" at the seven Job and Career Centers Countywide. These Smart Card Machines distribute monthly bus passes (known as "Smart Cards") for transportation to jobs, job interviews, and child care.
- **Taxi Voucher Program.** The CalWORKs Transportation Planning Committee plans to develop a "taxi voucher program" in FY 1999-00. A request for proposals (RFP) process would identify a taxi operator to provide no- or low-cost taxi fares to CalWORKs families for transportation to jobs, job interviews, and child care.

2. *For the homeless population, year-round transitional housing is needed where those without homes can choose to shower, lock up their possessions safely, do laundry, play with their children, receive mail and in general pull themselves together.*

**Response: Concur.**

HSA agrees with the need for year-round transitional housing where those without homes can shower, receive regular meals, maintain the family unit and gain access to those services that will assist in removing the barriers for employment or permanent housing. HSA staff works with appropriate agencies and through the Homeless Coalition and the Ventura Council of Governments (VCOG) Committee to develop permanent year-round transitional housing.

3. *Another serious need is for 24-hour shelters, particularly in inclement weather.*

**Response: Concur.**

The Human Services Agency agrees with the need for 24-hour shelters, especially in inclement weather. The Governor's Office approved a plan allowing the county use of the Oxnard National Guard Armory for a cold weather shelter operation during inclement weather. Sufficient funding to run this operation does not accompany the permission of building use. Cold weather shelter operation discussions continue with the Homeless and Housing Coalition and VCOG.

4. *For the homeless mentally ill, their supporters urge long-term treatment facilities.*

**Response: Concur**

While the Agency must note that mentally ill treatment and homeless services rest outside the jurisdiction of HSA, the Agency agrees a shortage of long-term

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treatment facilities for the homeless mentally ill currently exists. Too often the homeless mentally ill reside in our jail system without appropriate and necessary treatment. We support, and will work with, the Behavioral Health Department of the County Health Care Agency in developing a plan for presentation to the Board of Supervisors.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- *CalWORKs and public transportation officials must work closely together to better serve the specific needs of CalWORKs clients. CalWORKs could survey its clients' needs continuously and pass this information on to transit officials.*

#### **Response: Concur.**

VCTC and HSA continue the successful partnership of recent years by working closely to address CalWORKs families' transportation needs. The Countywide Guaranteed Ride Home Program and CMAQ and Smart Car Sharing transportation grants resulted from this partnership. VCTC provides technical assistance to HSA in obtaining the necessary CalTRANS approvals to acquire the vans approved by the CMAQ grant.

A CalWORKs Transportation Planning Committee representative works closely with the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), VCTC, and the County Resource Management Agency Planning Division developing comprehensive Countywide overlay maps that plot existing public transportation routes, CalWORKs population concentrations, and employer locations. These maps will identify gaps in existing transportation routes and services for CalWORKs families. This project will identify the specific needs of CalWORKs families for public transportation and allow public transit officials to work cooperatively to extend and adjust routes as needed.

Six hundred CalWORKs applicants completed a "Transportation Questionnaire" from December 1998 to March 1999. This client survey provided HSA with objective data regarding the transportation practices and needs of CalWORKs families. HSA provided survey results to VCTC for transportation planning purposes. In addition, the CalWORKs Transportation Planning Committee will meet regularly to discuss strategies for surveying the transportation needs of CalWORKs families and share the results with VCTC.

- *The balance between need and child sites should be adjusted.*
  - a. *Nursery schools could be encouraged to extend their half-day programs to all day, with the prospect of increased income.*

#### **Response: Concur.**

The Human Services Agency lacks jurisdictional authority over the operational hours of pre-schools or nursery schools, however, HSA staff actively participates with the Local Child Care Planning Council (LPC) in working with child care providers to increase capacity in underserved areas.

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- b. Churches and public schools could make their facilities available all day and seven days a week, if appropriately supported.*

**Response: Concur.**

As stated above, HSA lacks jurisdictional authority over when schools and churches offer childcare, but interested school officials and other providers also participate in the LPC in working on increasing childcare capacity.

- c. Childcare facilities could be a condition of large businesses establishing themselves in Ventura County with necessary incentives like tax credits.*

**Response: Concur.**

Again, HSA lacks jurisdictional authority over the approval of business development in Ventura County. However, a HSA staff member works collaboratively with various city planning departments in educating them on the importance of including child care as a factor when making land use decisions and granting development permits.

- d. School districts should establish supervised after-school programs at all school sites.*

**Response: Concur.**

HSA lacks jurisdictional authority over school districts' decisions to provide after-school programs; however, many school districts work with the LPC and recognize the need for expanded programs for school-age children.

- e. Boys and Girls Clubs and the YM&WCAs currently offer successful programs of wholesome activities under professional supervision, programs that are worthy of replication and expansion.*

**Response: Concur.**

Private, non-profit programs such as those listed are funded by fees and donations. HSA has no authority over them.

- f. As an important component of quality of care, teachers who have more training and experience could be rewarded with a pay scale above minimum wage.*

**Response: Concur.**

Retention of qualified teachers is tied to adequate remuneration. HSA has no control over the wages paid to childcare providers and teachers.

- To relieve the plight of the homeless, the Board of Supervisors must assume a leadership role and coordinate the efforts of the cities and other organizations.*

**Response: Concur.**

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The Human Services Agency agrees that proactive leadership and a coordinated effort with cities must take place as an important step in relieving the plight Ventura County's homeless. The three recommendations have been implemented and continue to evolve as resources and partners are identified.

- a. *The Board could request city and county agencies to furnish an inventory of spaces where the homeless could find shelter.*

**Response: Concur.**

Supervisor Kathy Long pulled together a group of experts representing Ventura County cities, non-profit community-based organizations and public employees to discuss the issues and challenges of providing homeless services. Discussion regarding limited homeless resources and the lack of affordable housing provided major topics of discussion. The VCOG subcommittee accepted a series of findings and recommendations it planned to present to the full Council.

- b. *The Board could set up plans for transitional housing, to help the homeless get on their feet, should they so choose.*

**Response: Concur.**

The Board of Supervisors voted to support the R.A.I.N. Project with contingency funds in the budget session. R.A.I.N. provides transitional housing for homeless families and singles seeking to make changes in their lives and work towards that end. R.A.I.N. currently operates out of a building at Camarillo Airport, however a search continues for a more permanent location that allows for expansion. The Human Services Agency partners with R.A.I.N. providing client case management services. The cities are also encouraged to plan for some transitional housing in each community. The amount of people requesting services because of problems relating to homelessness continues to increase while requests for shelter outstrip available space.

- c. *Human Services Agency should publish acknowledgements regularly in the media to those churches, industries and agencies that house the homeless and furnish care, thereby keeping their problems and the resolutions in front of the public.*

**Response: Concur.**

HSA works with the Ventura County Star and Los Angeles Times to publish human-interest stories about the success of clients helped by multiple community resources over a period of time. In particular, our partner agencies such as Catholic Charities, Salvation Army, Project Understanding, Commission on Human Concerns, to name a few, continue to provide a number of human services.