

Solano County Health & Social Services Department



Mental Health Services
Medical Services
Public Health Services
Substance Abuse Services
Older & Disabled Adult Services

Eligibility Services
Employment Services
Children's Services
Administrative Services

Gerald Huber, Director

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Fairfield, CA 94533-6804

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August 5, 2016

RECEIVED

AUG 5 2016

Honorable Robert C. Fracchia, Presiding Judge
The Superior Court of California, Solano County
600 Union Avenue
Fairfield, CA 94533

SOLANO COUNTY
GRAND JURY

Re: Response - 2015-2016 Grand Jury Report: Homelessness – Omnipresent and Invisible?

Dear Judge Fracchia,

Enclosed please find the Health and Social Services response to 2015-2016 Grand Jury Report concerning Homelessness.

If you have additional questions, please contact me at (707) 784-8400.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gerald R. Huber".

Gerald R. Huber, Director
Health and Social Services

GRH/dd

Attachment (1): Responses to 2015-2016 Grand Jury Report

Cc: Birgitta Corsello, County Administrator, Solano County
Solano County Board of Supervisors

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Health and Social Services Response to Grand Jury Homelessness – Omnipresent & Invisible

Finding 1

No significant changes in the number of permanent, emergency, and transitional beds have been made available since 2008, *Housing with Dignity 10-Year Plan*.

Response to Finding 1

Health and Social Services (H&SS) disagrees with this finding through various Federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and State program funds, Health and Social Services in FY2015/16 received 1.2 million dollars which provides approximately 260 permanent beds to families, couples, and single individuals. Housing First Solano Continuum of Care (CoC) has continually pursued and received increased funding for permanent beds to support the homeless population, leading to the current year where Solano's region was awarded \$923,977 specifically for permanent beds. In 2016, Solano County ranked third among all counties in California who received renewal funds from HUD, receiving a 19.1% increase in funds coming in to support permanent bed increases. Lastly, in FY2016/17 an Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) fund was awarded to Solano County for the first time, to provide \$560,000 in additional permanent housing.

On February 2, 2016, the Board of Supervisors approved a twenty-year purchase agreement for 20 transitional housing beds dedicated to H&SS clients. The assistance provided by the County will enable Mission Solano to construct a permanent kitchen at the Bridge to life center on Beck Avenue in Fairfield and allow for the expansion of Mission Solano shelter bed capacity by 98 beds. Construction is planned to begin in FY2016/17.

Since the report, as of June 28, 2016, the Board of Supervisors approved a 30 thirty-year loan agreement to assist Solano Habitat for Humanity in partnership with Community Action North Bay to purchase a property in Dixon, and construct permanent supportive housing to assist 6 disabled veterans. The project is anticipated to be on line in 2017.

For these reasons, Health and Social Services disagrees with the finding and anticipates a continued increase in capacity of permanent, emergency, and transitional beds in Solano County.

Recommendation 1a

The Solano County Board of Supervisors, the Department of Health and Social Services and Community Action Partnership of Solano-Joint Powers Authority work collaboratively to address the current, unmet need in Solano County of 711 year-round permanent supportive housing beds, including 638 beds for adults-only households and 71 beds for families with children, as well as, three transitional housing beds.

Response to Recommendation 1a

Health and Social Services agrees with this recommendation and will continue collaborating with the cities, Community Action Partnership of Solano-Joint Powers Authority (CAP Solano JPA) and key community stakeholders to increase permanent bed capacity in Solano County.

Recommendation 1b

The Solano County Board of Supervisors, the Department of Health and Social Services and the Community Action Partnership of Solano-Joint Powers Authority consider the approaches outlined in the Sonoma County Website referencing Building HOMES.

Response to Recommendation 1b

Health and Social Services agrees with the recommendation, as the HOMES document reflects national best practices and strategies in support of housing and services.

Finding 2

There is no County operated permanent homeless shelter or drop-in center in Solano County. The 795 unsheltered individuals from the 2015 Point in Time Count strongly suggest there is a need for more drop in facilities.

Response to Finding 2

Health and Social Services partially agrees that there is no County operated permanent homeless shelter or drop-in center in Solano County; however, there are several supportive housing programs funded and supported through Health and Social Services in Solano County. The County, Cities, and CAP Solano JPA continually seek ways to leverage State and Federal funds. As reported through studies across the nation on best practices, county and city governments will be focusing on more permanent solutions to homelessness as opposed to expansion of temporary solutions and shelters, studies suggest that when properly structured, it is more cost effective to invest in permanent housing with supportive services.

Recommendation 2

The Solano County Board of Supervisors, the Department of Health and Social Services and the Community Action Partnership of Solano-Joint Powers Authority work collaboratively to establish a localized permanent, year-round homeless shelter or drop-in center.

Response to Recommendation 2

Health and Social Services disagrees with this recommendation. There currently are year-round homeless shelters in Solano County and on February 2, 2016, the Board of Supervisors took action for Mission Solano to expand by 98 beds which were anticipated for 2016 but have been delayed beyond the County's contract.

Finding 3

There are no publicly funded residential drug and alcohol treatment centers in Solano County operated by the County.

Response to Finding 3

Health and Social Services disagrees with this finding. There are no residential drug and treatment centers operated by the County, however, through several public funding sources, the County contracts for these services to the tune of \$4.45 million dollars annually. There are several services providers under contract in the county who operate residential drug and alcohol treatment centers. In addition, the County has contracts funded with State & Federal funds for residents to have access to partner centers outside of Solano County if resources are not readily available here.

Recommendation 3

The Solano County Board of Supervisors, the Department of Health and Social Services, and the Community Action Partnership of Solano-Joint Powers Authority work collaboratively to establish publicly funded residential drug and alcohol treatment centers.

Response to Recommendation 3

Health and Social Services disagrees with this recommendation, across the state, residential drug treatment facilities operate uniquely in each region. Funding and operations are dependent upon available federal and state funding, county general fund, resources, facilities, and staff. All of this typically is a reflection of the county's size, geography, population, etc. Solano receives and spends approximately \$4.45 million each year in contracts for residential centers in this county. With this level of funding, the county is maximizing what the current capacity is to support these facilities. The department recognizes the value that increased services provides, and will be working with the state on the Drug Medi-Cal Waiver project, and Partnership Health Plan to look at and identify services in this region for those with substance abuse concerns.

Finding 4

There are no County operated and funded board and care homes for elderly, physically impaired or patients with mental health issues in Solano County.

Response to Finding 4

Health and Social Services partially agrees with this finding. While the County does not directly operate any Board and Care Homes, the County provides for board and care for many individuals who need this level of housing and care. Through Memorandums of Understanding and Contracts with facilities, the County provides oversight to the quality of service delivery to clients placed. Within Solano County, Crestwood operates an "augmented board and care," where for a daily rate, the clients are provided with housing and a structured mental health treatment program during the day. The program "Our House," operates 46 beds in Vallejo, and accepts clients from all over the region. There is little movement in terms of clients moving out of this facility, but Solano County has had five clients living there in the past year and has come to an agreement with Crestwood to prioritize Solano County clients when they have discharges.

Recommendation 4

The Solano County Board of Supervisors, the Department of Health and Social Services and the Community Action Partnership of Solano-Joint Powers Authority work collaboratively to establish publicly funded board and care homes for elderly, physically impaired, or patients with mental health issues in Solano County operated by the County.

Response to Recommendation 4

Health and Social Services disagrees with this recommendation. While the department agrees that there is a need for more Board and Care Homes in the community, the department disagrees that they should be operated by the County. Currently, the need for these services is greater than just the clients the County serves, there are other individuals with other medical care issues who would also benefit; it is a viable non-profit /private sector opportunity. Staff is working with local hospitals and board and care providers to pursue the Assisted Living Waiver (ALW) program in Solano. ALW facilitates safe and timely transition of Medi-Cal eligible individuals from nursing facilities to residential facilities, adult care facilities, and public subsidized housing in the community. ALW pays for skilled care in these facilities, making affordable housing possible for this population. Though this program is not a "catch-all" for the senior population or those with disabilities, having ALW may increase capacity for board and care homes while strengthening Solano's network of providers.

Increasing the availability of Board and Care homes is needed based on increasing aging population in the County and longevity due to improved health care. As noted earlier, the County has partnered successfully with Bay Area Community Services using Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funds for the purchase of seven duplexes in Fairfield. In addition, MHSA grant funds were used to purchase and renovate a large home in Vallejo which will serve as a new crisis residential treatment facility for the County.

The lack of available housing and support for those in the housing, would require a collaborative approach between both County and community providers. Health and Social Services believes that this would be best achieved through Memorandums of Understanding in a comprehensive public-private partnership in order to be sustained within the communities.

Finding 8

Among all the organizations, including the service provider agencies, funders, a county and municipal government, no agency has assumed an overall leadership role. Although some leadership exists at the individual agency and county levels, the lack of coordination at the county and municipal levels contributes to the observed fragmentation of service provision and poor understanding of the causes and cures of homelessness.

Response to Finding 8

Health and Social Services disagrees with this recommendation. The Community Action Partnership Joint Powers Authority (CAP Solano JPA) is a partnership established between the County and the 7 cities to be the body that oversees, coordinates, and collaborates on homeless issues. Currently, it is this body that is spearheading the five-year strategic plan soon to be the roadmap to reduce homelessness in Solano County.

Recommendation 8b

The Grand Jury recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services establish a position at the level of a Deputy Director who would be responsible for providing accountability, leadership, direction and coordination of all homeless services within the county.

Response to Recommendation 8b

Health and Social Services disagrees with this recommendation. It is not solely a County responsibility; there are many roles and responsibilities when addressing homelessness. The County has a role and has staff assigned however, strong partnering relationships with representatives from the cities, non-profits, and members of the continuum of care, is essential. The CAP Solano JPA was designed to be the lead agency to serve our homeless population.

Finding 9

The Grand Jury understands regional planning is a necessary and vital component to creating solutions to homelessness and has been informed that efforts are underway to develop a regional approach to the homelessness issues.

Response to Finding 9

Health and Social Services agrees with this finding, as a 5-year strategic plan is being undertaken by the CAP Solano JPA funded through a collaborative effort between the County and the 7 cities. The plan is anticipated to be drafted by the end of 2016 and will be a living document to be referred to as each solution identified is implemented. The plan will engage input from the public, stakeholder, constituencies, housing and service providers, the cities, and the County.

Recommendation 9a

Department of Health and Social Services complete the regional plan and disseminate it to all service providers, including Community Action Partnership of Solano-Joint Powers Authority, Continuum of Care, Housing First and the general public.

Response to Recommendation 9a

Health and Social Services partially agrees with this recommendation, for dissemination; but, the preparation is under the CAP Solano JPA.

Finding 10

Solano County Website provides insufficient and minimal information on homelessness services available.

Response to Finding 10

Health and Social Services partially agrees with this finding; since H&SS is in the process of developing a Network of Care portal to assist clients and services provides targeted for completion in FY2016/17. The Network of Care (NOC) will be a robust local and national depository of information on accessing services, providing a rich network of evidence based research on many different aspects of social services and health related information. As the NOC is fully developed, the Department will be updating its own website to assure that local information on services is up to date and easily accessible.

Recommendation 10

The Department of Health and Social Services collaborate with the Department of Information Technology to develop a robust, interactive website dedicated to providing information to assist the public in obtaining access to all available needs and services modeled after the websites of Contra Costa County, Santa Clara County and Sonoma County.

Response to Recommendation 10

Health and Social Services partially agrees with this recommendation, recognizing that a key strength of the described counties is that their websites are not simply linked to resources in the community, but rather, that information is disseminated. The Network of Care software and Homeless Information system (HMIS) will enhance traditional resource guides and information will be disseminated in ways that will streamline entry and access to the most available housing and services for prioritized homeless individuals and families. Housing First Solano Continuum of Care will be implementing Solano County's coordinated entry program in FY2016/17.

Finding 11

Solano County does not have a Homeless Response Guide that lists available services, providers, access points and contact information.

Response to Finding 11

Health and Social Services partially agrees with this finding; Health and Social Services does not gather and provide centralized data access for this information within the department. However, county and city specific services, providers, access points and contact information are gathered and disseminated through the Community Action Partnership of Solano – Joint Powers Authority and Housing First Solano CoC. As stated prior, as the Department expands the Network of Care website, up-to-date information pertaining to housing options and services will be included for citizens to access, assisting the community in finding access points to housing and addressing many of the issues the homeless and near homeless populations encounter.

Recommendation 11

The Solano County Department of Health and Social Services work with the Community Action Partnership of Solano-Joint Powers Authority, the Continuum of Care and Housing First to develop a comprehensive Homeless Response Guide.

Response to Recommendation 11

Health and Social Services agrees with this recommendation. As coordinated entry and updates to the resources guides should be on line in FY2016/17.

Finding 14

The development of a formalized intake system that tracks individual that utilize services is in process but the implementation and utilization throughout the county is lacking.

Response to Finding 14

Health and Social Services partially agrees with this finding. A formalized intake and tracking system is currently in the development stage, Community Action Partnership Solano – Joint Power Authority has recently successfully received grant funding to support the first stage of implementation of coordinated entry. It is anticipated that the Solano County program will be up and running in the fall of 2016.

Recommendation 14

The Department of Health and Social Services continue further development of the tracking system and accelerate the implementation of the components to all service providers.

Response to Recommendation 14

Health and Social Services partially agrees with this recommendation. Coordinated entry systems across the country are community systems, coordinated, planned, and implemented through local continuums of care with support of the County and City jurisdictions. Health and Social Services staff will continue providing key support, but not lead, to the Community Action Partnership Solano – Joint Powers Authority and Housing First Solano Continuum of Care and their efforts in regards to planning, coordinating, and implementing coordinated entry to the best of this region’s ability.

Finding 15

There is minimal outreach to enlist and engage support from the business community within the county to address homeless issues.

Response to Finding 15

Health and Social Services partially agrees with this finding, and the department will continue to enhance efforts in this area.

Recommendation 15

Department of Health and Social Services in conjunction with the Community Action Partnership of Solano-Joint Powers Authority and Continuum of Care collaboratively implement a robust outreach campaign to solicit financial support from the business community and foundation to address homeless concerns and issues.

Response to Recommendation 15

Health and Social Services agrees with this recommendation and will continue researching how high performing regions are creating partnership opportunities between private and public entities and will continue its efforts in FY2016/17.

Finding 17

Health and Social Services as well as other areas within H&SS have been understaffed for a significant period of time.

Response to Finding 17

Health and Social Services partially agrees with this finding 2.0 FTE Community Services Coordinator positions were approved by the Board of Supervisors in FY2015/16 as dedicated positions to support programs and services for the homeless population. In addition to these positions, the Behavioral Health and Public Health Divisions of H&SS have dedicated staff focused on outreach and interventions for the homeless populations in the county. Also, the Behavioral Health Department has contracted with Caminar and other community based organizations to assist the county in homeless outreach and planning.

Recommendation 17

The Department of Health and Social Services aggressively pursue filling staff vacancies to better meet the needs of residents of Solano County.

Response to Recommendation 17

Health in Social Services agrees that filling vacancies is critical to providing the core services for County residents. H&SS has been working collaboratively with the Department of Human Resources to streamline the recruitment process and develop strategic plans for difficult to fill recruitments.

Finding 18

There appears to be a significant difference between the *Point in Time* count number and the self-reported number of homeless or at risk of being homeless individuals.

Response to Finding 18

Health and Social Services partially agrees with this finding. The differences, however, are understandable once educated to the frameworks surrounding the different counts. One difference is the timeframe and purpose of each count, the first being a "point in time (PIT)," or an estimated count of individuals on the street or in a shelter on any single given day in Solano County. This is a much different framework than H&SS numbers, which represent all self-identified homeless individuals who visit H&SS clinics over the span of a 365 day period. By understanding that one count estimates how many homeless individuals are on the street or in a shelter on any single given day, opposed to the H&SS clinics tracking total individuals coming in over the span of a full year, it is clear why the numbers are different. (this is clearly seen in the tracking done by Employment and Eligibility in H&SS on homelessness and in the Family Health Clinics. For each of these programs, the numbers of homeless being tracked is based on what the population being served indicates on their housing status when they come to apply for services.) A second framework to understand is the general intention of each count, as their tracking is directly related to targeted programs and services. As mentioned, the PIT count is intended to provide a rough estimate of how many folks may be on the street or in a shelter on a given day. HUD programs are geared toward those individuals or families who are "literally homeless," or on the street or in a shelter. Therefore, the purpose of the count is to track a specific definition of "homelessness" that is linked to targeted HUD programs, which do not serve those who are doubled up. H&SS Clinical services track and serve a much broader definition of homeless, as health care targets all populations across all communities. By understanding these different frameworks, it is clear that these counts should reflect different results.

Recommendation 18

Department of Health and Social Services and the Joint Powers Authority identify the discrepancies and reconcile the PIT, HMIS and H&SS numbers.

Response to Recommendation 18

Health and Social Services disagrees with this recommendation. As described prior, by understanding the frameworks surrounding the described counts and how they are linked to specific services, it is evident that there are no discrepancies between the counts. Rather, the counts are not intended to be comparable to one another, as their unique goals, related services, and means of counting vary in timeframe and scope.

Finding 19

Santa Clara provides a mailing address for their homeless population.

Response to Finding 19

Health and Social Services agrees that mailing addresses are provided for the homeless population in Santa Clara. Health and Social Services also recognizes that Santa Clara's mailing addresses are provided through the U.S. Postal Services General Delivery service, which is provided in all zip codes through the post office, therefore this service is available and provided for those living within Solano County zip codes. The General Delivery service is a temporary service, free of charge, to the homeless population. Each piece of General Delivery mail is held for no more than 30 days, unless the sender requests a shorter period. General Delivery mail may be held for longer periods if requested by sender or addressee and approved by postmaster. Mail without a specific address or instructions from the sender is held for 10 days for General Delivery at an office with letter-carrier service, or 15 days for General Delivery at an office without letter-carrier service. Santa Clara County does provide a limited mail service at two district social services offices, however, this service can only be used for mail from Social Services Agencies. Therefore, that service is not considered a mailing address and general mail cannot be sent to these locations. For that service within Santa Clara, Social Service mail must be picked up with 7 days from these locations, or it is shredded.

Recommendation 19

The Solano County Department of Health and Social Services develop proxy mailboxes for the homeless.

Response to Recommendation 19

Health and Social Services disagrees with this recommendation. Through the U.S. Postal Service, the General Delivery service provides a temporary and free mailing address for the homeless population. As general delivery post offices are located in the majority of zip codes, there are already convenient offices spread throughout the county, allowing the homeless populations easier access wherever they may be located.