

**Children & Adolescent Mental Health Care Remarks---05/10/2016: Douglas
Dunn**

As we honor retiring Mental Health Commissioner Dave Kahler and welcome Connie Steers, I personally thank each of you (Supervisor Anderson, Supervisor Piepho, Supervisor Mitchoff, Supervisor Gioia, and Supervisor Glover) for recent major commitments made to greatly improve mental health services in this county.

Early last year (February 3, 2015), the Board unanimously voted to approve Assisted Outpatient Treatment (aka Laura's Law) for this county. This program gives families and caretakers compassionate tools to get help for their seriously mentally ill loved ones. With some challenges, county Behavioral Health and Mental Health Services are successfully implementing the program. In this vein, our county is extremely fortunate to have Presiding Judge Steven Austin, a most knowledgeable, compassionate and caring person, involved with this program. Even in rare court situations, Judge Austin genuinely wants clients to desire to visit him.

On August 18, 2015, a majority of the Board voted to help the mentally ill in prison by pursuing the Sheriff's Dept. proposed use of \$80M in competitive SB 863 grants to greatly expand mental health services at the Richmond detention facility. Even though this effort was not successful, it demonstrates your sincere commitment to the most vulnerable among us.

The next critical "area of need" is the county children and adolescent system of care. On April 26, 2016, other advocates made the Board aware of the acute need for a children and adolescent psychiatric ward at the Regional Medical Center. In sharing these concerns, we've been made aware other counties are most willing to contract for children's beds if this proposed project goes forward. This should alleviate many budget concerns. In upcoming meetings on this issue, I will also emphasize the need to also creatively fix "gaps" in this system of care created by budget cuts due to the Great Recession.

As we engage in this effort, we will appreciate your support, and that of Regional Medical Center as well as county Behavioral Health and Health Services leadership, and other advocates. Thank you for your time and careful consideration.