

August 13, 2018

To: The Board of Supervisors: Das Williams, Chair, and Janet Wolf, Joan Hartmann, Peter Adam, and Steve Lavagnino, Vice Chair

Re: Full Implementation of the Assisted Outpatient Treatment Pilot Program

The Board of Supervisors deserves praise for having the vision to launch the pilot program implementing Laura's Law. Dr. Cleghorn and the ACT personnel deserve high praise for successfully running the Pilot Program with such high measurable positive outcomes, both for the individuals whose lives have been changed, and for the County for the huge savings that these successes portend when Laura's Law is fully implemented and expanded.

It is surprising that the evaluation did not estimate the savings due to the lowered incarceration and hospitalization rates. I suggest these figures be obtained and extrapolated. The County could also find out how other counties manage to pay for AOT programs with Medi-Cal and MHSA funds so that in the future, minimal funding will have to come from the General Fund.

Incarceration rates have been reduced from 66% to 54%. Psychiatric emergency services have been reduced by almost one-third, and psychiatric hospitalizations were, incredibly, reduced by more than two-thirds, from 64% to only 18%! These are remarkable outcomes. However, the other counties that have enacted Laura's Law have achieved even more significant results. Santa Barbara County can do the same by fully implementing the Pilot Program.

The genius of the program is that when an individual has been intensively engaged for 90 days and has still not accepted treatment, they are to be referred for court-ordered treatment. This has been shown to be effective, borne out by the statistics from the other counties, which do make court referrals. Yet not one person in Santa Barbara County was referred to the court! Why? There is a logjam in the process on page 5, with no individuals moving on past the initial engagement period to court-ordered treatment. This needs to happen in order for the Pilot Project to give Laura's Law a fair shake and valid trial and to achieve the spectacular outcomes reported by other counties.

There is a tiny mis-statement on page 3. It says the AOT program seeks to reduce utilization of acute services by offering voluntary services "AND/OR" petitioning the court to order participation in such services. It should read "AND" instead of "and/or," because court-ordered treatment is a crucial, essential element of the program. AB1421 clearly says that the court shall be petitioned to order participation in treatment if the individual is not able to be successfully engaged by other means. Court-ordered treatment is not merely an option to be ignored.

Footnote 11 on page 9 says that half of the active cases have remained in the initial engagement part of the program for over 100 days. There are 12 active cases, which means that, according to the guidelines, 6 persons should have been referred to the court. This failure should be remedied immediately so that the Pilot Project will be fully implemented. This will open up spaces for more individuals to benefit from intensive engagement, will give the most treatment-resistant individuals a new path toward recovery, and lead to even better outcomes for the Pilot Project. Congratulations to the Board and Dr. Cleghorn for what has been accomplished so far, with hope for even more spectacular outcomes, Sincerely, Anna Campbell 966-6610 annacampbell@cox.net