

1981-82 Grand Jury

Over 100 contractors were invited to bid on the housing project, and as of early April 1982, the bidding had narrowed to three contractors. Following a meeting of the three contractors with County officials, they will be required to provide a final response by approximately July 1982.

The combination of services available for the seniors at Fairmont and the services and facilities located nearby would contribute toward making this a successful project. The Grand Jury considers that the senior housing project is extremely worthwhile.

RECOMMENDATION 51 : That the Board of Supervisors encourage the continuance of the planning of the senior housing project.

PSYCHIATRIC CARE: CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The practice of transporting Santa Rita prisoners to the County hospitals for psychiatric evaluation or treatment on an outpatient basis has been a matter of concern to Grand Juries of the previous year and the current year. The County's psychiatrists maintain that the atmosphere at the prison is not conducive to the successful performance of their work. However, the Grand Jury considers that the establishment of a proper atmosphere could be created at the prison and at a minimal cost. The transportation of the doctors to the prison would certainly be more cost effective than transporting busloads of prisoners every weekday to Highland Hospital. This new system would also reduce the security risk factor.

RECOMMENDATION 52 : That the Board of Supervisors direct that all psychiatric out-patient treatment for the Santa Rita population be done at Santa Rita.

PSYCHIATRIC CARE: JUVENILES

Mental health programs and facilities for the juvenile population of Alameda County are sorely deficient. For many years, children's advocates and several interested citizen's groups have attempted to get the County to recognize and address this deficiency. The problem is particularly acute for the juvenile offender who, by law, comes under the jurisdiction of the County's Probation Department. The Probation Center facilities are not designed to handle youth with mental disorders, and in many cases, the staff lacks training to work with these neglected youth.

Villa Fairmont is a county owned facility located on the grounds of Fairmont Hospital and was designed for the treatment and housing of the emotionally disturbed. The operation of Villa Fairmont is contracted to a private operator.

The Alameda County Health Care Services Agency gave temporary thought to designating a wing (24 beds) to accommodate juveniles 16 years of age and over. This idea, however, proved not feasible because of financial consideration. The operators of Villa Fairmont did indicate that they would work with the San Lorenzo Unified School District to provide special education services for clients up to 21 years of age. In addition, the County is involved in two new mental health programs for juveniles—La Cheim Regional Program and La Familla Day Treatment Program. Even though these programs are positive efforts to confront the problem, a greater emphasis on mental health programs for juveniles is needed.

RECOMMENDATION 53 : That the Board of Supervisors adequately fund

mental health programs designed for juveniles, and particularly, those juveniles who are youthful offenders.

RECOMMENDATION 54 : That the Board of Supervisors investigate the possibility of directing the operators of Villa Fairmont to set aside a specific number of beds for mentally disturbed juvenile offenders.

HOSPITAL CONSOLIDATION REVIEW

The Grand Jury also had an opportunity to review the "Consolidation Plan for Alameda County Hospitals" prepared by the County's Health Care Services Agency. This report was prepared by a Task Force composed of seven sub-committees. The Task Force and sub-committee membership had representation from Highland and Fairmont Hospitals as well as the County departments of Mental Health, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services, and the Health Care Services Agency.

Considerable time and effort was spent by the Task Force in rationalizing services with the goal of providing cost effectiveness and quality health services at Highland and Fairmont Hospitals.

The initial recommendation made by the Task Force was that Highland and Fairmont Hospitals be consolidated into a single entity, the Alameda County Medical Center, while maintaining two service sites, the Fairmont and Highland campuses.

Professional business administration and quality care need to be the priorities in order to improve programs at both Highland and Fairmont Hospitals. This is not in the range of accomplishment by implementing an additional overburden of management staff and administrative positions. The Task Force deserves merit in their goal to provide cost effectiveness through improved administration and operations, however, the Grand Jury feels that the implementation of this plan could create confusion at both hospitals and could quite possibly have a negative impact on the status of current improvements at Highland Hospital. This consolidation project is currently under revision as the state has denied the initial request by the County to consolidate the two hospitals.

In what is put forth by the Health Care Services Agency as an attempt to improve administration and operations of the County hospitals, the Grand Jury sees only another layer of bureaucracy.

Within the last year, Health Care Services Agency has made many administrative and personnel changes in the County hospitals. One of the most significant was the elevation of the Administrator of Highland Hospital to the position of Supervisor over both County hospitals. The Grand Jury in no way wishes to question the capabilities of the Administrator. The concern of the Grand Jury is with Highland Hospital and the need of that hospital to have the full commitment of that Administrator.

It appears that the Agency is unable to take a leadership role for the County hospitals. The creation of a position to supervise the County hospitals appears to be an attempt by the Health Care Services Agency to delegate its leadership authority to another layer of management. Enough layers currently exist through the chain of command starting at the hospital, through the Health Care Services Agency, through the County Administrator's Office to the Board of Supervisors who are the hospitals' Board of Trustees. The addition of another management position between the hospital and the Health Care Services agency should not be necessary.