



**COUNTY OF SAN MATEO**  
Inter-Departmental Correspondence  
County Manager's Office



**Date:** August 31, 2016  
**Board Meeting Date:** October 4, 2016  
**Special Notice / Hearing:** None  
**Vote Required:** Majority

**To:** Honorable Board of Supervisors

**From:** John L. Maltbie, County Manager

**Subject:** Board of Supervisors' Response to the 2015-2016 Civil Grand Jury Report, "Youth in Mental Health Crisis: What Lies Behind the Emergency Room Doors?"

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve the Board of Supervisors' response to the 2015-2016 Grand Jury Report, "Youth in Mental Health Crisis: What Lies Behind the Emergency Room Doors?"

**BACKGROUND:**

On July 18, 2016, the 2015-2016 San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury issued a report titled "Youth in Mental Health Crisis: What Lies Behind the Emergency Room Doors?" The Board of Supervisors is required to submit comments on the findings and recommendations pertaining to the matters over which it has some decision making authority within 90 days. The Board's response to the report is due to the Civil Grand Jury's Presiding Judge, the Honorable Joseph C. Scott, by October 17, 2016.

**DISCUSSION:**

The Grand Jury made six findings and two recommendations in its report. Each finding and recommendation, along with County staff's recommended response, is set forth below:

**FINDINGS**

**Finding 1:**

San Mateo County has contracted with Mills-Peninsula Hospitals since 1995 for the provision of inpatient psychiatric beds for children and adults. Pursuant to the current agreement, Mills-Peninsula Hospitals has designated 13 inpatient psychiatric beds for children at the Mills Health Center in San Mateo, with the flexibility to add up to four additional inpatient psychiatric beds for children on an "as-needed" basis.

**Response:**

Agree.

**Finding 2:**

BHRS is responsible for administering San Mateo County's Contract with Mills-Peninsula Hospitals. Pursuant to the Contract, Mills-Peninsula Hospitals are required to regularly provide information regarding work performed under the Contract.

**Response:**

Agree.

**Finding 3:**

Numerous youth residing in San Mateo County who experience a psychiatric emergency requiring inpatient care are being transferred to facilities outside the County rather than being admitted to Mills Health Center.

**Response:**

Agree.

**Finding 4:**

Mills-Peninsula Hospitals were unable to explain the disparity in the admissions rates for youth patients from SMMC vs. MPMC. Mills-Peninsula Hospitals also were unable to provide the Grand Jury with requested data relating to the provision of its services to the County generally. This data is critical in determining, among other things, the true costs of youth inpatient psychiatric care, whether the contracted care is being provided economically, whether additional San Mateo adolescents could be accommodated at Mills Health Center as inpatients, and whether there are sufficient psychiatric inpatient beds for adolescents in San Mateo County.

**Response:**

The County cannot agree or disagree with the finding since matters pertaining to Mills-Peninsula Hospital are not under the control of the County.

**Finding 5:**

The Grand Jury requested any formal reports with data or details relating to the services provided under the contract with San Mateo County. Neither Mills-Peninsula Hospitals nor BHRS could locate and produce such reports. It is unclear whether such reports were ever provided to BHRS by Mills-Peninsula Hospitals in the past or were even requested by BHRS.

**Response:**

Partially disagree. BHRS receives a Treatment Authorization Request for each youth admitted to their inpatient unit. BHRS has data for inpatient services on the number of treatment admissions and discharges and length of stay. BHRS also has data on the number of 5150's admitted to Mills-Peninsula Hospitals.

As mentioned in Finding 4, in regards to matters pertaining to Mills-Peninsula Hospitals, which is not under the control of the County, the County cannot agree or disagree with the finding as it pertains to Mills-Peninsula Hospitals

**Finding 6:**

The Grand Jury also requested detailed information from BHRS and Mills-Peninsula Hospitals regarding the provision of psychiatric emergency services to children from 2012 to present. BHRS provided detailed information regarding SMMC, but neither BHRS nor Mills-Peninsula Hospitals provided the same information regarding the provision of psychiatric emergency services to youth at MPMC or Mills Health Center.

**Response:**

Partially disagree. BHRS contracts with Mills-Peninsula Hospitals for inpatient psychiatric services and not for psychiatric emergency services. Therefore there is no contractual requirement placed upon Mills-Peninsula Hospitals for reporting psychiatric emergency services data. As mentioned in Finding 4 and Finding 5, in regards to matters pertaining to Mills-Peninsula Hospitals, which is not under the control of the County, the County cannot agree or disagree with the finding as it pertains to Mills-Peninsula Hospitals

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Recommendation 1:**

The Board of Supervisors should direct Behavioral Health and Recovery Services to request and regularly track data sufficient to understand the disparity in the admission rates of youth patients referred to Mills Health Center from SMMC vs. MPMC. Such data should be submitted by Mills-Peninsula Hospitals to Behavioral Health and Recovery Services at least semi-annually and is recommended, in addition to the data categories requested by the Grand Jury in this investigation (listed on p. 13), to include information such as:

- The daily number of youth psychiatric inpatients at the Mills Health Center facility
- The insurance status of all youth who are discharged to out-of-county facilities for inpatient psychiatric care
- The reason(s) why a youth referred to Mills Health Center by SMMC for inpatient admission is unable to be admitted to Mills Health Center. These reasons might include, for example, whether there are no available beds, if the youth is otherwise not qualified to be treated at Mills Health Center, or if a physician at Mills Health Center does not or cannot accept the referred patient.

**Response:**

The recommendation requires further analysis. BHRS is the Mental Health Plan for Medi-Cal beneficiaries. Reporting to BHRS on the status of privately insured patients would constitute a violation of HIPPA rules protecting patient health information. Related to inpatient services provided to its beneficiaries, BHRS will review its current information and will implement modifications if it is determined that such modifications will improve oversight and planning to meet the needs of beneficiaries.

**Recommendation 2:**

The Board of Supervisors should direct Behavioral Health and Recovery Services to submit a report to the Board to be presented at a public meeting no later than December 31, 2016, explaining the disparity in the admission rates.

**Response:**

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable. The BHRS contract with Mills-Peninsula Hospitals is limited by the amount of the contract and the daily rate for inpatient services. Furthermore, the disparity by admissions from the psychiatric emergency services at SMMC and Mills-Peninsula Hospital is understood to be, in large part, a reflection of the insurance status of the patient population. While Mills-Peninsula Hospitals service patients who are privately insured in addition to those on Medi-Cal, SMMCs population is largely Medi-Cal. Bed capacity for the Medi-Cal beneficiaries is limited, thus requiring BHRS to seek services at hospitals outside the County.

Acceptance of the report contributes to the Shared Vision 2025 outcome of a Collaborative Community by ensuring that all Grand Jury findings and recommendations are thoroughly reviewed by the appropriate County departments and that, when appropriate, process improvements are made to improve the quality and efficiency of services provided to the public and other agencies.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no Net County Cost associated with accepting this report.