

# Response to Grand Jury Report



Report Title: **FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

Report Date: **May 19, 2015**

Response by: **Heidi Dunham, Director Mendocino County Human Resources**

## Findings

I (we) agree with the findings numbered: **F27, F30**

I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: **F26, F28, F29**

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

## Recommendations

Recommendations numbered **xxx** have been implemented.

*Attach a statement describing the implement actions.*

Recommendations numbered **R15** have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

*Attach a statement with the schedule for implementation(s).*

Recommendations numbered **R16** require further analysis.

*Attach 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 **xxx** will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.

*Attach an explanation.*

Signature: Heidi Dunham Date: 7-16-15

Number of pages attached: 3

## Response to Grand Jury Report - continued

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### FINDINGS:

**F26. The private sector pays significantly higher for social workers. It is likely that the difference between public sector salaries and private sector salaries impacts the ability of the County to hire sufficient numbers of Social Workers.**

Partially Disagree: It is difficult to determine whether the salaries offered by the private sector impact the County's ability to hire social workers. The County's benefit package affects the bottom line being offered so it is impossible to compare without hard data.

**F27. The more populous counties of Napa and Sonoma pay significantly higher salaries than do Humboldt, Lake, and Mendocino. It is probable that this difference leads to the loss of professional social workers to those counties.**

Agree: While it is probable that higher salaries may be the reason some social workers leave, there are a variety of other reasons social workers, and other employees, leave their jobs.

**F28. The problem of 'train-and-trot' is real. Within two years of hiring or promotion, one out of four employees has left the job. A loss of 25% of employees, after less than two years of service and training, would not be sustainable by a private agency. This is an unacceptable strain on the HHS budget.**

Partially Disagree: While I do believe what you term as "train and trot" is a real issue for all of our County departments, I can't agree fully with your statistics as I do not have the information you used to get there. I would like to point out that social workers and social worker supervisors left their jobs for a variety of reasons, not only for new jobs. Some of the other reasons included illness, retirement, and being released during their probationary period for poor performance.

I cannot agree with your statement that this is an unacceptable strain on the HHS budget because I am not sure what you considered to come to that conclusion.

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**F29. The higher paying counties are a major magnet for 'train-and-trot.' Also, the atmosphere in which the employees work has contributed to the 'train and trot' phenomenon.**

Partially Disagree: I agree that the higher paying counties are a major magnet for "train and trot". It has not been brought to my attention that the work atmosphere at social services is anything but professional and while there may be some employees who are unhappy at Social Services, there are some unhappy employees at all workplaces.

**F30. Benefit packages vary widely from county to county, and are very complex. The Grand Jury was not able to determine if differences in benefit packages were significant from county to county for counties of equivalent size.**

Agree: Benefit packages do vary from county to county. Mendocino County's benefit package is comparable to other county benefit packages and provides County employees with benefits such as deferred compensation packages, life and accident insurance, retirement benefits, wellness benefits, and many other benefits.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

**R15. Human Resources contact social workers who rejected employment offers with the County FCS. HR should request specifics as to why the Mendocino County offer was rejected. (F26, F27, F30)**

Job offers are made by the hiring department, not the Mendocino County Human Resources Department (HR). HR does not have staff available to contact candidates declining job offers. It would not be unreasonable to have the hiring department making the job offer document the reason for an offer being declined. The information could then be submitted to the HR for tracking purposes.

If the hiring department agrees to implement a process of asking why a job offer is being declined, HR will develop a tracking process within six months of the date the department begins providing the information.

**R16. Human Resources perform exit interviews to establish the extent of ‘train-and-trot.’  
(F28, F29)**

The Mendocino County Human Resources Department (HR) is currently polling California counties to review current industry exit interview practices. Of eighteen (18) counties polled to date, one third (1/3) of the human resource departments conduct a voluntary exit interview. A handful conduct voluntary exit interviews at the department level, and approximately 40% of those polled have no exit interview process at all. HR will continue to gather information and make a determination regarding implementation of a formal exit interview strategy.

Human Resources will report its findings and determination to the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors by January 1, 2016.