



SERVING CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES SINCE 1974

June 04, 2018

Dear Mendocino County Board of Supervisors:

I apologize up front of not being here in person, as I planned on being at the Tuesday meeting, and had plans to be out of town on Wednesday. I hope you will accept this letter in lieu of my presence.

I want to express my grave concerns regarding the consideration of closing out Juvenile Hall. I would like to discuss the services we provide to the youth therein, as well as add some points to the already excellent analysis done by the Grand Jury. There was also a recent article in the UDJ by Alyson Bailey that made several good points, but failed to realize that there are already Behavioral Health services in the Hall.


The Youth Project has been providing therapeutic services in the Hall, predating my hire over 13 years ago. In addition to providing a therapist in the Hall we have an additional contract with probation that allows any therapist at Youth Project to continue to see our clients when they enter the Hall, and these are typically youth on probation. This allows a continuity of care for the many youth on probation as well as coordination of care with psychiatrists for medication as needed as well as Crisis Services and Substance Use Counseling. Youth Project maintains Individual and Family Therapy services when a youth enters the Hall, as well as coordinating WRAP services for many youth incarcerated there. We also coordinate care before and after youth transition from crisis care facilities and out of home placements. In addition, we coordinate with Hall staff to improve behavioral interventions for youth to support them with their goals. It is my belief that this continuity of care has kept many youth from returning to the Hall, as well as avoiding costly placements to group homes, crisis centers, and other facilities.

It deeply concerns me that the leaders of our community are considering balancing their budget on the most vulnerable members of our community at the most vulnerable time of their lives. Those with almost no voice and no power in our society will get reduced services and our community will ultimately pay the price. Some youth come from remote parts of the county, and many parents will be unable to travel to a Hall out of county, and continuity of services will not be able to be maintained. It is unconscionable to consider separating these children from their families and the support they need at such a vulnerable time in their lives. What will be the cost to our community?

The uncalculated costs include mixing our youth with more sophisticated gang members, allowing them to be "trained" and network with them only to return to our community. What will be the costs of treatment and law enforcement to those youth? How will it negatively impact their lives? What will be the costs of the increased placements, incarcerations, and reduced functioning of our emerging community members. What are the costs of creating children more alienated from their community? What are the costs of not paying people in our own county to do the work of rehabilitating our youth, that money that won't be circulating in our financially struggling community anymore?

In conclusion, the discussion should not be should we eliminate services, but how do we increase them? This early intervention in the lives of struggling youth pays its dividends for decades, in reduced treatment later in life, or worse, incarceration. Please consider ALL the impacts and costs to both juvenile and adult systems and our community before making a decision like this.

Sincerely,

  
Sean Re, MFT, LPCC  
Therapist

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