

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT

“The Humboldt County Behavioral Health Board”

Report Date: June 14, 2016

Response by Linda Atkins, Chair, Humboldt County Behavioral Health Board

The Humboldt County Behavioral Health Board (BHB) is an all-volunteer organization that meets monthly to review and evaluate the community's behavioral health needs, services facilities and special problems. The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury decided to take the unprecedented step of criticizing a volunteer group of citizens for perceived actions or lack of actions of County management. This diversion of attention to the BHB may very well impair this body's ability to recruit and retain citizens to serve on the BHB in the future.

The responsibilities of the BHB are challenging in the extreme, but our members take seriously our duty to meet them.

FINDINGS

- We agree with the finding numbered: F3 & F7
- We disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: F1, F2, F4, F6
- Findings F5 does not apply to the Behavioral Health Board

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations numbered R2 and R7 will not be implemented by the Behavioral Health Board because they are under the control of the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors.
 - Recommendations numbered R1, R3, and R6 have not been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.
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**Humboldt County Behavioral Health Board
Response to Findings and Recommendations from the Grand Jury Report
“The Behavioral Health Board”**

FINDINGS

- F1. The Humboldt County Behavioral Health Board (BHB) does not adequately serve the Mental Health Branch of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors (BOS), nor *[sic]* the citizens of Humboldt County.

Response: Partially Disagree.

The BHB agrees that it has not met all the requirements of the Bronzan-McCorquodale Act as stated in the Grand Jury Report. Nevertheless, the BHB provided valuable input to DHHS staff regarding currently available services and service gaps. In addition, the BHB serves as a forum for community members who bring issues related to the delivery of behavioral health services to the attention of the board. DHHS is attentive to comments raised by both BHB members and the public. In some cases, informal recommendations lead to the consideration and implementation of major program initiatives.

An example is the merging of the BHB Children’s Committee with the Children’s System of Care committee which has helped to decentralize services available into the communities in where the children live.

The BHB has also attained the recommended 51% membership by consumers and family members of consumers, the first BHB in the State to do so.

- F2. The Humboldt County Board of Supervisors provides little or no direction, specific goals, or training to the Humboldt County Behavioral Health Board.

Response: Disagree

The Board of Supervisors through the budgetary resources allocated to the DHHS, makes in-house training available to BHB members. In addition, the BOS through DHHS provides support for BHB members wishing to attend educational conferences. Although some training programs may not currently be available given the current BHB budget allocation, the BHB has not requested augmentation of its budget.

- F3. The Humboldt County Behavioral Health Board failed to submit written annual reports to the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors for the years 2014 and 2015.

Response: Agree

- F4. There is little evidence of communication between the Board of Supervisors and the Behavioral Health Board.

Response: Disagree

The BHB agrees there has not been significant formal communication between the BOS and the BHB, however, a member of the BOS is a member of the BHB and serves as a liaison between the two bodies. BHB members periodically address the BOS in session regarding various issues

- F6. The Humboldt County Behavioral Health Board assumed little or no responsibility for investigating issues of concern regarding the County's mental health system.

Response: Partially disagree

The Board cannot agree that it assumed no responsibility in this area. There are many issues of concern regarding the mental health system; foremost of which being the persistent lack of financial resources necessary to provide adequate services to persons with mental illnesses and/or substance addictions and their families. The BHB has worked to educate themselves about available services and service/funding gaps. While many services are provided in the community, they fall short of what is needed to support recovery and optimum mental health. The board has taken proactive steps to advise DHHS regarding available services and programs and to help prioritize the allocation of available resources; however, we agree there is more to be done in this area.

Based on the Discussion section of the Grand Jury Report, the Board interprets this finding as a suggestion that the BHB could have played a major role in resolving labor relations and workplace climate issues within the Mental Health Branch. The Behavioral Health Board respectfully disagrees with that viewpoint. The BHB's role does not include the oversight and mediation of labor grievances and disputes, nor does it include a role in individual performance reviews, correctional interviews etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Humboldt County Behavioral Health Board submit its past due annual reports to the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors, and thereafter submit, in a timely manner, its required reports.

Response: The BHB will implement this recommendation in full

The BHB will report on activities in the 14/15 and 15/16 fiscal years. The BHB will develop a report preparation schedule in cooperation with the Mental Health Branch of DHHS to ensure that reports are prepared. The target for report submittal is October 2016.

- R2. The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Humboldt County Behavioral Health Board expand its membership, as allowed by State law, so it can more proactively serve the interests of Humboldt County.

Response: The BHB will make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors

The BHB will do outreach recruitment to the ethnic communities in the County whenever vacancies occur in order to expand their representation on the BHB.

- R3. The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Humboldt County Behavioral Health Board study and then proceed to proactively carry out the requirements of the Bronzan-McCorquodale Act.

Response: The BHB will implement this recommendation in full

The members of the Behavioral Health Board have been provided copies of the Bronzan-McCorquodale Act for their review. Changes in meeting format have been made to free up time for discussion of issues and potential development of recommendations to DHHS and the BOS. Training and discussion time will be scheduled to discuss BHB responsibilities and develop a work plan and strategy to ensure we meet those responsibilities (by December 1, 2016); these discussions will include DHHS management and will involve an assessment of staff support needs and DHHS' ability to meet those needs as well as the need for any financial support necessary to hire trainers.

- R6. The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Humboldt County Behavioral Health Board members explore and utilize on-line training, video-conferencing, and webinars available to expand their knowledge.

Response: The BHB will implement this recommendation in full

The BHB will work with the DHHS training staff and program managers to identify additional opportunities to further educate themselves about behavioral health subjects. This activity will be ongoing, but will commence immediately.

Respectfully Submitted:

Linda Atkins, Chair Humboldt County Behavioral Health Board