



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY HEALTH AGENCY

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

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TO: Ginger Fisher, Administrative Analyst

FROM: Jeff Hamm, Health Agency Director *Michael Stuma*
Karen Baylor, Ph.D., MFT, Behavioral Health Administrator

DATE: June 22, 2010

SUBJECT: Response to Grand Jury Report

This is provided as the required response to the Grand Jury's Report; "Homelessness in San Luis Obispo County: Are we solving the problem?" The Grand Jury requested that the Health agency respond to findings seven through ten and recommendations one and three through seven.

Finding 7: No single county official or agency is charged with overall responsibility for assisting the homeless.

Response: The Department agrees with the finding.

Finding 8: The County Department of Social Services, Mental Health Services and Drug and Alcohol Services assist homeless persons who are eligible for their programs, but simply being homeless does not qualify an individual for any particular services.

Response: The Department agrees with the finding.

Finding 9: The extent to which the key county agencies (DSS, Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol) integrate services to the homeless is uncertain. Agency leaders offer differing assessments.

Response: The Department agrees with the finding.

Finding 10: Some homeless persons who are afflicted with drug and alcohol problems or mentally ill are not well served.

Response: The Department agrees with this finding.

Recommendation 1: The county and all the county's incorporated cities should "adopt" and begin to implement the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness.

Response: This recommendation is beyond the scope of authority of the Health Agency. However, Health Agency's representative on the Homeless Services Oversight Council (HSOC) is the Behavioral Health Administrator who attends the monthly meetings. As specified in the by-laws for the HSOC, the purpose of the county-wide Homeless Services Oversight Council is to lead, facilitate and provide oversight for the implementation of the 10-year Plan to End Homelessness. The Health Agency is committed to participating in this effort.

Recommendation 3: A full-time Homeless Services Coordinator (a senior official who is more than the currently contemplated HSOC "executive Director") should oversee the implementation of the ten year plan. This person should be supplied with a staff, including a grant writer.

Response: This recommendation is beyond the scope of authority of the Health Agency. However, the Behavioral Health Administrator participates in the monthly HSOC meetings and has met with the HSOC Executive Director.

Recommendation 4: The Homeless Services Coordinator should monitor funds directly towards helping the homeless and make recommendation and offer guidance to all involved agencies and groups throughout the County.

Response: This recommendation is beyond the scope of authority of the Health Agency. However, one of the roles of the HSOC is with to make recommendations to local jurisdictions for funding for this population. The Behavioral Health Administrator as a member of HSOC will actively participate in this process. The Health Agency will work with the HSOC Executive Director regarding data needed for various funding opportunities.

Recommendation 5: The Homeless Campus should be built as soon as possible. The coordinator and appropriate staff from DSS, County Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol should also be stationed there. These professionals need to meet with the homeless where they eat and sleep. Each department should have one or more staff assigned to the Prado Day Center on a regular basis until the campus is occupied. Appropriate arrangements should be made to address issues of client privacy and confidentiality as required by law, but such requirements should not provide a rationale for not delivering services.

Response: The portions of this recommendation involving the Health Agency can not be implemented unless sufficient funding was provided to pay for the mental health and drug and alcohol staff involved. Mental Health Services used to have a program that was specifically funded by the state for people who are mentally ill and homeless. This program was very successful but the funding was cut by the Governor. Should funds become available in the future, the Department would have the knowledge and expertise to implement a similar program at the Homeless Campus. Currently there is a mental health staff who does visit Prado Day center on a regular basis who could be reassigned to the Homeless Campus in the future.

Recommendation 6: The county, south county incorporated cities and appropriate non-profit groups should vigorously pursue joint efforts to build and operate a facility that provides both day services and night time shelter for homeless persons in the five cities region.

Response: This recommendation is beyond the scope of authority of the Health Agency. However, Health Agency's representative on the Homeless Services Oversight Council (HSOC) is the Behavioral Health Administrator who attends the monthly meetings. This recommendation is discussed at the HSOC meetings.

Recommendation 7: Cities in south county, the county itself and The Five Cities Homeless Coalition should begin to work with local churches and service groups to provide temporary shelter until the facility is operative. ECHO in Atascadero provides an excellent model.

Response: This recommendation is beyond the scope of authority of the Health Agency. However, Health Agency's representative on the Homeless Services Oversight Council (HSOC) is the Behavioral Health Administrator who attends the monthly meetings.