

**SANTA BARBARA COUNTY
BOARD AGENDA LETTER**



Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
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Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Agenda Number:
Prepared on: 9/1/05
Department Name: Public Health
Department No.: 041
Agenda Date: 10/4/05
Placement: Administrative
Estimate Time:
Continued Item: NO
If Yes, date from:

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Elliot Schulman, MD, MPH, Director and Health Officer
Public Health Department

STAFF CONTACT: Jane Overbaugh, 681-5173
Primary Care & Family Health Division

SUBJECT: **Expanded Medical Services in South County Homeless Shelters**

Recommendation(s):

That the Board of Supervisors:

- A. Direct the Public Health Department (PHD) staff to proceed with the implementation of PHD-operated expanded services and staffing at Casa Esperanza, Santa Barbara Rescue Mission and Transition House.
- B. Adopt a Personnel Resolution effective 09/26/05, in budget unit 5210 to add the following positions:
Add: One (1.0 FTE) Health Care Practitioner (003930), Range 6116, (\$5124mo-\$6256/mo)
One (1.0 FTE) Medical Assistant (005123), Range 4566, (\$2365/mo-\$2888/mo)

Alignment with Board Strategic Plan:

The recommendations are primarily aligned with Goal No. 1, "*An Efficient Government Able to Respond Effectively to the Needs of the Community*", and Goal No. 2, "*A Safe and Healthy Community in Which to Live, Work, and Visit*".

Executive Summary and Discussion:

The Health Care for the Homeless (HCH) program emphasizes a diverse approach to delivering health care to people experiencing homelessness, combining medical outreach with integrated systems of primary care, mental health and substance abuse services, case management, and client advocacy. Emphasis is placed on coordinating efforts with other community health providers and social service agencies. The HCH program receives \$443,054 from the Federal Bureau of Primary Health Care. The number of people served by the Health Care for the Homeless program is on the rise in Santa Barbara County. The HCH program in Santa Barbara County has consistently served the target population well. Without any significant change in infrastructure, the program has dealt with an increase in the number of homeless users from 3,259 in 2000 to 4,058 unique clients in 2004. The rapid growth in users has greatly affected the ability of the HCH Program to provide health care to all who need it in a timely and effective manner.

The HCH program in Santa Barbara County addressed this crisis by applying for support from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HRSA) to expand medical capacity in the field service sites. Prior to the application, the medical outreach component of the project consisted of Public Health Nurses (PHNs) stationed in the homeless shelters and transitional living centers throughout the county. The nurses provide triage care and make referrals to the public health clinics for those needing primary care. Due to the needs of so many people, same day clinic appointments are not always available. Without immediate access to healthcare, many people are faced with difficult decisions: to choose between expending a great deal of time for a doctor's appointment, or to continue to look for work, to find a ride to the pharmacy to fill an antibiotic prescription or wait in line at the shelter to get a bed for the night. With these choices a reality in the lives of the homeless, people often make healthcare needs secondary to other pressing concerns. As a result, many people let health conditions go untreated, creating a risk to themselves, and to the community.

To address the barriers to healthcare access that so many people living in the shelters face, the HCH program in Santa Barbara County is proposing to expand medical capacity at the field service sites in three shelters in South County. Although the original application to HRSA included a mid-level in Santa Maria, HRSA funded less than half of the request. Therefore the design was altered to provide services where the majority of people who are homeless are located. The plan entails placing one mid-level Health Care Practitioner and one bilingual Medical Assistant in the field rotating between shelters and the Calle Real Public Health Clinic. These expanded services are in addition to those provided by PHNs in the field.

A mid-level Health Care Practitioner will enhance the current model and increase our capacity to provide health care services, because the scope of practice of a mid-level is broader than a PHN. Serving under the supervision of a physician, mid-level Health Care Practitioners perform examinations and evaluations of patient health, as well as diagnostic and therapeutic tasks appropriate to licensure; and prescribe medications at the field service site greatly reducing the number of referrals to the clinics. This expansion will effectively provide services to an additional 600 people during the end of the second year of the expanded medical capacity project, offering services to more people in the field; providing immediate resolution of many of the health concerns seen in the shelters. Offering real-time treatment will effectively allow people quicker access to healthcare resulting in more time for the client to address the other social and behavioral issues in their lives that are interfering in their quest for stability. Another benefit is the reduced number of referrals from the shelters to the public health clinics, making additional appointment time available for those in the community who need it, thus, increasing our medical capacity in the field and in the clinic without capital expenditures for costly construction, renovation or relocation.

As a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) with a special reimbursement rate system based upon Federal/State standards, we are in a position to offer services to this population of uninsured and underinsured patients, many who are covered by Medi-Cal. A Health Care Practitioner is able to bill at the special rate where as PHN's are not able to bill at all for their services in the field.

To date, the PHD has initiated or developed plans to initiate the following:

- Plans to modify existing workspaces and add additional workstations and equipment, based on additional service requirements at the shelters. The Santa Barbara Rescue Mission and Casa Esperanza provide space, at no cost to the Public Health Department.
- Phased in additional services starting in June 2005.

Mandates and Service Levels:

The provision of primary care services are mandated by California Administrative Code, Title 17, Chapter 3, Article 2, Sections 1276, 2500, 2501, 2502, 2503 and 2505; California Administrative Code, Title 17, Chapter 3, Subchapter 1; and Section 17000 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.

The County is statutorily mandated to care for patients who have no visible means of support. Failure to provide for services to this uninsured population may result in homeless patients receiving care in the Emergency Room at a greater expense to the County.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

These actions will not increase the General Fund contribution or use of Special Revenue funds for the Public Health Department. These actions are intended to be cost neutral and will not create any new costs for the department's adopted FY 05-06 budget.

The two new positions have an estimated cost of \$108,544 in salaries and benefits for the remainder of FY 05/06. The funding for these positions is available from the increase in the Federal funding for our Health Care for the Homeless grant in the amount of \$98,054, and \$10,490 in increased patient service revenues because of increased patient visits at the clinics and shelters.

The positions, their related appropriation and revenue are not in the adopted FY 05-06 budget for the Public Health Department. Upon authorization of this request, a budget revision request will follow.

Special Instructions:

Please send a signed copy of the Personnel Resolution to Sandra Viola in the Human Resources Department and Alan T. Kasehagen at PHD Human Resources. Please send a Minute Orders to PHD Contracts Unit, 300 North San Antonio Road, Building 8, Santa Barbara, CA 93110 Attention: Dawn McGrew.

Concurrence:

Human Resources Department