

# **2015-2016 GRAND JURY REPORT**

## **County of Riverside Department of Public Social Services Administrative Policies and Procedures**

### **Background**

The Riverside County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) has a staff of 4,400 employees and serves approximately two million residents. It manages a budget of over \$1.8 billion and provides a multitude of services to needy families, children, and the elderly and disadvantaged adults.

DPSS provides services in the form of CalFresh benefits (formerly food stamps), employment services via the Welfare-to-Work Program, financial and homeless assistance to families through the CalWorks Program, In-home Supportive Services for the disabled and elderly, foster care services for neglected and abused children, as well as Medi-Cal and other health care benefits offered under the Affordable Care Act. It also offers financial aid and homeless assistance to qualifying individuals through the General Relief Program.

DPSS is divided into five Divisions: Administrative Services, Children Services, Self Sufficiency, Adult Protective Services, and First 5. It has 13 regional offices located in Blythe, Indio, Cathedral City, Rancho Mirage, Banning, Hemet, Perris, Temecula, Lake Elsinore, Norco, Moreno Valley, and two locations in Riverside.

### **Methodology**

For the purpose of this review, the 2015-2016 Riverside County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) examined the validity of and compliance with, DPSS Administrative policies across all five divisions. During the review, the Grand Jury visited various DPSS administrative, regional, and satellite offices. Multiple interviews were conducted with DPSS management, supervisory, and field support personnel.

The Grand Jury report was developed from the following:

Interviewed:

- DPSS Director
- DPSS Assistant Director, Administrative Services
- DPSS Assistant Director, Children Services (Interim)
- DPSS Assistant Director, Self Sufficiency
- DPSS Assistant Director, Adult Services

- DPSS Executive Director, Families Commission, First 5
- DPSS Chief Financial Officer
- DPSS Administrative Services Manager II
- DPSS Regional Managers, Children's Services (3)
- DPSS Regional Managers, Adult Services (3)
- DPSS Regional Managers, Self Sufficiency (3)
- Riverside County Assistant County Executive Officer and Director of Human Resources
- DPSS Assistant Regional Manager, Children's Services
- DPSS Supervisors (3)

NOTE: Parenthesis indicates number of managers and/or supervisors interviewed.

Visited:

- DPSS Administrative Office (County Circle Drive, Riverside)
- DPSS Regional Office (Kidd Street, Riverside)
- DPSS Regional Offices (Hemet)
- DPSS Regional Offices (La Sierra, Riverside)
- DPSS Regional Office (Reynolds Road, Riverside)
- DPSS Regional Office (Blythe)

Reviewed:

- DPSS Organizational Charts
- DPSS Budget
- DPSS Policies and Procedures Manual
  - Administrative Policies
  - Children's Handbook
  - Self-Sufficiency Handbook
  - Manual of Policies and Procedures, Adult Services
  - California Health and Safety Code – First 5
- DPSS Department Memorandums
- Bureau of Business Practices, Standard Manual for Supervisors (1988)

## Findings

1. The DPSS Administrative Policy and Procedure manual located on the department's intranet lacks a systematic order and is not user-friendly. According to DPSS Administrative Policy 17-001, policies and procedures are categorized by division. However, the Grand Jury found evidence of several policies that were not categorized by division and did not meet the index description indicated in the policy. It also found that the mapping index was not alphabetized nor categorized to facilitate accessibility.

Between February and March 2016, the Grand Jury visited DPSS regional offices located in the cities of Hemet, Riverside, and Blythe. The purpose of the visits and subsequent interviews was to evaluate the accessibility and effectiveness of DPSS Administrative policies. DPSS Administrative policies are located and maintained on the department's intranet. During the course of the visits, the Grand Jury observed that a majority of the Regional Managers, Deputy Regional Managers, and Supervisors interviewed (9 of 13) could not locate specific administrative policies and procedures on the department's intranet when requested by the Grand Jury. This was due to the lack of an organized system for categorizing and tracking department policy.

2. During the course of the Grand Jury's review of DPSS Administrative Policies and Procedures, it found the department does not have a system or policy in place for the periodic review and/or revision of policy to ensure policies and procedures remain current, accurate, and applicable. The Grand Jury also found evidence that specific requirements mandated by state and federal regulations, such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), the Privacy Act of 1974, and the California/Welfare and Institution Code §5328 had not been incorporated into all applicable DPSS policies. The incorporation of these laws and regulations into DPSS operating policies and procedures is critical to protect the confidentiality of the client's legal, medical, and personal information.

3. Department Memorandums (DM's) are not in compliance with administrative policies.

DPSS Policy 17-001 (dated 01-15-2003) *Department Written Communications* states:

*A DM is written when a requester is providing impacted staff with information that is needed immediately and is usually needed for a short duration. A short duration is defined as six months or less.*

The Grand Jury found that more than one hundred DM's were active for extensive periods of time. They are not removed from the DPSS intranet or converted to policy within six months. The Grand Jury found multiple DM's in the department policy manual which were more than 12 years old.

4. Acronyms used in administrative policies are not defined when first utilized and in some cases not spelled out. For example, the acronym PEPD is used on page 7 of Policy 17-001, *Department Written Communication*, but not spelled out until page 20 as "Planning and Evaluation Policy Development." According to this policy, "*acronyms must be completely written the first time used followed by the acronym in parenthesis.*"
5. The Grand Jury observed that policies under revision are identified on the DPSS intranet as "under construction." During that time, policy information is not available on the intranet, and the only accessibility to policies and procedures is through the use of office hard copies. Two of the six DPSS office locations did not have hard copies of administrative policies and procedures.

## **Recommendations**

### **Riverside County Department of Public Social Services**

1. Establish a standard for categorizing, cross referencing, and/or mapping policy titles for easier access to information. Revise the DPSS Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual Table of Contents (mapping index) to conform to a more systematic, organized, and simplistic format for easy accessibility.

According to the Bureau of Business Practice (1988), "Policies convey the mission, philosophy, and goals of the Department." Having policies and procedures well organized saves time and eliminates confusion. Lack of an organized system for locating administrative policies and procedures could affect management's ability to effectively manage resources and

ensure the department's mission, philosophy, and goals are consistently implemented across the enterprise.

2. Establish standards for the periodic review, revision, and approval of administrative policies and procedures at planned intervals, or when significant changes occur to ensure policies and procedures are current, accurate, and applicable. Update existing policies and procedures to ensure compliance with state and federal laws and regulations.
3. DM's that exceed the six month time frame be converted to a policy, assigned to a policy or deleted.
4. DPSS personnel responsible for developing and reviewing department policy be retrained on the proper use of acronyms. Department management to direct personnel to comply with DPSS Policy 17-001. Review and revise existing policies to ensure compliance with department policy on the use of acronyms. Devise a process for educating DPSS personnel on the use of acronyms and the dissemination of department policy containing acronyms to ensure policies are not misunderstood or misinterpreted.
5. Update the intranet so that policies and procedures under construction or revision remain valid and accessible until the updated policy has been approved and ready for distribution. Develop an electronic storage system such as a Compact Disk (CD) or USB Flash Drive that can be used as back-up when the intranet is not available for field support accessibility. Ensure outdated versions of policies and procedures are available to supervisors and administrators for historical and/or reference purposes.

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