



county of ventura

Human Services Agency

Ted Myers
Director

July 21, 2004

The Honorable Bruce A. Clark
Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, Ventura County
Ventura County Hall of Justice
800 S. Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

Dear Judge Clark,

This is in response to the letter dated May 21, 2004 requiring a response to the Ventura County 2003-2004 Grand Jury report, *Elder Abuse in Ventura County*. Human Services Agency is appreciative of the positive findings of APS and the acknowledgement of the hard work and the passionate dedication of our APS staff. We are proud of the program and the difference it makes in the quality of life for elders and dependent adults of Ventura County.

Grand Jury Conclusions:

- C-01. The incidence of elder abuse is on the rise within Ventura County. The APS is actively involved in a public education program to increase the general public awareness, concerning the necessity of assisting individuals who are involved with elders so that they are less at risk. APS educates them in how to report incidences of abuse affecting seniors.
- C-02. The APS staff has developed a comprehensive plan to address the incidence of elder abuse through the established network with the District Attorney's Office, FAST and other agencies within Ventura County.
- C-03. The APS has developed a comprehensive training program for its social worker staff and the mandated reporters to address the elder abuse problem

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PRESIDING JUDGE

VENTURA COUNTY GRAND JURY
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Grand Jury Recommendations:

- R-01. There is a need for an increased level of outreach with the Ventura County District attorney's Office Victim Assistance Unit, and FAST to immediately address the critical needs identified in the elder abuse problem within Ventura County.
- R-02. The increasing elder population within Ventura County requires that additional funding be sought to adequately serve elder abuse victims either through federal grant funding or appropriations from the County's general fund when adequate funding reserves are available.
- R-03. The Ventura County Area Agency on Aging should assume a more active role on the issue of elder abuse either through its Advisory Council Meetings or staff involvement with the APS.

Human Services Agency Responses:

1. Ventura County District Attorney's Office Victim Assistance Unit and Human Services Agency support increased outreach. FAST has been an excellent partner and forum. The Ventura County Partnership for Safe Families, working with Elder Abuse Prevention Council, that serves as a sub-committee to the Partnership, and FAST presented a one-day seminar on recognition of the warning signs of financial abuse of elders and dependent adults, how to prevent abuse, and if it has already occurred how to help APS, law enforcement and the DA's office to prosecute perpetrators. Approximately 100 professionals attended the seminar, including: law enforcement, CPAs, Financial Planners, attorneys practicing elder law and estate planning, APS social workers, Senior Ombudsmen, bankers, and other professionals that work with elders and dependent adults. In addition to APS having active membership in the Partnership, APS coordinates mandated reporter training presentations with the Partnership that also does mandated reporter training. APS has had a good working relationship with the District Attorney's office to coordinate prosecutions, but has also contacted the District Attorney's Victim's Unit to partner in providing outreach to elder communities and organizations. Outreach has also be provided through the State Attorney General's office elder abuse awareness campaign. In Ventura County, cable TV commercials, radio ads, newspaper ads, and bus-stop signs were purchased, as well as free public service announcements ran from April 2003-April 2004. Human Services Agency will continue to participate in outreach efforts, to the level that our current budget will allow.
2. The Human Services Agency has developed a grant writing committee to look at grant opportunities. For grants that are not available to County government, HSA will help assist local non-profits to apply for these funds. As for increased

appropriations, federal legislation, SB 333 – Elder Justice Act, if passed may provide federal funding to states and counties. This funding may provide the means to hire staff for outreach, and to provide direct services. In addition to support directed at passing this federal legislation from County Welfare Directors Association and its lobbyists, support and letters and phone calls have been made by members of the Partnership for Safe Families in an effort to get this bill moved forward. Due to the reduction in the County budget, two APS social workers were laid off effective June 30, 2004.

3. APS is open to a closer relationship with AAA and working together in providing seamless services between programs. Like the recent APS budget reductions, AAA is slated for a 5% budget reduction of state funds. During the last two years legislation has been passed that would pilot service integration of AAA, APS, IHSS/PCSP, Public Conservator, and institutional care under a single administration to provide better and more seamless services to the clients, but at present neither of these bills has passed with any appropriations. The concept of better service integration would provide for improved services, but may be delayed due to implementation costs during tight budget times, but is likely to eventually be implemented through legislation. It would result in all these services falling under one State agency rather than California Department of Aging, California Department of Social Services, and California Department of Health Services as things are currently operated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ted Myers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ted" being more prominent than the last name "Myers".

Ted Myers
Director
Human Services Agency