



August 24, 2016

Peter Adam, Chair
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

Subject: Departmental Agenda – Behavioral Wellness,
item #1 (16-00673)

Comments Prepared for presentation to BOS Meeting 8/30/2016

I am Dr. Michael Gorodezky, past chair of the Santa Barbara County Mental Health Commission. I am happy to commend Dr. Gleghorn and Dr. Howard with the production of their first Semi-Annual report highlighting key metrics and outcome measures.

The production of the report and the measures that are displayed offers a real opportunity to open the Behavioral Wellness Department to genuine program evaluation. Whenever charts and graphs are available, the data will produce an array of new questions. This is appropriate and normal. Data is rarely the answer, but it is a vital part of the answer.

I hope Dr. Gleghorn will create appropriate opportunities for Behavioral Wellness leadership to dialogue with the community about the meaning of the new semi-annual report. Understanding the data requires both professionals and community members. I am sure that the Mental Health Advisory Commission stands ready to help.

There are two key **unanswered questions** that should be addressed immediately.

One of the goals of the expansion of crisis services and system change has been the : 1) reduction of incarceration of Behavioral Wellness clients and (2) the reduction of Emergency Room wait times for mentally ill clients who are awaiting service in Behavioral Wellness facilities.

The first question requires collaboration with the Sheriff's office and the second question requires work with the various emergency departments.

Several months ago, when George Kaufman , on behalf of NAMI and I on behalf of the Commission requested metrics from the department, a request was made about both incarceration and ER utilization.

It is important that the CEO's office facilitate whatever collaboration is required to answer both questions in a timely manner.

Let me conclude by again, congratulating the genuine progress that the Department is making. Sharing these data will make the work of the Department more transparent and will encourage the improvement of services to the community.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Gorodezky, MSW, Ph.D.

Cc: Myra Miyasato, CEO
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