

# SONOMA COUNTY HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT RESPONSE TO THE 2004-2005 GRAND JURY REPORT

## **Mental Health Services Division: On the Mend?**

### ***Recommendation R2, Page 55***

*The Human Resources Department, with assistance and support from Health Services Department, needs to revise its process for collecting and analyzing employee turnover data. The process for documenting turnover data should delineate the various reasons for separation. This turnover data should be examined on a periodic basis and compared to other county departments. Analysis of this data, not available today, could provide another useful tool for insight.*

### **The recommendation will be implemented but requires further analysis:**

The Human Resources department agrees with the Grand Jury that the county would benefit from a revision of HR's process for collecting and analyzing employee turnover data. HR concurs with the recommendation and will take the lead in exploring options to better gather, analyze and distribute turnover data to the county's executive management. The degree of implementation of process improvements would be predicated on the costs associated and the County's financial constraints.

Currently, the Human Resources department and the Auditor/Payroll division collect separation and turnover data in two differing formats:

#### Human Resources Data Collection

- Turnover by department: This data collection provides both whole number and percentage information on turnover by department, on an annual basis. HR has used this data internally to identify issues and trends in recruiting and for collective bargaining processes. The data has not been routinely shared with county departments.
- Turnover by job class: HR collected employee turnover stats by job class in the past. In 1995, HR discontinued the collection of turnover data by job class and began collecting turnover data by department only. HR agrees that data on turnover by job class could also provide valuable insight into higher than normal turnover rates related to specific positions or for preventable reasons.

#### Auditor/Payroll Division Data Collection

- The Auditor/Payroll division also collects data on turnover, although this data has not historically been made available to departments. The data, collected when a change of status occurs for any employee, includes information related to separation from the county such as transfer to another employer, resignation, dismissal, layoff, retirement/regular, retirement/disability, and death.

While HR has not taken the lead on this issue in the recent past, some individual departments have developed processes of their own to collect such data for their internal use. Health Services is one such department.

The Human Resources department agrees with the Grand Jury that the process and content of these reports could be improved to provide important information for the county and departments. Over the next year and dependant on financial constraints, the Human Resources department will research options

available to improve this process. In the long term, an HR Information System currently under consideration by the county could provide a wide variety of employee information to county management, including turnover data. However, in the short run, HR will explore ways to improve this (now by hand) collection of data, including development of a database.

We will, of course, seek assistance and feedback from departments, including the Health Services Department and the Auditor Controller's Office, to improve this system so that it can be a useful tool.

***Recommendation R3, Page 55***

*The Human Resources Department, with assistance and support from Mental Health Services Division, needs to revise its process for collecting and analyzing employee exit interview comments. All employees who terminate should be encouraged to write a summary of their work experience. The exit interview process should be conducted in a consistent manner with a neutral person who can ask questions and record answers in an unbiased fashion. Exit interview comments should be considered valuable information and reviewed by each successive member of the management team including the MHS Division Director.*

**The recommendation will be implemented but requires further analysis:**

The HR department concurs with the Grand Jury that Human Resources current Employee Exit Interview Program is not effective in collecting valuable information from separating employees. We agree that the data provided by an effective program should yield, particularly when correlated with turnover and change of status data, important insight into the causes and conditions that may lead to higher than normal turnover rates.

In April of 2003, County of Sonoma Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution implementing a countywide Employee Exit Interview Program using the County Exit Interview Guidelines and Questionnaire. The program collects information on job title; length of service in the department as well as with the county; employee satisfaction with supervision, working conditions, promotional opportunities, salary, training, employee benefits, location, the job, fellow employees and recognition. Employees are also asked what factors contributed to their decision to leave the county and/or department. Finally, employees are asked for comments or suggestions that they feel would improve employment with the county or the department. Interviews are conducted at the departmental level and then sent to HR, where they are filed. The Human Resources department administers the Employee Exit Interview Program countywide, but does not enforce participation nor provide correlated or aggregated data to departments from this program. Some departments, such as Health Services, have developed their own methods of collecting, analyzing and acting on their exit data.

Over the next year, the Human Resources department will explore options for strengthening the existing program to better serve the needs of our departments and the county. HR will research other agency models and research the current best practices in this area. This might include online survey tools now available in the market. Implementation of any process improvement will depend on costs and available resources.

Ann Goodrich  
Director of Human Resources

C: Honorable Allan Hardcastle, Former Presiding Judge  
Board of Supervisors  
County Administrator  
Court Executive Officer  
County Clerk