

2002-2003 SANTA CLARA COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY

INQUIRY INTO THE COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Summary

The 2002-2003 Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury inquired into the reason for an apparent lack of beds for psychiatric patients in the Emergency Psychiatric Service at Valley Medical Center. It was found that there was no lack of beds but a problem of discharging patients to appropriate levels of care. This problem has been resolved with a budget increase to the Department of Mental Health. However, during this inquiry, it was learned there are no beds available at Valley Medical Center for children and adolescents who live in Santa Clara County and require psychiatric hospitalization. This problem could be resolved in one of two ways: opening a unit within Valley Medical Center or providing a reasonable per diem to the families of children who are hospitalized in out-of-county facilities.

Background

The 2001-2002 Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury undertook an inquiry into the operations of Santa Clara County's Emergency Psychiatric Service. That inquiry raised some issues surrounding the apparent shortage of acute care beds for psychiatric patients within the county. As a follow-up to that inquiry, the current Civil Grand Jury inquired into this apparent lack of beds at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center Emergency Psychiatric Service.

The Psychiatric Service at Valley Medical Center is comprised of two facilities: Don Lowe Pavilion and Barbara Arons Pavilion. The Emergency Psychiatric Service is housed in the Don Lowe Pavilion. Patients are treated in the Don Lowe Pavilion on an outpatient basis, with an average stay of 12 to 18 hours. If it is determined that inpatient service is needed, the patients are transferred to Barbara Arons Pavilion. Barbara Arons Pavilion has a 50-bed inpatient acute care unit for the treatment of county residents (except minors). Santa Clara County contracts for additional psychiatric beds in Fremont and Sacramento. These beds are filled on an "as needed" basis. Patients could also be sent to Napa State Hospital. Napa State Hospital accepts patients requiring long-term care. Patients can be housed in Napa for as little as six months or for as long as ten years or more.

Santa Clara County also has contracts with several privately operated locked psychiatric facilities. Two of these facilities are located in San Jose: San Jose Care and Guidance Center and Crestwood Manor. Another of these facilities is located in Santa Cruz and is named the Seventh Avenue Center. All three are licensed Skilled Nursing Facilities. When the population in one of these facilities is over 50% psychiatric, the facility is designated an Institute for Mental Disease. At the time this report was written, the Santa Clara County Department of Mental

Health had approximately 247 psychiatric patients in either an Institute for Mental Disease or a Skilled Nursing Facility.

Santa Clara County also contracts with East Valley Pavilion Riviera in San Jose. It is a Residential Care Facility. However, it should be made clear that this facility offers no skilled nursing care. The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors in fiscal year 2002 augmented the Mental Health budget by \$11.2 million, of which approximately \$8.0 million was allocated for additional services and facilities. With this extra money, another level of psychiatric care was opened in the East Valley Pavilion Riviera, which helped to prevent a patient staying in the Emergency Psychiatric Service beyond 24 hours. When a patient is allowed to stay longer than 24 hours, it is called an “overstay.” As noted, Emergency Psychiatric Service is an outpatient service licensed by the State of California. In order to remain in compliance with state law, a patient must be discharged or transferred to an inpatient care facility within the 24 hour prescribed period of time.

Moreover, beginning in 2003, an addition of \$5.6 million will continue to be allocated to the Mental Health budget on an annual basis. This addition will provide for better and more efficient management of the system by assuring proper levels of patient care. Specifically providing another level of psychiatric care at East Valley Pavilion Riviera allows for a more systematic flow of patients out of Barbara Arons Pavilion and thus avoids the problem of overstays in Emergency Psychiatric Service (Don Lowe Pavilion). Overstays could jeopardize the state license issued to Emergency Psychiatric Service.

The juvenile psychiatric service at Valley Medical Center was closed in 1992. This decision was made for financial reasons. It was determined that it is less expensive for juveniles to be placed in out-of-county facilities. Minors, who need psychiatric hospitalization, are now sent to Fremont, Fresno, Fairfield, Vallejo, or Sacramento. These cities have facilities that are under contract with Santa Clara County to treat our children who suffer serious psychiatric disturbances.

The Santa Clara County Department of Mental Health offers services at many other facilities, including Elmwood Correctional Center, Main Jail, Juvenile Hall, Harold Holden and William James Ranches for Boys, six outpatient clinics, and contract facilities, as well as the Santa Clara Valley Medical Center.

Finding I

The apparent lack of acute care beds in Emergency Psychiatric Service has been resolved with the budgetary augmentation from the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors totaling \$11.2 million over a period of two years. Of these funds, approximately \$8.0 million, which includes \$5.6 million ongoing, were utilized for contracting additional beds in the Institute of Mental Disease/Skilled Nursing Facility and a Residential Care Facility. This allowed a more systematic flow of patients from Barbara Arons Pavilion to those facilities. This, in turn, permitted Emergency Psychiatric Service to stay within the required “no more than” 24 hour care and eliminated overstays.

Recommendation I

The Department of Mental Health should conduct an annual review of the \$5.6 million addition to the budget. The findings of this review should be presented to the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors. These additional funds will assure a continuation of the appropriate level of psychiatric care.

Finding II

There are no inpatient psychiatric treatment facilities located in Santa Clara County for minors. There is a twenty-bed unit in the Don Lowe Pavilion that is currently unused. County Mental Health contracts for child and adolescent inpatient psychiatric services out of the area. This creates a substantial financial hardship on the families, especially those of low income, thus making it difficult for them to participate in the therapeutic treatment of their children. It also places an additional burden on the county, since ambulance fees and transport costs are added to the cost of treatment.

Recommendation II

Recommendation II - 1

The Department of Mental Health should utilize the currently unused 20-bed unit, located in the Don Lowe Pavilion, for the treatment of minors.

Recommendation II – 2

If it is deemed necessary that a minor be placed in out-of-county facilities, then a reasonable per diem should be provided to the family. This would enable each family to participate in the treatment of this child.

PASSED and ADOPTED by the Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury on this 23rd day of January, 2003.

Fred de Funiak
Foreperson

Ron R. Layman
Foreperson Pro Tem

Pat Cunningham
Secretary

REFERENCES

Document:

Final Report: 2001-2002 Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury, “Review of County Emergency Psychiatric Services.”

Interviews:

Barry, Maryann, MSN, RN, NP, CNAA, Associate Director, Acute Psychiatry, Custody Health Services, Santa Clara Valley Health & Hospital System, September 23, 2002, October 22, 2002.

Meade, Michael, M.D., Chairman, Department of Psychiatry, Santa Clara Valley Medical Center, August 22, 2002.

Murphy, Susan G., Director, Santa Clara Valley Medical Center, August 20, 2002, October 22, 2002.

Peña, Nancy, Ph.D., Director of Mental Health, Santa Clara Valley Health & Hospital System, August 22, 2002.

Roberts, Kim, Chief Financial Officer, Santa Clara Valley Health & Hospital System, September 23, 2002.

Sillen, Robert, Executive Director, Santa Clara Valley Health & Hospital System, September 23, 2002.