



HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of the Health, Education, and Social Services Committee of the 2014-2015 Grand Jury pursuant to California Penal Code §§925 and 933.5 to observe, investigate, and report on citizen complaints of health, education, and social service activities, safeguard the public from misfeasance, malfeasance, and nonfeasance and recommend reasonable action addressing related concerns of the community. It is the Committee's concern not only to make the citizens of Kern County aware of its findings but also make long-term positive impact and economic recommendations on behalf of the community.

Ella Abrams, Chairman
Gary Chaffin
Richard Frank
Earlene Hightower

HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

The Health, Education, and Social Services Committee has written and published the following reports:

- America's Job Center
- El Tejon Unified School District
- Kern Adult Literacy Council
- Kern County Aging & Adult Services Department
- Kern County Child Support Services
- Kern County Farm and Home Advisors
- Kern County General Services – Graffiti Removal Program
- Kern County Department of Human Services – Adoptions
- Kern County Department of Human Services – CalWORKs
- Kern County Veterans Service Department
- Tehachapi Health Care District
- Valley Fever

The Health, Education, and Social Services Committee received and responded to 9 complaints.

Additionally, the Health, Education, and Social Services Committee visited the elections office, the K-9 training site, the Kern Regional Center, the Kern County Crime Lab, China Lake Naval Weapons Center, the Norris Road Sheriff's Facility which included a helicopter tour. Some members visited various prisons and jails. Others served on various additional committees such as: Public Relations and Kern County Sheriff's Department Emergency Services. There was training in Visalia and meetings of Kern County Grand Jury Association.

AMERICA’S JOB CENTER FORMERLY CAREER SERVICES CENTER

PREFACE:

The Mission Statement of America’s Job Center (Center) states, *“To provide expertise and leadership to ensure that the workforce development system prepares people for current and future jobs that improve the economic conditions of the community”*. The Center serves Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties.

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

Penal Code §933.6 authorizes a grand jury to conduct an inquiry into non-profit corporations receiving tax dollars. Recent news articles discussing employment rates caught the attention of the 2014-2015 Kern County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) and prompted this investigation.

PROCESS:

The Health, Education, and Social Services Committee (Committee) began the investigation by doing related internet research. The Committee conducted an extensive question and answer session with the staff and toured the Center located at 1600 East Belle Terrace, Bakersfield, CA 93307.

FACTS:

The Center provides numerous no fee services and training programs for job seekers and employers.

- A. The State of California, Employment Development Department, Employer Training Resource (ETR), and Workforce Investment Act Administrator are all mandated to partner with and operate the local One Stop centers in which all services are available.

- B. Partners are as follows:
 - 1. Employment Development Department
 - 2. Kern High School District
 - 3. Bakersfield College
 - 4. Bakersfield Adult School
 - 5. Department of Rehabilitation
 - 6. Taft College
 - 7. Kern County Department of Human Services
 - 8. Mexican American Opportunity Foundation
 - 9. Cerro Coso Community College

10. Proteus Inc.
11. Kern County Mental Health Department
12. Community Connection for Child Care

C. Locations

1. Comprehensive One Stop Centers
 - Bakersfield
 - Delano
2. Affiliate Offices
 - Lake Isabella
 - Lamont
 - Mojave
 - Oildale
 - Ridgecrest
 - Shafter
 - Taft
 - Mammoth Lakes
 - Walker
 - Bishop

D. ETR Funding Streams

1. Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Funds
 - Youth
 - Adult
 - Dislocated Workers
2. Department of Labor Grants - National Farmworker Jobs Program
3. State Grants
 - Jobs Driven National Emergency Grant
 - Central Valley Infrastructure Employment Project
 - Workforce Strategies to serve long term unemployed
 - La Cooperativa WIA Dislocated Agriculture Worker Program
 - Central California Workforce Collaborative National Emergency Grant
 - Public Safety Re-Alignment Grant
4. County Grants
 - AB109 - Public Safety Re-Alignment
 - CalWORKs - California Work Opportunity & Re-Alignment
 - PWEX - Work Experience Program for CalWORKs recipients

E. Job Seeker Services

1. Staff Assisted Job Search
 - Open to everyone, available during business hours
 - Resource Room with internet access, telephones, copiers, and fax
 - Workshops, Recruitments, and Job Forums available

2. Staff Assisted Job Search
 - Must meet the WIA program minimum eligibility requirements to enroll
 - Must take a Work Keys assessment
 - Job search assistance – Resume, Interview Skills, Applications,
 - Must be a resident of Kern, Inyo, or Mono Counties
 - Case Manager to assist in job search
 - Work experience opportunities available – Earn While You Learn

3. Training Opportunities
 - Must take the Work Keys and Career Path Workshop assessments
 - Must meet eligibility requirements

4. Professional clothing is provided, if needed.

F. Guide To Employer Services

1. Services and Resources
 - Post job openings on the State sponsored website - www.caljobs.ca.gov
 - Pre-screen, refer and coordinate interviews with qualified job candidates
 - Hold on-site recruitments for open positions
 - Announce job opportunities at Job Forums, Job Corner (TV program), website and Facebook page

2. Facility Use
 - Classrooms, conference rooms, cafeteria, outdoor patio space available
 - Can be reserved for recruitments, interviews, testing, orientations, etc.

3. Financial Incentives
 - No cost for services
 - On-the-Job Training Program - hire job candidates and save money
 - Work Opportunity Tax Credit

4. Competitive Solutions
 - Layoff aversion strategies - Rapid Response Team to assist
 - Labor Market Information

G. Features of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act emphasize:

1. Market relevant skills attainment.
2. Sector strategy to ensure training is relevant to the current job market.
3. Help for those people with barriers to employment.

FINDINGS:

- F1. The Center is well-organized and clean.
- F2. Modern technology is evident throughout the Center. Social media is utilized to spread knowledge of the programs.
- F3. Up-to-date printing on-site allows the Center to produce professional quality materials.
- F4. Veterans and their spouses receive priority over all other participants in any program.
- F5. The Center targets industrial clusters according to high demand and high wages, e.g., energy and natural resources, logistics and manufacturing, etc.
- F6. Employer-led public/private partnerships close skills gaps and increase regional prosperity.
- F7. The inventory of professional clothing was limited and dated.

COMMENTS:

The Committee was impressed by the quality of the environment and the interest shown by the staff. They showed a deep understanding of the problems that clients are facing.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- R1. Efforts should be made to solicit more donations to stock the professional clothing collection. (Finding 7)
- R2. America's Job Center should continue their outstanding service to the community. (Findings 1, 2, and 3)

NOTES:

- America's Job Center should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.
- Persons wishing to receive an email notification of newly released reports may sign up at: www.co.kern.kern.ca.us/grandjury.
- Present and past Kern County Grand Jury Final Reports and Responses can be accessed on the Kern County Grand Jury website: www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury.

RESPONSE REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS

**PRESIDING JUDGE
KERN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 212
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

**CC: FOREPERSON
KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 600
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

Kern County Board of Supervisors
Response to Grand Jury Final Report
America's Job Center

Response to Findings:

The Board of Supervisors notes that the Grand Jury's findings are correct.

Response to Recommendations:

R1: *Efforts should be made to solicit more donations to stock the professional clothing collection.*

We concur with the Grand Jury's recommendation to solicit more donations to stock the professional clothing collection. Since the Grand Jury's tour of the East Belle Terrace facility, America's Job Center of California (AJCC) staff has received donations of both men and women's professional clothing appropriate for interviews. Staff has also reached out to stores at the Tejon Outlet Mall to seek donations of returned clothing in order to obtain more consistent donations.

R2: *America's Job Center should continue their outstanding service to the community.*

We concur with the Grand Jury's recommendation to continue the AJCC's outstanding service to the community.

EL TEJON UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

PREFACE:

Tucked into San Emigdio Mountains is the small El Tejon Unified School District (District) serving approximately 730 students. An elementary district was founded in 1876 and has grown into a unified school district that now includes: El Tejon Continuation School, Mountain Communities Family Resource Center, Frazier Park Elementary School, El Tejon Middle School and Frazier Mountain High School.

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

The 2014-2015 Kern County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) received multiple complaints concerning a wide range of concerns about the District Board Members and past District Superintendents of the El Tejon Unified School District. Penal Code §933.5 authorizes the Grand Jury to investigate and report findings. These complaints were assigned to the Health, Education and Social Services Committee (Committee).

PROCESS:

The inquiry began by doing internet research including watching video recordings of meetings of the District's Board of Trustees (Board). Many officials and citizens were interviewed by the Committee. Local newspaper articles were also examined.

FACTS:

The El Tejon Unified School District serves kindergarten through 12th-grade students in the mountain communities of the Tejon Pass, which include Frazier Park, Lebec, and Pine Mountain Club in the southern mountains of Kern County. Lockwood Valley is part of the District even though it is within Ventura County, and Gorman students in Los Angeles County are accepted into the high school by special permit. Frazier Mountain High School was established in 1995 after the unified school district was formed.

Figures show the District had a total of 1,433 students enrolled in grades K through 12 in 1996. In 2000, there were 1,748 students. In 2010, the number dropped to 1,123 and by 2012 the enrollment dropped to 980, which is a loss of 758 students. Board Members stated the October 2014 enrollment to be approximately 731 students.

California has an open enrollment policy, which means a child can attend any school in the district, including charter schools, as long as there is space available. Some districts will allow a child to attend a school in a neighboring district.

In 2013, the Peak to Peak Mountain Charter School left the District and opened under the Maricopa Unified School District. This resulted in a loss of average daily attendance (ADA) for the District resulting in a loss of revenue.

Many students choose to attend schools within other school districts causing a loss of ADA.

The 2012-13 State Funded Base Revenue Limit for El Tejon Unified School District was \$5,689.33 per student ADA.

Because of the District's financial situation, money saving measures were initiated:

- No transportation for school athletics
- Bus pass was required for home to school transportation
 - \$80 for the year
 - \$40 for the semester
- Staff layoffs
- School maintenance repair projects were placed on hold

The closing of the middle school was also considered as an option but not initiated.

All school board meetings and actions of the board must follow the Ralph M. Brown Act and California Education Code.

FINDINGS:

- F1. District communications were not functioning well and caused concerns for the public:
- Audio of recorded Board meetings is not user friendly
 - YouTube video feeds of Board meetings are incomplete
 - Minutes of Board meetings and agendas are provided in English only
 - District Newsletters were not found by the Committee or made available
 - Information regarding the new Superintendent was not made available to the public on the website, YouTube or in a press release
- F2. Board of Trustees actions seems to be questionable:
- Inconsistent Board Member statements indicated that the Brown Act and Williams Settlement Agreement may have been violated by not addressing all complaints equally and in a timely manner
 - Robert's Rules of Order or equivalent are not currently being used at Board meetings
 - Vision Statement and Mission Statement are not current
 - Recusal protocol requiring a person recusing themselves to leave the immediate area before discussion or action begins is not being followed
 - No captions are listed under photographs to identify Board Members on the District's web page

- The timing of open and closed sessions Board meetings is not in the public's interest
- F3. Currently the District communications are not informing the public of the actions of the Board.
- F4. Failure to use Robert's Rules of Order resulted in chaos during Board meetings which led to an unproductive work environment.
- F5. Holding closed Board sessions first results in the public being left waiting for hours for the open sessions, and the meetings have gone late into the night.
- F6. Members of the public were upset with the Board's failure to address their concerns during the public comment session and over solutions offered to District's problems.
- F7. As evidenced by Board Member interviews and Board meeting minutes, some Board Members seems to have personal agendas that do not consider the needs of the entire District.
- F8. Board Members are unclear as to what is considered a conflict of interest regarding their ability to vote on raises/stipends and other related issues that affect their immediate family members.
- F9. Loss of student enrollment has placed a financial burden on the District in meeting all of its statutory obligations.
- F10. Home to school bus pass fees are not properly collected and accounted for. Some Board Members stated that the fee is only voluntary.

COMMENTS:

The Committee would like to thank the past and present Superintendents as well as the members of the School Board who cooperated with us in this investigation. The Committee has some concerns that not all the information given by the interviewees was truthful.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- R1. The Superintendent and Board Members should be trained in communication and meeting skills. This would allow the Board members and the public an opportunity to express and work out concerns. (Finding 1)
- R2. A Board Retreat with the Superintendent should be offered to develop communications and cooperation amongst themselves on an ongoing basis. (Findings 1 and 2)

- R3 Robert's Rules of Order, the Brown Act, the Williams Settlement Agreement and Board Ethics training should be completed by all board members. (Findings 2 and 4)
- R4. Open session of Board meetings should be held at a reasonable time to allow public access and input prior to going into closed session. (Finding 5)
- R5. The public should be allowed adequate time to express their concerns in open session at Board meetings. Board Members should address respectfully the public regarding their concerns. (Findings 2, 5, and 6)
- R6. Board Members should take into consideration the needs of the entire District. (Finding 7)
- R7. The District should consult legal counsel regarding the Brown Act on conflict of interest and personal concerns. (Findings 2 and 8)
- R8. The Board should address the public's concerns to determine why so many students have left the District in hopes of re-enrolling those students. This would help place the District on a better financial standing. (Finding 9)
- R9. The District should follow their adopted administrative policy concerning bus pass fees, so the fees are equally and equitably applied to all students who ride the bus. (Finding 10)

NOTES:

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DISCLAIMER:

This report was issued by the Grand Jury with the exception of two jurors pursuant to Penal Code §916.2(a). These jurors were excluded from all parts of the inquiry/investigation (including interviews), deliberations, writing and approval of this report.

The Honorable John Somers, Presiding Judge
Kern County Superior Court
1415 Truxtun Avenue, Suite 212
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Re: Grand Jury Investigation

On March 19, 2015 the Kern County Grand Jury released a report based on an investigation of the El Tejon Unified School District. The Grand Jury issued ten (10) findings and made nine (9) recommendations. The following is the El Tejon Unified School District (ETUSD) Board of Trustees' response to this report.

Due to the lack of specific information (time frame, incidents, examples) regarding the findings of the Grand Jury it is difficult to address the findings. The findings are vague and include "the feeling" of the panel. Without specific information regarding the findings, a clear and concise response to some of the findings is difficult. Some of the findings seem, due to lack of information supplied by the report, to reflect findings related to actions of previous ETUSD Board of Trustees, previous lack of information and functions of previous Board meetings.

In response to the Findings:

- Finding 1: District communications were not functioning well and caused concerns for the public: The District partially disagrees with this finding. ETUSD was one of a very few local small districts that were attempting to stream their board meetings "live" and then have it uploaded to YouTube. While this process may not have been smoothly operated it did show that the District was attempting to keep the public informed of District decisions. Individual school sites send out newsletters and therefore in this small District no District newsletter is sent out. In regards to new Superintendent information both news media had individual interviews with the Superintendent immediately following the hiring.
- Finding 2: Board of Trustees actions seems to be questionable: Without specific information regarding facts behind these findings the District partially disagrees with the finding. In areas of recusal protocol, the Board is aware of the protocol and if a question arises consults with Schools Legal Service to get advisement. In regards to Vision Statement and Mission Statement the current Mission Statement is written so that it still is relevant for today's District. In regards to the timing of open and closed sessions of Board meetings, due to the location of the District and the fact that many community members work outside of the greater Frazier Park area an earlier start time would likely prohibit some community members from attending.

- Finding 3: Currently the District communications are not informing the public of the actions of the Board. Due to the word "currently" the District disagrees with this finding. "Currently" and since January of 2014 the District has made extensive use of its automatic calling system, the Superintendent has had a small news conference and all Board meeting minutes are posted per requirements.
- Finding 4: Failure to use Robert's Rules of Order resulted in chaos during Board meetings which led to an unproductive work environment. The District partially disagrees with this finding. Some Board meetings, even working under Robert's Rules of Order, due to the nature of the meeting can get emotionally driven. The Board uses Robert's Rules of Order but due to controversial issues some meetings did not run as smoothly as the Board would have preferred.
- Finding 5: Holding closed Board sessions first results in the public being left waiting for hours for the open sessions and the meetings have gone late into the night. The District agrees with this finding. This scenario is the exception to the rule as most Board meetings are held according to times posted.
- Finding 6: Members of the public were upset with the Board's failure to address their concerns during the public comment sessions and over solutions offered to District's problems. The District disagrees with this finding. Board meetings are run under the direction of Education Code guidelines. Members of the public are given an opportunity to address the Board. The Board receives input but as Education Code allows sometimes no comment from the Board is made regarding these comments. The Board then must make a decision that they, as elected representatives of the public, see in the best interest of the District. Sometimes these decisions do not make everyone in the public happy.
- Finding 7: As evidenced by Board Member interviews and Board meeting minutes, some Board Members seem to have personal agendas that do not consider the needs of the entire District. The District disagrees with this finding. No evidence was given so that a proper response could be given. But a general statement of each Board member runs for and is elected based on their desire to make a difference in the education of the communities students. Board members, like every other human being, have their own thoughts of what is in the best interest of the District.
- Finding 8: Board Members are unclear as to what is considered a conflict of interest regarding their ability to vote on raises/stipends and other related issues that affect their immediate family members. The District partially disagrees. A Board Member, especially when first elected, may not know

all the regulations regarding conflict of interest. The Board consults with Schools Legal Service when conflict of interest questions arise.

Finding 9: Loss of student enrollment has placed a financial burden on the District in meeting its entire statutory obligation. The District agrees.

Finding 10: Home to school bus pass fees are not properly collected and accounted for. Some Board Members stated that the fee is only voluntary. The District partially disagrees. All fees are properly accounted for.

Recommendation 1: The Superintendent and Board Members should be trained in communication and meeting skills. This would allow the Board Members and the public an opportunity to express and work out concerns. The District has implemented this recommendation. Prior to the release of the report this Board and Superintendent began working on ways to improve communication with the public. The District uses an automatic calling system to communicate information regarding specific school site and District information. The Superintendent has held a mini news conference with both local media outlets, has established a working relationship with these outlets to ensure communication is delivered to the public and holds public meetings to discuss Board decisions with the general public. Board of Trustees contact information is posted on the District's website.

Recommendation 2: A Board Retreat with the Superintendent should be offered to develop communications and cooperation amongst themselves on an ongoing basis. The recommendation has not been implemented but the idea is being discussed.

Recommendation 3: Robert's Rules of Order, the Brown Act, the Williams Settlement Agreement and Board Ethics training should be completed by all Board Members. The recommendation has been implemented. The current Board of Trustees have attended trainings both locally and state conferences regarding Board Ethics, the Brown Act (as well as being given informational material regarding the Brown Act each year) and access to other publications and information provided by the California School Board Association. This Board has discussed and put into place procedures that address the proper functions of a Board meeting.

Recommendation 4: Open session of Board meetings should be held at a reasonable time to allow public access and input prior to going into closed session. The recommendation will not be implemented because the recommendation is not warranted. The Board of Trustees' monthly meetings are held once a month on the second Thursday. The standard agenda calls for the closed session to be held at 6:00pm with the open session beginning at 7:00pm. Due to the location of the District and the fact that many community

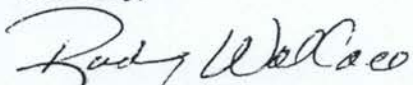
members work outside of the greater Frazier Park area an earlier start time would likely prohibit some community members from attending.

- Recommendation 5: The public should be allowed adequate time to express their concerns in open session at Board meetings. Board Members should address respectfully the public regarding their concerns. The recommendation will not be implemented as the District was already following guidelines to address this issue. The Board of Trustees follows the California Education Code in regards to the publics' right to address the Board. At each meeting the Board president reads a statement that informs the public of the ability to address the Board.
- Recommendation 6: Board Members should take into consideration the needs of the entire District. The recommendation has been implemented. Each Board member feels free to express their opinions on issues relating to the District. Discussions between the Board members are professional.
- Recommendation 7: The District should consult legal counsel regarding the Brown Act on conflict of interest and personal concerns. The recommendation has been implemented. The Board of Trustees utilizes the legal advice from Schools Legal Service as a resource in regards to possible conflict of interest situations.
- Recommendation 8: The Board should address the public's concerns to determine why so many students have left the District in hopes of re-enrolling those students. This would help place the District on a better financial standing. The recommendation has been implemented. The Board has expressed concern and is looking into reasons for the declining enrollment of the District. Many factors have led to the declining enrollment in the District: an aging population of the community, the state-wide economic downturn which has forced some families to relocate instead of commuting and the opening of other educational options for parents of the District.
- Recommendation 9: The District should follow their adopted administrative policy concerning bus pass fees, so the fees are equally and equitable applied to all students who ride the bus. The recommendation has been implemented. The Board has recently changed the Board Policy in which they no longer will charge students to ride the bus.

This response was approved by the El Tejon Unified School District Board of Trustees at their Regularly scheduled meeting on June 11, 2015.

The ETUSD Board of Trustees respectfully submits this response to the Kern County Grand Jury. If you have any further questions feel free to contact Rodney Wallace, ETUSD Superintendent, at the District Office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rodney Wallace".

Rodney Wallace

Superintendent

El Tejon Unified School District

Cc: Kern County Grand Jury
1415 Truxtun Avenue, Suite 600
Bakersfield, CA 93301

FARM AND HOME ADVISORS KERN COUNTY ADVISORS

PREFACE:

Agriculture is a key industry within Kern County and the State. This industry provides food and related products for people and promotes economic development. California has crops valued at approximately \$30 billion per year.

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

Penal Code §933.05 authorizes a grand jury to investigate agencies that use county money. The last time a grand jury inquired into the Farm and Home Advisors was ten years ago. All services offered by the Farm and Home Advisors are free and have a direct bearing on the economic health of Kern County.

PROCESS:

The Health, Education, and Social Services Committee (Committee) of the 2014-2015 Kern County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) began the inquiry by reading a previous Grand Jury report. Online research provided additional knowledge. The Committee visited the offices and research laboratories of the Farm and Home Advisors located at 1031 South Mt. Vernon Avenue. An extensive interview was followed by a tour of the facilities.

BACKGROUND:

A. Historical Development

1. The Morrill Act of 1862
 - Established Land-Grant Universities
 - Provided public education including agriculture and mechanics
2. The Hatch Act of 1887
 - Authorized and funded agricultural experiment stations
 - Required research to be related to agriculture
3. Smith-Lever Act of 1914
 - Established Cooperative Extensions
 - Coupled research with application at a county level

B. Goals of Farm and Home Advisors

1. Agriculture must be productive, efficient in use of resources, and it must not harm the environment.
2. The goal is attained by research, education, and regulation.

FACTS:

A. The University of California has a Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) which includes the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE). The ANR and UCCE work hand in hand with the industry to enhance agricultural production.

B. The ANR's current objective is to ensure the health of:

- Food systems
- Environments
- Communities
- Californians

C. The ANR Staffing for 2014

Locally based Cooperative Extension Advisors and Specialists	200
Local offices throughout California	57
Campus-based Cooperative Extension Specialists	130
Research and Extension Centers	9
Statewide programs	6
Affiliated academic researchers in 40 departments at 3 colleges and 1 professional school	700
UCCE advisors based and residing in Kern County	11

D. Funding for the UCCE

1. Advisor salaries are paid by the University of California
2. Facilities and local support paid by Kern County includes:
 - Office space
 - Secretarial support
 - Mechanic/Field Technician
 - Transportation for field calls

E. County Advisors are expected to:

- Conduct research
- Conduct educational programs

- Act as consultants
- Coordinate and advise 4-H Youth Clubs
- “*Virtually all services are provided without a fee,*” according to the County Director and Farm Advisor

F. Research is paid for by money outside of the UCCE system such as

- Commodity boards
- Government agencies
- Private companies
- Endowments

G. Funding of the Farm and Home Advisors

- Kern County provides 14% - 17% of funding
- The Kern County portion is decreasing while the UCCE portion is increasing

FINDINGS:

- F1. There is harmonious cooperation between UCCE and Kern County personnel.
- F2. Many pamphlets and brochures are available to the public through a well-organized distribution system.
- F3. Topics range from growing ornamental plants at home to large-acreage crops.
- F4. The decreased funding contributed by Kern County causes support services to lag behind.

COMMENTS:

The Committee commends the personnel of the Farm and Home Advisors for being well informed and courteous.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- R1. The cooperative work of Kern County personnel and the University of California Board of Regents should be continued. (Finding 1)
- R2. The Farm and Home Advisors should request the Kern County Board of Supervisors to find a way to channel more funds into support services. (Finding 4)

NOTES:

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Kern County Board of Supervisors
Response to Grand Jury Final Report
Farm and Home Advisors Kern County Advisors

Response to Findings:

The Board of Supervisors notes that the Grand Jury's findings are substantially correct.

Response to Recommendations:

R1: The cooperative work of Kern County personnel and the University of California Board of Regents should be continued.

We concur with the Grand Jury's recommendation to continue the cooperative effort with the University of California Cooperative Extension Advisors to provide research and education programs in Kern County.

R2: The Farm and Home Advisors should request the Kern County Board of Supervisors to find a way to channel more funds into support services.

The department will not be able to implement this recommendation at this time. The County faces significant budgetary challenges and a fiscal strategy was developed to minimize the overall impact on services. As a result, on January 27, 2015 the Board of Supervisors approved a fiscal year (FY) 2014-15 mid-year net general fund cost (NGFC) allocation reduction of 1%. Further, on February 10, 2015 the Board of Supervisors approved a FY 2015-16 NGFC allocation reduction of 1.4% and required departments to provide an additional budget step-down plan of up to a 5% reduction for consideration. It is imperative that departments remain within the proposed NGFC guideline in order to meet the objectives of the fiscal strategy. In fact, all departments are encouraged to curb spending and be vigilant in finding efficiencies to reduce costs.

KERN ADULT LITERACY COUNCIL

PREFACE:

On Jan 28, 2012, the Bakersfield Californian reported, *“It’s gotten to the point where many people in Bakersfield just roll their eyes and laugh when Men’s Health or another supermarket glossy comes out with a ranking that places this city at the wrong end of some national list. We rank low in terms of patriotism and high in terms of drunkenness? Really? Where does this stuff come from, and what are we supposed to do about it?”*

But a new ranking that came out last week placing Bakersfield dead last in terms of literacy is not just some throwaway compilation of market data packaged into a space-filling magazine article. It’s a meaningful statement about Bakersfield’s single greatest failure—and a legitimate warning that things will never get appreciably better unless we address it.

In its sixth annual literacy report, Central Connecticut State University places Bakersfield 75th out of 75 in a survey that considers education level, the city’s number of bookstores, periodical circulation, library resources, and other factors. If this were the first we’d heard of it, perhaps we could file it with the others. It isn’t, and we can’t.”

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

The Central Connecticut State University conducts research into the literacy of various cities with populations of 250,000 and larger. Bakersfield is frequently at the bottom of the list. Sections §§925 and 933 of the Penal Code permit the 2014-2015 Kern County Grand Jury to do this study.

PROCESS:

The Health, Education, and Social Services Committee (Committee) began with reviewing newspaper and online articles. Research continued with a tour of the Kern Adult Literacy Center (KALC) and an interview with the Director.

FACTS:

- A. According to the Department of Justice, *“The link between academic failure and delinquency, violence and crime is welded to reading failure.”* The statistics back up this claim, *“85 percent of all juveniles who interface with the juvenile court system are functionally illiterate, and over 70 percent of inmates in America’s prisons cannot read above fifth grade level,”* according to BeginToRead.com.

- B. According to KALC, *“Over 13.9% of Kern County adults lack the basic literacy skills necessary to perform daily job functions. Over 15% of Kern County adults have not attained a 9th grade literacy level.”*
- C. CCSU has been ranking the literacy of cities with over 250,000 population.
- The report has continued for at least eight years
 - Bakersfield has been ranked between 65th and 77th (lowest) each report
 - Criteria for the CCSU report includes data from newspapers, internet, magazines and journals, booksellers and stores, educational attainment and libraries
- D. Sandra Bynum, a noted literacy proponent, states, *“Adult illiteracy can impact the entire family because inadequate reading skills usually result in limited earning power. Approximately 50% of the chronically unemployed are functionally illiterate and over 80% of unemployed parents lack a high school diploma.”*
- E. *“Illiterate people cannot read a prescription drug label, open a bank account or get a credit card, read street signs or navigate public transportation, or understand job directions,”* according to Literacy Partners.
- F. Pro Literacy tells us, *“Nearly 800 million people worldwide are illiterate.”*
- 93 million American adults have basic or below-basic literacy
 - 43% of Americans with low literacy are impoverished
 - 65% of prison inmates (or 1 million Americans) have low literacy skills
 - Low literacy costs the United States over \$200 billion every year
- G. KALC is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization providing literacy services to residents of Kern County and is supported by various funding sources. The County of Kern gave \$20,747 to KALC last year; this year, the amount is decreased to \$19,000. KALC offers:
- Adult Basic Education
 - English as a Second Language
 - General Education Development (GED)
 - Family Literacy Program
 - Citizenship

FINDINGS:

- F1. The KALC parking lot is in disrepair.
- F2. Currently, the name of the organization only mentions children.

- F3. There are approximately 120 volunteers who tutor a total of 14,440 hours each year.
- F4. Outlying areas are underserved.

COMMENTS:

Thank you to the volunteers and staff who made our visit enjoyable and educational. The Committee commends KALC for making the most of every dollar.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- R1. For safety reasons, the surface of the parking lot should be repaired and striped. (Finding 1)
- R2. The name of the organization should be amended to better reflect clients using the services. (Finding 2)
- R3. Efforts to recruit more volunteer tutors should continue. (Finding 3)
- R4. The number of tutors to serve outlying areas should be increased. (Finding 4)

NOTES:

- The Kern Adult Literacy Council should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.
- Persons wishing to receive an email notification of newly released reports may sign up at: www.co.kern.kern.ca.us/grandjury.
- Present and past Kern County Grand Jury Final Reports and Responses can be accessed on the Kern County Grand Jury website: www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury.

RESPONSE REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS

**PRESIDING JUDGE
KERN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 200
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

**CC: FOREPERSON
KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 600
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

331 18th Street
Bakersfield, CA 93301
661-324-3214
Fax 661-861-0417
Non Profit ID #23-7312722



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Jeff Nickell, MA

June 10, 2015

PROGRAM COORDINATOR
Alejandra Garcia

The Honorable John Somers, Presiding Judge

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT
Gabriela Gamboa

Kern County Superior Court

1415 Truxtun Avenue

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Bakersfield, CA 93301

President
Tina Posey
Kern Housing Authority

Honorable Judge Somers,

Vice President
Javier Lozano
AERA, LLC

The Kern County Grand Jury investigated the Kern Adult Literacy Council and released their final report January 12, 2015. I apologize for the lateness of my response. I am including the Grand Jury's recommendations and what has been done to date.

Secretary
Lisa Baldrige
Klein, DeNatale, Goldner

Treasurer
Joel Sherman
Grimmway

R1. For safety reasons, the surface of the parking lot should be repaired and striped as soon as possible.

Nancy Chaffin
The Bakersfield Californian

Robin Fleming
Chevron

Response: The parking lot has not been fixed. I have attained quotes and worked to attained in-kind work or a donation to cover the cost. No-one has stepped up to help the Kern Literacy Council with this issue. Bowman Asphalt did offer to repair the parking lot for 33% off, but it is still not in the budget at time.

Joyce Holtzclaw
E & B Natural Resources

Jodi Loeffler
Bakersfield Adult School

Jimmy Phillips
San Joaquin Hospital

R2. The name of the organization should be amended to better reflect clients using services.

Lisa Phillips
City of Bakersfield

Heidi Worman
State Farm

Response: The name of our organization has legally been changed. The new name is – Kern Literacy Council (KLC). This is due to the fact that we have adult and family literacy programs. With this, KLC has re-branded itself with a new logo, web site, social and traditional media to market the change to Kern County residents.

ADVISORY BOARD

Dr. Robert Arias

R3. Efforts to recruit more volunteer tutors should continue.

Dr. Don Carter

Kevin Charette

Dr. Richard Collins

Response: KLC continues its efforts to secure volunteers to ensure the success and growth of KLC. The number of volunteers fluctuates with the season (summer has the least tutors and clients due to traditional school not being in session). Due to KLC's efforts, volunteerism increased with the net being a 17% increase in clients served during the 2014 year (we operate on a calendar year). These numbers are consistent thus far through 2015.

Sherry Gomez

Sean McNally

William R. Rector

Dr. Larry Reider

Tony Russo

Joe Schoenstein

(Continued on page two)

Chancellor Sandra V. Serrano

Christy Swatzell

...empowering individuals to improve their quality of life through literacy education since 1966.

R4. The number of tutors serving outlying areas should be increased.

Response: This has already occurred with substantially more tutoring in Delano and McFarland. KLC also has tutors in Arvin, Lake Isabella, Lamont, Shafter, Tehachapi, and Wasco. In addition, tutors are scattered throughout Metropolitan Bakersfield. I emphasize our services would be severely hampered without our partnership with the Kern County Library system. Over 50% of our tutoring sessions take place at a public library. However, the number of tutoring sessions at Kern County's adult schools and in Parent Resource Centers located in the Bakersfield City School District is on the rise. It is worth noting, KLC will begin that in July 2015, KLC will be offering services to Cal Learn students in Shafter thus increasing our clients and volunteers.

Sincerely,



Jeff Nickell, MA

Executive Director

Kern Literacy Council

KERN COUNTY AGING & ADULT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

PREFACE:

The Kern County Aging & Adult Services Department (KCAASD) connects seniors, dependent adults and caregivers with programs and services they need.

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

Everyone has occasion to interact with elderly relatives and friends. Questions regarding assistance are often difficult for an average citizen to answer. The Kern County Aging & Adult Services Department helps resolve most difficulties. Penal Code §925 authorizes a grand jury to inquire into how tax dollars are being used for the benefit of county residents.

PROCESS:

The Health, Education, and Social Services Committee (Committee) of the 2014-2015 Kern County Grand Jury began the inquiry by reading previous Grand Jury reports. Internet research provided more information. Extensive interviews were held on the premises of KCAASD followed by question and answer sessions. Additional information was discovered while touring the facility. Final questions were answered during a telephone conference call.

FACTS:

- A. The KCAASD was created by the Kern County Board of Supervisors to aid seniors, dependent adults and caregivers with various services and programs including:
 - Senior Information and Referral Program (formerly known as the Call Center) - begins assessing the client for correct placement
 - Senior Nutrition Services
 - Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP)
 - Disease Prevention/Health Promotion
 - Caregiver Support Program
 - In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS)
 - Alzheimer's Day Care Resource Center
 - Legal services
 - Adult Protective Services (APS)
 - Public Guardian – handle probate conservatorships when no one else is willing to act or when ordered by the court in instances of abuse or possible misconduct

- Public Conservatorships under the Lanterman, Petris, Short Act – handle conservatorships for mentally ill clients who, as a result of their illness, are unable to provide for their food, clothing and/or shelter
 - Volunteer Senior Outreach Program-offers help for clients who are isolated and homebound
 - Other services include income tax preparation, transportation and help with legal forms
- B. All services offered by KCAASD are free. Assistance is available at locations throughout Kern County.
- Approximately 100 people work at the facility
 - Workers are cross-trained in various programs
 - Two supervisors and twelve social workers are assigned to APS
 - Information and Referral receives about 800 phone calls per month
 - Approximately 300 calls involve elder abuse
 - Nearly ten percent of the 300 calls result in reports to law enforcement
- C. Respite beds where clients could be cared for temporarily are not available at any location.
- D. The Senior Information and Referral Program receives new clients Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and refers them to the appropriate program.
- E. All workers at KCAASD are mandated to report abuse to various law enforcement agencies. Until recent budget cuts, there had been a law enforcement officer on the premises who could expedite reports and investigations.
- F. The Department of Human Services provides KCAASD with a medical liaison to assist clients with Medi-Cal related questions or issues.
- G. The KCAASD offers on-site IHSS program orientations for in-home caregivers.
- H. The written materials the Committee examined used one or more acronyms.

FINDINGS:

- F1. When appropriate, KCAASD personnel transfer clients from one program to another in a timely and caring manner.
- F2. There is a shortage of office space for volunteers in outlying areas.
- F3. There is a need for respite beds for temporary client care.

- F4. There is no law enforcement presence on site to expedite investigations.
- F5. Many forms were difficult to understand because of the frequent use of unexplained acronyms.

COMMENTS:

Kern County Aging & Adult Services Department personnel are knowledgeable, friendly and dedicated to their jobs. The facility is organized and well kept. Their cooperation is greatly appreciated.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- R1. As funding becomes available, space for volunteers in outlying areas should be obtained. (Finding 2)
- R2. There should be provision for the installation of two or three respite beds. (Finding 3)
- R3. A law enforcement officer should be available on the premises. (Finding 4)
- R4. The use of acronyms should be strictly limited to make forms more understandable. (Finding 5)

NOTES:

- The Kern County Aging & Adult Services Department should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.
- Persons wishing to receive an email notification of newly released reports may sign up at: www.co.kern.kern.ca.us/grandjury.
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RESPONSE REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS

**PRESIDING JUDGE
KERN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 212
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

**CC: FOREPERSON
KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 600
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

Kern County Board of Supervisors
Response to Grand Jury Final Report
Kern County Aging & Adult Services Department

Response to Findings:

The Board of Supervisors notes that the Grand Jury's findings are substantially correct.

Response to Recommendations:

R1: *As funding becomes available, space for volunteers in outlying areas should be obtained.*

In an ongoing effort to provide services in outlying areas the department will continue working closely with other County departments and community organizations to co-locate in outlying areas until funding and space becomes available.

R2: *There should be provision for the installation of two or three respite beds.*

At this time, the department will not be able to implement this recommendation. Budget constraints do not provide enough funding for the cost and reallocating funding would significantly impact other critical and mandated services. The department will continue collaborating with local board and care facilities that have proven to be very successful in finding placement for displaced seniors.

R3: *A law enforcement officer should be available on the premises.*

The department will continue to work closely with law enforcement. The department trains law enforcement throughout Kern County on the possible signs or elder abuse. The department and law enforcement work together when they encounter a senior suffering from elder abuse or are in need of community resources. The department's social workers and District Attorney's investigators help investigate elder abuse cases together so that they can prosecute if warranted.

R4: *The use of acronyms should be strictly limited to make forms more understandable.*

A thorough review of all forms, brochures, and flyers will be completed to ensure that the use of acronyms are limited and/or explained in greater detail so they are more understandable.

KERN COUNTY GENERAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT GRAFFITI REMOVAL PROGRAM

PREFACE:

The Graffiti-Off program, an extension of the Kern County General Services Department (Department), provides prompt graffiti removal for residents and business owners in the unincorporated areas of the County.

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

Penal Code §925 authorizes a grand jury to conduct an inquiry and report on various departments throughout the County.

PROCESS:

The Health, Education, and Social Services Committee (Committee) of the 2014-2015 Kern County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) began by doing internet research on graffiti removal. The Committee invited the General Services Warehouse Supervisor, who also supervises graffiti removal, to meet for an extended question and answer session to inform us about graffiti removal procedures.

FACTS:

Graffiti is words, colors, and shapes drawn or scratched on buildings, overpasses, train cars, and other surfaces. It is done without permission and is against the law. Graffiti is also referred to as tagging and those who commit this are called taggers. In school years 1996-1997, the latest national data available, 52% of public high schools and 47% of middle schools reported graffiti; 36% of students have seen hate-related graffiti.

A. Facts and figures in Kern County:

1. Graffiti cleanup is expensive: \$25,000 or more per year in supplies and paint alone.
2. Graffiti is the most common type of vandalism.
3. Graffiti increases instances of crime and delinquency in a given area.
4. Motives for graffiti include: fame, rebellion, self-expression, and power.
5. Four types of graffiti include hip-hop, gang, hate, and generic.
6. Kern County removes 10 to 15 tags a day. This year between February 1st and March 11th, 108 tags were removed
7. The County does not remove tags that are on railroad or Caltrans property.
8. Eighty percent of graffiti in Kern County is hip-hop.

- B. Taggers:
 - 1. Nationally, only 10% of graffiti is gang related.
 - 2. The majority of taggers are between 12 and 21 years of age.
 - 3. Approximately 15% are females.

- C. Negative effects of graffiti nationwide:
 - 1. Graffiti reduces retail sales and property values.
 - 2. The cost of graffiti removal in the U. S. rises each year.
 - 3. Graffiti removal is estimated to cost taxpayers millions of dollars each year.

- D. Surfaces less prone to graffiti:
 - 1. Textured surfaces.
 - 2. Dark or colorful surfaces.
 - 3. Surfaces with extra coatings of repellent.

FINDINGS:

- F1. The Department maintains security cameras in graffiti prone areas. Photographs of tags are taken and copies are forwarded to the Kern County Probation Department for analysis and identification.

- F2. Graffiti damage up to \$400 is punishable by up to one year in jail, a \$10,000 fine, or both. Damage in excess of \$400 is a felony punishable by up to three years in state prison, a \$50,000 fine, or both.

- F3. The County has numerous volunteer programs, e.g. Adopt-a-Wall and the Mexican-American Opportunity Foundation, which assist the one County employee assigned to the Graffiti-Off Program

- F4. Some outlying areas, e.g., Mojave and Rosamond, handle their own graffiti removal programs. The County supplies materials but not manpower.

COMMENTS:

The Committee was highly impressed by the Graffiti-Off team which accomplishes so much with so little.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- R1. The Grand Jury recommends that the Graffiti-Off team continue its efficient operations. (Findings 1, 2, and 4)

NOTES:

- The Kern County General Services Department should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.
- Persons wishing to receive an email notification of newly released reports may sign up at: www.co.kern.kern.ca.us/grandjury.
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RESPONSE REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS TO:

**PRESIDING JUDGE
KERN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 212
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

**CC: FOREPERSON
KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 600
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

JOHN NILON
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER



JEFF R. FRAPWELL
ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
FOR GENERAL SERVICES

County Administrative Office
GENERAL SERVICES DIVISION

ADMINISTRATION • COMMUNICATION • CONSTRUCTION • CUSTODIAL • FACILITIES • FLEET • KGOV
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY • PROPERTY MANAGEMENT • PURCHASING • SECURITY

August 18, 2015

RECEIVED

AUG 20 2015

By 

The Honorable John Somers, Presiding Judge
Kern County Superior Court
1415 Truxtun Ave., Suite 212
Bakersfield, CA 93301

General Services is in receipt of a letter from Foreperson Weslie Brown, dated August 10, 2015, stating that we were required to respond within 60 days to the Facts and Findings cited in the Final Report on the Kern County Graffiti Removal Program from April 23, 2015.

The Board of Supervisors approved the response at the June 2nd, 2015 2:00pm meeting as item CA-30. Attached is a copy of the Chairman's signed letter that you should have received thereafter.

Our apologies for any delay that this may have seen in reaching you.

Thank you,



Bret Haney, Division Director for General Services

CC: Kern County Grand Jury
Weslie Brown, Foreperson
1415 Truxtun Ave., Suite 600
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Kern County Board of Supervisors
Response to Grand Jury Final Report
General Services Department Graffiti Removal Program

Response to Findings:

The Board of Supervisors notes that the Grand Jury's findings are substantially correct.

Response to Recommendations:

R1: *The Grand Jury recommends that the Graffiti-Off team continue its efficient operations.*

We concur with the Grand Jury's recommendation to continue efficient operations.

CalWORKs

WELFARE TO WORK PLAN

PREFACE:

According to the California Department of Social Services, “*CalWORKs is California’s version of the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. The program provides 48 months of cash grants and welfare-to-work services to low-income families with children. Children remain eligible for assistance up to age 18.*

CalWORKs serves over one million children in 560,000 cases. CalWORKs provides assistance to 50 percent of children in poverty in California, more than double the comparable national average of 20 percent served by TANF.”

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

Members of the Health, Education and Social Services Committee (Committee) of the 2014-2015 Kern County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) noted that the question of how to help people transition into full time employment is frequently seen in news media. Recent cuts in the County budget beg the question of how effective are the programs to help the unemployed. Penal Code §925 permits the Grand Jury to investigate and report on any agency receiving County funds.

PROCESS:

Research began with an extensive review of internet articles. Many charts and tables were available and very informative. Next was a visit to the Department of Human Services where questions were answered and a tour was provided. Staff members were interviewed during the visit.

FACTS:

When a client seeks to enter the program, a form is completed and eligibility determined. Assistance is provided if the client is eligible. Documentation is required. Next is orientation and appraisal. Bus passes, child care, school supplies and training may be provided. CalFresh, a State program, may provide for the food needs of the family.

When these preliminaries are complete, the client may choose to actively seek employment, attend school or voluntarily leave the program.

The following situations may interfere with the client being able to complete the program. There may be a lack of:

- Documentation or the funds necessary to pay for documentation
- Transportation
- Child care
- Job skills

SUCCESS RATES FOR CalWORKs 2014
Source: CalWORKs

Scheduled to Attend	2,546
Showed (Attended)	1,155
Show Rate	45%
Successfully Completed Workshop	499
Completion Rate	43%
Did Not Successfully Complete Workshop	511
Withdrawn	145
Employed During EZONE (Employment Zone)	203
Employed Within 90 Days of Completing EZONE	124
Employed Within 90 Days of Attending EZONE	298
Showed Employment Rate	43%
Completed Employment Rate	66%

FINDINGS:

- F1. The difference between an excused and an unexcused absence is not clear.
- F2. If a client misses two class meetings without proper cause, the client is dropped from the program.
- F3. Physical space is inadequate for the number of applicants for the CalWORKs Program.
- F4. The Chief Deputy Director’s position was vacant at the time of the visit.
- F5. Some of the services that are provided to clients are to:
- Assist clients with online job search
 - Help to create resumes
 - Provide job leads/recruitment information
 - Provide photo copy services
 - Provide fax services
 - Provide telephones to call employers
 - Provide for answering phone messages with a service called, “Hello Line”

COMMENTS:

The Committee would like to thank the knowledgeable Director and the well-organized staff who met with us. Thanks to all staff who provided answers to all of our questions. Special thanks to the Program Director who led the way.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- R1. Program Directors and instructors should develop uniform guidelines regarding the definition of excused vs. unexcused absences. (Findings 1 and 2)
- R2. Every effort should be exerted to find more office space for CalWORKs. (Finding 3)
- R3. The position of Chief Deputy Director should be filled as soon as possible. (Finding 4)
- R4. CalWORKs should continue to offer a wide variety of services. (Finding 5)

NOTES:

- The Department of Human Services should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.
- Persons wishing to receive an email notification of newly released reports may sign up at: www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury
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RESPONSE REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS

**PRESIDING JUDGE
KERN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 212
Bakersfield, CA 93301**

**CC: FOREPERSON
KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 600
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

Kern County Board of Supervisors
Response to Grand Jury Final Report
CalWORKs Welfare to Work Plan

Response to Findings:

The Board of Supervisors notes that the Grand Jury's findings are substantially correct. It is important to note that the Department has already implemented some of the changes recommended in the Grand Jury's report. These changes are incorporated into the responses below.

Response to Recommendations:

R1: Program Directors and instructors should develop uniform guidelines regarding the definition of excused vs. unexcused absences.

We concur with the Grand Jury's recommendation and changes were implemented. A written policy was developed to provide consistency and clarification regarding workshop attendance expectations. The intent was to emulate the real work world as much as possible therefore clients with two absences are dropped from the program as they would lack critical information needed for a successful job search and likely not retain employment.

R2: Every effort should be exerted to find more office space for CalWORKs.

We concur with the Grand Jury's recommendation and are currently exerting more effort in securing additional office space to serve CalWORKs clients more effectively by providing additional space to conduct job search and other workshop classes.

R3: The position of Chief Deputy Director should be filled as soon as possible.

We concur with the Grand Jury's recommendation and have begun a recruitment to fill the Chief Deputy Director position.

R4: CalWORKs should continue to offer a wide variety of services.

We concur with the Grand Jury's recommendation and will continue to offer a wide variety of services to our CalWORKs clients to enhance their employability and self-sufficiency.

TEHACHAPI VALLEY HEALTHCARE DISTRICT

PREFACE:

On July 1, 1934, the City of Tehachapi became the site of a modern, well-equipped hospital. A major earthquake hit the Tehachapi area on July 21, 1952, and demolished the hospital. The building of a replacement hospital began June 1, 1953.

Currently another facility (Hospital) is being built at a new location. The Tehachapi Valley Healthcare District (District) broke ground in 2013. The Hospital is expected to open during 2016.

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

Many newspaper articles have noted the delays between making plans and the actual hospital construction. Each delay results in cost overruns. The Health, Education and Social Services Committee (Committee) of the 2014-2015 Kern County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) became aware of residents' concerns. Penal Code §933.5 authorizes the Committee's investigation.

PROCESS:

The Committee began with newspaper research. Area newspapers covered the financing of the new Hospital in depth. Other information came from the Tehachapi Visitor Guide and on-line articles.

In addition, the Committee interviewed the District's Interim Chief Executive Officer, the President of the Board and a Doctor who is also a Board Member. This was followed by a tour of the present building and a tour of the new building. The Committee was shown all of the blueprints on a 3-dimensional computer monitor.

FACTS:

- A. The Hospital will be a Critical Access Hospital meeting these requirements and others:
 - It must be limited to 25 inpatient beds or less
 - The Hospital must be at least 35 miles from another hospital
 - The average length of stay must be no more than 96 hours

- B. Currently there are insufficient funds to complete the building.
 - If the funds are not raised, some of the non-critical modules may be left as shells to be completed at a later date
 - The cash on hand is earning a small amount of interest, by law not to exceed 4.5%

- The Guild House in Tehachapi raises approximately \$10,000 per month to buy equipment for the Hospital
- C. Early missteps led to increased costs and loss of time.
- The first plans did not comply with seismic requirements
 - The new plans required more funding
 - The low-bid contractor declared his company unable to pour concrete to meet the necessary standards
- D. Planning and construction for the new Hospital continues.
- The Hospital will be approximately 75,000 square feet

DEPARTMENT	BEDS
Acute Care	16
ICU	4
Pre-Op	4
Recovery	7
Operating Suite	2
Labor	3
Post-Partum	5
Trauma	2
Triage	2

- A helipad is being completed to facilitate transfers during emergencies
- Parking

PARKING	STALLS
Regular	114
Handicap	16
Vans	6
CODE REQUIREMENT	77

- E. Communicating with the public.
- The Hospital has a website
 - Hospital news is covered by news articles

FINDINGS:

- F1. Information on the website is not current.
- F2. Improving community attitudes towards the Hospital should be a top priority.
- F3. Grants are not being sought.
- F4. Newspaper articles with a negative bent are not addressed.

COMMENTS:

The Committee would like to thank the personnel who graciously answered our questions. Tours of the old and the new facilities were very informative.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- R1 The District should hire a webmaster (or find a volunteer) to ensure timely information is on line. (Finding 1)
- R2. The District should host a town meeting to discuss Hospital-related concerns which might improve community support. (Finding 2)
- R3. A grant-writer and/or publicist should be hired (or a volunteer found) to apply for grants and answer negative publicity. (Findings 3 and 4)

NOTES:

The Tehachapi Valley Healthcare District should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.

Persons wishing to receive an email notification of newly released reports may sign up at: www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury, click on: Sign up for early releases.

Present and past Kern County Grand Jury Final Reports and Responses can be accessed through the Kern County Library system and the Kern County Grand Jury website: www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury.

RESPONSE REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS TO:

**PRESIDING JUDGE
KERN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 212
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

**cc: FOREPERSON
KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 600
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**



April 28, 2015

Kern County Grand Jury
Attention: Mike Elliott, Foreperson
1415 Truxtun Avenue
Bakersfield, Ca 93301

Re: Response to Findings and Recommendations for the Tehachapi Valley Healthcare District (TVHD) – Fax dated 04/09/15

Dear Mr. Elliott:

Per your request, below are Findings and TVHD's responses:

- F1. Information on website is not current.
The website is kept current to the best ability of staff; however, there is no dedicated staff exclusive to the website. The District has engaged an outside firm to update and maintain the website.

- F2. Improving community attitudes towards the Hospital should be a top priority.
The District has had several leadership changes over the past few years. It is hopeful that continuity in leadership and outreach will provide the community a more positive outlook towards the District.

- F3. Grants are not being sought.
Grants have been sought and received by the District for various uses: equipment, training, and safety. The District collaborates with partner and advisory agencies such as the California Hospital Association (CHA), Association of Healthcare Districts (ACHD), the California Critical Access Hospital Network (CAAHN), as well as local agencies in seeking out grants. The Chief Executive Officer answers or coordinates all publicity and media inquiries.

- F4. Newspaper articles with a negative bent are not addressed.
The District does not have control over editorial content; however, the District does contact and address media outlets when negative articles are written.

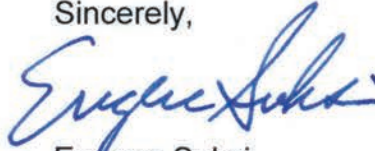
Per your request, below are recommendations and TVHD's responses:

- R1. The District should hire a webmaster (or find a volunteer) to ensure timely information is online.
The District has engaged an outside firm to update the website with a completion date set for June 1, 2015.

- R2. The District should host a town meeting to discuss hospital-related concerns, which might improve community support.
Town Hall meetings have occurred since last September for staff. The community will be extended invitations for future Town Hall meetings.
- R3. A grant writer and/or publicist should be hired (or a volunteer found) to apply for grants and answer negative publicity.
Grants are sought through current staff and through partner and advisory agencies such as the California Hospital Association (CHA), Association of Healthcare Districts (ACHD), the California Critical Access Hospital Network (CAAHN), as well as local agencies. The Chief Executive Officer answers or coordinates through staff all publicity and media inquiries.

If you have additional questions, I can be reached at esuksi@tvhd.org or (661) 823-1622.

Sincerely,



Eugene Suksi
Chief Executive Officer

ES:pm

VALLEY FEVER (COCCIDIOIDOMYCOSIS)

PREFACE:

In 1892 the first case of Valley Fever was reported in a soldier from Argentina. In 1894 two researchers noticed similar symptoms in a Portuguese immigrant farm laborer working in the San Joaquin Valley. The first case in Kern County was recorded in 1901. The patient was 19 years old, worked as a canner and had only resided in Kern County for 12 days.

Valley Fever has occurred in Northern Mexico and may extend farther south. It is found in New Mexico, Phoenix to Tucson, Texas and two documented cases stem from Washington State.

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

The Health, Education and Social Services Committee (HESS) of the 2014-2015 Kern County Grand Jury (Jury) read a newspaper article concerning the Walk for Valley Fever. The intent of this report is to promote awareness of Valley Fever and its dangers. Penal Code §§925 and 933.5 authorize the Jury to investigate.

PROCESS:

In spring of 2014, a symposium regarding Valley Fever stimulated interest in the disease. Extensive computer research gave the necessary background and led to numerous articles in newspapers. On August 14, 2014, research was completed with an extensive interview of a public health official.

FACTS:

- I. Prevention
 - A. Avoid the outdoors during windy conditions.
 - B. Avoid activities in which large amounts of dust are generated.
 - C. Keep disturbed soil wet to reduce spores in the air.
 - D. Avoid animal burrows.
 - E. Avoid areas of sparse vegetation.

II. Diagnostic

- A. 50%-60% of people infected by Valley Fever will have no symptoms at all.
- B. 40%-50% will develop an illness severe enough to prompt the person to go to a health care provider.
- C. In 1%-5% of cases, the fungi leave the lungs and spread to other parts of the body. Such occurrences are called disseminated and can be deadly.
- D. In the United States, during the years 2000-2007, Valley Fever sickened approximately 60,000 people annually.
- E. Around 150 patients die of Valley Fever each year.
- F. Men catch the disease 1.4 times more often than women.
- G. Valley Fever cannot be directly transmitted from one person to another.
- H. Dogs, horses and other domestic animals are susceptible.

III. Therapeutics

- A. Current drug treatments use fungi-static drugs which inhibit the growth of the fungi.
- B. Nikkomycin Z is a fungicide which can kill the fungi. It is not currently approved for use in humans.
- C. Treatment for Valley Fever may last from a few weeks to the rest of the patient's life.
- D. There is no vaccine available for Valley Fever at this time.

IV. Valley Fever in Prisons

- A. The annual cost to treat inmates with Valley Fever in hospitals outside the prison system is over \$23,000,000. In 2013 there were 2,732 prisoners diagnosed with the disease.
 - 1. \$12,000,000 to guard inmates in hospital
 - 2. \$9,000,000 for hospital care
 - 3. \$2,400,000 for antifungals
- B. \$23,000-\$29,000 is the median cost per patient.

V. Education

- A. Public Health distributes pamphlets explaining the facts about Valley Fever. The pamphlets are also available online.
- B. Periodic press releases are used to expand awareness of Valley Fever.
- C. Data from graphs and tables are available for downloading.

VI. Research and Development

- A. The largest problem is that research is so costly.
- B. Another problem is the lack of an affordable skin test. Two are scheduled to be available by the end of 2014.
- C. Desired Kern County Public Health (Public Health) grants include:
 - 1. A partnership with California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB) to research predicting Valley Fever growth
 - 2. To work with National Institutes of Health to research Valley Fever in agriculture workers
 - 3. A partnership with National Aeronautics and Space Administration to learn to use satellites to identify spore colonies
- D. Data Collection
 - 1. Began in 1901 and consisted of raw counts until 1996
 - 2. Doctors and laboratories are required to report cases of Valley Fever to Public Health
 - 3. Public Health reports to the State
 - 4. The State reports to Center for Disease Control in Georgia

FINDINGS:

- F1. Data collection is neither streamlined nor standardized.
- F2. Funding for research and experimentation is inadequate.
- F3. Publicity is scarce and underfunded.
- F4. Prevention options are limited.

COMMENTS:

Dr. Hans Einstein (February 3, 1923 – August 11, 2012) was the acknowledged leader in the study of Valley Fever. His father was Albert Einstein's cousin.

On September 23-24, 2014, a Valley Fever Symposium was held at CSUB. Three of Dr. Hans Einstein's sisters attended the Walk for Valley Fever in Bakersfield on August 9, 2014.

A big thank you to the personnel of the Kern County Department of Public Health for their generous donation of time and information.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- R1. A streamlined and standardized case history form should be developed. (Finding 1)
- R2. Efforts to obtain more funding should be continued. (Finding 2)
- R3. Publicity needs to be expanded. (Finding 3)
- R4. Prevention suggestions should be available through multiple means. (Finding 4)

NOTES:

- The Department of Public Health should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.
- Persons wishing to receive an email notification of newly released reports may sign up at: www.co.kern.kern.ca.us/grandjury.
- Past and present Kern County Grand Jury Final Reports and Responses can be accessed on the Kern County Grand Jury website: www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury.

RESPONSE REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS

**PRESIDING JUDGE
KERN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 212
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

**CC: FOREPERSON
KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 600
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

Kern County Board of Supervisors
Response to Grand Jury Final Report

Response to Findings:

The Board of Supervisors notes that the Grand Jury's findings are substantially correct.

Response to Recommendations:

R1: A streamlined and standardized case history form should be developed.

There is a national case definition for coccidioidomycosis reporting. The state of California has developed and implemented a case history form in the California Reportable Disease Information Exchange (CalREDIE) system that is used as a state-wide reportable disease database that can be used by counties. Kern County assisted with the development of the CalREDIE data collection form and uses CalREDIE to monitor reportable diseases, including coccidiomycosis.

R2: Efforts to obtain more funding should be continued.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this recommendation. Kern County would benefit from the development of methods to prevent infection and to improve diagnostic and treatment. Such research is conducted through collaborative efforts with organizations like CSUB, UC Berkeley, UC Davis, UC Merced, etc. and the Department continues to aggressively support applications for research funding. The County of Kern also provides funding annually towards to development of a vaccination for Valley Fever. For fiscal year 2014-15, the County of Kern provided \$47,500.

R3: Publicity is scarce and underfunded.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this recommendation and believes that a collaborative approach is needed to increase awareness. The Public Health Services Department developed a website during this past year dedicated to Valley Fever, www.kernvalleyfever.com, and recognizes the need to expand the ongoing effort to increase public awareness. The Department is working with UC Merced to bring a multidisciplinary, multi-pronged public education campaign to Kern County in 2015. In addition, the Department is part of the planning process to provide Continuing Medical Education (CME) hours during education of our local medical providers on Valley Fever during January or February 2015.

R4: Prevention suggestions should be available through multiple means.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this recommendation and the Public Health Services Department is making great strides in this area. The Department developed a Valley Fever website during 2013 which can be viewed in multiple languages. Brochures are available in English, Spanish and Tagalog. Target audience education is in the planning phase, starting with physicians and other healthcare providers. An active outreach and education resource to the wider community and delivering information in a timely, culturally sensitive manner would be a distinct benefit in educating the community on how to take advantage of strategies that reduces

the risk for exposure to Valley Fever and prevention of infection. The Department utilizes social media and the electronic billboard located at 1800 Mt. Vernon Ave. to remind the public to limit outdoor activities during higher-risk weather conditions. Further, the Department is continuing to explore additional ways to educate the public on prevention strategies.

ADM_GJ_Valley Fever_B

KERN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES KERN COUNTY ADOPTION AGENCY

PREFACE:

The vast majority of children placed for adoption through the Kern County Department of Human Services, Kern County Adoption Agency (Agency) are children who entered the foster care system due to safety concerns in their family of origin. There are children of all ages in the foster care system who need parental care outside the home. Many are, or will become, eligible for adoption by relatives or licensed foster parents. The Agency is continually seeking families that are motivated to make a difference in the life of a child.

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

California Penal Code §925 authorizes a grand jury to investigate and report on various departments throughout Kern County. The Health, Education, and Social Services Committee (Committee) of the 2014-2015 Kern County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) made a visit to inquire into the management and operation of the Agency located at 3041 Wilson Road, Bakersfield, CA 93304.

PROCESS:

The Committee researched the Kern County Adoption Agency website. Committee research found no record of previous grand jury reports. The Committee visited the Agency and interviewed the Director along with supervisory staff.

BACKGROUND:

When children cannot safely be returned to their parent(s), adoption is generally the best option. It may not always be appropriate to permanently terminate parental rights. Legal Guardianship and Long Term Foster Care are alternatives to adoption in these cases. Children in Long Term Foster Care remain wards of the Juvenile Court and their parents' rights can only be limited by the Court.

FACTS:

- A. In order to adopt in the State of California, one must be at least ten years older than the child being adopted unless a relative.
- B. One must be financially able to care for the child and willing to assume responsibility for the care, guidance and protection of that child.

- C. All children eligible for possible adoption through the Agency are initially placed as foster children. Therefore, every prospective adoptive parent must also be a licensed/certified foster parent or approved relative/non-related family member.
- D. Family Code 8715 and Welfare & Institutions Code 16002 encourages adoption of siblings together.

FINDINGS:

- F1. Children are adoptable from birth to 20 years of age.
- F2. After the age of five, the possibility of adoption declines dramatically.
- F3. There is a \$5,000 Federal Income Tax credit during the tax year of adoption.
- F4. Relatives of adoptable children are given preferential consideration for adoption, guardianship or foster family status.
- F5. A parent unable or unwilling to care for an infant can legally and confidentially surrender their baby safely within three days of birth.
- F6. Kern County Adoptions are private unless birth parent(s) give permission to make record(s) available to the adopted child.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- R1. There should be a form the biological parent(s) could sign relinquishing their child/children at the time of the adoption. The form would allow the parent(s) to choose or refuse to make the adoption information available to the child at adulthood. (Finding 6)

NOTES:

- The Kern County Department of Human Services should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.
- Persons wishing to receive an email notification of newly released reports may sign up at: www.co.kern.kern.ca.us/grandjury.
- Present and past Kern County Grand Jury Final Reports and Responses can be accessed on the Kern County Grand Jury website: www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury.

RESPONSE REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS

**PRESIDING JUDGE
KERN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT
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BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

**cc: FOREPERSON
KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 600
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

Kern County Board of Supervisors
Response to Grand Jury Final Report
Kern County Department of Human Services
Kern County Adoption Agency

Response to Findings:

The Board of Supervisors notes that the Grand Jury's findings are substantially correct.

Response to Recommendations:

R1: There should be a form the biological parent(s) could sign relinquishing their child/children at the time of the adoption. The form would allow the parent(s) to choose or refuse to make the adoption information available to the child at adulthood.

Although the department is in compliance with the basic mandates regarding consent for post adoptive contact they are considering making changes to enhance efforts and increase accountability by documenting all contact consent information efforts made with the birth parent(s). Currently, contact consent forms mandated in accordance with Family Code 8702 and 8703 already exist. Prior to the termination of parental rights or upon a birth parent(s) relinquishment, the adoption Social Worker asks the birth parents whether or not they wish information to be disclosed to their biological child at the age of 21. If a birth parent wishes to contact their adult biological child, a Consent for Contact form is signed authorizing the release of information.

KERN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

PREFACE:

When child support is paid regularly, families can be less dependent on other social services such as Food Stamps, Medi-Cal and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Most cases receiving TANF are referred to Child Support Services for collection of support from the noncustodial parent.

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

The Health, Education, and Social Services Committee (Committee) of the 2014-2015 Kern County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) was advised that the Kern County Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) had not been the subject of inquiry for seven years. Penal Code §925 authorizes the Grand Jury to conduct such an investigation.

PROCESS:

The investigation began with a review of earlier Grand Jury reports. More information was gathered through Internet research. The Committee met with the Director, Lead Attorney and various program managers for an extensive question and answer session. A tour of the facility located at 1300 18th Street, Bakersfield, CA followed.

BACKGROUND AND FACTS:

- A. Title IV-D of the Social Security Act was modified in 1975 to include the establishment of a child support enforcement program in each state. The program is a Federal mandate to collect payments from noncustodial parents. These funds are to recover public aid paid to the families. A later expansion included services to families not receiving aid.
- B. Before 1999, California used the District Attorney's Office in each county to collect child support payments. In 1999, a centralized agency, DCSS, was founded and the responsibility transitioned to this new agency.
- C. The Kern County Department of Child Support Services was established in 2001 as an independent County department to manage child support.

D. Pillars of the DCSS program:

1. Vision: *“We are number one in the central valley committed to children and making a difference in their lives.”*
2. Mission: *“We deliver outstanding child support services so that all children receive the financial and medical resources necessary for their well-being.”*
3. Philosophy: *“Child Support creates a better life for your child.”*
4. Values: *“Trust, respect, communication, quality, teamwork, innovation.”*

E. Comparison of DCSS and Department of Social Services (DSS):

DCSS	DSS
Establish Paternity	CalWORKs
Establish Child Support Orders	Medi-Cal
Enforce Orders	Child Welfare Services
Modify Orders	
Distribute Support Payments	

F. Impacts of poverty on children:

1. 22 times more likely to be abused and twice as likely to be poor as adults
2. Cognitive and educational achievement is lessened
3. Behavioral and emotional problems are more common
4. Poor health outcomes

G. Reduction of poverty through child support:

1. In 2008, California distributed close to \$2 billion to families, almost half of whom were previously on assistance.
2. Nationally, over half a million children have been lifted out of poverty according to the Urban Institute.
3. Child support may be as much as 25% of family income.
4. A child support order nearly doubles the amount collected.

H. Prevalence of Poverty in California:

1. 1.75 million children live in poverty defined as less than \$22,050 for a family of four.
2. 2.17 million children live in families with income below \$44,100 for a family of four.
3. 826,000 children live in poor families where neither parent has a high school diploma.
4. 896,000 children live in poor families with a single parent.

I. Services DCSS can and cannot provide.

DCSS Legal Perspective	Services DCSS Does Not Provide
On-staff attorneys	Enforce custody or visitation orders or enforce property settlements
Represents interests of State of California	Assist in obtaining a divorce
Legal Collaborations	Obtain or enforce restraining orders
Court Innovations	Establish spousal support orders
	Represent either party

J. Child Support Program Overview in Kern County.

1. There are 51,449 open cases including approximately 5,000 cases from other states.
2. Total Distributed Collections during 2013–2014 were \$79,365,710.
3. There were 56,607 children assisted during this same period.

K. Funding allocation for DCSS is \$22,248,412.

1. Federal 66%
2. State 34%
3. County General Fund 0%
4. Personnel are Kern County employees.
5. There has been no increase in funding since 2006.
6. Unspent funds do not carry over to the next year.

L. Staffing has dropped from 277 paid positions in 2006 to 188 paid positions.

FINDINGS:

- F1. The DCSS has increased client contacts leading to increased collections.
 - a. The DCSS call center answers approximately 12,000 calls per month with only 11 full time employees.
 - b. There are 30 phone lines in the call center but only 22 are being utilized.
 - c. The call center is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

- F2. Technology is being used to increase the efficiency of all DCSS departments.
 - a. The facility is essentially paperless decreasing the amount of storage space needed and increasing the risk of compromising data.
 - b. Computers are used by every employee including document imaging and electronic filing in Federal court.
 - c. Computer equipped kiosks are located in the facility and various locations around the County.

- F3. The DCSS collaborates with the following agencies:
 - a. Department of Human Services
 - b. Owens Valley Career Development Center
 - c. Kern County Sheriff's Office at Lerdo Facility
 - d. Network for Children
 - e. United Way VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) Program
 - f. Promotores – A statewide Spanish language organization

- F4. The reduction in staffing has resulted in:
 - a. Delays in establishing paternity and court orders
 - b. Less frequent review of delinquent cases for enforcement
 - c. Less contact with clients on delinquent cases
 - d. Longer wait times
 - e. Federal and State compliance mandates being more difficult to meet
 - f. Delays in response to calls and mail
 - g. Trending down in the rate of growth of collections
 - h. Increase in complaints
 - i. Loss of knowledgeable employees
 - j. Cuts in outreach activities
 - k. Inability to reach performance goals
 - l. Excess office space

COMMENTS:

The Committee would like to commend DCSS for adopting technology to the advantage of all users. The facility is clean and quiet. It is designed to help employees confer with clients and with each other. The overall design helps put users at ease. The staff is to be congratulated for their level of knowledge and willingness to share it.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- R1. The DCSS should investigate cyber security for computer records. (Finding 2)
- R2. The DCSS should find smaller quarters. Other County departments could use the empty space. (Findings 2 and 4)

NOTES:

- The Kern County Department of Child Support Services should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.
- Persons wishing to receive an email notification of newly released reports may sign up at: www.co.kern.kern.ca.us/grandjury.
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BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

Kern County Board of Supervisors
Response to Grand Jury Final Report
Kern County Department of Child Support Services

Response to Findings:

The Board of Supervisors notes that the Grand Jury's findings are substantially correct.

Response to Recommendations:

R1: The Department of Child Support Services should investigate cyber security for computer records.

The department will continue to proactively utilize McAfee anti-virus scan, Gwava e-mail scan, and Qualys network scan to protect against potential computer risks. In the event of a cyber security incident, the department is prepared to diligently investigate and work collaboratively to resolve. The department is also prepared with an off-site backup of computer records.

R2: The Department of Child Support Services should find smaller quarters. Other County departments could use the empty space.

We concur with the Grand Jury's recommendation that the department should search for smaller office space that will still serve their needs yet obtain cost savings. Increased costs and flat funding have reduced their staffing resulting in under-utilized leased office space.

KERN COUNTY VETERANS SERVICES DEPARTMENT

PREFACE:

The Kern County Board of Supervisors established the Veterans Services Department (Department) in 1944. The goal of the Department is to assist veterans, their dependents, and survivors in obtaining benefits and entitlements available through Federal, State, and local agencies.

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

Penal Code §925 authorizes a grand jury to investigate and report on the operations, accounts, and records of the officers, departments, or functions of the county. The Health, Education, and Social Services Committee (Committee) of the 2014-2015 Kern County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) noticed many unfavorable articles about programs offered to veterans. The Committee decided to investigate local conditions.

PROCESS:

Research began with an extensive review of media articles. Many charts and tables were available and informative. Next was a visit from the Director of Veterans Services who answered Committee questions. Later a tour of the veterans' facility located at 1120 Golden State Avenue, Bakersfield, CA 93301 was provided.

FACTS:

- A. The current Director, a veteran, was appointed in 2012.
- B. Funding for Kern County Veterans Department is provided by the County (85%) and the State (15%).
- C. Federal and State rights that veterans may have earned:
 1. Compensation for veterans and their families
 2. Pensions for war-era veterans
 3. Death Pensions for survivors
 4. Dependent allowances
 5. Pensions with Aid and Attendance Allowance
 6. State Veterans Homes
 7. Requests for military records and decorations
 8. Discharge upgrades
 9. Correction of military records
 10. Vocational rehabilitation
 11. Home loan guarantee information

12. College fee waivers
13. Life insurance
14. Burial benefits

D. Services available to veterans:

1. Comprehensive benefit counseling
2. Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) group counseling referrals
3. Claim preparation, submission, and follow-up
4. Initiate and develop appeals when warranted
5. Networking with Federal, State, and local agencies
6. Transportation to Department of Veterans Administration (VA) medical facilities in the Los Angeles area
7. TAP briefing (Transitional Assistance Program)
8. Information and referral
 - Employment
 - Public Assistance
 - VA Medical Services
 - Social Security
 - Food Referrals

E. California College Fee Waiver:

1. Available to children of U.S. veterans who have a Service Connected Disability
2. College tuition type fees are waived.
3. Must attend a California Community College, a California State University, or a University of California campus to qualify for this benefit

F. Bakersfield National Cemetery:

1. The cemetery serves approximately 187,000 veterans in California.
2. The cemetery is 500 acres and will accommodate casketed and cremated remains.
3. Cremated remains are interred or placed in vaults.

G. Many veterans' artifacts are displayed throughout the facility and many more are kept in storage.

FINDINGS:

F1. State funding is disbursed to the counties according to a mandated formula.

- A. Funds are distributed by workload units. A state auditor annually determines what a workload unit is and how the funds are to be disbursed.
- B. Not all counties participate.

- C. The fiscal year 2014-2015 is expected to see \$3.2 million dollars from the State Fund being distributed.
- F2. The Kern County Veterans Services Department:
- A. Veterans visit the Department at the rate of 1,500 per month.
 - B. The fiscal year 2013-2014 saw over 19,000 visits
 - C. The current facility has inadequate floor space to meet demand. .
 - D. Veterans connect with three types of services at the Department.
 - Medical service includes hospitals and mental health
 - Requesting benefits is done locally
 - The local Department also helps with arrangements for Bakersfield National Cemetery
- F3. Many artifacts donated by veterans' families are being displayed and stored at the Department.
- F4. The Veterans Resource Center, located at the Beale Memorial Library, is dedicated to helping Kern County veterans and their families by providing assistance through books, DVDs, and pamphlets about finding jobs, surviving change, and managing PTSD.
- F5. The Bakersfield National Cemetery, located near the intersection of State Routes 58 and 223 has achieved Shrine Status, a prestigious and rare distinction.
- A. An operational assessment is conducted approximately every three years.
 - B. Shrine Status is awarded to cemeteries that show excellence on the assessment.
 - The Bakersfield National Cemetery scored gold (highest score) on 19 areas and green (next highest score) on 2 others. A total of 21 areas were examined.
 - There are 17 cemeteries of Shrine Status nationwide with Bakersfield having the only one in California.

COMMENTS:

The Committee commends the Veteran Services Department for providing an environment that makes clients and visitors feel equally welcome. Most staff and volunteers are all veterans and well acquainted with veterans' rights, needs, and services.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- R1. The Department should continue its efforts to find adequate space for both offices and displays. (Findings 2 and 3)
- R2. Volunteers should be recruited to take charge of rotating displays of artifacts. (Finding 2 and 3)

NOTES:

- The Kern County Veterans Services Department should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.
- Persons wishing to receive an email notification of newly released reports may sign up at: www.co.kern.kern.ca.us/grandjury.
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Kern County Board of Supervisors
Response to Grand Jury Final Report
Kern County Veterans Services Department

Response to Findings:

The Board of Supervisors notes that the Grand Jury's findings are substantially correct.

Response to Recommendations:

R1: *The Department should continue its efforts to find adequate space for both offices and displays.*

We concur with the Grand Jury's recommendation for the department to continue its efforts to find adequate space for both offices and displays. The department is exploring a number of possible options for additional space for its expanding operations.

R2: *Volunteers should be recruited to take charge of rotating displays of artifacts.*

We concur with the Grand Jury's recommendation for the department to recruit volunteers to help catalog and display artifacts and displays. The department is committed to continue its efforts to develop a volunteer program.

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN KERN COUNTY

PREFACE:

Special Education (Special Ed) students require academic education and practice in problem solving. Without these abilities, a student will be unable to make appropriate choices at school, home, or in the community.

Special Ed students may possess a wide range of disabilities, some physical and other ailments which interfere with learning. Teachers in the field receive one of the following credentials:

- Mild/Moderate
- Moderate/Severe
- Early Childhood Special Education

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

The Health, Education, and Social Services Committee (Committee) of the 2014-2015 Kern County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) sought a better understanding of Special Ed programs in Kern County. Penal Code §933.5 authorizes the Grand Jury to make such an inquiry.

PROCESS:

The Committee began with internet research. A question and answer session at the Kern County Superintendent of Schools (KCSOS) followed. The next step was a visit to the Kern High School District (KHSD) where more questions were answered. Further study looked at the Bakersfield City School District (BCSD) and how Special Ed works in their population.

BACKGROUND:

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 gave any student/adult with a mental/physical impairment inhibiting learning, the right to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). The Rehabilitation Act of 1975 included the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) stating the disabled should be enrolled in regular classes with needed support. The IDEA was reauthorized in 1997 and 2004 insuring that disabled students are educated in the least restrictive atmosphere possible.

According to California's Special Education organizational model, "The California Legislature implements the provisions of IDEA through the 'California Master Plan for Special Education.' *This plan provides the legal foundation for a comprehensive state-wide model for the provision of Special Education. It requires districts to have sufficient size and scope to meet the needs of all students with disabilities from birth to 22 either individually or as a Special Education service region. These regions are known as Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPA)s, the backbone to California's Special Education organizational model.*"

FACTS:

I. Laws and regulations

A. State and federal laws require:

1. Find and serve all eligible children
2. Each child is entitled to a FAPE
3. Educate disabled students together with nondisabled students as much as possible
4. Parents have the right to participate and/or challenge procedures
5. Students have a right to an Individualized Education Program. (IEP)

B. Implementing the laws and regulations led to:

1. Coordination of Resources
2. Less restrictive environment
3. Increased parent participation
4. Non-handicapped children become more accepting of the disabled
5. Annual review of progress
6. Local governance system put in place
7. Compliance and quality assurance
8. Staff development programs
9. Full services to all students with disabilities
10. Equality of access
11. IEPs
12. Increased self-esteem for the disabled
13. Career training
14. Due process rights
15. Program reviews/evaluation
16. Community involvement and support

II. Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) – a geographic region of sufficient size to provide for all Special Ed services within the boundary. Kern County has four SELPAs: BCSD, KHSD, KCSOS and the remote regions of Kern County.

A. Special Ed classes in the KHSD

1. Mild/Moderate
2. Moderate/Severe – Severe may include one-on-one teaching

3. Autism
4. Visually Impaired
5. Deaf/Hard of Hearing
6. Vocational Centers
7. Mobility Program
8. Therapeutic Learning Centers – Constellation, Aurora
9. Alternative Instructional Method (AIM), AIM Center East (ACE)
10. Adult Based Life Experience (ABLE)

B. Special Ed classes in BCSD – Classes are equivalent to high school programs except for vocational classes.

C. According to the California's Special Education Local Plan Areas pamphlet, *"It is incumbent upon the SELPA to see that a continuum of programs and services are available to meet the unique needs of each student with a disability."*

D. Free and Appropriate Public Education becomes more restrictive as you progress through the following list:

1. General Education (General Ed) classes with needed adaptations
2. General Ed classes with individual or group tutoring
3. Special Ed classes with part-time integration into academic general education classes
4. Special Ed classes with integration into non-academic general education classes
5. Full-time Special Ed classes
6. Full-time Special Ed classes in a public school
7. Full-time Special Ed classes in a Nonpublic School
8. Home/hospital instruction

III. Responsibilities of SELPAs:

- Ensure programs are available for all disabled children
- Assistance complying with all requirements
- Transition planning
- Coordinating programs
- Fiscal management
- Staff development
- Curriculum design
- Management information system/reporting to the state
- Regional services
- Interagency coordination
- Budget planning
- Community awareness

IV. Goals of SELPAs:

A. Local goals:

1. Respond to local areas of concern
2. Emphasize the need for effective Special Ed
3. Organize and coordinate administrators
4. Define SELPA governance and organizations

B. Goals for Special Ed students:

1. Assure appropriate programs and services are available
2. Assure that a full continuum of programs is available
3. Maintenance of programs and services
4. Mainstreaming is used to the greatest extent possible
5. Special Ed students are given full due process rights

C. Goals for Special Ed services:

1. Eliminate duplication of services
2. Use evaluations to improve programs
3. Encourage parental involvement

D. Goals for Staff:

1. Increase parental involvement
2. Assure professional growth through staff development
3. Foster the sharing of technical resources among SELPAs

E. SELPA-wide goals:

1. Foster public support
2. Assure effective management
3. Facilitate lines of communication with parents, staff and appropriate agencies
4. Maintain quality services

V. Fiscal aspects of SELPA:

A. Approximate funding for Special Ed provided by:

- | | |
|------------------|---------|
| 1. Federal funds | 12%-14% |
| 2. State funds | 45%-55% |
| 3. Local funds | 39%-43% |

B. Improvement in funding equity

C. Flexible Funding Allocations

D. Increased accountability to parents and public

E. Coordinated staff development

VI. Special Ed Placement:

- A. Parents, teachers, doctors, and/or caseworkers may identify children for testing which could lead to placement.
- B. A system exists at the regional level for identification, assessment, and placement of students with disabilities and implementation of support programs.

FINDINGS:

- F1. SELPA personnel believe that all students can learn.
- F2. SELPA personnel facilitate high quality educational services.
- F3. SELPA personnel collaborate with county agencies to maintain an enriching environment.
- F4. State law mandates a parent conference be held at least annually.
- F5. Special Ed students are subject to standard discipline policies, provided their misbehavior is not caused by their disability and is included in their IEP.
- F6. The general public may be unaware of the scope of programs available to Special Ed students.

COMMENTS:

The Committee was impressed by the dedication of the Special Ed professionals interviewed. The information provided was specific and informative.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- R1. Special Ed professionals in Kern County should continue providing enriched education for disabled students. (Findings 1, 2, and 3)

NOTES:

- The Kern County Superintendent of Schools, Kern High School District, and Bakersfield City School District should each post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.
- Persons wishing to receive an email notification of newly released reports may sign up at: www.co.kern.kern.ca.us/grandjury.
- Present and past Kern County Grand Jury Final Reports and Responses can be accessed on the Kern County Grand Jury website: www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury.

RESPONSE REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS

**PRESIDING JUDGE
KERN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 212
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

**CC: FOREPERSON
KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 600
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

June 17, 2015

Presiding Judge
Kern County Superior Court
1415 Truxtun Avenue, 2nd Floor
Bakersfield, CA 93301

We are pleased to respond to the Grand Jury's report regarding Special Education in Kern County. We appreciate the time and attention that the Grand Jury members gave to this important and complex issue. In response to the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations, we offer the following responses:

Findings

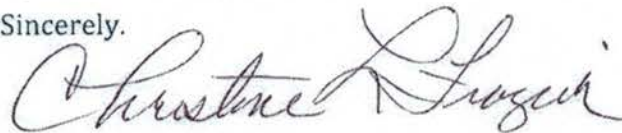
- F1: We agree.
- F2: We agree.
- F3: We agree, and we appreciate these partnerships. Kern County's commitment to collaborative services is very important.
- F4: We agree.
- F5: We agree.
- F6: We agree.

Recommendations:

- R1: We agree, and we are committed to ensuring that Special Education students in Kern County receive quality services.

Again, thank you for taking the time to understand the delivery of Special Education services in Kern County. We will continue to work with our partners to ensure that students receive a quality education and the support they need to achieve success.

Sincerely,



Christine Lizardi Frazier
Kern County Superintendent of Schools

Cc: Foreman, Kern County Grand Jury