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COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

March 8, 2022

Honorable Gustavo Lavayen
Presiding Judge
Santa Barbara Superior Court
312 East Cook Street
Santa Maria, CA 93454

Reference: Response to Santa Barbara Grand Jury report titled, "Suicide in Santa Barbara County Main Jail: A Challenge for Law Enforcement and Health Professionals" published December 20, 2021.

Judge Lavayen:

Please find attached the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors (Board) response to the above referenced Civil Grand Jury Report. As directed by the Grand Jury, all responses are provided in accordance with Section 933.05 of the California Penal Code.

Sincerely,

Joan Hartmann, Chair
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

CC: Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
Pamela Olsen, Foreperson, 2021 Santa Barbara Grand Jury

Attachment A

**Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
Response to the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury 2021 Report
“Suicide in Santa Barbara County Main Jail: A Challenge for Law
Enforcement and Health Professionals”**

Finding 3

The contract between the County of Santa Barbara and Wellpath allows a significant time lag between the identification of potential medical or mental issues and the initiation of treatment protocols, delaying the initiation of necessary care.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees with Finding 3. In 2016, the Board retained a health care consultant, Health Management Associates (HMA), to develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) for health care services at the Jail. As a correctional health expert, HMA conducted a thorough review of the health services at the Jail and presented findings and recommendations to the Board. These recommendations formed the basis of the RFP and the ensuing contract with WellPath (CFMG at the time) that the Board approved in 2017.

The amended contract requires that an arrestee be fully screened at receiving within two hours from arrival, absent exigent circumstances. If the screening identifies emergent health concerns, they are to be addressed within four hours, i.e., provide care or develop and implement a treatment plan. (Contract, Exhibit A, 1.1.) Thereafter, WellPath will perform an Initial Health Assessment as soon as possible but not later than 14 days from intake. (Contract, Exhibit A, 1.3.) At any time after intake, an inmate may request to be seen through the sick call process. Sick call requests are collected and triaged every 24 hours. (Contract, Exhibit A, 1.4.)

Additionally, the Public Health and Behavioral Wellness departments are charged with conducting quarterly reviews of key contract performance metrics which conform to National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC) standards.

Public Health reviews medical records for compliance regarding the following data I:

Question #1	Question #2	Question #3	Question #4	Question #5
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<p>The contractor shall ensure that the Initial Health Assessments are done within 14 days of a patient's incarceration. Was the Initial Health Assessment completed within 14 days of incarceration and if they refused, is there documentation of refusal?</p>	<p>The contractor will ensure that all TB skin tests are placed as needed. If patient refuses then alternate methods of screening TB shall offered? Was TB Skin Test places, if needed, during the Initial Health Assessment, and if patient refused was a Chest X-Ray ordered?</p>	<p>The contractor shall ensure that all chronic care patients (including major mental illness) are being seen in accordance to the NCCHC standard. If diagnosis and RX was verified, was the On-Call Provider contacted for continuation of meds and patient referred to Medical Provider within 5 to 7 days from intake for Chronic Care evaluation and on-going visits.</p>	<p>Contractor shall ensure that medication verification is completed within 12 hours of a Medical Intake Screening if the patient indicated essential or psychiatric (not to include Benzo's or sleep aids) prescription drug utilization. Were the verified medications "bridged" at intake until the patient was able to be seen by a provider?</p>	<p>If the medications for essential and psychiatric conditions could not be verified, the nurse shall confer with the On-Call Medical or Mental Health Provider to establish, document, and initiate a treatment plan within 24 hours of arrival. Is there documentation that the nurse contacted the OCP and is there documentation of a treatment plan ordered by the OCP?</p>
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Further, in regards to mental health care the following data points are monitored:

1. *Timeliness of psychiatric medication prescription after individual in custody,*
2. *Continuity of psychiatric medication* - tracking whether or not clients taken into custody are maintained on same medication regimen,
3. *Quantity of care* - monitoring whether clients are seen at least three times a week by mental health team; and
4. *Safety standards for those in crisis* - ensuring whether a) those on suicide watch are reassessed every 6 hours and b) after 24 hours of being on suicide watch the County Crisis Services are contacted timely.

Finding 4

There is no on-site coverage by a Wellpath mental health professional from 11:00 PM to 7:00 AM daily, which can allow for urgent medical needs to go untreated in a timely manner.

The Board of Supervisors partially disagrees with Finding 4. Although the County's current agreement with Wellpath does not require on-site coverage by a Wellpath mental health professional from 11:00 PM to 7:00 AM daily in the Santa Barbara County Main Jail, access to a mental health professional is available on an on-call basis should it be needed during these hours.

With the opening of the Northern Branch Jail in Santa Maria, thirty-two beds will be set aside for inmates who are experiencing a serious mental health crisis. Additionally, the Santa Barbara County Main Jail has received Attachment A

accreditation from the National Commission on Correctional Health Care, assuring it is in compliance with the NCCHC's Standards for Health Services in Jails.

Recommendation 3

That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors propose shorter required response times to initiate medical and mental health protocols during the upcoming contract negotiation process.

This recommendation requires further analysis. The Public Health and Behavioral Wellness departments will review the data from the quarterly contract reviews and, if warranted, develop revised contract performance metrics, utilizing best practices, for required response times to initiate medical and mental health care protocols. These potentially revised metrics will be incorporated in the upcoming contract negotiation process which begins in April 2022 and be presented to the Board of Supervisors as part of their approval consideration of the subsequent contract.

Recommendation 4

That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors propose that on-site mental health professionals be employed at County jails from 11:00 PM to 7:00 AM daily during the upcoming contract negotiation process.

This recommendation requires further analysis. The Public Health and Behavioral Wellness departments, together with the Sheriff's Department, will evaluate the need for this higher level of contract services. If warranted, this requirement will be incorporated in the upcoming contract negotiation process between the County and Wellpath scheduled to begin in April 2022 and be presented to the Board of Supervisors as part of their approval consideration of the subsequent contract.