

Introduction

The California Grand Jurors Association states that the mission of a civil Grand Jury is to "help local government be more accountable and efficient." They also state that their mission is to "facilitate positive change....". The Lassen County Board of Supervisors applauds this goal and would like to thank the citizens who have given of themselves to serve as Lassen County Grand Jurors. The Lassen County Board of Supervisors recognizes the considerable contribution of time and energy by private citizens for the benefit of Lassen County as a whole.

The Board of Supervisors welcomes the constructive criticism offered by the Grand Jury, considers it seriously, and takes to heart the recommendations brought forth by the Grand Jury. The Board of Supervisors joins the Grand Jury in trying to make local government as efficient and effective as possible.

Over the next pages the Lassen County Board of Supervisors will be presenting its response to this year's Grand Jury report.

There is one note to be made with this year's report entitled "City and County Agency Website Compliance". What appears to be a simple printing error beginning near the top of page 24 and continuing through to the middle of page 25 caused the report to be difficult to follow to conclusion. Nevertheless, as F-2 (finding #2) is identified at the top of page 24 as requiring a response ("requested" was the word used) from Lassen County, a response thereto is provided below.

Grand Jury Report:

S.A.R.T. Program

Finding Number 1: "Lassen County and the City of Susanville, have a lack of certified medical personnel available to administer forensic exam kits."

Response/Comment: The Board of Supervisors agrees in part and disagrees in part with the finding.

To begin, for purposes of this discussion, the Board of Supervisors understands the use of the terms "certified medical personnel", as used in this report, to mean a person who is a registered nurse or equivalent, who has special training in the examination of alleged victims of sexual assault, special training in the collection and preservation of evidence for use in determining if a crime occurred, and subsequent testimony in a court of law regarding those findings.

Secondly, the Board of Supervisors understands this report to be focused on forensic services in the context of **adult** victims of sexual assault, not **child** victims.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the basic premise of the finding that there is not a sufficient number of local certified medical personnel to administer these kits. At the same time the Board of Supervisors questions the implication that it is the County that should be employing personnel for these forensic services.

No doubt a need for such important service exists. The need for these services however is driven by the numbers of cases calling for them and the facts of those particular cases. Historically, the need for these

services has never been remotely close to legitimizing the hiring of a nurse by the County. Rather, the registered nurses already on staff at the local hospital have been the resource both City and County law enforcement agencies have used for such examinations. Moreover, the County does not now maintain the kind of medical facilities necessary for such forensic examinations.

In point of fact, the local privately owned hospital (BLMC) has been a faithful and contributing full-fledged member of the S.A.R.T. team for years and continues to be. Regrettably, BLMC has had difficulty finding staff willing to take on this additional responsibility. BLMC has pledged to work to increase the number of trained nurses.

So, in specific response to the finding, while it is true that there are not now any certified medical personnel locally available to perform this very specialized service, the current shortage of "certified medical personnel" needed to perform this function is with the local hospital and not the County.

Finding Number 2: "Often victims are sent to other counties and/or states for forensic exams, delays can affect the forensic findings."

Response/Comment: The County of Lassen disagrees with the finding.

The Board of Supervisors is advised that referrals for forensic examinations to other jurisdictions occurs **very rarely**, not "often". In the few instances in which it has occurred, the Board of Supervisors is advised that referral to out of County examiners is in the context of child victims and not adult victims which is the subject of this report. The other jurisdictions referenced include Shasta County, Butte County and/or Washoe County (Nevada).

Finding Number 3: "Lassen County has grant funding and other funds that could help certify more medical personnel for S.A.R.T. Program."

Response/Comment: The County of Lassen agrees with the finding.

The Board of Supervisors is advised that grant funding exists through the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) to fund the training of nurses to perform **child** forensic exams. This money is available to nurses of BLMC for training. As part and parcel of an operational agreement that exists between BLMC and the Lassen County District Attorney, an identified goal is to train 3 nurses for this specialized service by mid 2020.

Finding Number 4: "Lassen County has a written understanding with Banner Hospital, Lassen Family Services, Police and Fire for responses."

Response/Comment: The County of Lassen agrees with the finding.

Currently, an operational agreement exists between the local hospital and the Office of the District Attorney regarding the Multi-Disciplinary Team Program. That agreement is intended to memorialize the roles and responsibilities of each signatory regarding **child victims** of physical and sexual abuse. There

does not appear to be any question that nurses employed by BLMC who receive specialized training to deal with child victims of assault will also be able to use this training for adult victims.

Finding Number 5: "The cost of sending a victim to another county or state for S.A.R.T. testing can cost up to \$4500.00 per administered kit, this does not include the cost of 2 law enforcement officers or personnel to transfer the victim out of the area."

Response/Comment: The Board of Supervisors does not have a sufficient basis to agree or disagree with this finding.

While there is no doubt medical services are expensive, the Board of Supervisors can find no evidence that supports the finding that \$4500.00 has ever been spent for such services.

Recommendation Number 1: "Lassen County Board of Supervisors develop a task force for S.A.R.T."

Response/Comment: The recommendation will not be implemented (at least by the Board of Supervisors) because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

The creation of, membership within, and business conducted by, the Lassen County Sexual Assault Response Team, while of importance to the Board of Supervisors, is properly a function of the two county-wide constituent elected officers, namely, the Sheriff and District Attorney. The Board of Supervisors recognizes the autonomy that these two elected officers of Lassen County have in handling the important business of the administration of justice within Lassen County and hereby commends this report to them to address with their sound discretion.

The Board of Supervisors stands by ready willing and able to consider reasonable requests for assistance related to this very important issue.

Recommendation Number 2: "Lassen County Health and Human Services help recruit and pay for S.A.R.T. certified medical personnel."

Response/Comment: The recommendation will not be implemented (at least by the Board of Supervisors) because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

Please see response to "Recommendation Number 1" above.

Recommendation Number 3: "Lassen County Board of Supervisors adopt a financial incentive to prompt S.A.R.T. certified medical personnel to respond while off duty."

Response/Comment: The recommendation will not be implemented (at least by the Board of Supervisors) because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

Please see response to "Recommendation Number 1" above.

Recommendation Number 4: "Lassen County Health and Human Services to create 24/7 call list of certified S.A.R.T. Personnel with financial incentive pay."

Response/Comment: The recommendation will not be implemented (at least by the Board of Supervisors) because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

Please see response to "Recommendation Number 1" above.

Recommendation Number 5: "Lassen County Board of Supervisors need to develop and fund Adult S.A.R.T. Services."

Response/Comment: The recommendation will not be implemented (at least by the Board of Supervisors) because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

Please see response to "Recommendation Number 1" above.

Grand Jury Report: City and County Agency Website Compliance

Opening remarks: The Board of Supervisors had some difficulty following this report. It appears there may have been a printing error beginning on page 24 and continuing through about half way down page 25. Nevertheless, in an effort to respond to that portion of the report the Grand Jury identified (found at the top of page 24; "Response Requested Lassen County F-2") the Board of Supervisors offers the following:

Finding Number 2: "No reference to a dispute resolution process or complaint policy."

Response/Comment: The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding.

Conclusion

The Board of Supervisors would like to once again take this opportunity to thank those who have served as Grand Jurors for the 2018-2019 year. It is a considerable commitment, and can, from what we have seen, be frustrating at times. This Board of Supervisors wishes to acknowledge our shared interest in making Lassen County a safer, happier and more productive place to live and work. We pledge to continue to work with future Grand Juries in reaching this goal.