



**County of Sonoma
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES**

Rita Scardaci, MPH – Director
Sharon Aguilera – Assistant Director

August 10, 2005

TO: Allan Hardcastle, Presiding Judge
Superior Court, State of California
County of Sonoma

FROM: Rita Scardaci, MPH, Director, Department of Health Services
Art Ewart, Mental Health Services Director

RE: Response to 2004-2005 Grand Jury Final Report

Mental Health Services Division: On the Mend?

Recommendations

R1: (page 54)

- a. **The MHS Director should actively support and promote the formation of an Implementation Team consisting of cross-functional staff and management as soon as possible.**
- b. **Participation on the Implementation Team should be open to anyone in the division. Recognizing workload pressures of the division staff, schedules should be adjusted, where practical, to allow participation.**
- c. **The Implementation Team should be empowered to formulate the plans and timeline for implementing the changes documented by the consultant's Recommendation Teams.**
- d. **The Implementation Team should report progress back to the Mental Health Services Director and the Director should communicate this progress to the rest of the division staff.**
- e. **The MHS director should commission an independent survey six months after the formation of the Implementation Team to assess both tangible and perceived progress with the results of the survey communicated to the entire staff**

Response: *This recommendation has been implemented:*

During the past year, the MHS Director has actively supported the Staff Advisory Team, consisting of cross-functional staff and managers, which was formed for the stated purpose “to provide feedback and make recommendations on the ongoing functioning of the organization in order to create a respectful, trusting, cooperative work environment which supports and nurtures collaboration, joint problem-solving, two-way communication and open dialogue.”



Participation is open to any staff member in the organization and representatives are elected to serve by their peers in each Section of the Mental Health Division. Recognizing workload pressures of the staff, schedules are adjusted, where practical, to allow participation.

The role of the Staff Advisory Team during this first year has been to monitor the implementation of the recommendations made by the organizational consultant and the Recommendation Teams that resulted from the Division-wide surveys of 2003/04.

Since the Mental Health Services Director is a member of the Staff Advisory Team, he receives progress reports directly from the rest of the Team. In turn, these elected representatives then communicate the same reports to their respective Sections. Similar reports are then provided by the Mental Health Director to all management staff.

The Staff Advisory Team has recently completed a face-to-face survey of the staff to assess progress of implementing the organizational recommendations and will communicate that information to the entire staff.

Recommendations

R2: *(page 55)*

- a. The Human Resources Department, with assistance and support from Health Services Department, needs to revise its process for collecting and analyzing employee turnover data.**
- b. 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 into departmental behavior.**

Response: *This recommendation has partially been implemented.*

The Human Resources Department, with assistance and support from Health Services, is planning to revise its process for collecting and analyzing employee turnover data.

The Department of Health Services documents employee turnover data, delineating the various reasons for separation. During FY 04/05, the entire Department of Health Services experienced seventy-nine (79) permanent employee separations which equates to a 12.9% Turnover Rate. The seventy-nine (79) separations were further delineated by reason of separation as follows: 32 – resignations; 23 – retirements (service); 15 – transfers to other county departments; 5 – retirements (disability); 2 – deaths; and 2 – dismissals.



The Department routinely examines this data which serves as a useful tool to measure each division's practice and functioning, and to support the department's personnel management activities, including: succession planning, recruitment priorities, highlighting key staff vacancies, and identifying trends which may require additional staff training.

The Mental Health Division will make use of employee turnover data to better analyze any trends in staff separations that may yield insight into the necessity of organizational change.

Recommendations

R3: (page 55)

- a. **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.**
- b. **All employees who terminate should be encouraged to write a summary of their work experience.**
- c. **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.**
- d. **Exit interview comments should be considered valuable information and reviewed by each successive member of the management team including the MHS Director.**

Response: *This recommendation has been partially implemented.*

The Human Resources Department, with assistance and support from Health Services, is planning to revise its process for collecting and analyzing employee exit interview comments.

This past year, the Department of Health Services has reviewed and re-emphasized its guidelines for the conduct of employee exit interviews. Exit interviews are made available to all separating employees. Employees are offered a choice of managers or payroll staff who may conduct the interview. In addition, the Department now plans to mail each separating employee, who has chosen not to participate in an exit interview, a written "Exit Results Questionnaire." The separating employee will be encouraged to complete the questionnaire and return it to the Department Head via a self-addressed, stamped envelope. When a Mental Health staff member separates employment, information from these questionnaires will be reviewed by the Mental Health management team to determine the necessity of organizational change that may lead to enhanced job satisfaction.

Recommendations

R4: (page 55) **The management of MHS should make a concerted effort to encourage employees to discuss work place problems and concerns with management personnel first. Submitting complaints directly to the press, or utilizing**



the grand jury as a sounding board, is not the most effective way to resolve these issues.

Response: *This recommendation has been implemented.*

The Mental Health management team openly solicits employee comments or concerns about work place problems. Employees are encouraged to direct problems to their immediate supervisor. In recent meetings with labor organizations, Mental Health managers have also requested the Union Business Agents to encourage this practice with employees as well.

Recommendations

R5: (page 55) Insufficient consideration has been given to the Director's tenure affecting MHS Division Turmoil. Mental Health Services should be examined by an oversight committee consisting of one or more representatives from the Board of Supervisors, the County Administrator, and the Director, Health Services to uncover the underlying reasons why MHS has lost four directors in the last fifteen years.

Response: *This recommendation will not be implemented.*

The Director of Health Services is the appointing authority for the Mental Health Services Director. As part of the recent recruitment process, the Director sought input from key stakeholders in the outcomes of the public mental health system to develop an ideal candidate profile. In addition, the tenure of the prior incumbents in this position was given serious consideration, including recognition that individuals make career choices to pursue other opportunities and professional advancement. The Director's appointment of Art Ewart as Mental Health Services Director reflects this process and Mr. Ewart's significant knowledge and understanding of Sonoma County Mental Health Services which he brings to the position from his thirty (30) years of mental health experience.

RS/AE/jas

cc: Members, Board of Supervisors
Denise Gordon, Court Executive Officer
Bob Deis, County Administrator
Eeve Lewis, County Clerk