



# VENTURA COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

- BOB BROOKS  
SHERIFF
- CRAIG HUSBAND  
UNDERSHERIFF

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June 12, 2003

RECEIVED  
VENTURA COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT

JUN 16 2003

OFFICE OF THE  
PRESIDING JUDGE

Honorable Bruce A. Clark  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
800 South Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, CA 93009

RE: Response to the 2002-2003 Ventura County Grand Jury report entitled  
*Ventura County Behavioral Health Agency Housing for Adults with Severe  
and Persistent Mental Illness.*

RECEIVED

JUN 19 2003

Dear Judge Clark:

I am in receipt of the Ventura County Grand Jury report entitled, *Ventura County Behavioral Health Agency Housing for Adults with Severe and Persistent Mental Illness*. The report indicates that a response is required for the following recommendations.

R-3 That Ventura County develop a locked facility with the County capable of long term care for patients requiring it.

R-4 That Ventura County bring together a Demonstration Project Team comprised of stakeholders including Behavioral Health, the Sheriff's Department, family organizations, and the Ventura County Mental Health Board to develop an in-custody diversion program with residential care for mentally ill adults accused of minor crimes such as loitering, vagrancy, public nuisance, etc.

R-7 That a study be made of the Crisis Team's responsiveness to the site and its ability and willingness to provide other than predominantly criminal justice services to the mentally ill patient.

R-8 That the Sheriff's Department and Behavioral Health implement a consistent policy for releasing persons with mental illness from the County Jail.

SPECIAL SERVICES

6401 Telephone Road, Suite 200  
Ventura, CA 93003  
(805) 477-7011 FAX (805) 477-7010

PATROL SERVICES

2101 East Olsen Road  
Thousand Oaks, CA 91362  
(805) 494-8261 FAX (805) 494-8295

DETENTION SERVICES

800 South Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, CA 93009  
(805) 654-2305 FAX (805) 654-3500

SUPPORT SERVICES

800 South Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, CA 93009  
(805) 654-3926 FAX (805) 654-2109

Response:

Those of us who run detention facilities have long ago recognized that jails are often the housing locations of last resort for the mentally ill. While many of the inmates housed in our jails are violent and dangerous to society, some of the mentally ill housed in jails could be better served outside of our custody. We have continually worked to improve our staff training for those who deal with the mentally ill. We have increased medical and mental health staffing within our jails. We also work more closely with the Behavioral Health Department than any time in our history.

Recommendation R-3 is one that my agency and several others have requested for quite some time. It should be noted however, that simply because an individual has a mental illness, they still may very well be held accountable for their crime and be housed in a jail while their case is adjudicated. Most of our severely mentally ill inmates are not sentenced. They are held in jail while their case makes its way through the court process. Our MART program, described later in this report, has helped expedite that process.

The current examination of the Honor Farm jail facilities by Behavioral Health as a possible locked facility may fill the void recognized by R-3. My agency will be vacating that fully functional jail as of July 1, 2003 due to budget cuts.

In the report (R-4) the Grand Jury recommend that our county brings together a demonstration team comprised of all of the mental health stakeholders to develop a diversion program for mentally ill adults accused of minor crimes. That occurred two years ago when I obtained a grant from the California Board of Corrections (BOC) and the Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA) for \$3,200,000. A strategy committee of all of the stakeholders was assembled to develop a program for the Mentally Ill Offender Crime Reduction Grant from the BOC. The strategy committee consisted of representatives from Behavioral Health, District Attorney's Office, Public Defenders Office, Probation Department, Courts, National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, a mental health client, and the Sheriff's Department.

Our grant program, known locally as the Multi Agency Referral and Treatment (MART) Program is in its third year. The program provides for the early recognition of mentally ill offenders, literally at the time of booking, and refers them to a special team consisting of the Public Defender, Probation Department, District Attorney and Behavioral Health. That team takes ownership of the client and diverts them to treatment, housing and supervised probation. This grant is part of

an intense study to determine if we can eliminate or at least slow the revolving door of arrest and release of the mentally ill for minor offenses.

The down side of the grant is that it ends next year. While we believe we have made great in-roads in interagency cooperation and communication, a lack of funding could eliminate the program. We are currently working with the involved agencies to determine if additional grants or other funding might be available.

In addition to the MART program, last year I began Critical Incident Training (CIT) not only for Ventura County Deputies, but also for every law enforcement agency in Ventura County. CIT is actually enhanced mental health training for law enforcement. This training augments the academy training with an additional 40 hours of specialized training in how to recognize and deal with individuals who have mental health problems or psychotic breaks. As you might imagine, 40 hours of additional training for every law enforcement officer in the county is cost prohibitive. Using a model that has been successful around the country known as the Memphis model we have set a goal of training 20% of the county's officers. When officers encounter a distraught individual they call for a CIT officer to respond. To date this program has been very successful, as many violent confrontations have been avoided with the aid of the CIT officers.

R-7 makes a request of the Crisis Team, which is part of the Behavioral Health department. I believe that department should make the appropriate response to this recommendation.

In reference to R-8, earlier I commented that we have added additional mental health staff within our jails. Included in that staffing within the last two years is a mental health discharge planner. The discharge planner meets with and counsels inmates with mental health issues about their impending release from custody. Legally, the only person who I can take to a mental health facility upon their release is a person who is 5150 W&I, a danger to themselves or others. In every case where a 5150 qualifying individual is released, they are taken to the Behavioral Health Intake Facility. A person with a mental illness who can care for their own safety cannot be detained or otherwise forced to go anywhere upon their release. We use the discharge planner to assist and encourage persons to seek treatment upon their release. In many cases our deputies drive released inmates for voluntary commitments to mental health facilities, to their homes, or other safe locations. In the case of MART program inmates, the MART team come to the jail and picks up inmates at the time of their release.

As you can see, our agency goes to great lengths to treat and care for the mentally ill. Unfortunately, there will always be those individuals with a mental illness who,

Grand Jury Response

June 12, 2003

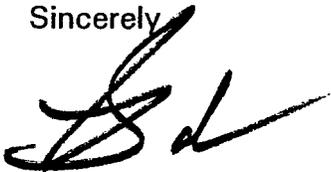
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by their actions come to the attention of law enforcement. Our deputies will make the best decision at the time as to how best to protect that individual and society. If it involves incarceration, the individual will be cared for to the best of our ability and referred to mental health professionals.

I believe both the MART program and the CIT program are the best options for dealing with a difficult population and I encourage the County to continue funding these worthwhile programs.

I would be delighted to discuss these issues at greater length if you should so desire. Thank you.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bob Brooks', written in a cursive style.

BOB BROOKS  
Ventura County Sheriff