



County of Orange
California

James D. Ruth
Interim
County Executive Officer

July 22, 2003

Honorable Frederick P. Horn
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court of California
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92702

Subject: Response to Orange County Grand Jury Report, "Medical Resources at Juvenile Facilities"

Dear Judge Horn:

Per your request, and in accordance with Penal Code 993, enclosed please find the County of Orange response to the subject report as approved by the Board of Supervisors. If you have any questions, please contact Frank Kim at the County Executive Office who will either assist you or direct you to the appropriate individual.

Respectfully,

James D. Ruth, Interim County Executive Officer

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2002-2003 Orange County Grand Jury Report

Medical Resources at Juvenile Facilities

FINDINGS

- 1. Forty percent of medical emergencies occurred at remote juvenile facilities on weekends during the study year.**

Response: Agree with the finding.

The Grand Jury report implicitly defined a medical emergency on weekends as “a medical condition experienced by a detained minor resulting in the minor being transported to Juvenile Hall at the direction of medical staff for treatment”. Of these medical “emergencies” occurring on weekends, approximately 44% were related to recreational injuries or were removals based more on administrative reasons than on the actual need for medical treatment.

- 2. DPCs are more inclined to transport a minor to Juvenile Hall in a medical emergency when a nurse was not present.**

Response: Agree with the finding.

- 3. Transporting minors to routine medical appointments increased demand on staff time, added transportation costs, and lost ADA funds. The total cost savings, cost avoidance, and additional ADA money to OCDE could be approximately \$150,000 a year by the addition of a physician visit to remote facilities.**

Response: Disagree partially with the finding.

The County is unable to confirm the cost savings attributed to having a physician visit the remote facilities. While visits by health care providers to the facilities could eliminate some trips, other trips will still be needed. Minors detained in remote camps are routinely transported to Juvenile Hall every day of the week for reasons other than medical. Minors must appear in Juvenile Court, visit with parents, visit with Foster Home staff, visit with relatives, enroll in high school or college prior to release and/or attend job interviews prior to release. Additionally, minors are returned to Juvenile Hall for disciplinary reasons. If a minor must attend a medical appointment, OCDE staff at camps are notified (in advance if possible) of the minor’s pending absence and the minor is provided an “excused absence”. ADA no longer is collected for excused absences, but this is true of all schools in California. If the absence is only for a portion of the day, then the student returns to school and ADA is collected for the student.

- 4. HCA currently has a contract with a local hospital and medical group to provide health care to juveniles.**

Response: Agree with the finding.

The staff of HCA Juvenile Health Services provides primary care medical services for juveniles in the County's facilities. A Comprehensive Care Registered Nurse is available at the remote facilities Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., while a Board Certified Pediatrician is available at Juvenile Hall Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. A Comprehensive Care Registered Nurse is available at Juvenile Hall 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The contract described by the Grand Jury is intended to provide specialty health care services, such as orthopedics, gynecology and ophthalmology as well as hospitalization, if needed. These services are delivered in a clinic or hospital setting because, in many cases, specialized equipment is needed by the physician.

- 5. Juvenile Hall has changed to dental appointment procedure to reduce the number of routine dental trips from Joplin and Los Piños by sixty percent.**

Response: Agree with the finding.

By mutual agreement between HCA Dental staff and Juvenile Hall Administration, these changes occurred prior to the Grand Jury Report and will continue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Conduct a study to better understand the severity of the medical emergencies occurring during nurses' off-duty hours. (Findings 1-2)**

Response: The recommendation has been implemented.

Probation and HCA record and collect data on the medical condition of every minor detained in remote camps. Of the 366 medical "emergencies" at the remote facilities during the study year, only 21 juveniles, or six percent, were referred to a hospital for medical care. These incidents occurred at various times of the day with no apparent pattern to the illnesses or injuries. Only seven of the referrals occurred on the weekend. At least 30 of the juveniles classified as medical "emergencies," or eight percent, did not need any medical treatment.

A random review of the medical records showed that in a large number of cases, the removal of juveniles from remote facilities might have been more for administrative reasons rather than for medical care.

- 2. Take appropriate action after analyzing the study to mitigate lost time and costs. (Findings 1-2)**

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

HCA Juvenile Health Services is exploring several options to reduce the number of trips to Juvenile Hall for medical services.

HCA will work with Probation staff to coordinate medical transportation with other routinely scheduled trips. Similar to the practice adopted for dental services, this may include scheduling trips for routine medical appointments on selected days of the week.

HCA Juvenile Health Services also plans to initiate during Fiscal Year 2003-04 a pilot program with visits to remote facilities by a staff nurse practitioner for medication monitoring and the renewal of routine prescriptions.

- 3. Examine the medical contract to see if it could include a weekly physician visit to all remote facilities. (Findings 3-4)**

Response: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable.

Juvenile Health Services contracts with a local hospital and medical group to provide specialty medical services. In order to provide contract physician visits to remote facilities, a new contract or significant modification of the existing contract would be necessary. These visits would result in significant additional costs and would duplicate the primary care services already provided by HCA Juvenile Health.

- 4. Continue the twice-weekly dental appointment practice for Joplin and Los Piños. (Finding 5)**

Response: The recommendation has been implemented.

The County will continue the practice that was in place prior to the issuance of the Grand Jury's report.