

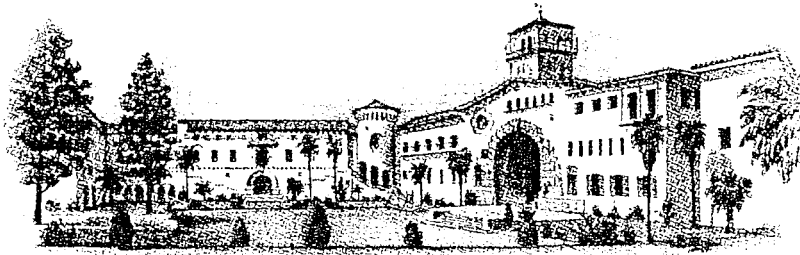
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June 1, 2010

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

Honorable Judge Arthur A. Garcia
Santa Barbara County Superior Court
312 C. East Cook Street
Santa Maria, CA 93456-5369

Board of Supervisors' responses to Fiscal Year 2009-2010 Grand Jury Report on "Under the Radar and Under the Gun - Budget Cuts Threaten the Frail Elderly and the Disabled of all Ages"

Dear Judge Garcia:

During its regular meeting of June 1, 2010, the Board of Supervisors adopted the following as the Board's response to the findings and recommendations in the Fiscal Year 2009-2010 Grand Jury Report entitled "Under the Radar and Under the Gun - Budget Cuts Threaten the Frail and Elderly and the Disabled of all Ages".

The Board of Supervisors thanks the Grand Jury for its work on this most important issue regarding the frail and elderly of our County. The County Supervisors have carefully reviewed the findings and recommendations presented in the Grand Jury Report and provide the following responses:

Finding 1

In-Home Supportive Services is dependent on federal, state, and county sources.

Response: The Board of Supervisors agrees that the In-Home Supportive Services Program is funded by a melding of County General Fund, and Federal and State funds.

Finding 2

In July 2009, the California Legislature enacted ABX4 4, which reduced funding for In-Home Supportive Services programs for fiscal year 2009-10.

Response: The Board of Supervisors agrees that ABX4 4 reduced funding for the IHSS program.

Finding 3

A federal district court judge has stayed the implementation of ABX 4 4. The state has appealed the injunction to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. This appeal is pending at this time.

Response: The BOS agrees with this finding.

Finding 4

If ABX4 4 is implemented, Santa Barbara County would lose approximately \$2.69 million, per Department of Social Services, from the funding for In-Home Support Services programs, resulting in reduction or elimination of such services to approximately 1,200 frail elderly and disabled of all ages.

Response: The BOS generally agrees with this finding. While the exact reductions are difficult to estimate at this time due to the pending lawsuit and uncertainties about the State budget, a significant number of IHSS recipients can expect to see a reduction in service or an elimination of their services if the State of California were to prevail in their legal appeal to the Federal court.

Finding 5

Approximately 1,200 people currently receiving In-Home Support Services benefits will experience a reduction or complete loss of service, some requiring institutionalization, if the budgets cuts are implemented.

Response: The BOS agrees with this finding. An exact number of recipients who will either see a reduction or elimination of service cannot be determined at this time, the department estimates that approximately 1,200 clients will be affected.

Finding 6

Currently, there is a serious shortage of both skilled nursing homes and alternative beds for In-Home Supportive Services recipients in Santa Barbara County.

Response: The BOS agrees with this finding. The current service delivery model in the State of California to support low-income frail elderly and disabled individuals is the IHSS program which provides in-home caregiver support for only the necessary hours, rather than the more expensive institutional 24-hour care. This model has been in place for forty years. As a consequence, there are fewer skilled nursing facilities, with fewer available beds, than is needed to absorb all of the former IHSS recipients around the State who will no longer be able to remain independent in their own homes.

Finding 7

If the 2010-11 budget proposal is enacted even more of the 3,000 current recipients of In-Home Supportive Services benefits will lose all services and could need institutionalization.

Response: The BOS agrees with this finding. The Governor's current budget proposal includes the elimination of the In-Home Supportive Services program.

Recommendation 1

The Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors directs the County Chief Executive Officer to identify funds to maintain the current level of services for In-Home Supportive Services recipients.

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is unreasonable at this time. If the IHSS program is eliminated, as recommended by the Governor in his budget, the cost to the County to supplant the lost federal and state funds would be prohibitive in this economic climate (an additional \$27.5 million annually). The Board of Supervisors may direct that the County funds already allocated to the IHSS program, approximately \$5 million (caregiver wages, contract services and administration) be used to provide some specified level of support services to the most frail of the elderly and disabled population who lose IHSS services.

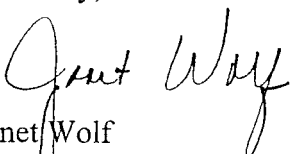
Recommendation 2

The Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors develop a definitive plan, which could include public and private partnerships, to seamlessly assist the low income frail elderly and the disabled should prior and/or proposed budget cuts be implemented.

Response: The recommendation will not be implemented as it is not reasonable at this time. The Board of Supervisors does agree that it is prudent to plan should IHSS program reductions occur as a result of State actions. However, given the depth of the State budget dilemma and continued issues impacting revenue at the local level, it would be misleading to suggest that such a plan would result in an increased distribution of funding to assist the clients, caregivers and families within the IHSS system in a substantive way. However, should the reductions occur the Adult and Aging Network, an existing collaborative network of local non-profit service providers and public agencies, all of whom provide various services to the elderly and disabled populations, could work to strengthen safety net services for the most vulnerable clients who lose IHSS benefits. Funding for such an effort would only be available if existing County funds allocated to the IHSS program are redirected to support this local alternative program, thus ensuring that the most vulnerable among the elderly and disabled would continue to have some level of support services.

Thank you once again for your report. If I can be of any further assistance, please contact my office at any time.

Sincerely,


Janet Wolf
Chair, Board of Supervisors