



COUNTY OF SONOMA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

Mark A. Kostielney - Director

Sharon Aguilera - Assistant Director

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Memorandum

DATE: September 2, 2003
TO: Allan Hardcastle, Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
FROM: Mark Kostielney, Director, Department of Health Services
Cathy Geary, LCSW, Mental Health Services Director
SUBJECT: Response to 2002-2003 Grand Jury Final Report

MT

9/10/03

CO

ADOLESCENT CRISES

Findings

Finding F5 (page 11): *The losses in both current and future funding mean that every child who is mandated to be served will continue to be seen, but the services will be diminished.*

Response: The respondent disagrees with this finding. Currently, the Department of Health Services, Mental Health Division provides mandated services to children and youth who are deemed eligible under the AB 3632 program for special education pupils; children who are Medi-Cal beneficiaries who require specialty mental health services; and other seriously emotionally disturbed children and youth to the extent resources are available.

The Department of Health Services, Mental Health Division continues to provide all of these mandated services. However, services provided under the AB 3632 program to special education students has not been adequately reimbursed by the State of California, as required, since the fiscal year 99/00 and reimbursements for both fiscal years 02-03 and 03-04 have been deferred by the State. Without adequate reimbursement, for past and current year services, it will become difficult or impossible for the Division to continue to provide adequate services in the future.

Finding F6 (page 12): *The Juvenile Justice Commission reports that the mental health treatment of young people transferring from county detention to a group home is often inadequate at a time of great instability for the child.*

Response: The respondent agrees in part with this finding. Certainly the placement of a young person from a county detention facility to a group home is a time of great instability for any child and significant support for and supervision of these children is necessary.

However, it is not the experience of the Department of Health Services, Mental Health Division, that the majority of these children require mental health treatment, nor that the treatment they may receive is inadequate. When requested by the Probation Department staff, Mental Health Division clinical staff assess children and youth prior to, or at any time after, placement in a group home. If a child is a Medi-Cal beneficiary and requires specialty mental health treatment, the Division either provides this care, or arranges for its provision through a contract with a treatment provider.

Recommendations

Recommendation R1 (page 13): *The Department of Mental Health should oversee the production and distribution of a comprehensive informational brochure for those families in the private sector who do not know where to get help for their disturbed or mentally ill teens or children. A list of resources should include these items:*

- *Professional therapists*
- *Family support groups such as the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill*
- *Patient support groups through Interlink*
- *Peer counseling groups such as the one for pre-suicidal teens called "Reach Out to Someone"*
- *Non-profit agencies such as the Social Advocates for Youth, which offer information and telephone numbers for the many teen "Help Hot-Lines"*

Response: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented as soon as possible.

Recommendation R3 (page 13): *Since the Department of Mental Health is already short-staffed, it is recommended that the department explore the possibility of having a student at the college or graduate level undertake the project as an intern or as a thesis subject or seek community volunteers.*

Response: This recommendation has already been implemented. The Department of Health Services, Mental Health Division, has begun the process of seeking a student, intern or community volunteer who might assist in this project.

PROFESSIONALS DEFEND SONOMA COUNTY'S INDIGENTS

Recommendations

Recommendation R9 (page 62): *The Public Defender's office supported by the Board of Supervisors and the Mental Health Department should retain the service of a full-time mental health professional.*

Response: Implementation of the recommendation should be decided by the Public Defender based on his department priorities. The Department of Health Services, Mental Health Division, currently provides services to the eligible target population who suffer from serious and persistent mental illness, including those who may be clients of the Public Defender's office. The Sonoma County Superior Court contracts with the Department of Health Services, Mental Health Division, for mental health consultations.

cc: Mark Tansil, 2002-03 Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
Members, Board of Supervisors
Denise Gordon, Court Executive Officer
Mike Chrystal, County Administrator
Eeve Lewis, County Clerk