



July 28, 2009

Solano County Board of Supervisors

Honorable Board of Supervisors,

On behalf of La Clínica, its Board of Directors and Staff, we offer the following corrections and perspectives on the 2008- 2009 Grand Jury Report which you recently received.

For the record, we would like to make the following corrections to the “**Background and Summary**” section.

First, the Grand Jury Report provides an inaccurate and confused account of La Clínica’s development in Vallejo. Today, La Clínica operates three medical clinic sites throughout the city: a family medicine clinic on Georgia Street; a prenatal clinic on Hospital Drive; and an innovative “emergency room diversion clinic,” also on Hospital Drive, which is the subject of the Grand Jury Report.

The Grand Jury Report mistakenly links the Georgia Street clinic – which used to be called the Redwood Family Clinic – with the diversion clinic on Hospital Drive. In fact, the circumstances that led to La Clínica taking over management of the Redwood Family Clinic are independent of the steps that led to the opening of the diversion clinic.

The Redwood Family Clinic, a private, community non-profit clinic was established in 1991. During the spring of 2001, the health center found itself in significant financial crisis, potentially facing closure. Its management, led by Dr. Gregory Baldwin (who continues to be a physician at La Clínica), approached La Clínica about assuming management of the clinic. After significant due diligence, both Boards agreed to the “transfer of assets” which occurred on November 1, 2002. The transition was seamless with no interruption of patient care. In 2008, this clinic site served as a medical home to 6,876 patients, providing over 17,000 visits.

In 2005, Sutter Solano approached La Clínica about assuming management of its Great Beginnings Clinic, a prenatal clinic in existence since 1989. Again, after careful due diligence, La Clínica’s Board of Directors approved assuming legal responsibility for Great Beginnings. In 2006, the first year that La Clínica operated the Great Beginnings clinic, 3,477 low-income, pregnant women received care; the next year, in 2007, that number grew to over 9,000 patients, and last year grew again to over 10,300.

Since then, La Clínica has also been able to secure federal funds and Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) designation for this prenatal care clinic. This collaborative effort has greatly benefitted not only La Clínica and its patients, but Sutter Solano, and the County, at large at a time when the availability of prenatal services is limited. (The Baby First Solano Program recently recognized La Clínica Great Beginnings for their support of the Prenatal Substance Abuse Project).

Since we first began the provision of services in 2002, demand for health care services in Vallejo has increased dramatically. According to the Solano County Health & Social Services Department, by December 2005, wait times for appointments at the County's own Fairfield and Vallejo clinics were approximately 6 weeks, "far exceeding the 2 week standard." At the same time, inappropriate use of hospital emergency rooms was skyrocketing. Between 2000 and 2006, Solano County saw a 13.1% increase in ER visits, more than twice the statewide average. Of those visits, almost 80% were classified as non-urgent or urgent with a moderate severity.

It was in this context that Sutter Solano approached La Clinica about partnering with Sutter on the creation of an alternative place to serve patients who inappropriately use the emergency room for primary care. This model was presented to the Solano Coalition of Better Health, which is the unique forum that brings together all the health care providers who constitute Solano County's Health Care safety net. During these discussions, it was determined that the creation of this new "diversion clinic" would not only benefit Sutter Solano, but had the potential to help Kaiser Permanente, and the County itself.

Each of these partners made a three year financial commitment to the La Clinica's North Vallejo Clinic. The Grand Jury Report states that the Solano County Board of Supervisors approved a \$100,000 contribution for each of the first 3 years of operation. That is incorrect. In fact, the Board approved a \$100,000 contribution in the first year, \$87,000 in the second year, and \$69,500 in the third year – declining as presumably La Clinica's operating deficit declines.

At the end of the three years, the intention is to evaluate whether the clinic has met its intended purpose. Toward that end, La Clinica secured funding from the California HealthCare Foundation to evaluate its outcomes. It is of interest to note that since La Clinica North Vallejo's inception in November, 2008, the partners have hosted a number of visits from outside the County from others who are interested in replicating this very creative approach to the inappropriate use of emergency rooms in Solano County.

From November 2008 through April 2009, La Clinica North Vallejo provided 1,513 patient visits. A quarter of those visits were from uninsured patients; 40% were Partnership HealthPlan enrollees; and about 30% were covered by Medi-Cal, Medicare, CMSP or private insurance.

## **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Finding 1** – The Report cites the County did not seek a replacement provider when the Redwood Clinic closed.

The Redwood Family Clinic on Georgia Street never closed; rather, management transferred to La Clinica, which operates the site currently. Because Redwood was a private, free-standing clinic, it was totally within its rights to choose a partner; and, this did not require Solano County's approval. It was not within the County's jurisdiction to find a replacement provider.

Since the transfer, La Clinica has secured federal funding for this clinic and has been successful in certifying it as an FQHC. Both of these actions greatly financially benefit the community at large and the Solano Health Department, in general.

**Finding 2** – Documentation of the use of the \$250,000 grant for start-up.

La Clinica has provided an itemized listing of expenditures. Confirmation of these expenditures is subject to both La Clinica's own internal auditors and those hired by the County. We have no reservations about facilitating such an audit.

**Finding 3** - La Clinica does not require proof of citizenship or legal residency for the provision of services.

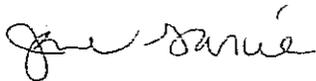
La Clinica is in compliance with all licensing, contracting requirements, and federal rules. The clinic has undergone a number of audits and has successfully completed each.

In addition, La Clinica serves a richly diverse patient base. In a recent progress report to its funders, La Clinica documented that year-to-date, the clinic is operating with a deficit primarily attributed to start-up and caseload build up. We believe creating a system to keep people out is more expensive than providing the service. Creating such a system affects all patients and essentially creates a double standard, an unequal system. We are not aware of any system that requires proof of residency. The cost is unwarranted.

In closing, in partnership with Solano County Health Department, Sutter Solano, Kaiser Permanente and Solano Coalition for Better Health, we have created a model that has the potential to save the larger system significant dollars while providing high quality, humane and ethical services. At a time when all aspects of the system are struggling, we believe creating new models that are cost effective and produce positive outcomes is essential.

We are proud of what we have developed and know it is an asset to Solano County. We are at your disposal to answer other questions.

Respectfully,



Jane Garcia  
Chief Executive Officer

Courtesy copies:

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