State Realignment—What is it?

Realignment is not new to California counties. Many of you may remember that in 1991 the state realigned a number of programs including mental health, public health and indigent health care, transferring responsibility for these programs to counties. It was presumed that counties would receive some ongoing tax revenue financial support, but in recent years, revenues have been either reduced or removed completely.

Gov. Brown now proposes realignment of state mandated programs, such as Mental Health Services for Special Education Pupils (AB3632), Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT), and Alcohol and Other Drugs, to counties without long-term funding stability. However, it would give some flexibility for us to better manage the programs at the county level—where the rubber meets the road. Representatives from our county and others are involved in negotiation with the state on these proposals. At the end of the day, I believe we will have some form of realignment.

What does this mean for us?

We will need to figure out how to provide services with fewer revenues. We hope to have flexibility in how to address the needs of these very vulnerable patients/clients/consumers through better integration across divisions, and creative use of available revenues. This is one reason why I am in the process of integrating Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services and the Homeless Programs into one division. This integration effort is receiving favorable responses from local officials, legislators, labor, advisory boards and others. I believe that we can develop a model that will achieve good results, statewide recognition, and ultimately improve health outcomes for the patients/clients/consumers we serve.

Let’s look at the state budget challenges facing us as an opportunity to truly think outside of the box in determining how best to serve the needs of the most vulnerable in our communities and how best to utilize the talents and skills each of you bring to Health Services. I welcome your ideas and suggestions.

Sincerely,

William B. Walker, MD

did you know?

• Roughly 50,000 students in Contra Costa need a Tdap booster before starting school this fall.
Vending Machines with 100% Healthy Foods Coming to Health Services Locations Soon

In my December message, I talked about how we are converting all vending machines at Health Services program locations to 100% healthy foods. Adopting this policy is important to helping us fight the obesity epidemic, particularly among children. Data shows that 40% of low-income children seen in our Health Centers or in the Women Infant and Children program are either overweight or obese and that some of them are eating high-calorie, low-nutrition foods in our waiting rooms. As the Health Services Department, we need to “walk the talk” and offer our patients and staff snacks and beverages that we know are healthier choices. What kind of message would we be sending if we continue to offer sugared sodas and junk food when these are considered to be major contributors to the obesity epidemic? This month, staff with our Community Wellness & Prevention Program (CW&PP) will be posting “coming soon” signs on vending machines to let everyone know about the change. As part of our roll-out effort, CW&PP staff also will be hosting “taste tests” in many of your locations for a two week period starting April 7 so you can preview the food choices and help us select specific items. This is a good first step and will help us practice what we preach. We hope to have the vending machines in place sometime in April. For more information, visit i site, our intranet, or call CW&PP at 925-313-6808. — WW

Emergency Medical Services Honors Contra Costa’s First HeartSafe Communities

HeartSafe Communities are starting to sprout up in Contra Costa. Last month our Emergency Medical Services Division designated El Cerrito and the communities in the San Ramon Valley as the county’s first HeartSafe Communities. This designation means that residents know the signs of a cardiac emergency and how to respond. A community becomes HeartSafe when it earns a certain number of “heart beats,” which are awarded for things like increasing public awareness, training residents in CPR and placing automated external defibrillators throughout the community. EMS Prehospital Care Coordinator Pam Dodson said other cities in Contra Costa have submitted letters of intent to seek the designation. She said people have a greater chance of surviving cardiac emergencies when the public becomes part of the process.

To find out more about the HeartSafe Communities, visit www.cchealth.org/groups/ems/heartsafe.php or call 925-313-9547.
Health Plan’s Healthy Families Program Recognized for ‘Superior Performance’

Our Health Plan received an A-plus last month for efforts it made to improve the quality of care for children enrolled in its Healthy Families Program. Our Health Plan was one of six statewide to achieve the “Superior Performance” designation in 2008, awarded by the Managed Risk Medical Insurance Board. It was the first time our Health Plan received the designation. According to the Board, our Health Plan scored between 73% and 75% on measures like childhood immunization, lead screening and well-child visits, among others. Health Plan Director of Quality Management Kevin Drury said it is very exciting to receive the honor, as it reflects the quality care provided to members. Award designations are based on data, known as the Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set, submitted by health plans.

To find out more about our Health Plan, visit www.cchealth.org/health_plan/

Videos, Podcast Educate Public About New Whooping Cough School Law

Need information about the new whooping cough vaccine school requirement? Contra Costa is gearing up for the law by creating multimedia educational materials for you and your clients. Our Communications Unit, Community Education and Information (CEI), produced a health column, a podcast, and videos in English and Spanish. The materials are available at www.cchealth.org by clicking Health Topics and then Pertussis. CEI worked closely with the Public Health Division to create accurate and relevant tools. More materials will become available as they are produced.

To view the videos, podcasts and other materials, visit www.cchealth.org/topics/pertussis/ or for more information about the new law, contact Immunization Coordinator Erika Jenssen at erika.jenssen@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6734.

Environmental Health Brochures Raise Awareness About Unsafe Food Vendors

Our Environmental Health Division has produced a pair of brochures that aim to keep unsafe food off the street. The brochures address permit information for food vendors and the importance of purchasing from permitted vendors for consumers. Supervising Environmental Health Specialist Jocelyn Habal said they are a part of the Division’s larger outreach efforts, which also include presentations at community meetings. Last year there were 174 complaints about unpermitted food vendors in Contra Costa. Jocelyn said Environmental Health Specialists regularly inspect permitted vendors to ensure they comply with all health laws. According to Jocelyn, most foods, including cut fruit, can grow bacteria and make you sick if not handled properly. The easiest way to tell if a vendor is permitted: Look for a current permit sticker.

For more information about food vendors, contact Kristian Lucas at kristian.lucas@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-692-2500. To view the brochures, visit www.cchealth.org/groups/eh/
Data Collection Aims to Pinpoint Health Disparities in Health Services

Clerks at our Regional Medical Center and Health Centers are collecting data at a rate of 10,000 patients a month to help Health Services comply with health reform requirements. This data collection effort is in support of new mandates from the Joint Commission for hospital accreditation and the new Medi-Cal waiver. Clerks collect data about a person’s race, ethnicity, and written and spoken languages (REAL). The REAL Data Task Force is composed of representatives from our Reducing Health Disparities Unit, Information Technology Unit, Contra Costa Health Plan, Alcohol and Other Drugs Services (AODS), Mental Health, Emergency Medical Services and Regional Medical Center and Health Centers. Task force leadership Bhumil Shah and Otilia Tiutin worked closely with Ambulatory Care Leadership Manager Lorena Garcia to train 104 of our 145 clerks on REAL data collection. According to Reducing Health Disparities Manager Concepcion James, collecting valid patient data is the first step in identifying whether health care disparities exist in Health Services. The task force expects to collect enough data for meaningful use in six months, which will assure millions of dollars for Health Services in federal support. The Institute of Medicine developed its national REAL data collections methods on the ground-breaking work of our Contra Costa Health Plan. Next steps for the task force include best practice strategies for collecting data on sexual orientation and gender identity (currently being piloted in our Mental Health Division under the leadership of Tony Sanders and in our AODS Division by Fatima Matal-Sol and Bob Kajdan), and division utilization of REAL data to reduce health care disparities.

For information on the REAL Data Task Force, contact Concepcion James at connie.james@hsd.ccounty.us. To find out how to request REAL data statistics, contact Bhumil Shah at bhumil.shah@hsd.ccounty.us.

Health Column Discusses Childhood Dental Disease

Good care of a child’s baby teeth is important to ensuring health and nutrition later in life. Our pediatrician Dr. Diane Dooley writes in a recent Healthy Outlook column that without proper care, many children suffer from pain, infection, school absences and poor nutrition, which could have lasting effects. Unfortunately, dental disease is the leading chronic and infectious disease—up to five times more common than asthma. According to Dr. Dooley, up to one out of every five children seen by our Children’s Oral Health Program are in bad need of treatment. She wrote that parents should brush children’s teeth at least twice a day to prevent tooth decay.
Nursing Staff Changes Realigning to Better Serve Community

Chief Nursing Officer Jaspreet Benepal said nursing staff changes will further integrate services between our Regional Medical Center and Health Centers and improve communication and coordinated care for patients regularly served by our system. As part of this effort, Jeanette Landucci has assumed the role of Director of Inpatient Care Nursing. Anthony Longoria will assume Jeanette’s former role as Director of Ambulatory Care Nursing, in addition to his current duties in Detention Health and the Emergency Department. CCRMC/HCs CEO Anna Roth said these changes are just a few of transitions happening to better integrate outpatient and inpatient services and care.
Interpreters Move to Expedite Access, Increase Capacity to Serve Our Clients

Our Linguistic Access Unit has relocated its interpreters to one location at 597 Center Avenue in Martinez to improve services and expand capacity. Public Health Manager Sally McFalone, who oversees our Linguistic Access Unit, said having one office will help the unit better serve our Contra Costa Regional Medical Center, Health Centers and other Divisions, as well as outside organizations participating in the Health Care Interpreter Network. The Health Care Interpreter Network is a cooperative of California public hospitals sharing trained health care interpreters through an automated video/voice call center. Our interpreters currently serve clients and patients in more than 13 languages, although more than 170 languages are available on the network. The larger office space allows the unit to add four interpreters to its existing team of 13. Sally is also working with our Information Technology Unit and Contra Costa Regional Medical Center to install a wireless network on the hospital’s campus. She said the wireless network would allow quicker access to the network and more flexibility.

To find out more about our Linguistic Access Unit or the Health Care Interpreter Network, contact Sally McFalone at sally.mcfalone@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6242.

Noon Conferences a Popular Place for Employees to Lunch and Learn

Staff packed the first floor conference room in Building One of our Regional Medical Center last month to learn the latest about contraceptives. They were there to hear from UCSF professor Dr. Michael Policar, a guest speaker for our ongoing Noon Conference series. The popular series features lectures from our staff and outside experts to further our staff’s medical education and improve patient care. Conferences occur on a near-daily basis and are open to all Health Services staff. Coordinator Pattie Lew said the beauty of the model is that our employees have a place on campus to stay up on the latest information. Employees unable to travel to our Regional Medical Center have the ability to call in or participate via web conference.

To get on the weekly distribution list for Noon Conferences, contact Pattie Lew at pattie.lew@hsd.cccounty.us
John Bhambra  
Student Worker—Deep Class  
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center

For being extremely helpful and kind by going out of his way to help a patient navigate the campus at Contra Costa Regional Medical Center.  
♦ Nominated by a patient

Marsha Flakoll, PHN  
Healthy Start Richmond

For her commitment, dedication, hard work and exceptional passion for her prenatal patients. For consistently going the extra mile by utilizing every available resource to support her patients and being a restless patient advocate.  
♦ Nominated by Dola Macaulay

Lesley Gillis, FNP  
Public Health

For her dedication, compassion and care that she demonstrates toward the adolescents she serves in the Mobile Health Clinic.  
♦ Nominated by Shanda Young

Ann Harvey, MD  
Richmond Health Center

For voluntarily ensuring that all 150 patients’ medication requests were refilled before a holiday weekend and for the love and caring that she demonstrates to patients and coworkers.  
♦ Nominated by Arturo Hernandez

Linda Hubbard  
Clerk – Senior Level  
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center

For working with a vendor to expedite the printing and maintenance of the supply of new workers compensation claim forms.  
♦ Nominated by Debbie Cowden and Sandra Scroggins

Tracy Kelly  
Patient Financial Services Specialist  
Mental Health

For her patience and determination demonstrated as she worked to determine the change in medication co-pays for Medicare and Medi-Cal patients and for helping patients to understand these changes.  
♦ Nominated by Robert Freeman

Lacey McKenna  
Certified Medical Assistant  
Martinez Health Center

For always going the extra mile to problem solve and be readily available to answer questions, assist her patients well and for being a great team player.  
♦ Nominated by Shannin Wright

Rene Nunez  
Materials Management Supervisor  
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center

For defusing a difficult customer situation where the customer was getting increasingly upset. For taking responsibility for the situation, remaining calm and resolving the issue.  
♦ Nominated by Teresa O’Riva
Communicable Disease Chief Retires

Francie Wise will retire from our Public Health Division this month after 37 years with Health Services. Francie began her career as a public health nurse serving East County. As Director of Communicable Disease and Public Health Nursing, she helped shape the county’s response to emerging communicable diseases, including the devastating AIDS epidemic in the 1980s and the H1N1 outbreak in 2009. Public Health Director Dr. Wendel Brunner said Francie had an enormous impact on public health, leading the Division’s way into the community by organizing the AIDS Task Force in 1983, and always advocating for prevention as well as treatment.

EMS Director Retires After 25 Years

EMS Director Art Lathrop retires this month after 25 years. Art has been pivotal in guiding our county’s emergency medical system, including implementing our trauma system and working to establish a benefit assessment to fund EMS system enhancements. He has worked to expand and upgrade paramedic service, fire first-responder services, EMS dispatching, CPR training and public access defibrillation, cardiac care through the establishment of a STEMI system and disaster preparedness. CCHS Director Dr. William Walker said Art’s direction and vision led the way to improvements that have undoubtedly saved lives.

Service Excellence

You are a GEM for Going the Extra Mile

Mona Stardragon
Clerk—Senior Level
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center

For always being eager to help with audio visual equipment and for her calm and pleasant demeanor.
*Nominated by Pat Bernhardt

March Milestones
Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: Carolyn V. Carlson, Michael Y. Lacuesta, Jennifer E. Wood, Michael P. Wedl, Brett M. Horton, Nenita T. Roldan, Chiye Avila, Ward Smedt, Cherese S. Burnley, Araceli J. Trejo, Hope L. Trucker, Joemely C. Delatorre, Maribel A. D. Ochoa (10 years); Elizabeth A. Rivera, Lorene Lowry, Toni Philbrick, Phyllis Howard, Christopher M. Fiso, Martin F. Lynch (15 years); Michael Greene, Patricia J. Halter, Virginia Ruiz, Nancy S. Hendra, Raquel L. Lochhead, Darrell L. Pierce (20 years); Suda Paul (25 years); Jolene A. Garrison and Susan C. Nairn (30 years).

Do you know someone who’s going the extra mile? Service Excellence nomination forms are available at www.cchealth.org and http://cchs/ from any CCHS computer.