

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT

Report Title: Inspections of Custody and Correction Facilities in Humboldt County

Report Date: 6/17/20

Response by: Humboldt County Board of Supervisors

FINDINGS

1. The county agrees with the findings numbered F6 and F8.
2. The county partially agrees with the finding F5 and F7.
3. The county disagrees with the finding F2.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Recommendation numbered _____ has been implemented.
2. Recommendations numbered _____ will be implemented.
3. Recommendation numbered R6 is in the process of being implemented.
4. Recommendations numbered R7 and R8 require analysis.
5. Recommendations numbered R2 and R5 will not be implemented.

Date: _____ Signed: _____

Number of pages attached: _____



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
MANAGEMENT & BUDGET TEAM

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INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
FROM: AMY S. NILSEN, COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO 2019-2020 GRAND JURY REPORT "INSPECTIONS OF CUSTODY AND CORRECTIONS FACILITIES IN HUMBOLDT COUNTY"
DATE: 8/25/2020

In the Grand Jury Report, Inspections of Custody and Correction Facilities in Humboldt County, the Grand Jury has requested that your Board respond to Findings 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8 and Recommendations 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8. I am proposing the following response as detailed below.

FINDINGS

Finding 2: *Lengthy vetting, onboarding, recruitment and retention problems in both the Humboldt County Correctional Facility and Humboldt County Mental Health impede the effective delivery of mental health care. (R2)*

Response: Disagree

Between 2018 and 2020, the Human Resources (HR) department reviewed the recruitment, hiring, and onboarding practices. HR took steps to mitigate the time between recruitments and created a streamlined recruitment process that allows departments to move through each recruitment quickly. Eligible candidates are placed on a Referred List, which is sent electronically to the department. When each recruitment is complete, candidates who pass the oral exam are considered eligible for hire.

Finding 5: *Sempervirens Psychiatric Health Facility has a physical atmosphere that is not conducive to mental health rehabilitation. This facility needs to be replaced with a larger, modern facility designed to accommodate both adults and juveniles for the patients' well-being. (R5)*

Response: Partially agree

The county is in the process of developing a Facilities Master Plan which will guide construction of new county facilities. While this process is sure to be an extended and expensive one, developing a cohesive master plan that details facility needs for all county departments will help ensure better planning and financing to complete the project.

Finding 6: *Mental health services would be improved if step-down housing was provided for patients as they exit secure facilities. (R6)*

Response: Agree

Finding 7: *Increasing the Mobile Response Team hours of availability would improve service to those in need of immediate mental health intervention while reducing the burden incurred by law enforcement and hospital emergency rooms. (R7)*

Response: Partially agree

The Mobile Response Team's (MRT) work has been effective, improving service and meeting a community need. The MRT is funded by grants and is subject to limited funding availability.

Finding 8: *Laura's Law (AB1421) has been found to be beneficial in the California counties that have adopted it. Adoption of Laura's Law by Humboldt County would provide a major option for treatment of people suffering from mental illness. (R8)*

Response: Agree

The Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS)-Behavioral Health has been exploring bringing this program to our county. Behavioral Health hosted a training on Laura's Law in 2019 and invited County and

community stakeholders. The courts, District Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, Probation and Humboldt County Correctional Facility would all need to support the creation and sustainability of this program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 2: *The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Humboldt County Human Resources Department and Department of Health and Human Services thoroughly examine and improve their effectiveness in hiring, onboarding, and recruitment processes to better fill vacancies. These changes should be implemented by January 1, 2021. (F2)*

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented

Human Resources screens each applicant for minimum qualifications based on the education and experience requirements outlined in the board-adopted job classifications. The Department of Health Care Services currently recognizes three National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) accredited organizations to register and certify alcohol and other drug counselors in California. To be considered for inclusion in the list of counselor certifying organizations, you must apply to and become accredited by the NCCA. Therefore, there are additional considerations to have when screening for minimum qualifications.

After the referred list is provided to the department, the department is responsible for moving candidates through the necessary screening and background process. Working in safety sensitive positions or locations (i.e. Correctional Facility, Juvenile Hall, etc.), requires eligible candidates to undergo a secondary level of screening, such as a background investigation, to fully vet the candidate before they can be hired. This secondary level of screening is completed by and within the department they are being hired into. Timeframes for those screenings are dependent on the department.

Recommendation 5: *The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends Humboldt County Board of Supervisors complete and approve the comprehensive infrastructure plan relative to County buildings and grounds, and specifically include Sempervirens Psychiatric Health Facility as a high priority project. This plan should be completed by January 1, 2021. (F5)*

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented

As stated above, the county is in the process of developing a Facilities Master Plan. While a draft plan has been created, it requires an extensive review process from the community, stakeholders, county and other public agencies, interest groups, and others. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the county has been seeking feedback on its draft plan and recently closed a survey on Aug. 6. Those responses are currently being evaluated and if necessary may be used to update the Facilities Master Plan. It would be ideal to complete the entire project, which includes securing hundreds of millions of dollars in funding, by Jan. 1, 2021, but that timeline is simply too short. However, the county is in the process of finalizing this important plan.

Recommendation 6: *The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services integrate the use of step-down housing for patients being discharged from secure facilities. These services should be available to all patients by January 1, 2021. (F6)*

Response: The county is in the process of implementing

DHHS-Behavioral Health is in the process of awarding a contractor on this recommendation and has been actively addressing this since last year.

Recommendation 7: *The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services expand staffing of the Mobile Response Team to around-the-clock (24/7/365), effective October 1, 2020. (F7)*

Response: This recommendation requires further evaluation

The Mobile Response Team's work has been effective, improving service and meeting a community need. The MRT is funded by grants and is subject to limited funding availability. Services can be expanded only if funding is secured.

Recommendation 8: *The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends Humboldt County Board of Supervisors adopt and implement the components of Laura's Law (AB1421) as another option for evaluation and treatment by mental health professionals, effective January 1, 2021. (F8)*

Response: This recommendation requires further evaluation

DHHS-Behavior Health has been exploring bringing this program to our county. Behavioral Health hosted a training on Laura's Law in 2019 and invited county and community stakeholders. The courts, District Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, Probation and Humboldt County Correctional Facility would all need to support the creation and sustainability of this program.