

August 23, 2001

Honorable Rodney S. Melville
Presiding Judge
Santa Barbara County Superior Court
312-C East Cook Street
Santa Maria, CA 93456

County Administrator's Response to the Fiscal Year 2000-2001 Grand Jury Report on
"Mental Health Services"

Dear Judge Melville:

We would like to thank the Fiscal Year 2000-2001 Grand Jury for their work on the Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Services (ADMHS) Department to respond to the findings and recommendations of the Grand Jury's Report on *Mental Health Services*.

Over the past year, The County Administrator's Office has worked extensively with the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services (ADMHS) department to resolve several of the issues raised by the Grand Jury. Our recruitment effort has culminated in the recent hire of a new Director who will lead the department in addressing these problems. The issues include a need for improved communication between management and staff; improved staff morale; clarity of the vision, mission and model of care of ADMHS services; the need for the integration of mental health and alcohol and drug services; the need for sound fiscal management and for collaboration with all stakeholders as the process develops.

The Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services and General Services Departments have responded separately to the findings and recommendations and the County Administrator has adopted many of these responses which follow:

FINDING 1b: *The beginning of solutions to these problems are in place:*

- *A well-managed recruitment process has led to the selection of a new ADMHS*

Director.

- *A Labor-Management Project Team has been created in Adult Programs.*
- *More emphasis and effort have been placed on employee recruitment and retention.*
- *Better management of clinical operations is being facilitated by the new ADMHS structure.*
- *A contract with the Auditor-Controller for fiscal management of ADMHS clarifies the fiscal situation and should lead to more informed and confident decision making.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (agree)

FINDING 1c: *The Labor-Management Project Team has accomplished much in the seven months that it has been in existence. This Project Team, in combination with the thoughtful and comprehensive search and research done by the Personnel Department and the County Administrator's Office, participated in the evaluation and choice of the new ADMHS Director.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (agree)

RECOMMENDATION 1: *The Labor-Management Project Team should continue to meet until all processes proposed by the group are underway.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (the recommendation has been implemented and will continue to be implemented).

RECOMMENDATION 2: *The restructuring proposed by the Department with input from the Auditor-Controller and the County Administrator is necessary in order to improve ADMHS services in the County. The incoming Director should review and act on the proposal's key ideas.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (the recommendation has been implemented).

RECOMMENDATION 3a: *Current and new management must signal that it will listen to staff and do what it takes to improve conditions and boost morale. The leadership capacities and expectations of the managers and executives in the Department should be enhanced. Resources are available from the County Director of Organizational Effectiveness to assist ADMHS with these critical tasks. Managers should be held responsible for demonstrating improved leadership practices.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (the recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented)

RECOMMENDATION 3b: *Following the success and example of the Labor-Management Project Team, programs and activities that promote openness should be evaluated and, if believed to have promise, implemented.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (the recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented).

FINDING 4a: *Clinicians and other line staff might fail to understand fully the difficult and complex problems facing management. Unfocused, imprecise complaints about job dissatisfaction are not sufficient to enable busy decision-makers to perceive that a real problem might exist. In any case the lack of specificity is a communication failure.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (agree)

FINDING 4b: *The Labor-Management and the System of Care Project Teams are appropriate vehicles for error-free and timely dissemination of information throughout the geographically far-flung Department.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (disagree partially)

RECOMMENDATION 5b: *The caseload situation, specifically as a result of the MHTC, needs to be assessed by management or, preferably, by the System-of-Care Project Team. Management should recognize that a perceived problem is a real problem. It is not enough to try to prove that the caseload is manageable if many members of the clinical staff are having trouble dealing with their caseloads.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (the recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented).

FINDING 9b: *Despite all the paperwork, client information is not readily available to assist a clinician in designing urgently needed services.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (agree)

RECOMMENDATION 9a: *Redundant data collection should be minimized.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (the recommendation has been implemented).

RECOMMENDATION 9b: *Patient data, respecting all confidentiality laws, should be easily available to those professionals who need to provide urgent client care, and appropriately authorized professionals system-wide should have access to client data both during and outside of regular clinic hours, especially at the Jail.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (The first segment of the recommendation requires further analysis. The segment of the recommendation pertaining to the Jail has been implemented).

FINDING 10: *Reimbursement problems created in the budget might have been avoidable if there had been a way to cross-check service data between Departments prior to submitting the services information to the State, or any other granting agency.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (disagree)

RECOMMENDATION 10: *ADMHS Management should undertake data sharing with other Departments partnered in client services to assure that the most accurate information is being used to design client services and to create reports.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (The recommendation requires further analysis).

RECOMMENDATION 11: *In addition to staff recruitment, proposals on caseload redistribution developed by the Labor-Management and System of Care Project Teams should be evaluated and, if found to be useful, implemented.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (The recommendation will be implemented).

RECOMMENDATION 12a: Management *should encourage staff to advance professionally, increase their knowledge, and keep up-to-date via courses, seminars, workshops, and related activities.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (The recommendation has been implemented).

RECOMMENDATION 12b: *In combination with the restructuring of ADMHS, efforts introduced by the Labor-Management Project Team are valuable toward addressing employee career advancement concerns. These include the evaluation of grades within the clinical classifications and by the addition of working supervisor assignments within the clinics. These efforts should continue to be supported and advanced by management.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (the recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented)

RECOMMENDATION 14a: *New management must find ways to explain ADMHS financing so that it is readily understood. The leadership in the Labor-Management and System of Care Project Teams should educate colleagues as the new system of care is designed.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented).

RECOMMENDATION 14b: *The System of Care Project Team should ensure that all stakeholders have an opportunity to review and comment on their work before final recommendations are made.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (the recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented).

RECOMMENDATION 15: *The new Director should enlist the support of all employees as well as the Labor-Management and System-of-Care Project Teams in dealing with these important issues.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (the recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented).

FINDING 16a: *ADMHS has contracted with the Auditor-Controller to provide fiscal management services.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (agree)

FINDING 16b: *While fiscal matters are important, the mission of ADMHS is the delivery of mental health services within the county.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (agree)

RECOMMENDATION 16b: *Before any reductions in programs are proposed, the restructuring and streamlining of the Department should be allowed to go into operation and take hold.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (the recommendation requires further analysis).

FINDING 19a: *Thus far, the Alcohol/Drug services component of ADMHS has been poorly integrated into the Department's mental health system of care.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (agree)

FINDING 19b: *The dually diagnosed comprises the largest single group of clients in ADMHS.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (disagree partially)

FINDING 19c: *Based on the SEARCH survey, and managerial and staff interviews, the dually diagnosed is a client group on which more focus should be placed.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (agree)

FINDING 19d: *The System-of-Care Project Team is chartered to identify and address the needs of the community and to assess the resources of the Department to design appropriate programs. The assessment will necessarily include the Alcohol Drug Programs.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (agree)

RECOMMENDATION 19a: *The expertise of experienced alcohol and drug therapists in the County should be incorporated in the design of a comprehensive system of care. Such a system should particularly address the needs of dually diagnosed individuals.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented)

RECOMMENDATION 19b: *ADMHS management and the commissions (Mental Health and Drug & Alcohol) must continue to embrace and support the work of the System-of-Care Project Team, and fully commit to implementing its recommendations.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (the recommendation requires further analysis)

RECOMMENDATION 20: *The system of care, and the funding to support it, should be consistent with the definition of the client. In order for the system to be sustainable, there must be uniform understanding of who ADMHS is expected to serve, what services will be provided, how those services will be provided, and how those services will be funded.*

The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented within each Division of the Department).

FINDING 21: *Comprehensive plans and projects, specifically SEARCH and the Five-Year Plan for Adult Services, took a substantial amount of professional time and energy to create. Leaving them "on the shelf" costs taxpayer money and leads to staff frustration.*

RESPONSE: The County Administrator adopts the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Director response as its response (disagree)

RECOMMENDATION 21: *The County Administrator and the Board of Supervisors should monitor, on a regular basis, specific ADMHS plans and the adherence to and progress of such plans. Some internal ADMHS mechanism, perhaps an evolution of the Labor-Management Project Team, should be involved.*

RESPONSE: The recommendation has been and will continue to be implemented. The Budget Director and Administrative Analyst from the County Administrator's Office meets with the department on a monthly basis to review the department's financial status and projections for the future and recommend adjustments accordingly. The County Administrator meets with the Department Director and key staff on a quarterly Operations Review Meeting. The Board of Supervisors will receive a financial update in November 2001. In addition, there is ongoing discussion with the County Administrator's Office on the progress of the department's plans to provide services, manage its budget, and address various issues within the Department.

We again thank the Grand Jury for its dedicated work and the findings and recommendations on the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services Department.

Sincerely,

Michael F. Brown,
County Administrative Officer

Attachments: ADMHS Response to the Grand Jury
General Services Response to the Grand Jury