



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
(805) 568-2240

**Department Name:** Public Health  
**Department No.:** 041  
**For Agenda Of:** November 10, 2015  
**Placement:** Administrative  
**Estimated Tme:**  
**Continued Item:** No  
**If Yes, date from:**  
**Vote Required:** Majority

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**TO:** Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** Department Dr. Takashi Wada, Director  
Director(s) Public Health Department 681-5105  
Dr. Alice Gleghorn, Director  
Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Services  
Contact Info: Dr. Polly Baldwin, Medical Director, Public Health Department  
681-5608  
**SUBJECT: Staff Physician & Psychiatrist Recruitment Incentives**

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**County Counsel Concurrence**

As to form: Yes

**Auditor-Controller Concurrence**

As to form: N/A

**Other Concurrence:** CEO/Human Resources

As to form: Yes

**Recommended Actions:**

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Within existing funding, authorize the CEO to approve requests from the Public Health Department to provide new hire incentives for Public Health Staff Physicians up to \$75,000 per appointment as permitted by the New Hire Recruiting Incentives and Reimbursements Policy (Attachment A), not to exceed a maximum aggregate total of \$550,000 for the remainder of the fiscal year ending June 30, 2016; and;
- b) Within existing funding, authorize the CEO to approve requests from the Department of Alcohol, Drug, and Mental Health Services to provide new hire incentives for Alcohol Drug Mental Health psychiatrists up to \$75,000 as permitted by the New Hire Recruiting Incentives and Reimbursements Policy (Attachment A), not to exceed an maximum aggregate of \$150,000 for the remainder of the fiscal year ending June 30, 2016;
- c) Determine that the above action is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378(b)(2) because it consists of general policy and procedure making that will not result in changes in the environment.

**Summary Text:**

The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department (PHD) and Alcohol, Drug, & Mental Health Services (ADMHS) have been experiencing significant difficulties recruiting new staff physicians and psychiatrists while simultaneously losing existing physicians to other practices. This has made it extremely difficult for the Departments to meet the demands of an increasing number of Medi-Cal patients and provide timely clinical care. Staffing vacancies overburden existing staff, jeopardize the quality and timeliness of care, and make it difficult for PHD and ADMHS to maintain compliance with wait times for appointments as required by our Medi-Cal contracts. Further, ADMHS is continuing to work via the Systems Change process to improve overall access and timeliness to care within the clinic system. Improvements in this area have been difficult to achieve given the current psychiatrists vacancies.

The County's New Hire Recruiting Incentives and Reimbursements Policy allows Departments to offer incentives and reimbursements up to \$20,000 per candidate and provides for higher amounts with the approval of the County Executive Officer and the Board of Supervisors. The recommended action would enable the CEO to approve requests by PHD and ADMHS to offer higher incentives up to \$75,000 per new hire. Incentive support above \$20,000 would be prioritized to assist applicants in paying off student loans directly related to their medical training. If a candidate does not have outstanding student loans, the hiring incentive could be provided to support acceptable uses approved by the CEO in accordance with the New Hire Recruiting Incentive and Reimbursement Policy. This would help the Departments attract and retain individuals and would stabilize staffing levels over time because the newly hired physicians must stipulate to a two-year commitment to work at County Health Care Centers and Clinics in exchange for the incentive.

Individual incentive amounts would be determined based on the unique circumstances and merits of each candidate in accordance with established criteria per the New Hire Recruiting Incentives and Reimbursement Policy (Attachment A). However, PHD believes the maximum aggregate amount of \$550,000, set aside from existing salary savings, could be used to hire up to 10 physicians as needed through June 30, 2016. (There are currently 6 vacancies in Public Health.) Due to budgetary constraints, ADMHS would consider initially funding up to \$150,000 for this purpose, but use of the new hire incentives in FY 2015-2016 would be based on funding availability.

**Background:**

An increase in the demand for medical services and a decrease in the number of available physicians, coupled with each Department's difficulties with recruitment and retention of medical providers, have led to staffing concerns in PHD and ADMHS. The implementation of the Affordable Care Act, and an increasingly aging population, has intensified demand for medical services for several years. At the same time, according to the California Healthcare Foundation, the supply of Primary Care Physicians (PCPs) in California has not kept pace with increasing enrollment in Medi-Cal. The ratio of PCPs to Medi-Cal beneficiaries in our region is about 35 to 49 physicians per 100,000 beneficiaries -- far below federal guideline of 60 to 80 PCPs per 100,000 beneficiaries. The Central Coast region of California has the lowest rate of Primary Care Physician participation in Medi-Cal in the entire state.

**PHD:**

This primary care shortage has impacted the PHD which is understaffed and has physician openings at every one of our health care centers. Some vacancies have been unfilled for over a year, and some centers are down more than one physician. In the last year, 13 physician candidates have been offered

positions, but have declined to accept the positions because they had competing employment offers with more generous hiring incentives and salaries. The following chart shows the current wait times for appointments at each of the PHD health care centers.

Wait Times by Health Care Center		
Health Care Center	New Patient Appt	Follow up Appointment
Carpinteria HCC	2 months	1 month
Franklin HCC	3 months	1.5 months
Lompoc HCC	3 months	1 month
Santa Barbara HCC	2 months	1 month
Santa Maria HCC	3 months	1 month

PHD has made commitments to CenCal and HRSA to expand access to care and to see patients in a timely manner, and without enough physicians this has become a significant challenge.

This physician shortage is negatively impacting service reimbursements as well as service delivery. Staff Physicians are revenue generating positions for PHD. Primary care providers generate approximately \$100,000 to over \$200,000 more than the cost of their salaries and benefits annually, so it is imperative that we fill these vacant positions quickly. The new hire incentive of \$20,000 currently available at the Department Heads’ discretion has not been sufficient for PHD to hire needed physicians. The ability to offer up to \$75,000 will make positions much more attractive to new physicians carrying large student loan burdens and make it more likely that they will be retained for a two-year commitment. Because PHD has so many positions that have been vacant for so long, the department has salary savings that can be applied for this purpose; therefore, this would be budget neutral to the requested maximum of \$550,000. PHD is requesting that the Board authorize the CEO to approve requests from the Public Health Department to provide new hire incentives for Staff Physicians up to \$75,000 per appointment through the end of the current fiscal year.

**ADMHS:**

Psychiatrists are in short supply across the country, and many county mental health departments have few psychiatrists to provide necessary mental health services. Santa Barbara has roughly 75% of its psychiatry positions filled through a combination of civil service and other contractual arrangements. Similar to PHD, ADMHS believes that it could increase successful placements by offering higher recruiting incentives focused on repaying student loans.

Additionally, ADMHS is integrating mental health and substance abuse services as part of their System Change initiative. Generally, recent graduates in psychiatry have acquired significant training and exposure to integrated models of care, but they have typically also amassed large student loans. Providing loan repayment incentives for these recent graduates would aid recruitment and improve services by increasing the diversity of skills among the medical staff. ADMHS is requesting that the Board authorize the CEO to approve requests from the Alcohol Drug Mental Health Services to provide new hire incentives for Staff Physicians up to \$75,000 per appointment through the end of the current fiscal year.

**Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:**

Budgeted: It is anticipated that salary savings would be used as appropriate. However the actual distribution of an incentive is contingent upon adequate funding in the impacted department.

**Fiscal Analysis:**

It is anticipated that up to \$75,000 per new hire would be offered to attract physicians and psychiatrists through the remainder of the fiscal year. The maximum aggregate amount authorized by the recommended action is \$550,000 for PHD and \$150,000 for ADMHS. This amount would be covered by various potential sources, including existing salary savings for Fiscal Year 2015-16, but use of the new hire incentives is contingent on identifying adequate funding within each department.

**Staffing Impacts:**

Approval of this recommendation will not, in and of itself, add any positions.

Please send an electronic copy of the Minute Order to the PHD Contracts Unit at [PHDCU@sbcphd.org](mailto:PHDCU@sbcphd.org) and CEO/Human Resources Position Control.

**Attachments:**

- A. New Hire Recruiting Incentives and Reimbursement Policy

**Authored by:**

Polly Baldwin, Medical Director, Primary Care and Family Health