



SOLANO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Thomas A. Ferrara, Sheriff-Coroner

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June 22, 2017

Honorable Robert C. Fracchia
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
County of Solano
600 Union Avenue
Fairfield, CA 94533

Re: Sheriff-Coroner's Response to 2016-2017 Solano County Grand Jury Report – Opioid Risks in Solano County

Judge Fracchia:

Under Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05, I am responding to the following recommendations contained in the 2017-2017 Grand Jury Report that pertain to matters under my control as the Solano County Sheriff-Coroner:

Finding 1 – *The Sheriff-Coroner's office is not using available resources to identify and investigate opioid deaths within Solano County.*

Response to Finding 1 – I disagree wholly with the finding because the Coroner's Office's statutory duty is limited to inquiring into and determining the circumstances, manner and cause of death .

Recommendation 1a – *The Sheriff-Coroner's office expands their identification and investigation of deaths involving opioids using the Attorney General's prescription drug monitoring CURES database.*

Response to Recommendation 1a – The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. As stated in the report, the CURES database was designed for various entities, including law enforcement. The Coroner's Office is not a law enforcement entity. The Coroner's Office is a forensic investigation entity whose responsibility is to determine cause and manner of death. In order to maintain credibility of both the forensic and criminal investigations, they are deliberately bifurcated.

Recommendation 1b – *The Sheriff-Coroner's office expands its database in order to track and analyze local trends in the presence of all opioids as an additional cause of death.*

Response to Recommendation 1b – The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. The authority of the Sheriff-Coroner to investigate certain deaths is outlined in Government Code Section 27491, and limited to determining the circumstances, cause and manner of death. Tracking and analyzing all opioid-related deaths goes beyond the aforementioned government code authority and falls under the purview of the Public Health Division of the Solano County Health and Social Services Department. However, the Sheriff-Coroner does provide Fentanyl related death information to Solano County Mental Health due to a request from the United States Drug Enforcement Agency.

Dedicated to Community Service

Recommendation 1c – *The Sheriff-Coroner's office expands investigation of opioid-related deaths within the county and provide information to the appropriate state agencies.*

Response to Recommendation 1c – The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. The Coroner's Office, like all other Coroner's Offices in the State of California, investigates and determines the cause and manner of death only. The source or underlying social issues pertaining to the opioids is beyond the statutory authority of the Coroner's Office investigations. Sources of the drugs which may have caused death are under the jurisdiction of the investigating law enforcement agency, i.e. city police department or Sheriff's Office (not Coroner assigned). The recommendation to provide information to the appropriate state agency is something we already do and has been implemented. The Coroner's Office will provide any tracked data to any local, state or federal agency if the request is made by that agency.

Finding 3 - *Solano County Department of Health and Social Services and the Solano County Sheriff-Coroner's office failure to collaborate and utilize accurate and timely data on opioid deaths precludes these agencies from taking coordinated actions to control and mitigate the harm caused by opioids in our community.*

Response to Finding 3 – I disagree wholly with the finding. The Coroner's Office provides any requested information we track to Health and Social Services and any other governmental requesting agency. The Coroner's Office also participates in the "Prescription Drug Take-Back" campaign.

Recommendation 3a – *Involve all public health resources in the investigation of Solano County opioid- related health risks. The Sheriff-Coroner's office provides these data to other county agencies on a regular basis.*

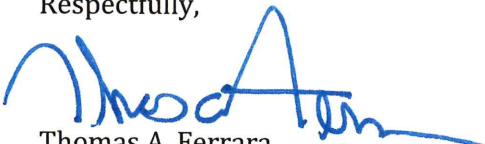
Response to Recommendation 3a – The recommendation has been implemented. As previously stated, the Coroner's Office conducts a limited investigation into the cause and manner of death. We can and do provide information to other governmental agencies as requested.

Recommendation 3b – *Solano County Department of Health and Social Services and the Solano County Sheriff-Coroner's office collaboratively engage the Solano County Board of Supervisors to consider the establishment of a task force that will combine the expertise of the District Attorney, the Coroner, the Public Health Officer and the Office of Education to establish a program to monitor and investigate deaths, identify recurring risk factors and take positive steps to address the harm caused by opioids within our community.*

Response to Recommendation 3b – The recommendation requires further analysis. The Sheriff-Coroner's Office would welcome being part of a County task force if deemed warranted by the Solano County Board of Supervisors.

I would like to thank the Solano County Grand Jury for their time invested in this matter and for their report of findings and recommendations. As always, the recommendations and comments of the Solano County Grand Jury are greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,



Thomas A. Ferrara
Sheriff-Coroner

cc: Solano County Grand Jury
County Administrator's Office