

RESPONSE ACCOUNTABILITY



RESPONSE ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

MEMBERS

Kent Fogleman, Chair

Julie C. Crites

Jesus C. Morga

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In past years, each Grand Jury's Final Report has provided many recommendations to various governmental departments, designed to either improve operations or save taxpayer dollars. Some times these departments have agreed with the recommendations and so indicate in their written responses, along with their intentions to adopt and implement the recommendations made by the Grand Jury. However, currently there is no policy or procedure in place that mandates they do so. Consequently they are under no obligation, other than public pressure after the Final Report is made public, to implement the recommendations, even if they agreed with them. Based on a survey conducted by the 2009-2010 Grand Jury, it was clear that some departments failed to follow through with their agreed to responses.

The 2009-2010 Grand Jury formed the Response Accountability Committee to assist in this regard. The main purpose of this committee is to review the responses to previous Grand Jury's recommendations and ensure that these responses have been complied with by the various departments.

In order to continue this accountability, the 2009-2010 Grand Jury would like to see this committee carried over each year and become a permanent part of the Final Report. It is each Grand Jury's responsibility to confirm that responses were implemented as agreed to, otherwise there is no accountability.

The reports that follow represent the efforts by this Grand Jury to confirm whether past Grand Juries' recommendations were implemented as promised.

DEPARTMENT OF AGING AND ADULT SERVICES

BACKGROUND

The 2008-2009 Grand Jury interviewed Administrators of the Department of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) to obtain an overview of the DAAS and, specifically, Elder Abuse Program. This Grand Jury learned that reported cases of elder abuse had been increasing in San Bernardino County over the past decade. While the cases of elder abuse were on the increase, state funds to investigate complaints of this nature were on the decline. This Grand Jury also felt that even with the declining funds, it was still imperative that the County's outreach program for reporting of elder abuse be enhanced. Based on their findings, the 2008-2009 Grand Jury recommended that the DAAS provide and display at all County Senior Citizen Centers, large visible 11X17 posters that provide information pertaining to the reporting of elder abuse. The County responded by agreeing to implement this recommendation. They projected a completion date of October 31, 2009, when these posters would be placed at all County Senior Citizens Centers.

METHODOLOGY

During the first two weeks of March, 2010, Grand Jury members of this committee visited various County Senior Citizens Centers including locations in Victorville, Apple Valley, Ontario, Rialto, Chino, Redlands and Fontana to determine if this program had been implemented. In addition, Administrators of the DAAS were interviewed by committee members via a telephone conference call on March 18, 2010.

FINDINGS

1. None of the County Senior Citizens Centers visited by Grand Jury committee members during the first two weeks of March 2010 had been provided these educational posters by the DAAS on reporting of elder abuse.

2. When contacted by Grand Jury Committee members on March 18, 2010, Administrators of the DAAS reported that they were unable to meet the October 31, 2009, deadline due to lack of funds to pay for this program. In addition, the person in charge of implementing this program had been on leave and no progress had taken place due to this absence.

3. Efforts were made by the DAAS to try and obtain these educational posters free through various state agencies, as well as the State Attorney General's Office, without any success. These posters were finally created in-house and were completed in February, 2010. DAAS personnel started distributing the posters on March 17, 2010, with completion of their distribution to all County Senior Citizens Centers by March 24, 2010.

4. County Senior Citizens Centers were once again visited by Grand Jury Committee members, including the Victorville, Apple Valley, Ontario, Rialto, Chino, Redlands and Fontana Centers at various times on March 19, 22, 23 and 24, 2010. The 11X17 posters, one in English and one in Spanish, with information regarding the reporting of elderly abuse, had been placed on the bulletin boards at all of these locations.

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

BACKGROUND

The Facilities Management Department is responsible for building maintenance activities, custodial services and ground services for county owned and leased buildings and parking facilities. The Department maintains over 3 million square feet of building space in approximately 260 sites. The Department currently is staffed by 118 employees including 16 Supervisors. The Department last year issued approximately 30 contracts for custodial work and 40 general contracts.

During investigations by the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 Grand Juries a number of recommendations were made with regards to Custodial Contracts and their compliance. The recommendations included providing adequate staffing to monitor contract compliance, paying particular attention to background checks, periodic reviews of existing contracts, checking license status, establishing reasonable distances that a site supervisor can be from a site, and modifying vendor contracts to allow communications between employees and supervisors to include use of either cell phones or pagers. All of these recommendations have received a response from the county agreeing to implement these recommendations.

METHODOLOGY

On February 23, 2010 an interview was conducted by committee members with the Director of Facilities Management and the Deputy Director of Facilities Management. The committee was supplied with a Department Organizational Flow Chart that showed the personnel in each division and their Supervisor. The committee was further supplied with Facilities Maintenance Inspection Checklists of all Contract Buildings for the County. These Checklists showed the Building, Address, Date of Check and Rating for the Inspection. The Checklist included checks on Insurances, MSDS, Supplies and Logbooks.

FINDINGS

1. The Supervisor of Custodians has been assigned to monitor and review contract compliance. The Department also uses a Quarterly Vendor Contract Checklist to check on work performed by the contracted vendors.
2. Contract workers are assigned a supervisor by Facilities Management. Workers are either accompanied by county employees at all times or have passed a background check before starting work for the county.
3. Modifications to the standard contract language have been implemented to allow communications between supervisors and workers by cell phones or pagers.

COMMENDATION

The current Director of Facilities Management assumed his position in December 2008. He is to be commended for his efforts in structuring a department that has been reduced in manpower by 22% over the past two years from 150 to 118 employees. The implementation of the 9/80 work schedule is the kind of innovative thinking required under the current conditions of budget and manpower cuts. Maintaining, renovating, and upgrading the county's numerous facilities while providing a safe and clean environment for customers and employees is the goal of the Facilities Management Department and this is being accomplished while implementing various recommendations from several sources.

SENIOR HOME REPAIR PROGRAM

BACKGROUND

The 2007-2008 Grand Jury reviewed the Senior Home Repair Program administered by the Department of Community Development and Housing. This program provides grants up to a maximum of \$5,000.00 for qualified applicants to have repairs done to their homes. At that time, the work required at an applicant's home was performed by two-man teams, which were usually County employees. The two-man teams, supervised by the County Facilities Management Department, were paid at the rate of \$45.00 per hour per employee. The billing at this rate began at the start of the day and did not end until the employees returned to the County facility. Additional charges included mileage, which was paid at the rate of \$.62 cents per mile, and the cost of all material used to complete the required work.

In its Final Report, the 2007-2008 Grand Jury recommended that the Department of Community Housing and Development review the necessity of routinely sending two-man teams to each project. The County's response was as follows:

“The County is currently studying this and several other options with the goal of reducing costs and performing more services for each eligible homeowner within the \$5,000-per-case limit. The Department plans to complete this review and develop recommendations prior to the end of the 2008-2009 fiscal year.”

METHODOLOGY

On May 6, 2010, Grand Jury members conducted a telephone conference call with the Director of the Department of Community Development and Housing. The purpose of this interview was to obtain an update on the Senior Home Repair Program. Grand Jury members also reviewed the Community Development Block Grant Senior Home

Repair Program Restructuring Recommendation that was presented to the Board of Supervisors for approval at their July 14, 2009, meeting.

FINDINGS

1. The Senior Home Repair Program was revised in the summer of 2009. The revised program was approved by the Board of Supervisors at their meeting of July 14, 2009.
2. The home rehabilitation work required at the home of a qualified homeowner is now being completed by a licensed Contractor. The Department of Community Development and Housing estimates a possible overall savings of 45% by utilizing licensed Contractors.
3. Staff members of the Department of Community Development and Housing provide the quality control inspections on the rehabilitation work that is completed by the Contractors.

SUMMARY

After a review of this revised program, it is evident that the Department of Community Development and Housing exceeded the recommendation made by the 2007-2008 Grand Jury in their Final Report. This Grand Jury committee feels that this Department is administrating this program with the thought of providing this very much needed service to as many qualified homeowners as possible.



San Bernardino County Grand Jury
351 North Arrowhead Avenue, Room 200, Courthouse
San Bernardino, CA 92415-0243
(909) 387-3820
www.sbcounty.gov/grandjury