

R3. A review should be undertaken to analyze the costs of long-term care of the mentally ill in the community, compared to the expense of housing and treating them in the jails for the short-term. The review should include a cost/benefit analysis of re-opening community treatment programs for the mentally ill where their interests, and the interest of society, can be better served, and whether programs such as F.A.C.T. should be re-established.

RESPONSE: The recommendation has been implemented.

The Board of Supervisors is aware that the Sheriff and the Department of Health Services in conjunction with the County Administrator conducted both a cost benefit analysis and an outcome analysis, the result of which did show a significant reduction in recidivism over the short term. The County Administrator indicated, in his response to the Grand Jury recommendation, that (1) although the outcome data reflected the positive impact on clients, (2) limited cost data rendered the analysis inconclusive. The results of the analysis however, did indicate that there would be no outright cost savings for continuation of the FACT program only a cost shift from the criminal justice system to the mental health system.

Continuation of the State-grant funded FACT program with County resources would result in a substantial County investment with a limited number of beneficiaries as compared with investments in other mental health programs. A higher priority is placed on maintaining other existing law enforcement, detention and mental health services over continuation of the FACT program and that such a shift of County funding from other mental health or law enforcement programs could negatively affect public safety and mental health services for others.

To address the loss of the FACT program and an increase in jail population the Board of Supervisors directed the County Administrator to work with the Jail Oversight Committee (JOC) to explore other options to safely reduce jail population. The Board approved \$372,000 in funding during the budget hearings for three of the JOC highest priority options in spite of an extremely strained budget.

GOT WATER?

FINDINGS, Page 55

F1. Since 1949, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors and the Sonoma County Water Agency Board of Directors have been made up of exactly the same members. Testimony given to the grand jury indicated a perception that a conflict of interest exists due to the Board of Supervisors political responsibilities to both rural and urban growth development which could affect their land use decisions to favor urban growth without regard to possible water supply shortages in the rural areas. Additional concerns were that each supervisor necessarily represents a specific geographical area, but not the entire county; and that the Board of Supervisors lacks technical expertise regarding water issues.

RESPONSE: The Board of Supervisors partially agrees with this finding.

The Board agrees with the finding as to the composition of the Board of Supervisors and the Water Agency Board of Directors. The balance of this finding recounts testimony provided to the Grand Jury but does not specifically state findings and the supporting evidence in relation to that testimony. While the election of the Board of Supervisors by geographic area ensures appropriate representation, the Board

serves as the legislative body for the county as a whole. The Board of Supervisors and Board of Directors recognize the need to preserve the balance between rural and urban growth development and sustaining water supplies, and have acted responsibly to do so.

RECOMMENDATIONS, Page 57

R1. The County and each of its cities should adopt or amend a sustainable water element as part of their general plan with a target date of January 1, 2005, the adoption date of the next general plan.

RESPONSE: The recommendation will be implemented.

Adoption of the County's General Plan update is currently projected to occur in mid-2005. The Board of Supervisors has already directed that a Water Resources Element be included in the General Plan update.

R2. The county and each of its cities should adopt and develop a comprehensive groundwater management plan such as that set forth in AB 3030. The information from the existing groundwater studies should be used to provide a bank of information upon which to initiate a groundwater management plan.

RESPONSE: The recommendation will not be implemented, as it is not reasonable.

Groundwater conditions in Sonoma County are highly varied, including some areas with well-defined groundwater basins and other areas with poorly understood fractured rock aquifers. These varied conditions are not well suited to development of a single, comprehensive groundwater management plan. Further, while the extent of groundwater information in Sonoma County is increasing, this existing information is not sufficient to form the basis for a groundwater management plan as envisioned under AB 3030. Finally, the County lacks the funding to undertake a comprehensive groundwater management plan at this time.

Nonetheless, the Board of Supervisors remains committed to increasing information and understanding of groundwater conditions in Sonoma County as evidenced by the recent completion of the Kleinfelder pilot study of three water scarce areas, the Board's support of the Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Study (in cooperation with the Sonoma County Water Agency, the cities of Cotati, Rohnert Park, Santa Rosa, Sebastopol and the Town of Windsor), recent implementation of new well monitoring and testing requirements and inclusion of a Water Resources Element in the General Plan update. The Board of Supervisors recognizes that groundwater will continue to be an important public policy matter into the foreseeable future.

R3. The Board of Supervisors should establish an independent Regional Water Resources Management Board that takes a long-term regional vision of all water issues facing this county, emphasizing sustainability. This new board would have authority over all water matters in the county. It would have its own funding sources and enforcement powers and would be the coordinating body for all the county's water issues.

RESPONSE: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

It is not within the Board of Supervisors' authority to establish such a broadly empowered entity. The Board believes that the Sonoma County Water Agency effectively and ably manages the water resources within its control, without the need for a separate governing board. The Board of Supervisors further

believes that the new General Plan Water Resources Element will be the most appropriate mechanism to address water resource issues that are under the Board's jurisdiction.

HOLES IN THE EMPLOYEE BENEFIT SAFETY NET

RECOMMENDATIONS: Page 64

R1. The Board of Supervisors should create a new position for an independent employee advocate who has medical and legal expertise to guide ill/injured employees who are unsure of their options through the various benefit systems to ensure they receive the appropriate outcomes.

RESPONSE: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

The County currently provides a number of employees and contractors through Risk Management, who are available to assist injured and ill employees regarding the various benefits available to them. In addition, the State of California, Division of Industrial Relations provides extensive staffing and support through its Information and Assistance Offices throughout the State available to assist injured workers with the goal that injured workers should not have to hire an attorney to assist them through the workers compensation process.

Risk Management is responsible for the administration of the County's self-insured workers compensation program and oversees the long-term disability (LTD) program provided through Standard Insurance. There are eight full-time County and contracted staff responsible for oversight and administration of the County's workers compensation program and three full-time staff assigned to the County's LTD claims at Standard. Feedback from both employees and labor organizations regarding the County's LTD program through Standard is that they are doing a good job and have been very responsive in addressing issues, which have been few.

Risk Management reports that while most injured workers are able to understand and receive workers compensation benefits timely and appropriately, and return back to work quickly, there are some cases where disputes arise regarding the nature and extent of the injury. In these situations, an employee can retain an attorney to promote and advocate their position. Employees can also obtain assistance from their labor representatives. Risk Management has confirmed that less than 17% of all workers compensation claims filed in 2003 with the County resulted in litigation and a small portion of these claims involve an actual dispute between the County and the employee.

R4. Evaluation of the results of the pilot Safety and Loss Prevention and the Transitional Duty/Return to Work Program in the five major departments (Sheriff, Probation, Health Services, Public Works and Human Services) should be analyzed and if cost effective, implemented countywide.

RESPONSE: The recommendation will be implemented.

As outlined in the "Report on the Board of Supervisors of the County of Sonoma's Self-Insured Workers Compensation Program" presented in May 2003, it is the County of Sonoma's intention to analyze the effectiveness of the Transitional Duty/Return to Work Program within the five major departments and if cost effective, to implement this program countywide.

The Board of Supervisors expects to evaluate the progress of this program in an updated report on Workers Compensation, which will be presented in the fall of 2004. It is our understanding that County staff have