

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE



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HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

The Human Services Committee investigated the following departments and agencies:

Aging and Adult Services

- Ombudsman Program

Department of Children's Services

- Foster Care
- Independent Living Program

Transitional Assistance

- Food Stamp Improvement
- Food Stamp Fraud

The committee completed reports on the Ombudsman Program and Foster Care.

DEPARTMENT OF AGING AND ADULT SERVICES

OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

BACKGROUND

Title VII Older Americans Act of 1965 is funded through the State of California and provides oversight assistance to residents in long-term nursing facilities and residential care homes in San Bernardino County. This oversight assistance is provided by trained Ombudsman volunteers who donate their time and service.

Knowledge of the program and Ombudsman duties were known to two Grand Jurors. Their experience was helpful in assessing the program and promoted the investigation.

FINDINGS

There are currently 26 certified Ombudsmen. This figure fluctuates according to the turnover rate. The volunteers serve 58 skilled nursing facilities and 256 residential care homes. The confidentiality and privacy of the residents is protected by the Ombudsman Program. An average of 160 monthly complaints are handled by the program. The turnover rate of Ombudsmen is a concern. Due to the increased longevity of the older population, the assistance provided is becoming less adequate. Continued news coverage and other coverage would encourage a flow of volunteers.

The Ombudsman volunteers are working without appropriate safety communication. A GPS system provided for the volunteers would give needed safety in the field.

Communication between County and State officials is insufficient due to unanswered telephone calls, e-mails and letters.

RECOMMENDATIONS

07-31 INCREASE MEDIA EXPOSURE TO REDUCE TURNOVER RATE OF THE OMBUDSMAN VOLUNTEER.

- 07-32 INSTALL GPS SYSTEMS IN ALL OMBUDSMAN CELL PHONES.

- 07-33 INCREASE COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN STATE AND COUNTY OFFICIALS
 TO ASSURE A CONTINUED AND SUCCESSFUL OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM.

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

FOSTER CARE

BACKGROUND

The Grand Jury looked into Children Services to see if safety and security were a priority for children and County workers. The Grand Jury found that children in Foster Care were visited on a regular schedule and reported as being visited in a timely manner.

FINDINGS

Social workers may use their own phone and/or pager, or County issued phone and pager for communication when making visitations and doing fieldwork. Social workers are often in areas where communication is limited. GPS systems are not used in conjunction with phone use in the field and should be purchased for safety and communication with supervisors and co-workers and law enforcement.

It was reported that the use of "Safe Measures" by department supervisors has improved the reporting percentage of foster care children being seen in a timely manner. "Safe Measures" provides real time information regarding current status of the department, region, unit and individual caseworker. Utilizing the "Safe Measures" program makes it apparent that the reporting problems were in data entry rather than social workers not making contact with foster child. The statistical data of children being seen in a timely manner has improved from 65% to 93%. The current cost for "Safe Measures" program is \$64,000 a year. There is no cost in adding the Social Workers to the "Safe Measures" program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 07-34 PURCHASE GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEMS (GPS) FOR SOCIAL WORKERS' AREA SO THAT THEIR LOCATION CAN BE TRACKED WHEN NEEDED OR ASSISTED BY OTHER STAFF OR LAW ENFORCEMENT IF IN A DANGEROUS SITUATION

- 07-35 ADD SOCIAL WORKERS TO "SAFE MEASURES" PROGRAM.