

ANOTHER LOOK AT THE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

MAY 21, 2009

Summary

In 2005 the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors (BOS) changed the system of management of health and human services from departments to a single Agency. The intent was to eliminate what was seen as duplications and to maximize the use of available funds.

In 2008-2009 the Grand Jury found that the Health and Human Services Agency continues to develop as a functioning structural agency but is delivering fewer services than it did as separate departments. The current financial crisis makes it difficult to determine whether the reduction of services is due to organizational changes or to severe reduction of funds.

Management of the Field Service Officers, formerly of Animal Care and Control (AC&C), has been transferred to the Sheriff's Office. This will result in a major change of budget, focus and possible change of name of AC&C to Animal Care.

Background

The 2006-2007 Grand Jury examined the restructuring of the former Departments of Health, Social Services, Animal Care and Control, and Mental Health into the Health and Human Services Agency (Agency/HHSA). That Grand Jury reported that the restructuring would be an ongoing process. Many changes had to occur before these independent departments with different structures, cultures and service delivery systems could be truly integrated. The Grand Jury found potential for better integrated use of funds and a concerned but anxious work force.

To understand how the Agency was developing and to answer questions raised concerning the level of services delivered, the 2008-2009 Grand Jury studied three of the former departments: Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Programs (AODP), and Animal Care and Control (AC&C). In addition, the Grand Jury briefly looked at aspects of Social Services and Welfare-to-Work/CalWORKs.

Methods

The Grand Jury interviewed County administrators and line staff, examined budgets, reports and memos, and attended public meetings. Jurors also looked at Web-sites and performed an onsite inspection.

FINDINGS

Administration

1. Restructuring of the Agency required the development of an administrative management unit.
2. The management unit for the Agency has been put in place through the creation of newly funded positions.
3. A permanent Director of the Agency has been appointed.
4. The Director goes before the BOS through the office of the County Chief Executive Officer (CEO). This is the only avenue of communication between the BOS and the Health and Human Services Agency.
5. Differences in hiring practices, salary scales and benefits that existed between Social Service employees hired under the State Merit System and County Civil Service employees have been resolved.
6. The Agency structure allows for the transfer of funds and personnel from one division to another except for Welfare-to-Work/CalWORKs.
7. The Agency has instituted a linear system of communication through most of the divisions.
8. Line management testimony indicated the linear system reduced the ability to directly communicate their concerns and suggestions to the head of the Agency.
9. The Director of the Agency has stated that there is an open door policy. An Agency newsletter for the public is available on-line. In addition, the director has an open telephone line one time per month for any HHS employees to talk to the director. Weekly e-letters are sent to staff to answer questions asked either by phone or e-mail and inform them of Agency policies and procedure changes.
10. The Mental Health, Social Service and Public Health Departments have been reorganized into an *Adult and Older Adult System of Care*, a *Children and Family System of Care*, and *Community Health*.

Mental Health

11. Mental Health is designated by Mendocino County as an *enterprise entity*. As such, it is expected to generate its own income. This continues to create budgeting complications.
12. The transferring of employees between Mental Health and Social Service began in 2007. Administrators reported the transfers went well, however, line workers reported the transfers created less productive units of service.
13. The number of budgeted positions declined in Mental Health.
14. Cross training of employees has provided flexibility of staffing.
15. In the previous structure there was some duplication of services. Elimination of this duplication is in process.
16. The mandate for the Mental Health Services Act funds received by Mendocino County is to provide for new and innovative Mental Health Services. These funds have been used in part for peer counseling and social rehabilitation

services in Ukiah, Willits and Fort Bragg. The State has made the use of these funds more flexible. Some of these funds are now used for previously existing programs.

17. Mendocino County has not been able to provide for all mandated services due to budgetary constraints. The current federal, state and county budget crises have further exacerbated the problem.
18. Due to lack of County Mental Health facilities for mental health hospitalization, residential care and transitional housing approximately 47% of County Mental Health funds are spent out of County.
19. Mental Health has contracted with Anka Behavioral Health, Inc. (Anka) for 10 beds in a licensed board and care facility in Redwood Valley and for social rehabilitation and group services. The County is paying \$2,900 per month per bed (\$29,000 per month). Part of this money is reimbursed to the County by residents' payments from government benefits. The board and care facility is appropriate and adequate for housing the population served but does not include spaces suitable for counseling and rehabilitation services.
20. Anka is not providing all the social rehabilitation and group services that are included in the contract with the County, instead they are sending residents to Ukiah to participate in Health and Human Services Act funded programs.
21. Medi-CAL funding requires the provision of extensive documentation, logging of time and the preparation of reports to justify payment. This impacts the amount of time available for client care.
22. A shortage of general funding and constraints on how available funding may be used have resulted in services being directed primarily to homeless persons and Medi-CAL recipients.

Alcohol and Other Drug Programs

23. The plan for integration of AODP into the *Adult and Older Adult System of Care, Children and Family System of Care or Community Health* was distributed on December 11, 2008.
24. Adult Services include:

- Drug Court
- Pre-Trial release
- Proposition 36 Programs
- Peri-natal Program
- Men's Alternative to Violence
- Childcare/Community Health
- Federal Probation

Children's Services include:

- grants with Ukiah Unified School District
- Probation Alternatives with Counseling Education (PACE)
- Clean & Sober Classrooms

25. Staff members have expressed concerns about the continued funding of Youth Services under Community Health Services. The use of alcohol and other drugs is higher in Mendocino County Middle schools than the state-wide average.
26. AODP is largely dependent on receipt of various grant funds. Under the Agency structure the grant writer's contract with AODP is in place until the end of this fiscal year. The Agency plans to increase the scope of the contract to serve all divisions. Staff members have expressed concern that the merger may lessen the ability to acquire grants for adolescent programs.
27. AODP staff members remain reluctant about being integrated into the Agency and being split into *Systems of Care* as defined by the Agency.
28. AODP staff reported that they have philosophical differences and work under different legal requirements than those that apply to Mental Health staff.

Animal Care and Control

29. AC&C is mandated to provide the following services:

- enforcement of state laws & county codes by Field Service Officers
- shelter services, including outreach, adoption programs, volunteer service, feral cat-trap/neuter-release programs and licensing programs
- clinic services, including the mobile unit, animal health education to local groups, vaccine clinic and spay & neuter options for the pets of low-income individuals

30. AC&C was the first formerly independent department transferred to the Agency in 2005.
31. AC&C is currently managed under the Agency's Community Health division.
32. The four positions of Animal Control Officers and the funds to support these positions were transferred to the Sheriff's Office on February 8, 2009. This transfer was made by BOS from recommendations made by the Agency in cooperation of the Sheriff's Office. The transfer was planned without prior discussion with AC&C line management concerning budget line items.
33. One goal in 2008-09 for AC&C was to collaborate with all Tribal Governments in Mendocino County to continue providing field services on tribal land.
34. AC&C is an *enterprise entity* and raises more than one-half of budgeted costs from fees adopted by the BOS. New fees were approved by the BOS on April 20, 2009. AC&C also receive grants, donations and funds from other inconsistent sources.
35. The primary facility is in Ukiah and there is a satellite shelter in Fort Bragg. An estimated 17% of the county's domestic animal population is served by the coast shelter; the rest of the animals are served through the Ukiah facility.
36. Both shelters are clean, sanitary and well maintained. The final section of the access road to the Fort Bragg shelter is rutted and unpaved. The Fort Bragg shelter provides limited medical care for animals.
37. The AC&C provides spay and neuter services in Ukiah and through a mobile unit at approximately one-half the cost of private veterinarians. AC&C fees as mandated by state law must not exceed costs of the actual service provided.

Animals are also being transferred to private and public animal rescue and care agencies in the counties of Mendocino, Lake, Marin and San Francisco.

38. The AC&C has developed a special training and socializing program for 'bull breed' dogs to be successfully placed in homes.
39. Grief counseling is arranged for staff who euthanize animals at the Ukiah Shelter and for pet owners whose animals are "put down."
40. Unsupervised dogs (unleashed, uncontrolled or abandoned) continue to be a major problem throughout Mendocino County.

Welfare-to-Work/CalWORKs

41. Welfare-to-Work/CalWORKs, a federally funded program, provides cash assistance to families with dependent children and serves all 58 counties. It is operated locally by the Agency.
42. In Mendocino County this program is not fully integrated into the Agency but is staffed by county employees.
43. This program entitles families to multiple services and is federally limited to a total of five years (60 months). All services are targeted to improve the parents' ability to leave the welfare system. If parents are unwilling or continue to be unable to work after the five-year period, they will be sanctioned by losing funding, except to support their children.
44. The program includes an advocate that assists disabled parents unable to work to apply for and receive Supplemental Social Security Insurance (SSI).
45. Resource centers that provide multiple services are located in Ukiah, Fort Bragg, Willits and Covelo.

Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends that:

1. the Administrative Director maintain and further strengthen communication with line managers and other employees. (Findings 4, 7-9)
2. the Agency Director discuss with line management any policy changes that affect division budgets before decisions are finalized. (Findings 7-8, 32)
3. the Board of Supervisors eliminate the *enterprise* designation for Mental Health. (Finding 11)
4. the Agency should continue to pursue grant support for alcohol and other drug programs for adolescents and children. (Findings 25-26)
5. the Agency accelerate the development of county residential care facilities as well as transitional housing in order to reduce out of County placements. (Findings 18-20)

6. the Agency Director review and revise the contract with Anka to reflect the services actually provided and the true costs and quality of these services. (Findings 19-20)
7. the Sheriff's Office continue the collaborative efforts for animal control on Tribal land. (Finding 33)

Discussion

Swift changes within the Agency continue to affect Social Services, Mental Health, AODP and AC&C. The Grand Jury has serious concerns that funding deficits will limit the provision of adult mental health services to only Medi-Cal recipients and homeless persons. We have further concerns that the State plans for the use of Mental Health Services Act funds will effectively end current peer counseling programs.

AODP has expressed concern that the merger will reduce services to children and adolescents with alcohol and drug issues. The Grand Jury applauds the policy of cross training between Mental Health workers and alcohol and drug counselors but continues to have concerns about the philosophical and legal differences between the two disciplines.

The transfer of AC&C Field Service Officers to the Sheriff's Office will provide for four budgeted officers. This is less than the minimum needed for a county of more than 3,800 square miles. In the past, Mendocino County has had eight Field Service Officers. Current budget restraints do not allow for this coverage. Management of Field Service Officers by the Sheriff's Office will change the focus and possibly the name of the division.

In this report, the Grand Jury has referred to *enterprise entities* which, by definition, are partially or fully self supporting through generation of income. The classification of Mental Health as an *enterprise entity* is *not* appropriate.

The development of the Anka residential facility is a beginning for providing local residential care. However, Jurors believe the contract and the services actually being provided by Anka do not justify the costs. Efforts need to be made by the county to develop more residential care facilities either through the county or private contracts. More transitional housing needs to be provided for clients moving out of conservatorship into supervised living.

Required Responses

Mendocino County Board of Supervisors (All Findings; All Recommendations)

Chief Executive Officer of Mendocino County (All Findings; All Recommendations)

Director of Health and Human Services Agency (All Findings; All Recommendations)

Mendocino County Sheriff (Findings 32-33, 40; Recommendations 2, 7)