



COUNTY *of* VENTURA

Grand Jury

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

This response was given using the 2020-2021 Ventura County Grand Jury Report form. The form should have reflected the Ventura County Grand Jury Report form 2021-2022.

We regret any confusion this may cause.

Sincerely,

Keith Frost
Foreperson
Ventura County Grand Jury (2022-2023)



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Response to 2020-2021 Ventura County Grand Jury Report Form (Please See California Penal Code Section 933.05)

Ventura County
Grand Jury

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Report Title: Mental Health Services and Wellness Centers in Ventura County Schools

Responding Entity: Conejo Valley Unified School District

FINDINGS

- I (we) agree with the Findings numbered: F1-F6, F10-F15
- I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the Findings numbered: _____
(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the Findings that are disputed; include an explanation of the reasons.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations numbered _____ have been implemented.
(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)
- Recommendations numbered R2, R4 have not yet been implemented but will be implemented in the future.
(Attach a summary indicating the timeframe for implementation.)
- Recommendations numbered R3 require further analysis.
(Attach an explanation to include: scope and parameters of the analysis or study and timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion with the agency or department head. The timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the report.)
- Recommendations numbered _____ will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.
(Attach an explanation.)

Date: 7-18-22

Signed: [Signature]

Title: Superintendent

Number of pages attached: 2

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Ventura County
Grand Jury

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Karen Sylvester, President
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SUPERINTENDENT

Mark W. McLaughlin, Ed.D.

July 26, 2022

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AUG 01 2022
Ventura County
Grand Jury

The Honorable Bruce A. Young
Presiding Judge, Superior Court of California
County of Ventura
Ventura, CA 93003

Honorable Judge Young,

The Conejo Valley Unified School District (CVUSD) appreciates the significant time and energy the Ventura County Grand Jury put forth to investigate the mental health needs of students in Ventura County and how mental health services and wellness centers within Ventura County schools are seeking to meet mental health needs. The research conducted by the Grand Jury for this report speaks to their level of care and concern for the youth of Ventura County - of which CVUSD shares in viewing student mental health as a priority.

Below is CVUSD’s response to the Grand Jury findings and recommendations:

Findings:

- I (we) agree with the Findings numbered F1-F6 and F10-F15
- I (we) do not disagree wholly or partially with any of the Findings

Recommendations:

- Recommendations numbered R2, R3 and R4 have *not yet been fully implemented* but will be implemented in the future.

R2: “The Grand Jury recommends that by June 30, 2025, VCBH in collaboration with VCOE, develop a strategy to expand the Wellness Center pilot programs into Ventura County public middle schools.”

Response: CVUSD received notice in May 2022 from VCOE regarding grant funds specifically earmarked to support the social emotional and mental health needs of middle school students. Upon receipt of the funds, CVUSD will hire a 1.0 FTE mental health clinician who is a fully licensed provider and will lead and supervise wellness counselors (individuals enrolled in a graduate program for school psychology, school counseling, Marriage and Family Therapy and/or Licensed Clinical Social Work). The funds from the grant will also be used to furnish the designated wellness center spaces on two of our five middle school campuses. Although a wellness center will not be on all five middle school campuses during the 2022-2023 school year, CVUSD does staff each middle school with a wellness counselor who provides direct mental health services to students. CVUSD will continue to plan for expansion of wellness centers to the three remaining middle schools and anticipates accomplishing this recommendation prior to the proposed due date of June 20, 2025.

R3: "The Grand Jury recommends that pursuant to Wellness Center continuity and expansion VCOE, Conejo Valley Unified School District, Simi Valley Unified School District and Ventura Unified District seek and obtain sustainable funding from public and private sources."

Response: Four years ago, CVUSD added a specific Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) goal regarding social emotional learning and mental health. More recently, additional LCAP language was added specifically about Wellness Centers and wellness counseling, including the expansion of Wellness Centers to all CVUSD middle schools and renovation of existing school facilities to increase the number of confidential spaces for students to receive wellness and mental health services, ultimately indicating to our community that there will be District funds earmarked to support wellness services. For the 2022-23 and subsequent two years, the District will commit approximately \$600,000 per year for additional mental health support. In addition to accessing District funds, CVUSD continues to write grant applications to access funds from the State, private and not-for-profit entities. Some of the grants CVUSD has secured include Prevention and Early Intervention, \$196,000 each year for three years; Middle School Wellness, \$150,000 for one year; Conejo Schools Foundation, \$60,000 for one year. Although we have been the recipients of some grants, for which we are extremely grateful, grant funding is not in perpetuity and therefore creates a long-term planning challenge. Consistent with every public school district in California, we hope to see an ongoing investment from the California Department of Education to fund these necessary supports and services.

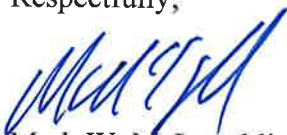
R4: "The Grand Jury recommends that pursuant to Wellness Center continuity and expansion VCOE, Conejo Valley Unified School District, Simi Valley Unified School District and Ventura Unified District create an infrastructure to claim Medi-Cal MH MAA funds for Wellness Centers."

Response: CVUSD currently bills Medi-Cal for mental health services provided as part of special education - therefore the practice is in place. CVUSD will expand the billing practices to include general education mental health services rendered. It is important to note that the time required, by staff, to complete the billing documentation has historically been a barrier to maximizing Medi-Cal reimbursement. CVUSD will work with our current vendor, Medical Billing Technologies, Inc., to identify strategies to reduce the barriers with a goal of fully maximizing Medi-Cal reimbursements prior to the June 30, 2025, proposed completion date.

In conclusion, CVUSD reiterates our appreciation to the Ventura County Grand Jury for their investment in researching the depth of mental health needs with our youth, the Wellness Center model, and overall advocacy to serve students. CVUSD believes we have been taking important steps over the past four years regarding this work and has a commitment to our community, and especially to our students, to keep moving forward to reach more students. As indicated above, our team actively pursues securing grant funds explicitly for mental health staffing and services along with making our priority clear in the LCAP.

If you have any questions, I welcome the opportunity to expand upon what has been written above.

Respectfully,



Mark W. McLaughlin, Ed.D.
Superintendent