

April 10, 2002

Honorable Clifford R. Anderson, III
Presiding Judge, Santa Barbara County Superior Court
PO Box 21107
Santa Barbara, CA 93121-1107

The following is our response to the Grand Jury's Children and Families Commission Report, dated April 10, 2003:

Finding 1:

The humanitarian spirit has overridden the clear understanding of finance issues, such as establishing controls and the acceptance of accountability.

Recommendation 1:

The Commission should designate a Chief Financial Officer to work in conjunction with the humanitarian responsibilities of the Executive Director.

Management Comment:

While we agree with the above Finding, we are helping to develop what we believe to be an effective solution to the problem identified by the Grand Jury. Rather than attempting to justify and establish a Chief Financial Officer position for the Children and Families Commission, a collaborative working relationship is being developed to include the Commission and the departments of the Auditor-Controller and the County Administrator.

The title Chief Financial Officer is currently used for positions in several major departments of the County. Those departments include Public Health, Mental Health, Social Services, Probation and Public Works. Each of these major departments involve multiple programs, complex funding, and budgets that range from \$35 million to \$110 million. The Children and Families Commission, while administering multiple programs to children, is basically funded from a single revenue source and is only a \$7 million dollar program.

Based on our experience in working with the county's Human Resources department, a position of Chief Financial Officer would not be approved for the Children and Families Commission. In lieu of establishing this type of position, we have been working with the Commission staff to provide advanced accounting support and administrative support from the office of Auditor-Controller and County Administrator. Roles and responsibilities have been defined for each member of a collaborative team including the Commission's Fiscal Analyst, A-C professional accounting staff, internal audit services, CAO analyst services and CAO information technology systems services. We believe that an effective implementation of this collaborative arrangement will assist the Commission in achieving the level of financial expertise envisioned by the Grand Jury.

We thank the Grand Jury for their insight and advice in this matter and will do our utmost to ensure the continuing fiscal integrity and fiscal viability of the Commission 's mission to the children and families of Santa Barbara County.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert W. Geis, CPA
County Auditor-Controller