

DATE: May 28, 2019

TO: Honorable Members of the Board of Supervisors
Jeffrey V. Smith, M.D., J.D., County Executive

FROM: René G. Santiago, Deputy County Executive &
Director, County of Santa Clara Health System

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René Santiago

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Matthew Gerrior, Director of Custody Health Services

SUBJECT: Administration of Medication in Indirect Supervision Settings and Physician After-Hours Coverage

On May 14, 2019, the Board of Supervisors directed Administration to provide a report with recommendations on how to optimize the provision of medication to inmates and the targeted position FTE count for nurses in Custody Health Services (CHS). The Board also directed Administration to provide a report regarding physician after-hours coverage at the correctional facilities including information on the recruitment of physicians for such healthcare.

This report addresses the above referrals, which were listed as budget workshop requests for information numbers 8 and 9.

Background

Inmates who are highly aggressive and pose a threat to staff and other inmates are housed in an indirect supervision setting where medication and other essential items are handed to the inmate through a tray slot. A concern was raised regarding a possible violation of the Five Rights of Medication Administration-- right patient, right drug, right dose, right route, and right time. It was suggested that increasing the number of nurses conducting the pill call could address the issue. A request was also made to increase medical physician coverage to 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

Physician Staffing

- 5 full-time coded Primary Care Physicians - 4 Internists, 1 Family Practitioner
- 1 full-time coded Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Physician
- 1 full-time coded Gynecologist (Elmwood only / CCW)
- 1 full-time coded Physician Assistant
- 3 part-time extra-help physicians, each working 8 to 12 hours per week
- 2 part-time extra-help physician assistants, each working 8 hours per week

Coverage

Medical physicians provide coverage from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., seven (7) days per week. (“Lights out” for inmates start at 11:00 p.m.) Clinic hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday to Friday. Clinic days for orthopedics are scheduled on Saturdays (4 hours at Main Jail and 4 hours at Elmwood). The Primary Care Physicians (internists) take turns serving as the on-call physician for two weeks each. On-call hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., seven (7) days per week.

Although on-call physicians are not contacted for routine consultations after 10:00 p.m., the Chief Medical Officer may be contacted for extra-ordinary events that occur after hours. For pregnant inmates, Valley Medical Center Labor & Delivery can be contacted after 10:00 p.m., should the need occur.

Because any change that might affect safety and security require approval from the Sheriff’s Office Custody Bureau, both CHS and Sheriff’s Office Custody Bureau management staff observed the pill call process to determine if changes to the pill call procedure and/or an increase in FTE count for nurses are warranted. CHS management also discussed the pill call process with the Chief Investigator for the California Board of Nursing.

Conclusions

- A. It was determined that changes to the pill call process or an increase in the FTE count are not warranted for the following reasons:
 1. The Sheriff’s Office Custody Bureau determined that handing the medication through a tray slot is the safest process for both staff and inmates;
 2. There is no violation of the Five Rights of Medication Administration since it is Custody Health policy to observe those rights when conducting pill calls, regardless of what area an inmate is housed in. It must be noted that there is no “Five Rights” statute that addresses medication delivery to patients. “Five Rights” is a convenient memory aid used to ensure that all aspects of safely attempting to medicate a patient are followed.
 3. The Chief Investigator for the California Board of Nursing has concurred with the conclusion that there is no violation of the Five Rights of Medication Administration.
 4. Increasing the FTE count for nurses conducting pill calls would have no effect on the pill call procedure in indirect supervision settings.
- B. Management is currently exploring options to provide 24/7 medical coverage for the jails and will review with the County of Santa Clara Health System Chief Medical Officer. Options would then be reviewed with the County Executive’s Office.
- C. Recruiting for vacant nurse positions is ongoing with the assistance of Employee Services Agency. Vacant positions are posted for internal recruitment first, then online on several of the top nursing recruitment sites in the hope of casting a wider network of interest.