



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: Sheriff-Coroner
Department No.: 032
For Agenda Of: March 19, 2024
Placement:
Estimated Time:
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Department Bill Brown, Sheriff-Coroner, (805) 681-4290
Director(s)
Contact Info: Ryan Sullivan, Custody Commander, (805) 554-3103
SUBJECT: Sheriff's Medical Grievance Oversight Coordinator 2020-2023 Annual Reports

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Receive and file the Sheriff's annual medical grievance oversight reports for 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023; and
- b) Determine that the approval of the recommended action is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378 (b) (5), since the recommended action is a government administrative activity which does not involve commitment to any specific project which may result in potentially significant physical impact on the environment.

Summary Text:

This item is before your Board to review the Sheriff's Office annual medical grievance oversight reports for calendar years 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023. The Sheriff's Office employs an extra-help staff member who is currently assigned as the Medical Grievance Oversight Coordinator (MGOC). This person's role is to evaluate the grievances submitted by incarcerated persons in Sheriff's Office jail facilities specific to medical and mental health related care. The MGOC ensures that incarcerated persons submitted grievances related to medical or mental health care are reviewed and investigated to ensure that their needs are being met and/or their complaint is followed up on appropriately by the Sheriff's contracted healthcare provider. The MGOC meets regularly with the Community Corrections Input Group (CCIG) to report out on findings and trends from his review of the grievances submitted and responded to by Wellpath and/or the Sheriff's Office as well as to obtain input from the group.

Discussion

During the years 2020 through 2023, the MGOC reported an increase in grievances submitted for medical and mental health-related concerns, accompanied by a smaller growth in total grievances (medical and non-medical related) submitted by incarcerated persons, while the population modestly increased as well. Within the last couple of years, the Sheriff’s Office has provided grievance forms within all housing units for incarcerated persons, to allow them to submit grievances more often and more quickly than the previous process in which they had to request a grievance form from a staff member and then submit their grievance at a later time. Included below is a table comparing the number of grievances submitted for each calendar year by type:

SBSO Medical Inmate Grievance Summary 2020 through 2023				
Category	Year			
	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>2023</i>
Dental	7	12	54	27
Mental Health	21	23	39	38
Medication	67	66	108	119
Medical	160	109	358	275
HIPAA Not Signed	8	12	25	15
Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)*				69
Total Medical/MH Related	263	222	584	543
Grievance Response Resolved Complaint	249	203	553	511
Average days for Response/Treatment	4.2	5.0	6.3	5.2
Total Grievances (Medical and Non-medical)	1292	931	1692	1646
Average Daily Population (Main Jail & NBJ)	673	638	768	759
*Category added in 2023				

Significant trends observed in the grievance reports are an increase in the amount of grievances related to access to care, medications, as well as medication assisted treatment (MAT), mental health and dental care. Some aspects that impacted the amount of grievances submitted during this four-year period include the activation of the Northern Branch Jail, the staffing levels of the healthcare provider, custody staffing levels, COVID-19 impacts, and the planned increased capacity of the MAT program. In the vast majority of cases (94% over the four-year period), the response to the submitted grievance resolved the individual’s complaint(s).

The Sheriff’s Office and the County have undertaken several steps to enhance the provision of medical, dental, and mental health care within the Sheriff’s Office facilities, including but not limited to the following: increased the provision of MAT, implementation of behavioral health units (BHUs) at both jail facilities, increased oversight and contract monitoring in partnership with Behavioral Wellness and Public Health, completed two healthcare staffing analyses, modified and/or created Sheriff’s Office policies and procedures related to health and mental health care, and regular administration and participation in multi-disciplinary meetings focused on improving care provided to the incarcerated population. The Sheriff’s Office intends to bring forward recommendations regarding the contract with Wellpath at a future meeting. The Sheriff’s Office also intends to resume providing these reports on an annual basis to your board. The Sheriff’s Office has recently implemented regular reviews of all inmate grievances and has a plan in place

to transition the responsibility for the MGOC duties to a permanent employee with implementation of enhanced healthcare monitoring being performed in partnership with the Public Health Department.

Background:

At the Board of Supervisors meeting on February 16, 2016, the Board recommended the creation of the CCIG. The CCIG includes members of several community groups, including Families Act, the Behavioral Wellness Commission, Clergy and Laity United for Economic and Social Justice (CLUE) of Santa Barbara, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and others. Membership is voluntary and the CCIG is chaired by retired Custody Lieutenant Mark Mahurin, who also functions as the MGOC. The purpose of this group is to assist the MGOC in making recommendations for improvements concerning the grievance process, procedural practices, and/or service delivery related to the medical, mental health, dental, or vision care of those confined within the jail system. The CCIG supports the MGOC by providing input towards the development of effective approaches, as well as aiding in the form of research and/or materials in support of formal recommendations. This group continues to have monthly meetings and to provide recommendations for changes with various processes and procedures. When a change is recommended, the MGOC presents the recommended change or solution to Sheriff's Office staff for consideration. Recommendations that have been recommended by the CCIG and subsequently implemented by the Sheriff's Office include but are not limited to the following: the addition of a HIPAA release on inmate grievances, modification to the inmate sick call request form and a community outreach table during visitation times at the jail.

Following the creation of the CCIG and MGOC, quarterly reports and annual reports were submitted to the Board of Supervisors regularly by the MGOC. In March 2020, the Sheriff's Office unintentionally discontinued reporting medical grievance oversight coordinator reports or activities to the Board of Supervisors due to several reasons, including but not limited to: the response to the COVID-19 pandemic within Custody Operations, the transition of roles and responsibilities of the Health Services Lieutenant and a restriction on the availability of facility access for non-essential personnel. In late 2023, it became evident that medical grievance oversight reports had not been submitted to the Board of Supervisors as directed in 2016, therefore the Sheriff's Office is presenting annual reports for the four (4) year period in which reports were not previously submitted for Board review.

Performance Measure:

N/A

Attachments:

- A) Santa Barbara Sheriff's Office Grievance Review Annual Report 2023
- B) Santa Barbara Sheriff's Office Grievance Review Annual Report 2022
- C) Santa Barbara Sheriff's Office Grievance Review Annual Report 2021
- D) Santa Barbara Sheriff's Office Grievance Review Annual Report 2020

Authored by:

Ryan Sullivan, Custody Commander
Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office