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The Superior Court  
 County of Los Angeles  
 Mental Health Department

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ADDRESS REPLY TO:  
 1934 HOSPITAL PLACE  
 LOS ANGELES 33, CALIFORNIA

December 10, 1951

CAO OFFICE	NO	DATE
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HOWARD		
M. TCHELL		
BENSON		
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Honorable Board of Supervisors  
 Los Angeles County

Chief Administrative Officer  
 Recommendation: Received File  
A. J. W.

Gentlemen:

I am submitting herewith my annual report for the year ending 1951. I regret that this is late and must be confined largely to statistics, due to the fact that our staff and working procedure necessarily have been undergoing a period of re-organization in the transfer of our offices to the new Psychopathic Hospital.

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This is my last report to the Board of Supervisors as I am retiring December 15, 1951. I have been employed in the Mental Health Department of Los Angeles County since 1927 and have considered it a genuine privilege to have a part in a program for mental health as progressive as that made possible by your Honorable Board. In fact with vision far ahead of its time, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has the distinction of having started the first county mental health program in California for its citizens in 1914, and has maintained and consistently developed this function of public service. An evidence of this is our new Psychopathic Hospital, opened last September, which is considered an outstanding unit of this type in the nation.

In view of my approaching retirement, I wish to review briefly the major services included in our County Mental Health activities and to outline the current needs which seem to me essential in sound future planning.

I PROGRAM OF MENTAL HEALTH includes:

1. Treatment and Rehabilitation of patients undergoing an acute temporary illness.

This involves:

- (a) Supervision of sanitarium care and treatment;
- (b) Readjustment of improved patients to home, community, and employment. This includes close co-ordination with community resources, particularly the State Vocational Rehabilitation Department.

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MOTION

Rec + file

2. Information and Counseling Center;
3. Outside Supervision of Patients permitted by the Court to return home under the counseling service of Mental Health Department;
4. Service to -

Veterans This is developed through cooperation of American Legion;

Alcoholics - expanded through participation of Alcoholics Anonymous;

Mental Defectives Preliminary case work on all applications for admission to Pacific Colony for adult cases;

5. Placement and Supervision of the Aged

## II NEEDS

The staff of the Mental Health Department has made consistent effort to develop and carry on these duties at a high level of County service. However, the two major needs that confront the Department in maintaining this service are:

1. Facilities for care of the aged;
2. Adequate staff for carrying out the Mental Health program as outlined above.

### FACILITIES FOR CARE OF AGED

In the past ten years I have appeared before your Board on several occasions recommending that additional facilities be provided at Rancho Los Amigos for the aged cases. However, since expansion of the Rancho has been considered less economic by County management than generating additional beds in private sanitariums, we have made every effort to work within this policy. In the last two years we have developed approximately 400 additional beds in private sanitariums. Despite this increase, however, we find it impossible to keep abreast of the problem and a recent average of at least 70 cases must be held in the new psychopathic hospital awaiting placement. Sanitariums at present have no vacancies for these cases and many of the patients are too ill for care outside a hospital setting. It is increasingly difficult for private operators to secure priorities for building materials and meet the

zoning restrictions in an expansion program. The various sanitariums anticipate providing this Department with over a hundred additional beds for County patients within the next year. However, the anticipated increases have always realized fewer beds than shown on the original plans.

The private sanitariums in Los Angeles County, with few exceptions, as well as the Mental Hygiene wards at Rancho Los Amigos, have for many years provided an outstanding community service in this field, filling an extensive and vital place in the program for the care of the aged. Nevertheless, based on national and local trends, it would appear additional public beds must be provided for these chronic patients; such buildings, possibly, as proposed by the last three Governor's Conferences on a State and County participating basis. The successful solution of this problem unquestionably demands careful analysis and study by the Administrative Offices of the County. There is no evidence that incidence of mental illness in the aged is leveling off and, if our present population trend continues, it is reasonable to presume that in the not too distant future, our new modern Psychopathic Hospital will function as a detention and disbursement unit rather than for the purpose for which by design it was apparently intended. This would seem, both socially and economically, a gross loss.

It appears to me that a clear analysis of the entire County program within all Departments concerned with the care of the aged is imperative. These Departments are:

Court Commissioner  
County Clerk, Psychopathic Department  
Bureau of Public Assistance  
L. A. County General Hospital  
Rancho Los Amigos  
Old Age Security  
General Relief  
County Health Department  
Medical Social Service  
Mental Health Department

A co-ordinated study by these Departments could undoubtedly result in the initiation of a more integrated, efficient and long-range program. Under the present plan, a large percentage of the elderly patients admitted to the psychopathic wards come from the open wards of the Los Angeles County General Hospital. This procedure should perhaps be reviewed in terms of over-all benefits to the County, as a number of economic and social factors are involved.

For example, when patients are transferred from the open wards to the Psychopathic Unit and found mentally ill by the Court,

they must be placed in a sanitarium licensed for the care of the mentally ill. There is seemingly a probability, under the new Social Security Act, effective June 1952, that all cases so diagnosed will be deprived of the Federal portion of the Old Age Security grant, which will impose a greater burden on the County. In analyzing this matter further between the Departments, it might be that more facilities could be developed of a non-mental nature where these difficult nursing cases could be cared for without a finding of mental illness or admission to the Psychopathic Hospital. Such rest homes do not have to meet the difficult zoning and building restrictions required by law of sanitariums licensed for the care of the mentally ill. It is also apparent that such cooperation between the Departments concerned might eliminate a great deal of duplication in record, financial and social service work within the hospital.

I would strongly recommend that a study be made by a committee representing these several County Departments to delineate and clarify a County-wide program. I regret that with the multiplicity of duties incumbent upon me as head of the Mental Health Department and my limited staff, it has not been possible to develop an adequate program for the care of the aged, which I have considered necessary.

#### NEED FOR MORE ADEQUATE STAFF

This need is portrayed by the following facts:

1. Ten Deputy Counselors must study and analyze approximately 7500 cases per year and prepare for daily Court hearings social and financial reports on over 6,000 of these patients;
2. The Mental Health Department has a constantly revolving case load of over 4,500 mentally ill patients of whom about -  
2100 patients must be supervised in private sanitariums  
700 " " " " at Rancho Los Amigos and Harbor Hospital  
1700 patients on outside supervision.
3. Our office is also a public information and counseling center for patients, relatives, and the general public.

Excluding myself and my Assistant, we have a total of ten Deputy Counselors to accomplish these tasks, with a clerical and financial staff of only thirteen workers to aid them.

I have every reason to believe that an increase in the actual social work done with patients, which can only be accomplished

through additional staff, would result in shorter stays in sanitariums and thus make available more beds for more patients. Consideration must be given to the demonstrable fact that approximately 500 patients are returned each year for further Court action because of recurrent mental illness. This number could be reduced significantly if we were able to extend our social case work to adequately cover those individuals who have been placed on outside supervision orders and permitted to return to their homes. Each Counselor carries a far too heavy case load and consequent responsibility greater than can reasonably be expected, especially because of the nature of the work and the grave emergencies frequently arising in the care and supervision of the mentally ill.

It is also my studied opinion that if an additional property investigator were assigned to the Mental Health Department, he could conduct field investigations and produce revenue and add substantially to the economy and efficiency of the Department's operation. During the past five years, the number of patients for whom the County pays all or in part has practically tripled, due primarily to necessarily increased sanitarium rates. This has resulted in such a volume of office work that we have not considered our field investigations up to the level we desire.

In view of the above, I feel certain that your Board will consider the urgent need for providing an adequate staff when this matter is again presented in our next budget request.

I cannot commend too highly the entire staff of the Mental Health Department who carry on such a volume of high pressure work with outstanding efficiency. Despite the serious lack of personnel, the work of the Mental Health Department is well organized and on my retirement will be ably supervised by my administrative assistant.

In summary, the following factors are involved in the future County Mental Health program:

1. Building for Care of Aged  
Public versus Private
2. Additional staff in the Mental Health Department to secure an increased rate of discharges and a decrease in number of returns.
  - (a) The 1,700 patients on "outside supervision" cannot be supervised as directed by the Court, except the very urgent cases, due to lack of staff.


3. An integrated placement program through combined study of all County Departments involved.

- (a) Embraces both admission and placement procedures.

I want to express my deep personal appreciation for the support given our work by the Board of Supervisors and the consideration extended by individual Board members to the development of a comprehensive mental health program to serve the needs of our community.

I shall continue my interest and activity in the field of mental health and shall welcome any opportunity to assist the County program in any way possible.

Yours respectfully,

  
(Mrs.) Genevieve Dodge  
Counselor in Mental Health

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