

# **EL DORADO COUNTY GRAND JURY 2013-2014**

## ***PLACERVILLE PSYCHIATRIC UNIT HEALTH FACILITY***

Case Number GJ-13-08

### **REASON FOR REPORT**

There have been frequent news stories during the past several years that have caused concern regarding the lack of treatment and housing for mentally ill people in the United States. Members of this Grand Jury wanted to identify the types of programs and facilities available in this county for individuals manifesting signs of mental illness.

### **BACKGROUND**

Grand Jury members visited the Placerville Psychiatric Unit Health Facility (PUHF) on November 4, 2013. This is an in-patient facility. The facility is funded (50/50) from state and federal subsidies, but operated by the county. The building was constructed in 1949 as a county hospital. In spite of the fact that it is now 64 years old the building seems to be in reasonably good shape. All areas have recently been painted. New, more functional furniture, including beds, have been installed. The heating and air-conditioning system is old but appeared to be adequate at the time of our visit.

The bed capacity is 16 patients; 12 were in residence at the time of our visit. Patients are referred to the facility by the county sheriff's department or Marshall Hospital and evaluated by the facility's crisis team. PUHF is considered an acute, short term facility. A majority of patients (approximately 75%) are affected by substance abuse and almost 50% are considered homeless. Patients spend an average of 10-13 days at the facility before being discharged. At the time of discharge patients are referred to the Placerville out-patient facility, or if deemed necessary, to involuntary residential facilities. Otherwise, they are returned to health facilities in their original counties of residence.

The Medical Director is a full-time psychiatrist who sees patients every week in individual sessions that last up to 30 minutes. Staff includes a program director, program coordinator, 8 full-time and 3 part-time nurses, 2 therapy clinicians, a cook assisted by nine para-professional mental health assistants who work on a rotating part-time basis, and 2 office administrators. Twenty-four hour staff coverage is needed.

Programs include group therapy, creative arts, coping skills, Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous.

## FINDINGS

1. The facility appears to be well managed. The engaging program manager is well informed regarding all aspects of this facility.
2. Per staff comments, nurse and especially psychiatrist retention has been a problem due to compensation differentials across the region.
3. An additional psychiatrist has recently been added for a full day on Fridays, as well as another doctor 2-4 hours during the week.
4. When patients are released from PHUF, there is a shortage of transitional housing destinations

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The recently increased physician time with patients should be maintained.
2. Investigate staff turnover rates; review adjacent area compensation levels and other retention tools as needed.
3. County Health and Human Services should focus on providing local placement, in the form of board and care residences, for patients in need of further supervision after being discharged from PUHF.

## RESPONSES

Responses to both findings and recommendations to this Report are required by law in accordance with California Penal Code §933 and §933.05. Address responses to:

The Honorable Suzanne N. Kingsbury, presiding judge of the El Dorado County Superior Court, 1354 Johnson Blvd., South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150.

This Report has been addressed to the El Dorado Department of Health and Human Services for review and response, and provided to the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors.

The Presiding Judge of the El Dorado County Superior Court additionally requests that the responses be sent electronically as a "Word" file or "PDF" file to facilitate the economical and timely distribution of such responses. Please email responses to the El Dorado County Grand Jury at:

[courtadmin@eldoradocourt.org](mailto:courtadmin@eldoradocourt.org)