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Shasta County

Adult Services

Shasta County Adult Services, Locust Street, Redding, CA 96001 (530) 225-5798

Protecting the vulnerable adults of Shasta County

The Shasta County Grand Jury received a citizen's complaint regarding Shasta County Adult Protective Services. The Grand Jury was unable to substantiate the complainant's allegations.

Background

Shasta County Adult Services, a branch of the Shasta County Department of Social Services, is made up of three separate departments:

- Adult Protective Services
- In-Home Supportive Services
- Public Guardian

Adult Protective Services (APS) investigates allegations of abuse, neglect, exploitation and abandonment of elder adults (age 65 and older) and dependent adults (ages 18 to 64). APS also attempts to stop abuse through a program of public education on detecting, preventing, and reporting abuse – and by providing information and referrals for housing, food, clothing and case management.

Currently the APS unit is staffed by four social workers, an extra help social worker, a service aide and a social worker supervisor. Both state and county fund APS.

In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) is the department assists low-income seniors and mentally or physically disabled adults who are in need of assistance with activities of daily living so that they are able to remain in their homes. IHSS determines eligibility for services and assesses how many hours of assistance can be authorized. IHSS arranges for and oversees caregivers who provide non-medical services such as housekeeping, cooking, laundry, shopping and personal care (e.g. help with bathing, eating, dressing). For those who do not qualify for IHSS, the department provides information and referrals to outside agencies.

The IHSS unit is staffed by 12 social workers and three social worker supervisors. Federal, state and county funds support IHSS.

Public Guardian (PG) aids people through both probate and Lanterman-Petris-Short (LPS) conservatorships. Conservatorships are court-ordered and court-monitored proceedings.

A probate conservatee is typically a person whose mental and physical problems are associated with the aging process. The person often lives alone and sometimes has a sizeable estate. The conservatee has been determined to be unable to resist fraud or undue influence. Referrals come from APS as well as from hospitals, families and community organizations. The probate conservatorship lasts until the conservatee dies or until the court terminates the conservatorship.

LPS serves people gravely disabled as a result of mental disorders or impairment. Referrals come from the mental health system. The LPS conservatorship is terminated automatically after one year but may be renewed annually at a court hearing. Through an LPS conservatorship the PG protects and cares for the conservatee by arranging for housing, hospitalization, medical care or psychiatric treatment. Conservators also manage the conservatee's funds, pay debts, apply for entitlements and keep benefits and entitlements in force.

The Shasta County Chief Public Guardian, a chief deputy public guardian, two deputy public guardians, a service aide, a legal secretary and an office assistant II staff the PG unit. Shasta County Mental Health, conservatorship fees and the Shasta County general fund finance the PG office.

Findings

1. Adult Protective Services (APS) social workers stated that an ideal workload is around 30 cases; however, they currently manage between 40 and 50 cases each.
2. APS social workers told the Grand Jury that they are often concerned for their safety. Cell phone reception is poor in some areas of the cities and non-existent in many outlying communities such as Shingletown, Fall River Mills and Platina. Consequently, a social worker who encounters a personal safety situation may be unable to call for help.
3. A Shasta County Sheriff's deputy or a city police officer may accompany a social worker investigating a case of alleged abuse who is aware of or suspects a threatening situation.
4. Through fiscal year 2007/2008 APS had a contract with the Redding Police Department for \$92,000 to provide a specially trained investigator to assist social workers on cases as needed. APS also had contracts with the Shasta County Sheriff's Office and the Anderson Police Department. However, due to County budget cuts this past fiscal year, the contract with the Redding Police Department was terminated and substantial reductions were made to the Shasta County Sheriff's Office and the Anderson Police Department contracts.
5. Staff interviewed by the Grand Jury stated that in their opinion elder abuse is under-reported. However APS has implemented a media campaign using posters and advertisements to educate the public. APS offers training to report suspicious actions which might indicate abuse.
6. There is no formal sign-out mechanism to indicate the destinations of social workers when they leave the APS office. Consequently, their locations and expected return times are often unknown. If

7. According to staff the Grand Jury interviewed, APS social workers are expected to learn their jobs through unstructured on-the-job training. Social workers' attendance at professional conferences offering knowledge and skill development has been curtailed because of budget restraints. Peace officers provide limited training on safety issues.

8. The Grand Jury learned that although any person is capable of abusing an elder, the typical abuser is a son, 40 to 50 years old, a substance abuser, who moves in with an elderly parent to act as the primary caregiver. Some indicators of abuse are disappearance of money, cars and personal property; irregularities with bank accounts; and isolation from friends and family. Frequently elderly people do not know what is happening or, if they do, they are too embarrassed or humiliated to report the abuse. They also fear causing trouble for their son/caregiver.

Recommendations

1. The Grand Jury recommends that APS purchase two satellite phones for use by social workers traveling to areas of the county where cell phone usage is limited. Satellite phones would provide a much needed measure of safety.

2. The Grand Jury recommends that APS provide a personnel sign-in/sign-out board on which all employees leaving the premises during work hours are required to post their times of departure, their destinations and their expected times of return. In addition, the Grand Jury recommends integrating GPS capabilities into the cell phones used by social workers. In case of an emergency a GPS could pinpoint the location of a social worker.

3. The Grand Jury recommends that APS provide formal, structured on-the-job training, utilizing a learning check list that articulates in detail what the social workers must do to perform the job to expected standards. The training also should prepare social workers to meet and respond to threatening or emergency situations.

4. The Grand Jury recommends that Shasta County Adult Services re-evaluate its budget to make available funds for reinstating law enforcement contracts which would provide specially trained investigators to assist in abuse cases.

Responses Required

- Shasta County Board of Supervisors as to Recommendations 1 through 4.

Method of Inquiry

The Grand Jury interviewed:

- Shasta County Social Services Director
- Shasta County APS/Public Guardian program manager
- Shasta County APS Supervisor
- Shasta County APS Senior Service Staff Analyst
- Shasta County APS social worker
- Shasta County APS former social worker

The Grand Jury visited:

- Shasta County Adult Services office

The Grand Jury reviewed the following:

- APS Web site www.co.shasta.ca.us/Departments/SocialServices/AdultServices
- Shasta County Adult Services brochure dated October 15, 2008
- Shasta County Adult Services customer satisfaction survey dated August 12, 2008
- Shasta County Public Guardian fee schedule



Shasta County

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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DAVID A. KEHOE, DISTRICT 1
LEONARD F. MOTY, DISTRICT 2
GLENN HAWES, DISTRICT 3
LINDA HARTMAN, DISTRICT 4
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August 18, 2009

The Honorable Stephen H. Baker
Presiding Judge, Shasta County Superior Court
1500 Court St., Rm. 205
Redding, CA 96001

Re: Response of Board of Supervisors to Fiscal Year 2008-2009 Grand Jury Report

Dear Judge Baker:

The Shasta County Board of Supervisors appreciates the time and dedication which the 2008-2009 Grand Jurors contributed to their charge. The following findings and recommendations are under serious consideration and discussions are being held regarding solutions to any unresolved problems.

RESPONSES AND FINDINGS

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

A. SHASTA MOSQUITO ABATEMENT DISTRICT

RECOMMENDATIONS:

2. The Grand Jury recommends that the City Councils of the City of Redding, the City of Anderson, the City of Shasta Lake and the Shasta County Board of Supervisors adopt a selection process that includes personal interviews for all appointments and reappointments to the board of trustees of the SMVCD.

Response The Shasta County Board of Supervisors disagrees with this recommendation as the Shasta County Board of Supervisors has no statutory

authority to adopt a selection process which would include personal interviews for appointments and reappointments to the SMVCD board of trustees. Further, the Shasta County Board of Supervisors finds the SMVCD selection process currently in place, is adequate to fulfill the requirements and needs of the SMVCD.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS *(Since issuance of the Grand Jury Report, Risk Management has issued a check to the complainant for the appraised value of his three handguns.)*

B. SHASTA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE: FIREARMS CONFISCATION

RECOMMENDATIONS:

4. The Grand Jury recommends that the Shasta County Risk Management Office reopen the complainant's claim and review new information discovered by the Grand Jury indicating that the guns should not have been sold.

Response: N/A

5. The Grand Jury recommends that the complainant be reimbursed for the appraised value of his three handguns.

Response: N/A

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS *(The Board previously provided responses on April 14, 2009, but will include them with this response for the convenience of the Court.)*

C. AGRICULTURE - WEIGHTS & MEASURES

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The fueling station inspector should be authorized to take home the county testing vehicle when this practice would shorten travel time, save gas and vehicle wear and tear, and allow the inspector more time to inspect fuel pumps.

Response The Board of Supervisors concurs with the recommendation in that this is an allowable authorization by the Department Head per County policy. The Board of Supervisors further finds that the California Business and Professions Code Section 12209 states that, "Every Sealer shall (a) Carefully preserve all copies of the standards of weights and measures in his possession; (b) Keep the copies in a safe and suitable place when not actually in use". All of

the County's weights & measures testing devices (standards) are officially traceable to the state, federal, and international standards. Preserving the integrity of these pieces of equipment is one of a County Sealer's primary duties. Additionally, all testing equipment is very expensive and must be maintained to maximize their useful life spans and minimize costs to the public.

These particular pieces of testing equipment are permanently mounted on a truck bed and are stored in the department's shop garage. They are stored in the garage for security, maintenance, safety, and liability reasons. Garaging them daily minimizes their exposure to potential vandalism and the elements. It also prevents any inspection of this unique truck by children or others who might be curious and might be tempted to touch or climb on the equipment. Glass gauges could be broken or the provers themselves could be dented or damaged. Any damage to the provers will destroy their integrity and immediately terminate their certification as official standards. Additionally interested parties could hurt themselves by climbing on the truck, etc. and expose the County to unnecessary liability.

County policy allows (Section 34.9 B) a department head to authorize an employee to retain a vehicle overnight...for a limited term to enable completion of special or unusual assignments. Retail meter (gas station) inspections typically do not meet this standard. The shop is fairly centrally located (and is even closer to the individual's home generally assigned this duty than the office is). Because of the security, maintenance, safety, and liability concerns the vehicle is garaged in a county facility. Any employee assigned to this job is allowed to start their day from the shop thereby eliminating the need to come into the office at the start of the day. No employee has ever requested to take the vehicle home and if that request is made it would be considered in conformance with County policy, the Grand Jury's recommendation, and the need to store the vehicle properly. The truck would not be allowed to be parked on the street at an employee's home.

2. The County should consider increasing the load capacity of the next vehicle used by the Shasta County Department of Agriculture/Weights & Measures for testing fuels and pumps by purchasing a heavy duty one-ton truck during the next replacement cycle.

Response The Board of Supervisors concurs with this recommendation and finds that this is an excellent recommendation and it is the Department's intent to eventually replace the existing vehicle with a heavy duty one-ton truck. The existing vehicle is an older County fleet vehicle that was retrofitted with the

testing equipment because the department was not able to fund a new vehicle when the equipment was initially purchased. Staff worked with Fleet Management to safely complete the retrofit.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

D. ADULT SERVICES

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Grand Jury recommends that APS purchase two satellite phones for use by social workers traveling to areas of the county where cell phone usage is limited. Satellite phones would provide a much needed measure of safety.

Response The Board of Supervisors concurs with the recommendation with a slight modification. Social Services – Adult Protective Services has purchased and is in the process of testing and setting up usage guidelines for the utilization of two Satellite Personal Tracker (SPOT) devices to provide a means of communication for social workers who find themselves in areas without cell phone reception. These devices include a GPS locator feature, and will send pre-programmed messages including an emergency call for assistance to pre-programmed email and cell or other phone numbers as well as 911. Implementation of these devices is to occur in the near future.

2. The Grand Jury recommends that APS provide a personnel sign-in/sign-out board on which all employees leaving the premises during work hours are required to post their times of departure, their destinations and their expected times of return. In addition, the Grand Jury recommends integrating GPS capabilities into the cell phones used by social workers. In case of an emergency a GPS could pinpoint the location of a social worker.

Response The Board of Supervisors concurs with this recommendation and it has been implemented. APS has used an in-out board for many years that included the expected time of return, but have added the physical addresses of the destinations workers are traveling to. The APS duty officer will monitor activity flow and take appropriate action if a worker is not back at the time noted on the board.

As noted in the response to the satellite phone recommendation, the SPOT devices include GPS technology to provide an additional measure of safety for social workers in the field.

APS staff meets every morning as a group to discuss staff assignments and any identified visitation safety concerns. If any safety concern is brought forward two staff will be sent out on the visitation and/or law enforcement will be asked to accompany the social worker. This process acts as an additional safeguard for social workers and was implemented years ago.

3. The Grand Jury recommends that APS provide formal, structured on-the-job training, utilizing a learning check list that articulates in detail what the social workers must do to perform the job to expected standards. The training also should prepare social workers to meet and respond to threatening or emergency situations.

Response The Board of Supervisors concurs with this recommendation, and in addition to its regular training procedures, APS is in the process of implementing a formal structured on-the-job training plan that utilizes a learning checklist and includes prevention tactics and response to threatening or emergency situations.

Annual safety trainings by local law enforcement will continue to be held for all staff to ensure safety while working in the office and out in the field.

4. The Grand Jury recommends that Shasta County Adult Services re-evaluate its budget to make available funds for reinstating law enforcement contracts which would provide specially trained investigators to assist in abuse cases.

Response The Board of Supervisors does not agree with this recommendation as the program does not have the resources to reinstate these contracts. APS will continue to work with all law enforcement agencies toward maintaining collaborative relationships and providing training to allow for more thorough response to and investigation of criminal elder abuse issues.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

E. PURCHASING

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Grand Jury recommends that Shasta County Board of Supervisors expand section 2.4 of the Shasta County Contracts manual (contract manual) to include standardized procedural guidelines for establishing open accounts with local vendors and for making purchases and paying invoices on those accounts.

Response The Board of Supervisors concurs with the recommendation. Staff will review section 2.4 and provide recommendations to upgrade the policy where appropriate. Consideration shall include but not be limited to; assessing procedures for how open accounts with local vendors are created, how purchases are approved, and how invoices are paid on those accounts.

2. The Grand Jury recommends that in expanding section 2.4 of the contracts manual the county adopt a policy that requires departments to go through the purchasing division to establish new open accounts so that the county maintains one central control for those accounts.

Response The Board of Supervisors concurs with the recommendation. The County will study the feasibility, cost and efficiency of implementing this recommendation or developing additional controls to ensure that accounts are created and managed in accordance with established procedures.

3. The Grand Jury recommends that each department head using open accounts be required to establish written purchasing policies and procedures specific to that department's open account activity, in accordance with the standardized guidelines established by the county in Recommendations 1 and 2.

Response The Board of Supervisors concurs with the recommendation. The County encourages departments to incorporate county wide policies into their daily operations and believes that appropriate business controls will be in place and standardized by the taking of action on recommendations one and two.

4. The Grand Jury recommends that all county employees involved in the purchasing process receive formal, written and documented training in purchasing procedures.

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August 18, 2009

The Honorable Stephen H. Baker

Responses: The Board of Supervisors concurs with the recommendation. The county already conducts an annual employee training series that includes a module on purchasing procedures. The county will look to include additional written materials in this training and ensure that the training is documented.

Sincerely,



Glenn Hawes, Chairman
Board of Supervisors
County of Shasta

GH:LL/rbhl

✓ Cc: Members of the Grand Jury