

HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

REASON FOR THE INVESTIGATION

The Human Services Agency was recently formed by a consolidation of the Mental Health, Public Health and Social Services departments. The Nevada County Civil Grand Jury decided to review the new agency even though no complaints were filed.

PROCEDURE FOLLOWED

The Grand Jury interviewed the following:

- County Administrative Officer David Brennan
- Director of Human Services Agency Phyllis Murdock
- The Deputy Director of Mental Health
- The Deputy Director of Public Health
- The Deputy Director of Social Services
- The Director of Personnel
- Analysts working for the County Administrative Officer and the Board of Supervisors

The Grand Jury toured all of the department work sites, the Alcohol Abuse Center, and the Lovett Center, studied departmental documents and had discussions with various staff members of the departments. The findings for the agency are followed by the findings for each of the departments. The conclusions follow the same format.

FINDINGS

HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

1. The Deputy Director of Mental Health, the Deputy Director of Public Health and the Deputy Director of Social Services all report directly to the Director of Human Services Agency who in turn reports to the County Administrative Officer.
2. The agency was formed by the Board of Supervisors in 1997 to incorporate the Public Health, Mental Health and Social Services departments under one director. The reason given for the consolidation was to provide improved service to the clients of each department. Many of the mandated programs in the agency are administered by two or more of the departments.
3. The agency Director has been in the position since January 2, 1998. She also acted as the Deputy Director of Social Services from January until October of that year.
4. There are about 200 employees in the agency. The number of employees fluctuates with the amount of funding provided each year by the state and federal governments. The budget is about \$22 million, mostly from the state and federal governments.

5. The three departments in the agency are located at six separate geographical sites. The agency has no formal plan for permanent physical consolidation of the departments. Modular buildings are being installed at the Health Education Welfare site to house the fiscal division for all three departments of the agency. Another modular building will be installed for Mental Health.
6. The Director, with the approval of the Board of Supervisors and the County Administrative Officer, has a two-step plan for organization of the three departments. The re-organization of the agency is now in the first step with completion of step two expected within three years. When the transition is completed, the agency will be comprised of Central Intake Managed Care, Adult Services, Child and Family Services, Community Programs and Fiscal Administration divisions.
7. There is a new task force concept in place for addressing problems in the county. The purpose is to involve all three departments in each case as required. The agency is also developing Central Intake, where clients can have all their initial needs addressed at one place.

MENTAL HEALTH

1. The Mental Health Department is located in the 100 year old Health Education Welfare building located on Willow Valley Road, Nevada City.
2. The department has 31.8 full time equivalency (FTE) employees, up from 29.3 in 1998 and admitted about 865 clients in the past year. Mental Health also handles alcohol and drug clients with an additional 4.5 FTE. Their total budget is in excess of \$5 million. The department's budget has increased over the past two years due mostly to a \$300,000, three year State grant for Children's System of Care (CSOC) for seriously emotionally disturbed children. Funding for the Nevada County Substance Abuse Agency part of the department has not increased over the past two years. The department has some flexibility in how to spend its money. Less than \$400,000 (about 7.4%) of the department's budget comes from the county General Fund, the balance from the State and Federal governments.
3. The department provides three primary services: Managed Care Services for Medi-Cal and CALWorks, Adult System of Care for Seriously Mentally Ill, and CSOC. The department also operates the residential drug recovery program at the 19-bed Lovett Center. The center handles about 120 patients a year. There is a six-week waiting list for use of the Lovett Center. Another drug program is Mothers in Recovery, a day treatment program, with a staff of 1.5 FTE and an average of 17 clients per month.
4. The mental health field is changing due to a 1991 State re-alignment of funding that changes Managed Care services. The CALWorks Welfare to Work program also affects the department as it now has access to \$16,882 of CALWorks money for drug and alcohol counseling.

PUBLIC HEALTH

1. The department is located in the substandard 100 year old Health Education Welfare building and in a newer modular health clinic building at the site.
2. There is a staff of about 40 employees who fill about 22 FTE employees. Only about \$62,000 (2%) of the department's \$2.6 million budget comes from county General Funds, the balance is funded by State and Federal monies. The department has limited flexibility in how to spend its money because of State and Federally mandated programs.
3. The department administers more than a dozen health programs that are mandated by the State. The programs include Vital Statistics, Senior Health and Outreach, the Women and Infant Children program, Tobacco Use Prevention, HIV/AIDS Prevention, a toddler car seat program, childhood lead poisoning prevention, women and children services, clinic services and other programs. Public Health contracts with California Forensic Medical Group to give vaccinations, family planning and other services to wards at the Juvenile Hall and jail inmates.
4. The department has a history of morale problems that have been addressed by the 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95 Grand Juries. The basic cause of the problem has been attributed in the past to salary and benefit issues.
5. There is currently, and has been a high rate of upper level administration turnover in the past several years.
6. The department has three off-site teen clinics; Teen Wellness in Grass Valley, a unit at Silver Springs High School and another at Sierra High School in Truckee.

SOCIAL SERVICES

1. The department is located in the Rood Center in Nevada City with a branch in Truckee.
2. Social Services administers more than 30 programs that include food stamps, financial assistance, supportive services, employment and training programs, medical coverage, foster care, child protective services, a fraud division and many other services. Some programs have a multitude of sub-programs; i.e., MediCal has 53 separate programs. The department administers the Welfare to Work program intended to help able bodied people find work.
3. The staffing level is 122, with a \$15 million budget, mostly from State and Federal funds. The county General Fund pays about \$1 million (7%) of the budget. The department has limited flexibility in how to use its money due to mandated state and federal regulations.
4. Social Services maintains approximately 5,000 cases at any one time. The number on assistance has declined recently, but the interaction with clients has increased due to the CALWorks Welfare to Work program. The Welfare to Work program requires that the emphasis be placed on job placement

rather than merely qualifying individuals for welfare. This changes the interaction with clients from as seldom as once a year in the past to as often as weekly now.

5. The department is installing a new computer system to meet State mandated changes in welfare reform.
6. The department experienced a staff turnover of 30 of its 122 personnel in 1998. The turnover rate is two to three times normal for this department. Salary and the switch in computer program are attributed by the Director and the Personnel Director as the cause. Also, employees in this department are faced with many negative and difficult client social problems on a daily basis.
7. In 1997 two Fraud Division officers investigated 507 cases of the 5,000 plus cases in existence at any one time, and referred 18 cases to the District Attorney. In 1998 three Fraud Division officers investigated 353 cases of the 5,000 cases in existence, and referred 30 cases to the District Attorney.
8. The department has a new Deputy Director, hired in October of 1998. The prior deputy retired in December 1997. The nine-month delay in hiring the replacement was due to difficulty in locating candidates that met the Director's standards.

CONCLUSIONS

HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

1. The agency works with a complex system of regulations and duties, almost all of which are mandated by the State and Federal governments.
2. The Director's organizational consolidation plan is in transition. Because it does not address the physical location of the three departments there is little chance that the plan could be totally effective within three years. Locating fiscal personnel into modular buildings apart from the balance of the employees seems to separate rather than consolidate the agency. The Health Education Welfare building does not meet the needs of the departments located there.
3. The community should be well served by the task force concept and Central Intake.

MENTAL HEALTH

1. The department is faced with a complex variety of responsibilities and a heavy caseload. The staff performs well under the heavy caseload.
2. The Deputy Director is involved with her staff and is addressing the department's needs.

PUBLIC HEALTH

1. The purpose of the department is preventive medicine.

2. The department has interaction with the Juvenile Assessment Center and the Wayne Brown Correctional Facility.
3. Morale problems still exist in the department. The high turnover of management personnel seems to be partly responsible. The employees are dedicated to their jobs.
4. The department has a complex State and federally mandated program load and little flexibility in how to administer the programs.

SOCIAL SERVICES

1. The turnover in personnel could be serious if it continues. There does not appear to be a morale problem within the department that would account for the rate of turnover. The burden of working at low wages in a department that deals with traumatic social problems could be a contributing factor, along with a change in the department's computer system.
2. The department has a complex set of state and federal programs to address. Because the department is heavily regulated by the state, it has a lack of flexibility in how to administer the programs.
3. The Deputy Director is addressing the present and future needs of the department. She demonstrates a very good understanding of the department's duties and responsibilities for the time she has been with the department.

RECOMMENDATIONS

HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

1. The Grand Jury recommends that the agency produce a formal, comprehensive plan for physical consolidation of the departments. The plan should be made available to the Board of Supervisors within an acceptable time line not to exceed one year.
2. The Grand Jury recommends that morale problems in Public Health be addressed by the Director and reported through the CAO to the Board of Supervisors within three months.
3. The Grand Jury recommends that the staff turnover issue in Social Services be addressed by the Director and reported to the Board of Supervisors within three months.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

Director of Human Services
Due August 30, 1999

Board of Supervisors
Due September 30, 1999

Response

COUNTY OF NEVADA
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

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BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



Peter Van Zant, 1st District
Karen Knecht, 2nd District
Bruce Conklin, 3rd District
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September 28, 1999

Cathy R. Thompson
Clerk of the Board

The Honorable Carl Bryan
Presiding Judge, Nevada County Courts
Nevada County Courthouse
201 Church Street
Nevada City CA 95959

SUBJECT: Board of Supervisors Responses to the 1998-99 Nevada County Civil Grand Jury Final Report

Dear Judge Bryan:


The attached responses by the Board of Supervisors to the 1998-99 Nevada County Civil Grand Jury Final Report are submitted as required by California Penal Code 933(b).

These responses were reviewed and approved by the Board of Supervisors at their regular meetings on September 14 and 28, 1999, and are believed to provide a full response to the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations.

The Board will subsequently review a comprehensive list of the implementation dates included in responses to Grand Jury recommendations. Some dates may be adjusted due to availability of resources and time needed by the County Administrator and other departments and agencies to fully implement each recommendation as requested by the Board. Any changes in implementation dates will be forwarded to you as they occur.

The Board of Supervisors would like to thank the members of the 1998-99 Grand Jury for their participation and effort in preparing the final report.

Sincerely,


PETER VAN ZANT
Chairman of the Board

Attachments

VI. GRAND JURY INVESTIGATION:

Nevada County Human Services Agency

Review of HSA following recent consolidation of the Mental Health, Public Health and Social Services Departments.

A. RESPONSE TO FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings:

HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

1. Agree.
2. Agree.
3. Agree.
4. Agree.
5. Agree. Modular buildings have been installed adjoining the HEW facility.
6. Agree. Division names and services provided may be adjusted if needed.
7. Agree.

MENTAL HEALTH

1. Agree. The department also has a branch office in Truckee.
2. Partially agree. The actual General Fund contribution is \$30, 893.
3. Agree. The Lovett and Mothers in Recovery programs also include recovery from alcoholism.
4. Partially agree. CalWORKS funding is now closer to \$175,000.

PUBLIC HEALTH

1. Agree. The department also has a branch office in Truckee.
2. Agree.
3. Agree.

4. Agree.
5. Agree.
6. Agree. One clinic is presently threatened due to lack of disabled access and lack of resources to change the clinic location.

SOCIAL SERVICES

1. Agree.
2. Agree.
3. Agree.
4. Agree.
5. Agree.
6. Agree.
7. Agree.
8. Agree.

Recommendations:

1. **That the Human Services Agency produce a formal, comprehensive plan for physical consolidation of the departments. The plan should be made available to the Board of Supervisors within an acceptable time line not to exceed one year.**

The recommendation will be implemented by March 31, 2000, contingent upon completion of the countywide capital facilities planning process. The comprehensive plan for physical consolidation of the departments will be completed within six months of completion of the countywide process.

2. **That morale problems in Public Health be addressed by the Director and reported through the CAO to the Board of Supervisors within three months.**

The recommendation has been implemented. A process is presently underway to address morale problems in the Public Health Department. An assessment of personnel concerns has been completed by the Human Services Agency Director and the planning process for addressing these concerns is now being accomplished. The County Administrator and the Human Services Agency Director have been directed to present a report to the Board addressing this issue by December 31, 1999.

3. That the staff turnover issue in Social Services be addressed by the Director and reported to the Board of Supervisors within three months.

The recommendation has been implemented. The Human Services Agency Director will prepare a report addressing this issue and present it to the Board through the County Administrator by December 31, 1999.

B. OTHER RESPONSES REQUIRED:

Director of Human Services Agency.



COUNTY OF NEVADA HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

PHYLLIS L. MURDOCK
DIRECTOR

Agency Deputy Directors:
Diane Chenoweth, LCSW
Mental Health Director
Herbert Giese, M.D., M.P.H.
Health Officer
Christina Linville
Social Services Director

950 MAIDU AVE P.O. BOX 1210 NEVADA CITY CALIFORNIA 95959 TELEPHONE (530) 265-1340 FAX (530) 265-7120

August, 1999

Honorable Carl Bryan II
Presiding Judge of the Nevada County Courts
Nevada County Grand Jury
950 Maidu Avenue
Nevada City, CA 95959

7/UP Committee
RECEIVED
9-24-99
9900-0024

Re: Response to the 1998-1999 Civil Grand Jury

Dear Grand Jury Members:

Thank you for taking the time and energy to investigate the County of Nevada's newly formed Human Services Agency. I am providing as requested a response to each of your findings, conclusions and recommendations. Your review process provides valuable input which assists in our development of the County of Nevada's Human Service Agency into an effective and responsive government entity for the benefit of the citizens of Nevada County.

RESPONSE TO FINDINGS

Human Services Agency

1. I concur with this finding.
2. I concur with this finding.
3. I concur with this finding.
4. I concur with this finding.
5. I concur with this finding, but would add that in addition to the Fiscal/Administrative Unit modular and the Mental Health modular that a modular for the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program has been installed on the grounds of the Health, Education, Welfare facility.
6. I generally concur with this finding. I need to point out that while services will eventually be generally reorganized along the lines of the divisions described,

the actual name of the divisions and the specific programs assigned maybe adjusted. These adjustments will be complete within the three year time frame described in the finding.

7. I concur with this finding.

Mental Health

1. I concur with this finding, but the Department also has a branch in Truckee.
2. I concur with this finding except for the \$400,000 figure stated as the County's General Fund contribution. The actual General Fund contribution is \$30,893.
3. I concur with this finding, but add that both the Lovett and Mothers in Recovery programs also include recovery from alcoholism.
4. I concur with this finding, but the amount of funding that the Department has access to from CalWORKS is closer to \$175,000 rather than the \$16,882 indicated.

Public Health

1. I concur with this finding, but the Department also has a branch in Truckee.
2. I concur with this finding.
3. I concur with this finding.
4. I concur with this finding.
5. I concur with this finding.
6. I concur with this finding, but one clinic's existence is currently threatened due to the lack of disabled access and the lack of resources available to change the clinic location.

Social Services

1. I concur with this finding.
2. I concur with this finding.
3. I concur with this finding
4. I concur with this finding and, in fact, the Agency has been rewarded with CalWORKS incentive funds for success in reducing the caseloads for assistance. These funds, in accordance with state regulations, will be reinvested

into the CalWORKS facilities and programs to better serve those individuals entering or reentering the workforce.

5. I concur with this finding.
6. I concur with this finding.
7. I concur with this finding.
8. I concur with this finding and would add that once again the low salary schedule continues to plague recruitments like these.

RESPONSE TO CONCLUSIONS

1. I concur with this conclusion.
2. While I concur that the organizational plan is in transition, it is premature to address the physical location of the three departments. The County has embarked on a study to determine long term capital facilities. The study will examine the facility needs of all County functions and will assess the potential of the existing facilities to meet those needs over the next five, ten and twenty years. During this process, needs will be identified as either (1) a current deficiency, or (2) a need based on growth or (3) both. The objective of this capital facilities planning process is to plan for the most efficient development of facilities possible. It would be imprudent of the Human Services Agency to act unilaterally from the rest of the County organization. This study will be completed later this calendar year and become the basis and a starting point for a comprehensive Agency plan for the physical consolidation of three departments.

I disagree with the comments on the location of the fiscal personnel. While the physical location is not joined with the other departments due to the previously noted lack of building space, the functions of finance for the three departments will be blended in one location, with staff that previously operated autonomously learning about the functions in all three departments. This is consistent with the overall goal of blending the functions in the agency that naturally fit together.

3. I concur with this conclusion.

Mental Health

1. I concur with this conclusion.
2. I concur with this conclusion.

Public Health

1. I concur with this conclusion.
2. I concur with this conclusion.

3. I generally concur with this conclusion, but would add that the low salary schedule is a contributing factor to low morale problems in the Department.
4. I concur with this conclusion.

Social Services

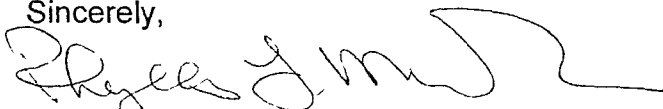
1. I concur with this conclusion.
2. I concur with this conclusion.
3. I concur with this conclusion, but note that since the time this report was completed, the Deputy Director resigned to accept a position in Contra Costa County.

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

Human Services Agency

1. I generally concur with this recommendation. The timing will be contingent upon the completion of the County-wide capital facilities planning process. With the consideration of this factor, the acceptable time line for an Agency consolidation plan would be 6 months from the completion of the County-wide process.
2. A process is currently underway to address this issue. In fact, an assessment of personnel concerns has been completed and a planning process for addressing those concerns has begun. This process has been inclusive of all Human Services Agency staff.
3. I concur with this recommendation and a preliminary report will be developed.

Sincerely,



Phyllis L. Murdock, Director
Human Services Agency

c.c. David Brennan, County Administrative Officer