

PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE

Psychiatric Health Facility – Building 440 935A Spring Street Placerville

Reason for the Report

The Grand Jury selected the Psychiatric Health Facility (Building 440) as one of its general reviews for 2002/2003.

Scope of the Investigation

The members of the Grand Jury:

- Made an unannounced visit to the Psychiatric Health Facility on November 7, 2002;
- Toured the facility with the Nursing Supervisor;
- Were briefed on the Psychiatric Health Facility operations;
- Interviewed Discharge Planner;
- Inspected the building and grounds;
- Reviewed previous Grand Jury reports for year's 1999/2000, 2000/2001 and 2001/2002 and found no findings or recommendations pertaining to this building.

Background

The building, originally constructed in the 1960's, has been used as the Psychiatric Health Facility since the early 1980s. It has the capacity for 15 patients who are admitted on an emergency basis for short-term stays. Twenty-four hour care is provided by the staff of 22 employees that include a psychiatrist, nurses, and a social worker.

The interior of the building appears neat and well maintained; however, the laundry room appears dirty and cluttered. Kitchen facilities are limited, which require meals be provided by the Senior Nutrition Center. The basement is unusable due to asbestos issues. Paint on the exterior of the building is peeling.

The observation area is utilized for observing new patients. The support column in this area has sharp edges/corners, which for safety concerns should be padded. The only furniture in this room is a rubber couch; a rubber table is needed for patient use. The current surveillance system for the lock up rooms should be updated to cover the entire day room area.

The parking lot is shared with the Senior Day-Care Center, Community Services/Senior Nutrition Center, and the Health Department. The poor condition of the parking lot poses a safety hazard to users, especially seniors and disabled individuals. Parking is limited, directional markings go against traffic flow and overall surface is in poor condition.

Findings

F1. The building exterior paint is peeling.

Response to F1: The respondent agrees with the finding.

F2. The parking lot surfaces are severely checked and cracked. The parking lot surface poses a danger to users and potential liability to the County.

Response to F2: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. The respondent agrees that the observable condition of the parking lot indicates the need for repair and resurfacing. The respondent disagrees with the finding in that all parking lots pose some potential for liability under any conditions.

F3. The parking lot directional markings go against the parking lot traffic flow and are severely faded.

Response to F3: The respondent agrees with the finding.

F4. The parking lot is inadequate and limits the full use of the facility.

Response to F4: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding.

The full use of the Psychiatric Health Facility for its intended functions is not impaired by conditions of the parking lot. The respondent agrees that the parking lot at its present size and configuration does not provide at all times enough space for employees and the public who may seek access to the building.

F5. The laundry room is dirty and cluttered.

Response to F5: The respondent agrees with the finding.

F6. The support column in the observation area has sharp edges/corners.

Response to F6: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding.

The corners of the support column are typical of standard construction and finishing surfaces.

F7. The surveillance system for the lock up rooms for the observation area is inadequate.

Response to F7: The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding.

The finding does not define what is inadequate about the surveillance system. The cameras in the two seclusion (observation) rooms were recently upgraded and purposefully allow for the privacy of patients when using the toilet.

F8. The water fountain in hall outside the activity room is inoperative.

Response to F8: *The respondent agrees with the finding.*

The water fountain was inoperative at the time of the Grand Jury visit to the facility. Normally the water fountain is maintained in full operation with a good stream of water.

Recommendations

R1. The building exterior should be painted.

Response to R1: *The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in future.*

General Services Department will paint the structure by May 2004.

R2. The parking lot should be repaired and resurfaced.

Response to R2: *The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.*

General Services Department has scheduled the parking lot for repair and resurfacing with completion in late summer, 2003.

R3. Directional arrows should show proper traffic flow.

Response to R3: *The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.*

Directional arrows will be aligned to show proper traffic flow on completion of the parking lot repair and resurfacing in late summer, 2003.

R4. The support column in the observation area should be padded.

Response to R4: *The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.*

Mental Health Department plans to issue a request to General Services Maintenance Division by July 31, 2003, for alternatives to the standard wall corners of this support column. Padding is not recommended as the first choice, in that acute psychiatric patients tend to shred soft padding and sometimes even consume the material. The two Departments will discuss and determine appropriate measures to be taken that consider issues of liability, patient safety, feasibility of installation, and cost. Completion is anticipated to be not later than November 30, 2003.

- R5. A rubber table should be provided in the observation area.

Response to R5: The recommendation requires further analysis.

The observation area must remain a secure area and any objects within that area must not be available for use as a weapon against another patient, the staff, or used by a suicidal patient to injure themselves. The existing rubber furniture currently used for sitting cannot be lifted or thrown by one, or even two, large adults. The alternative of stationary furniture, such as a table bolted to the floor, creates other unacceptable hazards in this secure area. The Department will research options to determine if there is a table that can be provided that is available and affordable for purchase, and that will maintain the required safety and security needed to protect staff and patients in this area. A determination will be made not later than November 30, 2003.

- R6. Surveillance system should be replaced with an updated version to cover the entire area of each lock up room.

Response to R6: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

Cameras in the seclusion rooms have been recently upgraded. The entire area is not intended to be viewed on camera in the nursing station in order to allow privacy for the psychiatric patients when using the toilets in these locked rooms. Safety of patients in seclusion is provided by required fifteen-minute checks through windows in the doors of the room or by staff entering the room, if needed.

- R7. The water fountain should be repaired.

Response to R7: The recommendation has been implemented.

The drinking fountain has been repaired.

- R8. The laundry room should be cleaned and maintained on a regular basis.

Response to R8: The recommendation has been implemented.

The laundry room has been cleaned. The Department is reviewing bids for new janitorial service to provide regular maintenance at this location in the facility. It is anticipated that regular cleaning and maintenance will commence with a recommendation of the qualified low bidder and approval of a contract by the Board of Supervisors by November 30, 2003.

Responses Required for Findings

F1 through F8

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
El Dorado County Department of General Services
El Dorado County Department of Mental Health

Responses Required for Recommendations

R1 through R8

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
El Dorado County Department of General Services
El Dorado County Department of Mental Health