

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE



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Front row, left to right:

Robert Romero, Dr. Peter Bulza, Jan Flammang, Joyce P. Seeger,
Becki Hernandez-Powell

Back row, left to right:

Samuel Ferry, Roger D. Trussell, Patricia Swangel, Dr. Harry Stavros,
Tom Hale

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

The Human Services Committee had the responsibility of reviewing these departments within the Human Services Group:

- Department of Aging and Adult Services
- Child Support Services
- Children's Services
- Performance, Education & Resource Centers
- Preschool Services
- Transitional Assistance Department
- Veterans Affairs Department

Areas of specific review included the following:

- Veterans Affairs
- Foster Care/Adoption

The Committee would like to thank each of these departments for cooperating with the Grand Jury and for providing professional and compassionate service to County residents.

The Human Services Committee submits reports on the following topics:

- Homeless Advocacy
- Homeless Coalition
- Elder Abuse

In addition, several letters of complaint triggered one Human Services subcommittee to spend more than 1,000 hours during the 2008-2009 Grand Jury term. This subcommittee investigated financial fraud and physical neglect of senior citizens with the assistance of the DA's office.

DEPARTMENT OF AGING AND ADULT SERVICES

ELDER ABUSE

BACKGROUND

Members of the Grand Jury visited with the administrators of the Department of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS). Discussions involved an overview of the Department with a special emphasis on the topic of elder abuse. A subcommittee received and reviewed the document, *San Bernardino County Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse Inter-Agency Protocol, November 1, 2004*. Discussions also centered on the Public Guardian and Conservator services provided by the County.

The Grand Jury has recognized that the demographics of the County regarding the percentage of the population defined as elderly is dramatically increasing.

Statistics indicate that reported cases of elder abuse have been increasing in the County over the past decade. While the number of reported cases has been on the rise, state funding to investigate these complaints has been declining.

Even with declining funding, it is imperative that the outreach program for reporting elder abuse be enhanced.

The website for DAAS has a prominent display in the middle of their home page highlighting the HOTLINE TO REPORT ELDER ABUSE.

FINDINGS

1. The Department website provides a tab listing *SENIOR CENTERS* within the County.
2. The Grand Jury visited a number of Senior Centers listed on the County website tab, and found few postings or brochures providing information on how to report elder abuse.

RECOMMENDATION

- 09-25 Provide and display large, visible posters, of at least 11 by 17 inches. Posters will provide information regarding the reporting of elder abuse and are to be displayed near exits of all of the Senior Centers listed on the DAAS website. (Findings 1, 2)

HOMELESS

HOMELESS ADVOCATE

BACKGROUND

To qualify for federal funds, Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has required counties to create and implement a ten-year plan to end chronic homelessness. The Grand Jury found that San Bernardino County is in the process of complying with this HUD mandate and has a coalition which is working toward this goal. Individuals were interviewed from the Department of Behavioral Health, Department of Legislative Affairs, San Bernardino Police Department, San Bernardino County Schools, and the Central City Lutheran Mission. Some Grand Jury members also attended the November 2008, Homeless Summit.

FINDINGS

1. A significant number of homeless individuals have been identified in the City of San Bernardino. Business owners and residents in City of San Bernardino often call the police, complaining that homeless individuals have been panhandling, trespassing, or causing a public nuisance. The responding officer can arrest and book, which costs time and money, or order the offenders to disperse, which only moves the problem to another location.
2. Three years ago, the San Bernardino Police Department (SBPD) assigned one Homeless Advocate Officer (HAO) to deal with incidents involving the homeless population. This HAO has created a unique program which provides professional, compassionate customer service to both the City and its homeless population. Problems involving minor crimes or mental illness are referred to Homeless Court. There, those who qualify are offered the opportunity to do community service, to receive treatment, or to participate in a program which will help them improve their quality of life. Occasionally the HAO has been able to assist clients by obtaining medical insurance through Medically Indigent Adults (MIA) or to refer them to low-cost clinics such as Social Action Community Norton or Central City Mission's H Street Clinic. This officer not only answers police calls, but personally goes into the homeless camps and seeks people who can be helped by the programs which are already in place.

3. The assignment of one dedicated officer who deals with the homeless population has been beneficial to the entire police department. This officer's expertise in locating services, in defusing potential altercations, and in understanding individual limitations has saved the City of San Bernardino much stress, time, and money.
4. This HAO has given presentations to other groups, such as Code Compliance, Public Works, Caltrans, Department of Behavioral Health, law enforcement, non-profit and faith-based organizations, stressing the importance of collaborative and compassionate efforts in dealing with the homeless population.

COMMENDATION

With no established program in place to deal effectively with police interactions with the homeless, this HAO has created and continues to implement a viable and exemplary program.

RECOMMENDATION

09-26 Establish a Homeless Advocate Officer position in the Sheriff's Department. (Finding 3)

HOMELESS CONTINUUM OF CARE

BACKGROUND

Recent investigations into the conditions of and care for the homeless of San Bernardino County (SBC) indicated that the County has some homeless programs in place, but more oversight is needed in order to create an effective and comprehensive plan. The 2008 application submitted by the San Bernardino County Continuum of Care (CoC) to the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was not awarded funding for new projects. This highlights areas of concern in the County's homeless program. This Grand Jury report demonstrates that a lack of cooperation among participating agencies has resulted in the loss of millions of dollars for new programs for the County.

Prior to the CoC Debriefing Summary, the 2008-2009 Grand Jury was comfortable with the direction of the homeless programs in the County. At the Homeless

Summit in November 2008, the Keynote Speaker from HUD had high praise for San Bernardino County.

FINDINGS

1. The April 22, 2009, Debriefing Summary concerning San Bernardino County's Continuum of Care application to HUD reported that the County received 74.25 points out of 100, falling short of the 78.25 threshold for funding. That shortcoming in the application cost the County \$6-8 million dollars of HUD funding for new projects in SBC.
2. The County is not the lead fiscal agency and has no oversight for the application submitted by the San Bernardino County Continuum of Care. The application was in response to the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) 2008 Notice of Funding Announcement (NOFA). The CoC Debriefing Summary demonstrated a lack of cooperation by the involved agencies. Agencies that receive HUD funding were deficient in reporting their required performance measures.
3. The application process for completion and approval is quite lengthy. All the providers, or agencies participating, are required to enter information such as bed-counts and bed-count usage into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). In 2008, this requirement was either not accomplished or not forwarded to HUD as required. Results show a lack of training by Office of Homeless Services (OHS) to assist agencies, and little, if any, monitoring by HUD.
4. The Community Action Partnership (CAP), a private non-profit benefit corporation, is responsible for the application of the Homeless Management Information System. HUD gives CAP funds to run the HMIS system. This arrangement resulted in a successful application in 2007, but a denial of new funding in 2008.
5. The County has not yet established an effective oversight group to bring together into a cohesive and active body all the current and potential organizations which aid the homeless. Successful results in the fight against homelessness will only be achieved through collaboration and cooperation with the Homeless Partnership.
6. San Bernardino County has fallen behind in its effort to achieve the 2005 Federal Government's National Alliance to End Homelessness plan which urged the cities and counties nationwide to create and implement a 10-Year Plan to deal with the homeless. The Counties of Riverside, Orange, Los Angeles, and Santa Barbara already have their 10-year plan in operation. Currently more than one dozen cities in San Bernardino County are involved in a County partnership to fulfill this plan.

The County has requested, through the Homeless Partnership, that the mayors of these cities present plans for their respective homeless situations, especially regarding the establishment of permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless persons. However, most agencies and cities continue to be reluctant to provide this permanent-type housing.

7. A consultant was hired for \$30,000 to assist in the writing of the CoC application. Despite this assistance, funding was not granted to the County for new programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 09-27 Establish the OHS as the lead fiscal agency on behalf of San Bernardino County Homeless Partnership. (Finding 2)
- 09-28 Request that HUD provide training for each agency to establish 100% accuracy and timeliness for HMIS entries and request that HUD monitor the County's application process from start to completion. (Findings 2, 3, 4)
- 09-29 Require that OHS submit the completed 10-Year Plan to the Board of Supervisors for approval well in advance of the application deadline to HUD. (Finding 6)
- 09-30 Urge mayors and city councils that are not currently part of the OHS Partnership to support the County leadership by identifying one or more providers of permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless persons. (Finding 6)
- 09-31 Request that cities within the homeless partnership of the County provide more support to the County's 10-year plan and prepare for their cities to address the homeless conditions. (Finding 6)
- 09-32 Allow no contracts with paid consultants to assist in applications for HUD funding. (Finding 7)