

de la Guerra, Sheila

Public Comment - Health & Human Services

From: Suzanne Riordan <suzanne@familiesact.org>
Sent: Monday, April 17, 2023 5:31 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: April 18th Statement, First Functional Group, Behavioral Wellness
Attachments: Suzanne Riordan - Beds Not Cells - April 2023.docx



Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

Please accept my attached Public Comment as part of the BEDS NOT CELLS group.

Thank you,

Suzanne

--

Stop the Revolving Door! **Beds Not Cells!**

Suzanne Riordan
Executive Director
Families ACT!
www.FamiliesACT.org
805-637-1339

To: Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

Date: April 17, 2023

Subject: Beds Not Cells

Name: Suzanne Riordan

My name is Suzanne Riordan. I helped to found Families ACT! shortly after young dually-diagnosed son Ian died in downtown Santa Barbara in 2006. Unfortunately, Ian was not the only young adult struggling with a mental health challenge who died here that year. Grieving mothers came together and vowed to convince Santa Barbara County to provide a better system of mental health care with an emphasis on desperately needed treatment facilities in lieu of the punitive approach which feeds the criminal justice machine.

A decade and a half later, we are still standing before you, our County Supervisors, to plead the case for funding treatment BEDS, NOT CELLS! In the interim, the suffering of families impacted by mental illness has been immense.

Some progress has been made but we are still far from having a true "continuum of care" with adequate numbers of acute inpatient hospital beds for persons in an acute crisis, longer term adult residential treatment beds, and outreach workers trained to work with those on our streets and riverbeds.

Hundreds of our Santa Barbara County residents in a major mental health crisis end up in the ER but few end up in a hospital bed. One of our mothers' sons cries for help fell on deaf ears. After bravely presenting himself five times in one week at Cottage's Emergency Department and being denied a hospital placement he returned home and brutally took his own life.

Our young adults who are lucky enough to make it to a short residential program are being released back onto the streets just as they are habituating to prescribed medications or finding sobriety from the substances they had been using to self-medicate. After sitting in our jails for months or years on charges related to their mental dysregulation and the lack of appropriate treatment facilities, they walk out of the jail without linkage to treatment. More than one person has died in jail in recent years waiting for adequate treatment and our County has now attracted the attention of a reporter from the Wall Street Journal as a result of this tragic situation.

Untold resources have been wasted year after year on holding mentally people in jail where they wait untreated in a tiny cage for a court hearing that seems to be endlessly postponed to a later date. This revolving door is costly and cruel. Our Latino population is especially used and abused by our byzantine and unjust "justice system", and at the mercy of certain court-appointed conflict attorneys with an obvious contempt for their client, as evidenced by the anguished testimony of some of our families that you will hear from this week. Grief and shame keep families from demanding reform but the shame is actually on the County for having allowed this travesty of justice to continue for so long.

As funding is becoming available from various sources, including the State of California, our County now has the opportunity to begin to address the huge remaining gaps in our disjointed system and create a robust system of care with strong linkages between departments and programs.

Nothing will erase the tragic legacy that closing mental hospitals and the failure to provide the promised community treatment has left behind in its wake. We have abandoned our fellow citizens to the streets or to a jail cell. Now is the time to end the cruel, unjust, inhumane and downright shameful way we have treated our mentally ill. We can and we will do better.


de la Guerra, Sheila

From: Trishia Thompson (via Google Docs) <4smmgr@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 17, 2023 7:31 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: April 18th Statement First Functional Group Behavioral Wellness
Attachments: Copy of TESTIMONY.pdf

Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

Trishia Thompson attached a document

Trishia Thompson (4smmgr@gmail.com) has attached the following document: [Learn more](#).

 Copy of TESTIMONY

Use is subject to the Google [Privacy Policy](#)

Google LLC, 1600 Amphitheatre Parkway, Mountain View, CA 94043, USA
You have received this email because 4smmgr@gmail.com shared a document with you from Google Docs.
[Delete visitor session](#)



April 18th Statement, First Functional Group, Behavioral Wellness sbcob@countyofsb.org Submitted By Patricia Thompson On Behalf Of Families Act And My Son Jeffrey

Prior to the pandemic, I was given the opportunity to testify before this Board in support of additional treatment beds much like I am today. My testimony included a description of my son's delusions, my desperately unsuccessful attempts to get him help, and my fear of harming an innocent bystander.

He believes he is a CIA trained paid assassin, operating with full authority given to him from our government, and the knowledge of our local police. His orders are received from my father, formerly a USAF Master Sergeant (he's deceased) which enables him to use the USAF as back-up. His mission is righting the wrongs of this world.

His training taught him to go into salamander mode to assassinate. I have actually seen him shape himself into a salamander, take out a knife and head down a hallway when he thought a visitor posed a threat. My son is normally the kindest soul you could ever meet. However, I am afraid he will cause harm to someone or get himself killed "with the best of intentions".

There is just no way of knowing whenlif his reality could become ours.

I also testified about his means of displaying his illness by artistically vandalizing private and public buildings, sidewalks, overpasses, stop signs etc. in a trail of everywhere he goes. He even found his way into an unlocked art classroom, then made new displays for the teacher, and set up projects for the students to paint the following day. I have no idea what the cost of his artistic expression is to the city, but I have personally spent about \$10,000.00 in repairs to private property owners.

My story overheard by Alice Gleghorn put everyone into action. He was qualified under Laura's Law, and an Outreach team was sent to pluck him out of a creek. He was arrested, prescribed medication, and held (unfortunately in solitary confinement) until mental health care professionals from Santa Barbara and Santa Maria Behavioral Health, Judge Coons from Santa Maria Mental Health Care Court, Santa Barbara Courts, his Public Defender, and Coast Valley had all of their ducks in order. Then they marched him to TeleCare in Santa Maria.

When he was released from TeleCare, he was assigned a parole officer, required to participate daily at Coast Valley, and report to Judge Coons monthly for the next three years. They found him a room and board to rent, and arranged to have his medications delivered by an Outreach program.

*Jeffery did so well, he had a small inheritance that he used to purchase expensive musical equipment and was making music, he started looking for employment, and talking about his future. He was able to tell me how grateful he was for the assistance, and what was happening in his head. He told me he never wanted to be unmedicated or homeless again. Statements I replay over and over again in my head.

When COVID arrived everything that was put in place, and gave my son back to me was stopped. Without warning, his medication was no longer delivered. The three years worth of safeguards ended and **I lost my son! He was arrested on September 19, 2021 in Santa Maria for using his artistic talents to paint three homes. He lost his future and everything he owned was stolen all so he could be issued a citation at Santa Barbara county jail. They released him from there. He had no cell phone, shoes, or clothes and was 80 miles away from his home.**

I haven't seen him since!

There are no Outreach Teams out there anymore trying to encourage the most severely mentally ill to get treatment.

I called Behavioral Health and was told they no longer had Outreach Teams, he could go to their location and hang out in the day room. That is the equivalent of calling 911 because you suffered a stroke and being told to find your car key, locate an emergency room and drive yourself there. Worse actually, 50% of severely mentally ill people don't know they are mentally ill. The chances of him showing up to ask for help some day are slim to nil.

***He was arrested two days in a row, wheeding a knife (both days) in a residential front yard screaming "I need help". I asked the detective who called me with the news "doesn't that sound like a cry for help, why did you just cite and release him? With all the information I have provided, couldn't you have taken him to get help?" His answer was short and to the point he said **"take him where"**.

Everyone from so many agencies worked together and you saved a life! I am grateful for the time I spent with him. If you give our mental health professionals the funding and treatment beds they need, You'll save lives, and begin the process of restoring our city to the quality of life we once enjoyed. Getting severely ill off the streets and into treatment is the first step to creating an environment that residents can enjoy. You will have more money to spend when our city becomes business friendly again.

Outreach needs to be funded to stop the humanitarian crisis that is playing out on our streets. Getting the severely mentally ill out of our jails and into treatment is the only way. They are dying out there! And were just stepping over them to get to our cars. Instead of enjoying our beaches, and our beautiful city.