

VENTURA COUNTY
HEALTH CARE AGENCY
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MEMORANDUM



Date: August 15, 2000
To: Harry Hufford, Interim CAO *[Signature]*
From: Pierre Durand, HCA Director/VCMC Administrator
Subject: Grand Jury Response – Ventura County Health Care Agency

The Health Care Agency response to the above titled 1999-2000 Grand Jury report is as follows:

I. MEDICAL CARE

A. Medical Center

Finding *Concur*

Recommendation The laboratory and kitchen areas should be upgraded to keep pace with hospital requirements.

Concur. At an earlier time, the County secured Federal funding to upgrade these and other areas needing physical improvements. However, CMH sponsored a referendum that prevented the County of Ventura from receiving the funds. Later, the County attempted to improve just the laboratory and kitchen areas and this plan also resulted in stiff public resistance led by CMH. The County is aware of the need and hopes to be able to repair and improve the laboratory and kitchen areas, at a time and with a funding plan to be determined by the Board of Supervisors.

Additional comment from the Health Care Agency: The Hillmont Psychiatric Center, now known as the Behavioral Health Inpatient Unit, is part of the Ventura County Medical Center and has always been part of the VCMC hospital license.

B. Ambulatory Care Department & Family Health Care Clinics

F-1 *Concur*

F-2. Treatment Room Capacity:

Concur. Clients are seen as needed and as directed by physician order.

F-9 *Concur*

F-10 Most of the clients were self-pay. The California Uniform Patient Fee Schedule sets payment guidelines.

Concur. Actually, at this time, 44% of this clinic's patients are Self Pay.

F-11 thru F14 - *Concur*

F-15 The clinic director stated that the role of the Behavioral Health Program is to provide a "safety net" for County citizens.

Concur, the clinic provides a "safety net" for County residents. It is not necessary for them to be citizens to receive services.

F-16 The mental health clinic has the first Socialization Program in the County.

Concur. The County of Ventura has had these programs for years. This is not the first.

F-17 thru F22 *Concur*

Recommendations

R-1 The clinic should be provided with a caged van to help the clinic respond more effectively in crisis intervention situations.

Concur. The clinic is able to access the caged van from the crisis team when needed, and the needs for transporting clients in crisis are met by this process. The Crisis Team is specially trained to meet these needs.

R-2 Camarillo clients should be provided with easily accessible transportation at no cost or minimal cost to the clinic, or a clinic should be provided in Camarillo.

Concur. Program development and management is an ongoing process, and assessment of these issues are included in the development process.

C. Port Hueneme Mental Health Care Clinic

Findings

- F-1** The clinic had a staff of 16. This was down from a high of 22.
- Concur. Staffing is based on a Full Time Equivalent (FTE) basis. One FTE equals 40 hours per week, even though at times part-time workers may be involved. This clinic is fully staffed and has no vacancies. There are fewer part-time employees but the same number of hours of service and therefore coverage.*
- F-2** *Concur*
- F-3** *Concur*
- F-4** An Intensive Care Case Management Team was formed five years ago for high-risk patients. Presently, there are only two on the staff due to cutbacks.
- Concur. Currently there are only two on staff because of restructuring based on client needs.*
- F-5** The Socialization Program core group consisted of 20 people at high-risk and lower functioning individuals ranging in age from eighteen to the early sixties. When members of the group reach sixty-five, they are transferred to a seniors group. The mandate of the Socialization Program is to provide maximum support to patients and their families. The program ceased to operate due to personnel cutbacks. The program has been reinstated with the hiring of a full-time community relations specialist.
- A full time Community Service Worker was added.*
- F-6 thru F-8** *Concur*
- F-9** Any MediCal recipient is eligible to use this clinic.
- Any MediCal recipient with medical necessity and appropriate diagnosis is eligible to use this clinic.*
- F-10** Federal Government provides \$789.00 per month for clients in a board and care facility, and \$600.00 per month for clients not in a board and care facility.
- These amounts are determined by the Social Security Administration.*

F-11 *Concur*

F-12 Facilities are being expanded by the acquisition of the suite next door to the clinic, and by expanding the lobby.

Construction is currently under way.

Recommendation

R-1 Restore staff to former levels so that a full set of programs can be provided for the clients.

Staffing is full at this location and program development is ongoing.

D. Behavioral Health Crisis Team

Findings

F-1 thru F-4 *Concur*

F-5 The numbers served by the Crisis Intervention Team Program have risen, while funding has not grown accordingly. SSI is no longer available for substance abuse clients, further affecting funding because there is often a dual diagnosis of mental illness and substance abuse.

Concur, however the department is currently working on program expansion and development for dually diagnosed individuals aged 18-21, through EPSDT funding, to address this issue.

F-6 thru F-13 *Concur*

F-14 The use of a portion of the Tobacco Settlement money for construction of permanent housing for the homeless mentally ill was discussed by the Board of Supervisors.

Concur. It is not yet certain that the County will receive this money due to an initiative support by Community Memorial Hospital to give all tobacco settlement funds to private hospitals with no restrictions on their use.

Recommendations

R-1 The Behavioral Health Department should continue its efforts to develop a psychiatric residency program to VCMC to augment the Crisis Teams.

Concur. The ongoing development and research into this program continues by the Behavioral Health Department through the Health Care Agency.

E. Emergency Shelter For The Homeless And Mentally Ill

Findings

F-1 thru F-6 *Concur*

F-7 There is agreement in the need to secure more permanent housing for the mentally ill. The County is now looking at a site on Lewis Road.

Groundbreaking is August 17, 2000 for this location.

F-8 thru F-13 *Concur*

Recommendations

R-1 A sign should be placed on the Poinsettia Place facility posting their hours and an emergency phone number.

Concur. This will be implemented.

R-2 The County should continue to vigorously pursue providing more suitable housing for the mentally ill.

Strongly concur.

III. PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Findings

Oxnard Public Health

F-1 *Concur*

F-2 *Concur*

F-3 Understaffing was a constant problem, although the nursing supervisor does all she can to help. There are three nurses assigned to the clinic and each sees between 50 and 65 patients per day.

Disagree in part. Understaffing was a result of vacancies and the inability of the department to retain qualified nurses given their limited availability. Many of those positions have now been filled and adjustments have been made to retain qualified nurses, including the conversion of per-diem staff to regular. The department is currently reviewing workload levels and staffing requirements for the Public Health Clinic and TB services in Oxnard. Adjustments will be made accordingly.

Depending on scheduled services and clients, between 2 and 3 nurses staff the Oxnard Clinic. The total number of clients served each clinic day by all scheduled nurses ranges between 5 and 100. Each nurse does not see between 50 and 65 clients.

F-4 thru F-22 *Concur*

F-23 The clinic would like to make Hepatitis B vaccine available, but recognize that it would be costly to the County to do so.

Concur in part. Hepatitis B vaccine is now readily available to the public as a result of the vaccine being offered through the federally funded Vaccines for Children (VFC) program.

Recommendations

R-1 Provide more nursing and clerical staffing at the Oxnard Clinic.

Requires further study. At the time of review and as already indicated, the Public Health Clinic in Oxnard had several vacancies. Many of those positions have now been filled and adjustments have been made to retain qualified nurses, including the conversion of per-diem staff to regular. The department is currently reviewing workload levels and staffing requirements for the Public Health Clinic and TB services in Oxnard. Adjustments will be made accordingly.

R-2 Friday and Monday staffing should reflect the Oxnard Clinic's busiest days.

Has been implemented. The department will continue to review service demand and staffing. Adjustments will be made accordingly.

R-3 Separate the TB treatment area and waiting room from the general clinic areas in Oxnard.

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Will be implemented. The Public Health Department is in the process of identifying additional space for the Communicable Disease and TB programs in Oxnard. It is anticipated that additional space/accommodations will be secured by July of 2001.

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PHONE CALL
WHERE IS FUNDING
COMMUNITY
FRAM*

R-4 Consider providing TB treatment in the Oxnard Clinic in a separate building.

See R-3 response.

R-5 Provide more clerical staff to assist in record keeping at the Oxnard TB facility.

Requires further study. The department is currently reviewing workload levels and staffing requirements for the Public Health Clinic and TB services in Oxnard. As already indicated, the TB program has more than two nurses staffing the Oxnard TB Clinic. The support staff includes a Community Service Worker, a Medical Office Assistant, and a technician to assist with scheduling, treatment, record keeping and billing. The staffing plan will also consider potential changes in program/service delivery as a result of additional space and program relocation. Adjustments will be made accordingly.