

San Benito County Behavioral Health Department: Follow-up of Investigation by the 2006-07 Grand Jury

Conducted by

Health, Education, and Welfare Committee

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**County of San Benito
Civil Grand Jury
2007-2008**

SAN BENITO COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT: FOLLOW-UP OF INVESTIGATION BY THE 2006-07 GRAND JURY

SUMMARY

The San Benito County Behavioral Health Department (SBCBHD) offers mental health and substance abuse services to county residents. The 2006-07 San Benito County Civil Grand Jury conducted an investigation of SBCBHD to ascertain the effectiveness and efficiency of its delivery of services to its clients. This Grand Jury made several findings and recommendations in the areas of staffing, programs, community outreach, and program evaluations. This report summarizes the status of those 2006-07 recommendations.

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY

The 2007-08 San Benito County Grand Jury performed a follow-up investigation of the 2006-07 Grand Jury's examination of the mental health services provided by SBCBHD. The purpose of the current jury's inquiry was to determine whether SBCBHD performed any or all of the recommendations offered by the 2006-07 Grand Jury.

METHODOLOGY

The members of the Health, Education, and Welfare Committee of the 2007-08 Grand Jury interviewed the SBCBHD staff.

DISCUSSION

Clinicians/Case Worker Staffing

SBCBHD receives additional funding through the Mental Health Services Act (California State MHS Act Proposition 63) to provide services to the seriously mental ill children and adults, and their families. The agency is required by the MHS Act to employ a total of 22.8 full-time clinicians/case workers. The 2006-07 Grand Jury noted that, as of November 2006, SBCBHD had 7 positions still vacant. The jurors recommended "SBCBHD aggressively pursue additional staff members on a priority basis using appropriate incentives if necessary."

SBCBHD Response

Between July 2006 and September 2007, a total of 16 new county staff members were hired. Among the new employees were 2 Vocational Assistants, 2 Peer Mentors, 2 Case Managers, 2 Mental Health Nurses, 2 Office Assistants, 2 Substance Abuse Counselors,

one Mental Health Clinician, one Assistant Director, one Secretary, and one Quality Improvement Supervisor.

Substance Abuse

The 2006-07 Grand Jury reported that substance abuse prevention is a major part of SBCBHD's mental health program and that it maintains a presence online to provide "assistance with substance abuse." Jurors noted, however, that the agency's Web site posted only contact information to SBCBHD. The Grand Jury recommended that "SBCBHD update its website to include comprehensive references and contact information for organizations and programs that are known to be effective in the reduction and prevention of substance abuse and related problems."

SBCBHD Response

SBCBHD built a Web page about its Substance Abuse Services on its Web site (<http://www.sbcmh.org>). This Web page provides information about the various services that are available for adolescents and adults along with a link to "frequently asked questions." SBCBHD also provides links to other online resources.

The Substance Abuse Services web page can be found at <http://www.sbcmh.org/saservices.htm>.

At-Risk Children, Youth, and Young Adult Populations

According to the 2006-07 Grand Jury's findings, the caseload of at-risk children and youth decreased "dramatically" when school was not in session during the summer months. Jurors recommended that SBCBHD provide a mental health screening/case-review program at schools to identify at-risk cases and to actively maintain these cases during the summer break.

SBCBHD Response

Generally, referrals of children and youth to SBCBHD are fewer during the summer break than when school is in session. However, programs are in place for at-risk children and youth during the summer months.

Community Outreach

The 2006-07 Grand Jury noted that SBCBHD is located far from the Hollister and San Benito County center of population. The agency has had plans to establish a walk-in center in downtown Hollister. Grand jurors recommended that SBCBHD work "aggressively" to put in the proposed walk-in center so that at-risk populations could "avail themselves of services."

SBCBHD Response

SBCBHD opened a walk-in center, called Esperanza Center, at 327 Fifth Street in Hollister (next to the YMCA).

Measurements and Management

According to the 2006-07 Grand Jury, SBCBHD had not established measurable goals that could be reported to the public. Additionally, last year's Grand Jury noted that SBCBHD had no citizen's review committee. To address those concerns, jurors made the following two recommendations:

- develop performance goals and program schedules, and report the department's results to the public on a quarterly basis
- create a citizen's oversight review group that is made up of members of the community

SBCBHD Response

Through its follow-up investigation, the 2007-08 Grand Jury learned that SBCBHD is required by California State Department of Mental Health to submit data with respect to their benchmarks. This data is submitted to a contracted group called the External Quality Review Organization. This data, along with benchmarks of other California counties, is published annually by the California Mental Health Directors Association in a report entitled *California Counties - Transforming Local Mental Health Systems*.

The 2007-08 jurors found that SBCBHD has a Mental Health Board and a Substance Abuse Board, which provide community oversight to the agency. Both boards are composed of a diverse cross-section of the community.

FINDINGS

- F1. SBCBHD has the required number of clinician/case workers on staff.
- F2. SBCBHD has created a Web page of its substance abuse services.
- F3. SBCBHD has programs in place for at-risk children and youth when school is out of session during the summer.
- F4. SBCBHD has established a walk-in center in downtown Hollister.
- F5. SBCBHD's benchmarks of goals and schedules are submitted each year to California Mental Health Directors Association, which publishes them in an annual report.
- F6. SBCBHD has two community review boards to provide oversight to the agency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

No recommendations.

RESPONSE REQUIRED

No response required.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Documents

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