



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: CEO
Department No.: 012
For Agenda Of: 4/17/2012
Placement: Departmental
Estimated Tme: 45 minutes
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department Chandra L. Wallar, County Executive Officer, 568.3400
Director(s)
Contact Info: Dennis Bozanich, Assistant to the CEO, 568-3400

SUBJECT: **Mentally Ill, Homeless Recidivism Cost Analysis**

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- A. Accept and file the staff report (Attachment A) on the financial impacts of homeless and mentally ill individuals repeatedly cycling through the courts and county jail as completion of our response to the Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury's Report entitled "*Homeless Mentally Ill Indigent Recidivism-This is not good for the County*";
- B. Authorize the Chair to sign a letter (Attachment B) on behalf of the Board to accompany the staff report being sent to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court and the Grand Jury, and
- C. Provide staff with any additional guidance and direction on this matter.

Summary Text:

On October 4, 2011, the Board of Supervisors approved and forwarded to the Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury responses to their report entitled "*Homeless Mentally Ill Indigent Recidivism-This is not good for the County.*" The Board determined a need for additional research and analysis to compare the total yearly costs of incarceration of homeless mentally ill individuals to the cost of providing the same population with housing, medical and psychological services, case management, outpatient care and other needed services as requested by the Grand Jury in its Recommendation 1. The Board requested that the County Executive Office (CEO) conduct that comparative analysis. The staff report (Attachment A) provides the Board with the comparative cost information. It is recommended that the

Board Chair sign the attached cover letter (Attachment B) to accompany the staff report in fulfillment of the Board's response to the Grand Jury's recommendation.

Background:

On May 26, 2011 the Civil Grand Jury released a report entitled "*Homeless Mentally Ill Indigent Recidivism – This is not good for the County.*" The Board responded on October 4, 2011. The Grand Jury's first recommendation was that the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors direct the County Executive Officer (CEO) to produce a document comparing the current total annual costs of the incarcerated mentally ill indigent homeless to the estimated total annual cost of providing housing, medical and psychological services, case management, outpatient care, and other supportive services to create stability for these particular individuals.

The Board asked the CEO to conduct the comparative analysis of the current annual costs of incarcerating homeless persons who have mental illness and the costs of providing the stabilizing services identified by the Grand Jury. The Board requested that the report be returned in four months. All of the services suggested as stabilizing for the targeted individuals who are homeless and have mental illness are currently available by county departments simplifying cost data.

The staff report (Attachment A) was developed using current year fiscal data from the departments currently providing incarceration or the stabilizing supportive services to the persons with mental illness who are homeless. Additional literature searches of academic, think tank and government agency research results were conducted to provide context to the County's expenditures, supportive service effectiveness and cost impacts of recidivism.

Conducting this comparative analysis at this time presents challenges and opportunities. The increasing costs of investigating, prosecuting, incarcerating and post-release supervision of criminals has caused nearly every jurisdiction to examine diversion programs, custody alternatives, restorative justice programs and criminal justice realignment. These cost reduction strategies have primarily focused on alternatives for low-level, non-violent offenders to maintain public safety. The cost of these public safety interventions is anticipated to change dramatically over the next several years as new processes replace current practices. The goal for most jurisdictions is real cost reductions.

The Great Recession that began in 2007 has taken its toll on large segments of the population. Recent surveys shows significant numbers of people at or below the poverty line as unemployment, the housing crisis and inadequate health care coverage have increased the needs for services from the public and non-profit sectors. As in the past, the needs of the public for safety net services, including cash assistance, food assistance, child welfare, public and mental health services increase at the same time local governments and non-profits are forced to cut back due to declines in tax revenues and donations. As more of the middle class have had to face real economic hardship, the impact on the most vulnerable individuals has become nearly catastrophic.

Homeless, aged, physically and mentally ill and the addicted are now competing with last decades middle class for a shrinking number of community resources to maintain the final elements of their self-sufficiency. Some of these individuals engage in criminal behavior out of desperation for life's basic necessities or due to a lack of sound judgment. Most of the crimes committed by homeless and mentally ill individuals are minor – being drunk or sleeping in public, petty theft and minor assaults stemming from arguments or theft of their few possessions. For the mentally ill, engaging with the criminal justice

system and facing time in jail generally increases the seriousness of their symptoms. And upon release from jail, if little is done to assist them, they are highly likely to return to jail in the next twelve months.

This comparative analysis will examine the costs of incarceration and the delivery of services to stabilize and support mentally ill and homeless individuals. The presumption is that the correct array of services will help someone move from homeless to housed, housed to treated, treated to employed and employed to engaged with family and community. We can calculate the cost of incarceration. It is slightly more difficult to calculate the cost of recidivism. The cost of reoffending is the total cost of investigating, prosecuting, and incarcerating for the new crime, as well as, supervision after the release from jail. In addition to that there is the cost to the victim of crime. The report will identify the cost per person per year to aid in the comparison process.

The report will examine the:

- Known costs of providing the services from county departments;
- Prevalence of service success;
- Known costs of incarcerating mentally ill individuals, and
- Possible costs of recidivism,

By providing the information identified above, policy makers will have additional information that will lead to high-quality decisions and that those decisions lead to better outcomes for the public of Santa Barbara County.

Impacts:

Budget: This report is to provide the Board with a comparative cost analysis. Producing the staff report does not require the commitment of any new financial resources. The only direct cost of providing this report is staff time.

Attachments:

A – Staff Report: Comparative Cost Analysis of Incarceration and Recidivism of Mentally Ill Homeless Individuals with the provision of Supportive Services

B – Cover Letter to the Court and Grand Jury for inclusion with the Staff Report

C – Presentation to the Board on Staff Report

Authored by:

Dennis Bozanich, Assistant to the County Executive Officer

cc:

Sheriff Bill Brown

Dr. Ann Detrick, Director, Department of Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health

Dr. Takashi Wada, Director, Department of Public Health

Kathy Gallagher, Director, Department of Social Services

Presiding Judge Arthur Garcia, Santa Barbara County Superior Court

Foreperson Ted Sten, Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury