



**CONTRA COSTA COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY REPORT NO. 1703  
"Mental Health Services for At-Risk Children in Contra Costa County"**

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS' RESPONSE**

**FINDINGS** – California Penal Code Section 933.05(a) requires a response to the designated findings of the Grand Jury.

**F1. The County provides timely and consistent mental health services to detained youth in Juvenile Hall, CSEC victims, and children in domestic violence and sexual abuse situations.**

Response: The respondent agrees with the finding. The County's Probation and Health Services departments work collaboratively to provide a high level of Mental Health services to the youth in the Juvenile Justice system including Juvenile Hall and the Orin Allen Youth Facility.

**F2. Under the terms of the Katie A. requirements, upper and middle management levels of CFS and BHS have started to coordinate their efforts.**

Response: The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding. Since about 1996, the Behavioral Health Division and Child and Family Services Bureau have collaborated on children's mental health services in a comprehensive way. Katie A. and the implementation of Continuum of Care Reform have contributed to a more coordinated relationship since Health Services and Employment and Human Services department staff meet on a weekly basis and often meet more than once a week.

**F3. Many at-risk children are not receiving mental health treatment for several weeks to several months after the County assesses their mental-health needs.**

Response: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. Children presenting at the Regional Clinics are seen within eight to thirteen days for their first appointment with a Mental Health Clinical Specialist that provides comprehensive assessment and treatment. The County recognizes challenges with the availability of child psychiatrists and delays may occur with the medical treatment and medication support of the child.

**F4. Children's Mental Health Services estimates that the County needs an additional six psychiatrists for its three clinics.**

Response: The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding. Further analysis is required before Children's Mental Health Services can provide a current estimate of the number of additional psychiatrists needed for its three clinics.

**F5. County salaries for psychiatrists are not competitive with private practice.**

Response: The respondent agrees with the finding. In general, private sector practices offer more competitive salaries than public agencies.

**F6. The shortage of psychiatrists causes delays in the diagnosis and treatment of medium to severely mentally ill children.**

Response: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. Shortage of psychiatrists may delay the medical treatment and medication support of the child. However, children are assessed and diagnosed to be seen for outpatient therapy by a Mental Health Clinical Specialist within eight to thirteen days.

**F7. West County clinic, which has the most medium to severe patients, also has the highest patient to therapist ratio.**

Response: The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding. Caseloads are balanced across the clinics. West County has a large number of contractors with open cases. These are cases that are not assigned to clinic staff.

**F8. The 85 County Clinical Staff, who treat medium to severely mentally ill children, are not equitably distributed among the three clinics based on workload.**

Response: The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding. Assignment of therapists across the County's regions is balanced. The numbers cited in the report are in error. Central County is listed as having more than forty clinicians on staff. The Central County Children's Clinic has 13 FTE therapists on staff.

**F9. Twenty percent of the CBOs and 68% of the individual private therapists are not available for appointments.**

Response: The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding. Only CBOs and Network Providers that are available for appointments are referred.

**F10. BHS liaisons are not provided with current information about the availability of CBOs and private therapists for appointments.**

Response: The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding. Liaisons operate with the most recent information available, as provided by surveys to private therapists and the expectation that CBOs notify liaisons of any availability changes. Behavioral Health liaisons follow the same protocol as Mental Health Access by providing three potential clinician referrals to each beneficiary. The County is not aware of issues with CBO's and private therapist's lack of availability and this is a process that is reviewed annually by the state.

**RECOMMENDATIONS** - California Penal Code Section 933.05(b) requires a response to the designated recommendations of the Grand Jury.

**R1. The Board of Supervisors should consider identifying funds to add six psychiatrists at the three regional mental health clinics.**

*Response:* The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. The Board of Supervisors reviews staffing levels and budget recommendations annually through budget processes. Throughout the year, County departments re-evaluate staffing and funding levels to determine whether additional positions are needed. At this time, the County has not identified a need to add six additional psychiatrist positions. However, there are currently four psychiatrist vacancies that the County is working to fill.

**R2. The Board of Supervisors should consider directing Human Resources to review the compensation packages for County psychiatrists to ensure their compensation packages are competitive compared to the private market.**

*Response:* The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable. The County's psychiatrist compensation packages can be compared with other county psychiatrists; however, the County cannot compete with the private market. Therefore, using private market compensation packages will not provide reasonable benchmarks. The County is currently in negotiations with Physicians' and Dentists' Organization of Contra Costa, which includes a review of benefits and wages for all represented classifications, including psychiatrists.

**R3. The Board of Supervisors should consider directing BHS to redeploy therapists with a view to a more equitable ratio of children per therapist among the County's three mental health clinics.**

*Response:* The recommendation has been implemented. Clinical staff are fairly and evenly distributed across the regional clinics with equitable ratios of children per therapist.

**R4. The Board of Supervisors should consider identifying funds to enable BHS to review and improve systems related to the real time availability of CBOs and individual private therapists for mental health service appointments.**

*Response:* The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable. The County is not aware of the existence of a real time tool to support the recommended effort. However, the County has processes in place to maintain current information on the availability of CBOs and individual private therapists.

**R5. The Board of Supervisors should consider directing BHS to monitor and report on the wait times for mental health treatment for at-risk children.**

*Response:* The recommendation has been implemented. The Behavioral Health Division is required by the State Department of Health Care Services to monitor and report on the timeliness of mental health treatment for at-risk children.