



SOLANO COUNTY GRAND JURY
2013-2014

Solano County Services Outreach for the
Economically Disadvantaged

Solano County Services Outreach for the Economically Disadvantaged

2013-2014 Solano County Grand Jury

I. INTRODUCTION

Nineteen percent (19%) of residents in Solano County receive services through Solano County Health & Social Services. The availability of services is as diverse as the reasons for the needs. Homelessness is the end result of people not being able to address mental health issues, substance abuse, housing availability, medical hardship, loss of economic base, loss/lack of employment, domestic violence, transitioning from jail and detox facilities. This affects children, adults, seniors, disabled, veterans, and transitional youth in foster care.

The mission statement of the Solano County Health & Social Services Department states in part *...to promote cost effective services which safeguard the physical, emotional and social well-being of the people of Solano County.*

The 2013-2014 Solano County Grand Jury elected to study the effectiveness of this intent.

The 2013-2014 Grand Jury Report on Solano County Services for Outreach of Economically Disadvantaged focused on the cities of Fairfield, Vacaville and Vallejo.

One member of the 2013-2014 Grand Jury was recused from this investigation. This juror was excluded from all parts of the investigation, including interviews, deliberations and the writing and acceptance of this report.

II. METHODOLOGY

Interviewed staff of:

- Solano County Health & Social Services
- Vallejo Together
- Community Action Partnership (CAP) Solano, Inc.
- Community Action Partnership of Solano – JPA (CAP of Solano – JPA)
- Vallejo Housing Authority
- Solano County Administrator's Office
- Older and Disabled Adult Services/Public Guardian
- Solano County Public Authority
- HomeBase-Center For Common Concern, Inc.

Interviewed Staff & Toured:

- Mission Solano, Fairfield
- Opportunity House, Vacaville
- Contra Costa/Solano County Food Bank
- Solano County Health & Social Services Clinic & Facilities
- Solano County 2014 Health Fair

Reviewed:

- Fund 902 Health & Social Services (H&SS) Department Summary
- Vallejo/Solano County Continuum of Care (COC) Evaluation
- Video of Hangtown Haven in Placerville, CA
- Federally Funded Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Programs in Solano County
- Solano County Programs Providing Supportive Services
- California Senate Bill 2 – Planning For Emergency Shelters
- Homeless Statistics for 2013, Community Action Partnership of Solano, Inc. (CAP of Solano, Inc.)
- Services of Solano Family Justice Center
- Solano County Health & Social Services Website
- Annual Report Contra Costa County/Solano County Food Bank
- California Mental Health Services Act
- Solano County Health & Social Services Annual Report FY 2011-2012 & FY 2012-2013
- 2012-2013 Solano County Grand Jury Report In-Home Support Services
- Vallejo Solano County Continuum of Care Evaluation “Recommendations For Strengthening Solano County’s Response to Homelessness” authored by HomeBase July 2013
- Newspaper articles

III. STATEMENT OF FACTS

Solano County’s 2013-2014 Proposed Budget for Health & Social Services is \$284,557,017 (\$284.6 M). This accounts for approximately 35% of the entire proposed County budget of \$817,735,009 (\$817.7 M). Only seven percent (7%) (\$20.9M) of the H&SS funding comes from County General Fund dollars. The remainder of the H&SS funding comes from a variety of Federal and State sources.

H&SS also received additional special funding from the County, State and Federal governments totaling \$2,179,000 for FY 2013-2014. This includes Community Service Block Grants, Home Programs, Home Acres Redevelopment Agency (RDA) and loans from Solano County to Mission Solano and Opportunity House.

Solano County programs providing supportive services funds from Federally Funded Housing & Urban Development (HUD) amount to a total of \$1,120,575 for FY 2013-2014.

Solano County programs received supportive service funds totaling \$9,836,791 for FY 2013-2014 from other County, State and Federal funds.

This equates to a total of approximately \$13,000,000 earmarked for services for the economically disadvantaged in Solano County.

Solano County Health & Social Services is headquartered on Beck Avenue in Fairfield. Campuses are also located in Vallejo and Vacaville. Services at these locations include mental health, dental, primary medical, outpatient substance abuse and a full range of eligibility and financial assistance programs that are mandated by State and Federal regulations. Not all County residents have means of transportation to get to these locations.

Dental exams, services and treatment are available at the H&SS campuses in Fairfield, Vacaville and Vallejo.

Solano County Department of Health & Social Services also has a mobile dental van that services schools, shelters and other locations upon request. The Grand Jury toured the mobile dental van on April 16, 2014. At that time the mobile dental van had been out of operation for approximately six weeks due to malfunctioning hydraulics with no anticipated return to service date.

A mobile medical van had long been recognized as an issue of urgent need. Federal funding was made available by Health Resources Services Administration in the amount of \$145,000 for the acquisition of this mobile medical van. After several years of delay in obtaining the medical van, one was finally acquired in April of 2014. This van was acquired after being used in the Hurricane Katrina disaster of August 2005 in Louisiana. The van is in need of maintenance and upgrading prior to being utilized.

Local churches, service organizations and private citizens have been very generous in providing clothing, meals and temporary overnight shelter during inclement weather. While we applaud the services local churches and faith based care centers offer in providing food and shelter, oftentimes the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender community needs are overlooked due to the faith based beliefs of these organizations. The Grand Jury was informed by staff at various organizations that individuals seeking services offered by faith based groups are oftentimes prohibited from receiving the services.

Facilities for the homeless are generally geared toward women and children. Family units are sometimes not accepted at facilities if a marriage license cannot be presented. This oftentimes leaves the father as well as male adolescents (age 14 and above) to fend for themselves, and subsequently divides the family unit.

The County does not operate a permanent homeless shelter nor a drop-in center for adults or minors. Solano County does not operate drug and alcohol residential treatment facilities other than in our jails.

Solano County does not operate board and care homes for the elderly, physically impaired, transitional youth or patients with mental health issues.

Solano County Health & Social Services operates a 23-hour holding facility for acute care mental health emergencies.

Accountability and oversight are lacking in the Continuum of Care and its partnership with Solano County for coordination and delivery of services for the economically disadvantaged.

Numerous mental health clinician positions, i.e., psychiatrists and Licensed Clinical Social Workers positions have been open and unfilled for an excessive period of time. The H&SS Mental Health Department, as well as other areas within H&SS, has been understaffed for a significant period.

Multiple grants are available every year for which Solano County could qualify if applications were aggressively pursued. For example, Emergency Shelter Grants are available, although neither the Continuum of Care nor Solano County applied for or received any funds.

The HomeBase Report of July 2013 indicates that the numbers for homeless are vague, nebulous, questionable and inaccurate due to faulty counting procedures. Health & Social Services contracted with HomeBase to conduct an evaluation of the Continuum of Care, CAP of Solano – JPA. Access to the report can be made through the Solano County Health & Social Services Department website.

IV. SUMMARY

Solano County lacks leadership in finding solutions to the homeless situation. The County needs to grasp the scope of the problem, to come up with creative and inventive responses to the homeless needs.

The delivery of homeless services in Solano County has been largely delegated to community based organizations overseen by Community Action Partnership of Solano - JPA (Joint Powers Authority). While the County is ultimately responsible for overseeing the outcome of these programs, they have removed themselves from the day-to-day responsibility of providing services and accepting accountability for the economically disadvantaged programs, except for those programs and services that are mandated by State and Federal laws.

The Solano County Health & Social Services total budget for FY 2013-2014 is \$217,724,128, additionally, \$2,179,000 was also received as special funding from Federal and State sources.

Solano County programs providing supportive services from Federally Funded Housing & Urban Development amounts to a total of \$1,120,575 for FY 2013-2014.

In addition, Solano County programs received support service amounts totaling \$9,836,791 for FY 2013-2014 from other County, State and Federal funds. This equates to a total of approximately \$13,000,000 earmarked for services for the economically disadvantaged in Solano County.

The County does not operate a permanent homeless shelter nor a drop-in center for adults or minors. Solano County does not operate drug and alcohol treatment facilities other than in our jails.

The HomeBase Report of July 2013 stated that *the numbers for homeless are vague, nebulous, questionable and inaccurate due to faulty counting procedures*. Health & Social Services contracted with HomeBase to conduct an evaluation of the Continuum of Care, CAP of Solano – JPA. Access to the report can be made through the Solano County Health & Social Services Department website.

Collaborative efforts need coordination with clear and consistent goals and outcome measurements for the establishment of trust and strong leadership.

The excessive amount of time which it has taken to get the mobile medical van is a classic example of talk of change versus timely action. For the amount of money that has been earmarked for this resource, having achieved such a limited outcome, is disappointing.

The downfall/recession of 2008 is mentioned over and over as a reason why resources and personnel could not be made available at the precise time that the demand for services was increasing. While the new medical facilities that the County has created in Fairfield, Vacaville and Vallejo go a long way to providing needed services, the concentration on getting these facilities has come at the expense of delivering services when they were needed. Numerous mental health clinician positions, i.e., psychiatrists, Licensed Clinical Social Workers positions have been open and unfilled for an excessive period of time. The H&SS Mental Health Department, as well as other areas within H&SS, has been understaffed for a significant period.

One member of the 2013-2014 Grand Jury was recused from this investigation. This juror was excluded from all parts of the investigation, including interviews, deliberations and the writing and acceptance of this report.

V. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding 1

Specific leadership for homeless services is lacking in Solano County and the Continuum of Care.

Recommendation 1a

A County employee should be in charge of overseeing all homeless services. At a minimum, this position should have the power and authority to consolidate services and be effective.

Recommendation 1b

A County employee should be well-versed in writing and obtaining grants for the economically disadvantaged from State, Federal, public and private entities to fund the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1c

Solano County establish, oversee and partner with a strong Continuum of Care organization.

Finding 2

Solano County lacks a permanent shelter to provide for the homeless population.

Recommendation 2

Create shelters for chronically homeless persons.

Finding 3

Solano County does not have a drop-in day center for chronically homeless persons.

Recommendation 3

Create drop-in day centers in various areas of the County for chronically homeless persons.

Finding 4

Solano County Health & Social Services contracted with HomeBase to produce a comprehensive report on the Continuum of Care with many significant recommendations.

Recommendation 4

Strongly focus, evaluate and implement appropriate corrective actions and recommendations as outlined in the HomeBase report of July 2013.

Finding 5

The mobile dental van is often out of service due to lack of maintenance. The newly acquired medical van has not yet been put into service as of this writing.

Recommendation 5a

The mobile dental and medical vans be immediately repaired, put into service and maintained in good operational condition.

Recommendation 5b

In the event dental and medical vans are not in operational condition, a nine-passenger, or similar vehicle, be available to transport individuals in need of medical and/or dental care to the existing Solano County facilities.

Finding 6

Solano County does not operate care facilities for individuals with chronic mental health issues.

Recommendation 6

Solano County establish care facilities for individuals with chronic mental health issues.

COMMENTS

Organizations feeding the homeless are often doing so at public parks, rather than at their own facilities. If these organizations want to help they can offer food, clothing, fellowship and counseling at their own facility, thus eliminating the influx of homeless into the city parks, e. g. piles of clothing are left in parks for the homeless and end up in disarray shortly after being delivered.

The best of efforts to reduce and eliminate homelessness will not work until substance abuse and mental health issues are addressed.

The County's leadership in addressing the services to the disadvantaged has been dismal and ineffective.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

Solano County Board of Supervisors (Finding 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)
Continuum of Care (Finding 1)
Director, Health & Social Services (Finding 4, 5, 6)

COURTESY COPIES

Board President, Community Action Partner of Solano - JPA