

Response to Grand Jury Report

Report Title: Another Look at Family and Children's Services

Report Date: 6/27/17

Response submitted by: Carmel J. Angelo, Chief Executive Officer

Findings

I have reviewed the report and submit my responses to the FINDINGS portion of the report as follows:

I (we) agree with the findings numbered: F7, F11, F12, F15

I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: F1, F2, F3, F4, F9, F10, F14

Attach a statement specifying the findings or portions of the findings that are disputed, and include an explanation of the reasons therefor.

Recommendations

I have reviewed the Report and submit my response to the recommendations portion for the report as follows:

Recommendations numbered R3 have been implemented.

Attached, as required, is a statement describing the implemented actions.

Recommendations numbered R2 have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

Attached, as required is a time frame for implementation.

Recommendations numbered N/A require further analysis.

Attached required, is an explanation, and the scope and parameters of the analyses or studies, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.

Recommendations numbered R1 will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.

Attached as required is an explanation.

I have completed the above response, and have attached, as required the following number of pages to this response form:

Number of pages attached: 5

I understand that responses to Grand Jury Reports are public records. They will be posted on the Grand Jury website: www.mendocinocounty.org/grandjury. The clerk of the responding agency is required to maintain a copy of the response.

I understand that I must submit this signed response form and any attachments as follows:

First Step: E-mail (word documents or scanned pdf file format) to:

- The Grand Jury Foreperson at: grandjury@mendocinocounty.org
- The Presiding Judge: grandjury@mendocino.courts.ca.gov

Second Step: Mail all originals to:

Mendocino County Grand Jury
P.O. Box 939
Ukiah, CA 95482

Printed Name: Carmel J. Angelo

Title: Chief Executive Officer

Signed: 

Date: 8/25/17

F1. The loss of significant numbers of experienced staff since 2011 and the inability of the County to attract trained social workers with CPS experience has resulted in the hiring of inexperienced workers with a higher than normal turnover rate and a need for on-the-job training.

The CEO partially disagrees with F1. The County has experienced turnover for the Social Work position since 2011. The County only hires social workers who meet minimum education and experience requirements of the position requested to be filled by the Health and Human Services Agency (HHS). In addition, HHS provides required training to social workers. The CEO incorporates by reference Human Resources (HR) and HHS response to F1.

F2. Mendocino County has a higher rate than the State average for removal of children from their families due to of lack of early intervention in troubled families, the drug culture, high unemployment, lack of housing, and the lack of teenage drug treatment programs.

The CEO partially disagrees with F2. Mendocino County has a higher rate than the State average for removal of children. For clarification, reasons mentioned in F2 may be contributing factors, but are not reasons for removal alone. The CEO incorporates by reference HHS response to F2.

F3. Without more investigators and a five-day workweek, it will be impossible to meet the County's mandated response time for non-emergency ten-day investigation requests. This results in unnecessary risks for children.

The CEO partially disagrees with F3. HHS does have vacancies and needs more experienced investigators to meet the volume of non-immediate referrals received. However, Social Workers are still working even though the office is closed to the public on Fridays, and the 10 hour work day increases their flexibility to locate families outside the standard work day. The CEO incorporates by reference HHS response to F3.

F4. The new State eligibility requirements and training requirements for foster homes may reduce the rate of abuse and changes in foster care placements, but make it even harder for Mendocino County agencies to recruit foster families.

The CEO is unable to respond. The Executive Office cannot speculate on possible future outcomes. HHS is responsible for implementing new state eligibility requirements; therefore the CEO incorporates by reference HHS response to F4.

F7. The contract with RCS for ESS workers stationed at the RCS facility in Willits, serving the entire County, is proving extremely valuable in removing children to safety while investigators make a determination on the removal of a child.

The CEO agrees with F7. The CEO incorporates by reference the HHS response to F7.

F9. The change from the Merit System to Civil Service Employment practices allows promotion of experienced people without an MSW degree to supervisory positions and this may attract new staff from neighboring counties.

The CEO partially disagrees with F9. The change to Civil Services did not change the Social Worker Supervisors; however the change has provided more local control of classification specifications and has enhanced the County's ability to recruit staff. The CEO incorporates by reference HR and HHS response to F9.

F10. The use of the term Social Worker as a job title in the Department is too broad. It does not properly define the education or responsibility of the various workers' assignments.

The CEO partially disagrees with F10. It is true that there is a significant difference in the breadth of experience, responsibility and education required from a Social Worker I to Social Worker V. Although some counties use other titles to highlight these differences, the majority of comparable counties use the Social Worker job title across these different job classifications, which are well defined despite the similarities of job title. The CEO incorporates by reference HR and HHS response to F10.

F11. The California State Waiver for staffing levels through 2018 will need to be renewed. Mendocino County is unable to maintain sufficient State mandated MSW staff levels.

The CEO agrees with F11. HHS has made great strides in increasing staffing levels. Additional staffing is needed to fulfill the state requirements; therefore, HHS is planning on submitting a new request for a staff waiver in January 2018. The CEO incorporates by reference HHS response to F11.

F12. The Differential Response RFP is part of developing community based programs that will lessen the stress on the available staff of FCS by assisting families before problems become exigent and require removal of children.

The CEO agrees with F12.

F14. The Grand Jury notes management is seeking outside help to analyze and correct the Departmental issues. However, the problems noted in the 2014-15 Report still need corrective action.

The CEO partially disagrees with F14. HHS has improved since the 2014-15 report and is continuing to address problems and committed to improvement. The CEO incorporates by reference HHS response to F14.

F15. The Board of Supervisors agreed to many of the recommendations in the UC Davis report. The BOS increased salaries and awarded a 5% differential payment to Coastal and Covelo staff. The BOS also took action to reward long-term County service with longevity pay. The Grand Jury commends these changes and hopes the BOS will continue to support those committed to County service.

The CEO agrees with F15.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. The County require a commitment of continued employment for a fixed period of time for those participating in the County subsidized Master's Degree program. (F1, F5, F9, F11, F13)

Recommendations numbered R1 will not be implemented because they are not warranted. The County does not subsidize Master's Degree programs for employees. Funding may be available for qualified individuals through federal programs. The County cannot require an employee to continue employment should they decide to leave. The CEO incorporates by reference HR response to R1.

R2. The County request another State Waiver for FCS to operate with less than the mandatory number of staff with MSW degrees. (F1, F3, F5, F11)

Recommendations numbered R2 have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. HHSA plans to apply for the waiver in 2018. The CEO incorporates by reference HHSA response to F11 and R2.

R3. The County continue to develop and utilize community-based non-profits to locate and assist families before exigent situations develop. (F1-F3, F7, F12, F14)

Recommendations numbered R3 has been implemented.

R4. The Board of Supervisors direct the County to offer competitive salaries to hire and retain quality Department staff. (F1-F3, F5, F11, F13, F15)

The CEO is unable to respond to R4. This is a recommendation for the Board of Supervisors.

R5. The Board of Supervisors provide a side letter agreement to the SEIU contract authorizing additional pay for Emergency Response work. (F1-F3, F11, F13-F15)

The CEO is unable to respond to R5. The CEO cannot make changes to County labor agreements or salary levels without direction from the Board. This is a recommendation for the Board of Supervisors.