

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
AND CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES  
GJ 04-010**

**Reason for the Report**

The Grand Jury received a public complaint that the Human Services and Child Protective Services Departments are dysfunctional in its current operations. The complaint listed several cases of emotional stress, repositioning of personnel into untrained positions, senior employees leaving, and feelings of being “terrorized”, “intimidated”, and lack of respect for the Social Workers and Staff.

**Scope of Investigation**

**People Interviewed**

- Director of Human Services
- Director of Child Protective Services
- Department of Community Services
- APS/IHSS Program Manager
- Department of Social Services
- Child Support Services
- Department of Mental Health
- Department of Public Health
- Program Manager Children Services
- Supervisor Adoptions, CPS
- Supervisor Emergency Response, CPS
- Supervisor Ongoing Services, CPS
- Supervisor Child Protective Services
- Several CPS and DSS Social Workers
- Recently resigned Employees of CPS
- Chief Administrative Officer
- County Counsel
- Human Resources

**Documents Reviewed**

- A preliminary working manual of current CPS policies.
- Memos to Social Worker Personnel from CPS Department Heads
- Memos of Human Services Personnel from HS Department Heads
- Memos to Local #1 Union from CPS Personnel
- Various Articles from the Mountain Democrat
- Audit conducted by Harvey Rose, CPA, 2002
- Board of Supervisors Response to the Grand Jury Final Report 1999-2000
- Board of Supervisors Response to the Grand Jury Final Report 2000-2001
- Board of Supervisors Response to the Grand Jury Final Report 2001-2002
- Board of Supervisors Response to the Grand Jury Final Report 2002-2003
- Board of Supervisors Response to the Grand Jury Final Report 2003-2004
- Audit conducted by John Warden, CPA, 2002

**Background**

The current Grand Jury has reviewed the last five years of Grand Jury Reports and Board of Supervisors Responses. The investigation revealed that many of the conditions addressed in these four reports still exist in the Human Services and Child Protective Services Departments. Over the past four years the Department of Human Services has been re-organized by integrating Welfare

Services and Social Services. The new department has had several directors as well as several resignations of personnel with long-term tenure and experience. Significant deficiencies in management and training have been identified and continue to exist. The Board of Supervisors in their micro-management of this county, as mandated by the County Charter, has been delinquent in establishing a format to follow-through with programs necessary to eliminate the continuing conditions.

### **Findings/Recommendations**

1a. **Finding:** Human Services Management has mandated reorganization and repositioning of personnel to create a cohesive workplace. Management's lack of effective, proactive leadership, cross training, and proper guidelines has allowed both confusion and poor morale to develop and continue.

1b. **Recommendation:** The proper training of managerial staff is needed to encourage a more sensitive approach when dealing with individual caseworkers, and when conducting staff meetings.

2a. **Finding:** Management mandated moving experienced long-term caseworkers, with established client relationships, into new and different positions within the department, caused children and families in crisis to be subjected to additional stress.

2b. **Recommendation:** When repositioning personnel a cross-training program needs to be initiated prior to final reappointment to new positions.

3a. **Finding:** The head of the department has stated "a work-in-progress manual, *Guidelines for CPS* is currently being written." A "*California Department of Social Services Manual of Policies and Procedures: Div. 31 – Child Welfare Services*" provides the guidelines which are generally used day-to-day. Methods to implement the "work-in-progress manual" have not been established. Many guidelines proposed within the "work-in-process manual" are subject to interpretation by the caseworker. Interpretation of policies has in the past caused confusion and delays in response to a child in crisis. The department director and managers are not implementing the manual policies and staff recommendations necessary to make these departments function properly.

3b. **Recommendation:** Implement a regular open forum round-table meeting with staff, supervisors, and managers to review day-to-day problems and current policies.

4a. **Finding:** Positions in the Human Services Department are filled from eligibility lists established by a State-sanctioned, quasi-public, non-profit, independent authority called "Cooperative Personnel Services," usually referred to as the Merit System. The Merit System screens and tests applicants and maintains eligibility lists of job categories for several Counties in the State. Merit System candidates responding to the needs of El Dorado County are selected from a "five candidate per opening requirement."

Other counties having a higher pay scale for the same qualification may have selected candidates and may deplete the number of candidates available. In the time frame of several weeks of screening, El Dorado County may not have the opportunity to interview the highest qualified applicant. Vacancies in the CPS and DSS are prevalent. Positions are remaining vacant for several

months, indicating a need to pursue different strategies to acquire the qualified personnel required for these positions.

4b. **Recommendation:** Other than the Merit System, establish a more responsive program to reduce the time frame required to employ candidates. Revise the recruiting procedure to a more direct contact with colleges and other employment agencies nationwide. Adjust salary scales to become competitive in the overall hiring process.

5a. **Finding:** The Director of Human Services has established an open door policy for employees to discuss improvements and inadequacies, but is very often not available and out of the office, which has created frustration on the part of employees.

5b. **Recommendation:** Establish a calendar with defined times that the director will definitely be available.

6a. **Finding:** Interviews with the Board of Education and Marshall Hospital staff indicate a slow response and follow-up from CPS and APS on crisis calls. We find these departments are not meeting the state mandated time frame on all crisis calls.

There have been cases where patients with pre-existing conditions of attempted suicide have been evaluated and sent home from the hospital without further investigation. This action could lead to tragic results.

6b. **Recommendation:** Directors, managers, and supervisors need to initiate a more rigid standard that will insure timely responses to crisis calls and be more informed as to response times achieved. Mental Health, as well as CPS and APS, must become more proactive in moving these patients into a more controlled environment.

7a. **Finding:** In January of 2004, several departments were incorporated under one director forming the Human Services Department. Over the past four years, Grand Jury Reports indicated several problems existed that these department managers had acknowledged. The Grand Jury finds some of these problems still exist. The CAO and the department heads have indicated that policies are currently not in place to correct these problems.

7b. **Recommendation:** The Board of Supervisors to review the last five years of Grand Jury Reports for stated and acknowledged problems that still exist. Establish a proactive process to assure that those responsible for correcting the problem follow through and finish the task in a timely manner. Penal Code Section 933 requires a time frame be stated when responding to all recommendations and findings.

A response is required from the Board of Supervisors within ninety (90) days. See Table of Contents "*Notice to Respondent.*"