



County of Santa Barbara

MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION

300 North San Antonio Road, Bldg. 3, Santa Barbara, CA 93110

TEL: (805) 681-5232 FAX: (805) 681-5262

As authorized by the Welfare & Institutions Code 5604 of the State of California, the Mental Health Commission shall review and evaluate the mental health services and contractual agreements of the Department of Alcohol, Drug & Mental Health Services which benefit the residents of Santa Barbara County.

Board of Supervisors

Salud Carbajal-1st District

Janet Wolf-2nd District

Doreen Farr-3rd District

Joni Gray-4th District

Joseph Centeno-5th District

Officers

Margie Lopez -5th District

Chairperson

James Rohde-3rd District

Vice Chairperson

Members

Manny Casas-1st District

Louis Weider-1st District

Michelle Brenner – 2nd

District

Vacant-2nd District

Michael Vellenkamp -3rd District

Ann Eldridge – 4th District

Chhиту Patel – 4th District

Charles Huffines-5th District

Alternates

Jan Winter-1st District

2nd District -Vacant

3rd District- Vacant

Lisa Morinini - 4th District

Teresa Menchaca – 5th District

Commission Staff

Maria Xique

Advisory Board on Drug & Alcohol Problems (ABDAP)

Liaison

James M. Rohde

Latino Advisory Committee

Liaison

Manny Casas

Governing Board

Steve Lavagnino-Member

5th District Supervisor

Joni Gray-Alternate

4th District Supervisor

Web site:

www.admhs.org

June 10, 2011

Dear Chair Gray and Supervisors Carbajal, Farr, Lavagnino, and Wolf:

Re: Impact of Terminating the County's Propay Services to ADMHS clients

The Mental Health Commission learned at its May 20, 2011 monthly meeting, of the Supervisors' termination of Propay Services. Together, we implore you to reconsider this decision and restore the services before the termination date of July 1, 2011.

The Propay program serves Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Services (ADMHS) clients who can't manage their funds due to mental illness. Propay receives the client's benefit funds and uses them to pay for their essentials for living such as: shelter, food, clothing, utilities, medical care and insurance, dental care, personal hygiene, education, rehabilitation expenses, and also gives them personal needs money. There are approximately 300 clients currently served.

Due to their severe illnesses, these clients are often ADMHS's most vulnerable clients. These persons, because of symptoms that affect their ability to responsibly handle their money, are at serious risk for:

Being victimized by persons who steal their money or to whom they give it.

Homelessness from eviction if they fail to pay their rent.

Discontinuing medications because they fail to pay their meds co-pays.

Creating large amount of debt.

Becoming ineligible for their benefits (SSI/Medi-Cal/Mental Health Treatment) due to hoarding their money and going over allowable assets.

Spending their money on drugs/alcohol.

Discontinuing mental health treatment altogether.

Voluntary and involuntary hospitalization due to the above.

LPS Conservatorship due to the above.

The majority of clients on Propay receive Supplemental Security Income, and some receive VA benefits or private pensions. To be on Propay, the Social Security Administration (SSA) decides that a person can't manage their benefits. When this program is terminated, the money clients who are still considered to lack the ability to handle their own funds must be sent back to SSA. The client can't access their funds until they are designated as their own payee or find someone to apply to be their payee. This can take 2 months or longer.

There is one private agency that provides this service. They charge the maximum allowed by SSA, \$37 per month, paid from the client's funds. They do not provide case management or ledgers of the client's accounts. And \$37 is an enormous amount when your total monthly income is around \$800.

The Mental Health Commission is committed to ensuring access to meeting rooms and anyone needing special accommodations due to a functional disability may request assistance prior to the meeting date by calling Maria Xique at 681-5232. We are dedicated to fostering a positive meeting environment for our clients and the people with whom we share a common goal. When speaking before the Mental Health Commission, personal attacks and other disruptive language and/or behavior are not permitted.

If ProPay is not restored, on July 1, 2011, many in this most vulnerable population will likely show up on our streets, in emergency rooms, in our already overflowing Psychiatric Health Facility and may end up with their rights taken away through conservatorship. This will add to the County's large financial burden and take a significant emotional toll on clients, their families and other County residents.

We are fully cognizant of the serious financial situation the County faces and appreciate that you must make many agonizing choices. We believe, given the potential consequences we have outlined, that ending ProPay will result in far more expense to ADMHS, the Health Department, and law enforcement, along with increased human suffering. We respectfully ask you to please reconsider.

Sincerely,

The members of the Santa Barbara County Mental Health Commission