

**Mike Pettit**  
Assistant County Executive Officer

**Catherine Rodriguez**  
County Chief Financial Officer

June 8, 2018

Sent Via E-Mail

**Shawn Atin**  
Assistant County Executive Officer/  
Human Resources Director  
Labor Relations

Honorable Patricia M. Murphy  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
Superior Court of California, Ventura County  
800 South Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, CA 93009

**Subject:** Board of Supervisors' Response to 2017-18 Grand Jury Final Report on Child Welfare Social Worker Caseloads

Honorable Judge Murphy:

In accordance with State requirements, the requested response from the Human Services Agency – Children & Family Services to the Grand Jury report referenced above was approved by the Ventura County Board of Supervisors on June 5, 2018 and is hereby submitted.

By way of this e-mail, copies of the response to the subject report (Exhibit #1), the Minute Order and the June 5, 2018 board letter were provided to the Ventura County Clerk, to Superior Court Jury Services and to the Foreperson of the 2017-18 Ventura County Grand Jury. As has been the usual practice in past years, Jury Services will provide copies of the responses to the State Archives.

Should you have any questions, please call me at 654-2864 or Kathleen Van Norman at 654-2566.

Respectfully submitted,



Mike Pettit  
Assistant County Executive Officer

**Attachments:**

Board of Supervisors' Response to 2017-18 Grand Jury Final Report on:  
Child Welfare Social Worker Caseloads (Exhibit #1)  
Minute Order  
Board Letter dated June 5, 2018

**Copies:**

County Executive Officer, Michael Powers  
County Clerk, Mark A. Lunn  
Foreperson, Andrew Ludlum, 2017-18 Ventura County Grand Jury  
Superior Court Jury Services, Nan Richardson, Manager

**EXHIBIT 1**

**FY 2017-2018 GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT**

**RESPONSES TO FINDINGS (FI)/CONCLUSIONS (C) AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS (R)**

<b>Report Number (&amp; Date)</b>	<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Respondents (With FI, C and R )</b>
<b>REPORT NO. 01</b>	<b>March 8, 2018</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b><u>Child Welfare Social Worker Caseloads</u></b>	
<b>Requested Respondent:</b>	<b>Human Services Agency, Children &amp; Family Services</b> (C-01, C-02, C-03, C-04, C-05, C-06, C-07, and C-08 plus R-01, R-02, and R-03)	



Grand Jury  
800 South Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, CA 93009  
(805) 477-1600  
Fax: (805) 658-4523  
grandjury.countyofventura.org

### Response to Grand Jury Report Form

Report Title: Child Welfare Social Worker Caseloads

Report Date: March 8, 2018

Response by: Barry Zimmerman Title: Director, County of Ventura Human Services Agency

#### FINDINGS / CONCLUSIONS

- I (we) agree with the findings / conclusions numbered: Findings 1-19; Conclusions 3, 4, 6, 7 \_\_\_\_\_
- I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the Findings / Conclusions numbered:  
Conclusions 1, 2, 5, 8  
(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the Findings / Conclusions that are  
disputed; include an explanation of the reasons.)

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations numbered \_\_\_\_\_ have been implemented.  
(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions and date completed.)
- Recommendations number 2, 3 \_\_\_\_\_ have not yet been implemented, but will be  
implemented in the future.  
(Attach a time frame for the implementation.)
- Recommendations numbered 1 \_\_\_\_\_ require further analysis.
- Recommendations numbered \_\_\_\_\_ will not be implemented because they are  
not warranted or are not reasonable.

Date: May 25, 2018 \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: 

Number of pages attached: 4

## FINDINGS

**FA-01 – FA-19: Agree**

## CONCLUSIONS

**C-1. Average caseloads as defined by HSA are a moving target with no relationship from one month to the next. For instance, a social worker could have what is considered a reasonable number of 17 cases one month and have the same 17 cases considered excessive the next month. Using monthly averages as the basis of determining excessive caseloads is often misleading. A social worker could have a caseload not exceeding the monthly average by 10% yet still significantly exceed HSA's ideal caseload standards. (FA-06, FA-08, FA-12, FA-14)**

### **RESPONSE: Partially Disagree**

HSA disagrees that average caseloads as defined by HSA have no relationship from one month to the next and are misleading. Rather than automatically determining that a caseload above a particular number is “excessive,” HSA supervisors and managers continuously monitor whether social worker caseloads are “manageable” (see Council on Accreditation’s definition of a “manageable workload”), and take action if needed. For example, HSA may assign additional resources to assist with referrals or cases, and may offer overtime hours when possible and necessary to manage spikes in workload. In this regard, there is a relationship between average caseloads from one month to the next, since HSA strives to reduce higher caseloads – at times through the use of interns or non-case-carrying social workers who are not officially counted in ER and Ongoing FTE staff counts.

**C-2. Monthly caseload averages for ER social workers for 2016 exceeded standards suggested by the Council on Accreditation as manageable workloads. (FA-01, FA-02, FA-05, FA-06)**

### **RESPONSE: Partially Disagree**

HSA disagrees with the conclusion that monthly caseload averages for ER social workers for 2016 exceeded standards suggested by the Council on Accreditation as manageable workloads, without consideration of the Council’s full position on workload standards. In its Child Protective Services Personnel Standard 14.05, the Council emphasizes that caseloads may vary depending on social workers’ exact duties, and places primary focus on ensuring workloads that are manageable given the particular environment:

**Interpretation:** Case complexity can take into account: intensity of child and family needs, size of the family, and the goal of the case. Generally, investigative workers should manage no more than 12 active investigations at a time including no more than 8 new investigations per month. Ongoing and preventive services workers should be working with no more than 15-18 families (cases) at a time, with no more than 10 children that are in an out-of-home placement. *However, there are circumstances under which caseloads may exceed these limits. For example, caseload size may vary depending*

*upon the volume of administrative case functions (e.g., entering notes, filing, etc.) assigned to the worker (emphasis added). Caseloads may also be higher when organizations are faced with temporary vacancies on staff. New personnel should not carry independent caseloads prior to the completion of training.*

*Note: The evaluation of this standard will focus on whether the assigned workload is manageable for staff, taking into account the factors cited in the standard and interpretation. The specific caseload sizes stated in the interpretation are only a suggestion of what might be appropriate. Each organization should determine what caseload size is appropriate (emphasis added), and reviewers will evaluate: (1) whether the organization's designated caseload size reflects a manageable workload, and (2) whether the organization maintains caseloads of the size it deemed appropriate.*

**C-3. For all but two months of 2016, caseloads for ER social workers exceeded ideal caseloads as determined by HSA. In four months, caseloads were over the ideal by 30% or more. (FA-03, FA-07)**

**RESPONSE: Agree**

**C-4. The 2016-2019 MOA suggests caseloads in excess of 10% of the average monthly caseload are excessive. In six months of 2016, 25% or more of ER social workers had caseloads exceeding the average monthly caseload by 10%. (FA-04, FA-06, FA-08, FA-09, FA-10) C-01.**

**RESPONSE: Agree**

**C-5. Monthly caseload averages for Ongoing social workers for 2016 exceeded standards suggested by the Council on Accreditation as manageable workloads. (FA-01, FA-02, FA-11, FA-12)**

**RESPONSE: Partially Disagree**

HSA disagrees with the conclusion that monthly caseload averages for Ongoing social workers for 2016 exceeded standards suggested by the Council on Accreditation as manageable workloads, without consideration of the Council's full position on workload standards, for the same reasons cited above in HSA's response to C-02.

**C-6. For all 12 months of 2016, caseloads for Ongoing social workers exceeded ideal caseloads as determined by HSA. (FA-03, FA-13)**

**RESPONSE: Agree**

**C-7. The 2016-2019 MOA suggests caseloads in excess of 10% of the average monthly caseload are excessive. In two months of 2016, Ongoing social workers had caseloads exceeding the average monthly caseload by 10%. Some social workers carried caseloads 20% and even 30% higher than the average monthly caseload. (FA-04, FA-12, FA-14, FA-15, FA-16)**

**RESPONSE: Agree**

**C-8. It is unclear investments in social worker staffing between 2014 and 2016 have resulted in HSA managing reasonable caseloads. Despite an increase in the number of ER social workers and a seven year decline in the number of cases, average caseloads in 2016 significantly exceeded standards suggested by the Council on Accreditation as well as those determined by HSA. (FA-07, FA-13, FA-17, FA-18, FA-19)**

**RESPONSE: Partially Disagree**

HSA disagrees that average caseloads in 2016 significantly exceeded standards suggested by the Council on Accreditation as well as those determined by HSA. Over time, as the County has invested in additional social worker staff, the average caseloads for ER and Ongoing have dropped by 20% (from 19.4 in 2011 to 15.6 in 2016 for ER, and from 25.7 in 2011 to 20.5 in 2016 for Ongoing). These significant reductions have resulted in more manageable workloads for social workers. Both the Council on Accreditation and HSA place primary emphasis on ensuring manageable workloads, while using figures such as 12 or 13 referrals for ER social workers and 15-18 cases for Ongoing social workers as points of reference for monitoring purposes.

### **Recommendations**

**R-1. Despite the difficulty defining and ensuring ideal caseloads, the Grand Jury recommends HSA intensify its efforts to establish realistic workload standards for child welfare social workers. Ideally, clearly defined standards should be included in the next union agreement. (C-02, C-03, C-04, C-05, C-06, C-07)**

**RESPONSE: Recommendation Requires Further Analysis**

HSA will consider proposing more defined workload ranges in the next union agreement if there is a way to do so amidst continuous changes in the work, some of which relieve social workers of tasks while others add new responsibilities.

**R-2. The Grand Jury recommends HSA improves its statistical analysis avoiding dependency on averages which can mask excessive caseloads. (C-01)**

**RESPONSE: Recommendation will be Implemented**

HSA supervisors and managers will continue to monitor whether social worker caseloads are manageable and take action if needed (e.g., assigning additional resources to assist with referrals or cases, offering overtime hours, etc.). Additionally, by July 1, 2018, HSA executive leadership

will implement a quarterly process for reviewing worker-level caseloads to ensure equitable distribution of work and manageable workloads.

**R-3. The Grand Jury recommends HSA determines why, despite increased hiring and a multi-year decline in child welfare caseloads, average caseloads for social workers remain over what the agency considers ideal. (C-08)**

**RESPONSE: Recommendation will be Implemented**

Although the County's investments in additional social worker staff have resulted in significant reductions (20%) in the average caseloads for ER and Ongoing and more manageable workloads for social workers, by July 1, 2018, HSA executive leadership will implement a quarterly process for reviewing the assignments of non-case-carrying social workers in relation to staffing needs in ER and Ongoing, and take any action that may be needed.



**BOARD MINUTES  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF VENTURA, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

**SUPERVISORS STEVE BENNETT, LINDA PARKS,  
KELLY LONG, PETER C. FOY AND JOHN C. ZARAGOZA  
June 5, 2018 at 8:30 a.m.**

**COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE - Approval of Response to 2017-18 Ventura County  
Grand Jury Report Entitled Child Welfare Social Worker Caseloads for Submittal  
to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court in Accordance with State Statute.**

- (X) All Board members are present.
- (X) The following person is heard: Mike Pettit.
- (X) The following document is submitted to the Board for consideration:  
(X) Revised Exhibit 1
- (X) Upon motion of Supervisor Bennett, seconded by Supervisor Zaragoza, and duly carried, the Board hereby approves recommendations as stated in the Board letter.

I hereby certify that the annexed instrument is a true and correct copy of the document which is on file in this office.

Dated: **MICHAEL POWERS**  
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
County of Ventura, State of California

6/6/18

By: Lori Gaines  
Deputy Clerk of the Board

By: Lori Gaines  
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Deputy Clerk of the Board





**Mike Pettit**  
Assistant County Executive Officer

**Catherine Rodriguez**  
County Chief Financial Officer

**Shawn Atin**  
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Human Resources Director  
Labor Relations

June 5, 2018

County of Ventura  
Board of Supervisors  
800 South Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, CA 93009

**Subject: Approval of Response to 2017-2018 Ventura County Grand Jury Report Entitled "Child Welfare Social Worker Caseloads" for Submittal to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court in Accordance with State Statute**

**Recommendation:**

It is recommended that your Board approve the response from the Human Services Agency, Children and Family Services to the Grand Jury Report entitled "Child Welfare Social Worker Caseloads" (Exhibit 1) pertaining to County government under your Board's control for submittal to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court in accordance with State statute.

**Discussion:**

Penal Code §933.05 requires that your Board comment on the Findings and Recommendations of the Grand Jury pertaining to County government under your authority. The 2017-18 Ventura County Grand Jury issued a report on March 8, 2018, entitled "Child Welfare Social Worker Caseloads." The Grand Jury requested a response from the Human Services Agency, which is attached as Exhibit 1.

The response pertaining to County government under your control will serve as your Board's response to the subject 2017-2018 Grand Jury Report to be filed as indicated in the recommended action along with any additional comments your Board may wish to make.

If your Board elects to amend the response prepared to the subject report before you for approval, then CEO staff, at your direction, will make such changes or additions prior to submitting the response to the Presiding Judge.

Board of Supervisors  
June 5, 2018  
Page 2 of 2

This letter was reviewed by County Executive Office, Auditor-Controller's Office and County Counsel. Should you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Mike Pettit at 654-2864 or Kathleen Van Norman at 654-2566.

Sincerely,



*m.p.*  
Michael Powers  
County Executive Officer

Attachments: Exhibit 1 – Human Services Agency, Children and Family Services Response to Grand Jury Report "Child Welfare Social Worker Caseloads"