

*Grand Jury*

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# More Authority For Health Director, Says Grand Jury

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County Health Services Director George Robertson has received support in the just-released 1978-79 final report by the county grand jury.

The jury recommended the Board of Supervisors give the director the "responsibility for the county's health care system," as well as the "authority to administer it without undue interference."

The report continues: "When the new administrator was appointed a year and a half ago, there had been a lack of agency leadership for some time and many organizational tasks faced him. He has approached these tasks realistically and methodically, and has the support of most of his staff in his efforts to achieve established goals. He appears to possess the business organization and fiscal management skills essential to sound administration of a program covering the diverse elements of community health."

The grand jury recommended that supervisors' role in health care be one of "defining county policies and supporting staff, particularly in the areas of needs assessment and periodic evaluation of programs."

The report cited a pattern of lack of communication in several areas, which included: the Board of Supervisors and the administrator; the administrator and the medical director; between north and south county staffs and between public and private providers of health care.

Staff members of the Health Services Agency were praised for their "concern and dedi-

cation." The report continued, "Despite the dedication of many employees, excessive criticism by the media and others often overshadows the positive accomplishments of the agency."

It cited the high turnover of employees within the agency as "intensifying problems of disjointedness and lack of continuity and diminishing staff effectiveness." It recommended that the County Administrative Office establish "constructive policies in the personnel department to encourage prompt recruitment of the best qualified personnel."

Reasons for unrest among employees, besides public criticism, were inadequate recruitment procedures, comparatively low pay compounded by the high cost of housing and the lack of inter-office communication.

"Opening lines of communication" in the agency was another grand jury recommendation with "input from the south county" being encouraged. "Recent personnel changes at high agency levels should create more positive communication," the report added.

Several of the agency's programs or planned programs were supported by the grand jury. These included the methadone maintenance program, the acute neuro-psychiatric facility, the initiation of monitoring heroin abuse and the Community Mental Health Services.

The latter was a recommendation to supervisors that they immediately approve the contract negotiated by that organization for the establishment and operation of a subacute residential treatment facility.

Another recommendation was for prisoner psychiatric evaluation to be routinely provided at the jail. A semi-isolated area in the neuro-psychiatric facility also was recommended.

Supervisors were recommended to direct the agency to establish a procedure for periodic review of existing contracts and monitoring of services provided in those contracts, in order that renewal negotiations elicit the "highest quality of care at a cost equitable to both the providers and the county."

A "stronger program of education, prevention and outreach using existing facilities" was recommended to the agency's administrator. A full-

time health educator was recommended to be hired. Other budget increases recommended were in the public guardian's office for an additional full-time account clerk, a permanent social worker and access to computer services.

South county health issues that were of concern included the under-use of facilities at the Watsonville Health Center and the scarcity of obstetricians and general practitioners to meet its needs.

An "aggressive program of primary and preventative health care in the outpatient clinic" was recommended. A public relations campaign, of sorts, was suggested to build a "strong public information program."