

**County of San Luis Obispo  
HEALTH COMMISSION**

Minutes of Meeting

Monday, November 19, 2007 (Board of Supervisors Chambers)

Members Present: Lynn Enns (Chair), Penny Chamousis, Ed Guereña, Pam Heatherington, Sara Horne, David Odell, Robert Thielscher, Susan Warren

Members Absent: Deborah Donnelly (excused), Jan Hicks (excused), James Mase, M.D. (excused)

Staff Present: Greg Thomas, M.D., Health Officer; Jean White (recorder)

Speakers: Karen Coffey (SLO County Victim Witness); Beth Raub (Women’s Shelter Program of SLO County); Dana Hansen (DSS); Elise Roberts (DSS)

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action	Who/When
<b>1. Call to Order</b>	Meeting called to order by Chair Enns at 6:00 p.m.		
<b>2. Approval of Minutes</b>	Minutes of October 15, 2007 were approved without correction.	<i>Odell/Warren</i>	Approved -all
<b>3. Public Comment</b>	<b>Jesse Arnold, Cambria</b> asks the commission again to endorse labeling of genetically engineered food. He references the Board of Supervisors meeting last year, where Dr. Thomas spoke in favor of labeling. He also notes that Avila Valley Barn is labeling their genetically engineered corn and wants to see San Luis Obispo County be a leader.		
<b>4. Defining Family Violence: a panel discussion</b>	<p><b>Commissioner Chamousis</b> introduces the topic.</p> <p><b>Karen Coffey, Assistant Director, District Attorney’s Victim Witness Assistance Center for the County of San Luis Obispo</b> introduces the panel speakers, who provide an overview of the problems surrounding family and community violence and talk about some of services their organizations provide.</p> <p><b>Karen Coffey</b> has been with the District Attorney Victim Witness Assistance Center for 20 years. Victim Witness Center’s mission is to provide comprehensive assistance to victims of crime, their families, to coordinate witness appearances in court and to reduce the trauma, frustration, and inconvenience experienced by crime victims and witnesses. They provide crisis intervention, making sure victims understand the criminal justice systems. They do field visits to victim’s homes or other locations, and have special services for the elder and dependent adult victims. They have a special advocate assigned for juvenile crimes and Cal Poly interns work with their property crime victims. They also provide emergency assistance, through a special fund from donations, for food, clothing and shelter. They work very closely with all agencies and make referrals on a daily basis to Child Welfare Services, Adult Protective Services, the Women’s Shelters, Probation and Law Enforcement. It is their job to make sure that crime victims are linked with the prosecutor that is handling their case, so they have a clear understanding of what is happening and what the possible outcomes are.</p> <p><b>Beth Raub, Women’s Shelter Program of San Luis Obispo County</b> explains intimate partner violence and talks about the services they provide. There are two women’s shelters – Women’s Shelter of San Luis Obispo County and the North County Women’s Resource Center and Shelter, who work closely together. They see primarily female victims (85%), but there has been an increase in the number of male victims.</p>	Handout: <i>Women’s Shelter Program Brochure</i>	

They also have services for children, offering free counseling to children aged 17 and under. Domestic violence includes physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, neglect, isolation and economic abuse. California Penal Code 11160 mandates that all medical personnel report intimate partner violence to law enforcement. The Women's Shelter has a 24-hour crisis hotline at 549-8989. They also have a confidential safe house that is female based; however, they have safety procedures for keeping a male and his children safe. The average stay at the safe house is about 8 weeks, and it is free. Other services they provide include counseling at two sites, counselors that go into the schools, and a legal clinic that helps with temporary restraining orders, court advocacy, and court accompaniment. They have a six-unit transitional apartment complex, where an intimate partner violence victim can move from either the Safe House or counseling program. They pay rent, but still receive case management and counseling. One of the most important things people can do to help is to believe the victim and provide them with the resources that they can use now or later.

**Dana Hansen, Department of Social Services Adult Protective Services (APS)** describes their unit, consisting of 5 full-time employees and one half-time employee. They receive an average of 100-120 referrals per month. These range from financial abuse, neglect, isolation, physical abuse, emotional abuse and fiduciary abuse. They are seeing more fiduciary abuse possibly due to receiving more referrals from financial institutions, who as of the first of the year became mandated reporters. If APS suspects there is a crime, they will notify law enforcement. Unfortunately, with a lot of elders, when the perpetrator is a family member, they do not want to prosecute. Many times they will see people that have befriended an elder, only to have moved in, taken their money, cars, and sometimes their homes. Hopefully, when brought to the attention of APS, some of that that can be rectified. APS handles a wide variety of referrals, many focused on domestic violence, where they will work with the Women's Shelter. If crimes are involved, they work with the DA's office. They are seeing a lot of elders that are being abused, some with aggressive physical assaults, which sometimes can go hand in hand with dementia or Alzheimer's. San Luis Obispo County is fortunate to have many community partners, who work together to provide resources.

**Elise Roberts, Regional Manager, Nipomo Office, Department of Social Services,** notes the importance of recognizing that it takes every partner at the table tonight to address the problems of intimate partner violence. She provides some statistics from the Department of Child Welfare Services and talks about the services they offer. Child abuse is a form of family violence and they see it cut across all ethnic groups and all socio-economic groups. On average, the SLO Dept of Social Services receives approximately 289 suspected child abuse or neglect calls every month, and of those, approximately 209 receive a response. There are approximately 352 children in SLO County in foster care at this time. 63% of those children have drug & alcohol issues as part of the concerns that brought them into their department. 19% of the children in foster care have identified domestic violence as a critical issue in their family. One of

	<p>the lasting effects they see is in inter-generational domestic violence and the effects in their youth population.</p> <p>They offer two primary level of response when they receive a referral – immediate (those cases involving sexual or physical abuse) and 10 day response (usually neglect type of cases). They have both voluntary services and juvenile court intervention services. For children who are removed from their families, they offer reunification services and also work with families and children when children have not been removed. Ms. Roberts again stresses that it is really a larger issue than just family violence or intimate partner violence in itself. All of these issues cross over one another. They also partner with the employment resource division, where CalWorks eligibility staff work with families for preventative types of resources and referrals.</p> <p><b>Penny Chamousis</b> speaks about her experience as a volunteer and as a survivor. She reflects on times she has talked to people on the phone very late at night or even stayed in the hospital with them. She always reminds herself not to judge, to listen carefully to what the person is saying, and to try to understand what they need from her. It takes a great deal of courage to get out of that situation. It also takes courage to be a volunteer, but she would do it again and is very grateful for the opportunity to give back to women in that situation.</p> <p><u>Commissioner Questions/Comments:</u></p> <p><b>Commissioner Odell</b> refers to an article in The Tribune today related to tonight’s discussion, titled “Father, Not the Killer” and recommends reading.</p> <p><b>Commissioner Heatherington</b> read recently that there are people overseeing elder’s financial situations who are convicted felons. Mr. Hansen talks about how easy it is to get a job as an in-home caretaker. There is usually no background criteria required. There are several agencies in our county that provide those services and do some type of background screening, but he is not sure of the extent. Many folks who provide this type of care are very transient and records in another part of the country wouldn’t show up here. It is easy to befriend an elder who is starving for attention. When APS receives a referral, part of their assessment is to educate the person on how to safeguard themselves both physically and financially. Ms. Coffey adds that recently all of the councils got together and wrote a protocol for first responders who respond to elder independent adult abuse. They are in the process of developing a DVD to use for training purposes.</p> <p><b>Commissioner Heatherington</b> asks if therapists are mandated reporters. (Benita Zisla, expert witness in testifying on domestic violence for the DA’s office, and who is in the audience tonight, answers that therapists are only mandated reporters on intimate partner violence if they are working in a medical establishment (hospital or other medical situation). Private practice therapists are exempt from the law.</p> <p><b>Commissioner Warren</b> asks Ms. Raub where they place teenagers that are not appropriate for the shelter or who do not want to come into the shelter. Ms. Raub</p>		
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	<p>answers that they are usually placed with safe uncle, safe friend, or neighbor. They will still come in for counseling.</p> <p><b>Commissioner Warren</b> asks about caregivers (for elders) with substance abuse problems. Mr. Hansen answers that if APS is called, they will initiate an investigation, and get law enforcement involved when appropriate. Many of these cases would go unreported if it weren't for folks in the community that are looking out for elders and dependent adults. They also make referrals to the Public Guardian's Office for those individuals that are unable to care for themselves safely.</p> <p><b>Commissioner Enns</b> notes that teachers are mandatory reporters and asks if many people enter the system through them. Ms. Roberts answers that teachers and schools are a primary area of response. She describes the Safe System of Care, which is a disciplinary team that reviews child abuse and juvenile probation cases.</p> <p><u>Public Comment:</u></p> <p><b>Jesse Arnold</b> thanks Commissioner Heatherington and Commission Chamousis for organizing the panel and thanks the speakers for their presentations. He asks about statistics on this type of violence as it relates to post traumatic stress disorder in soldiers returning from Iraq or previous wars. Benita Zisla answers that the Trauma Recovery Community is very concerned about this, and she and a few other therapists in the area who have experience working with post traumatic stress disorder have gotten together and are trying to set up a "clearing house," where either the vet or somebody experiencing violence from a vet, can contact one of them. They do not see this yet as a problem in our community, but as a coming issue and want to be ahead of the curve.</p> <p><b>Commissioner Warren</b> expressed her concern about this as well, especially with the high number of Vietnam Vets in the area who could become re-traumatized.</p> <p><u>Resources:</u></p> <p>Crisis Hotline: 549-8989 – 24 hours per day / 365 days per year  Business Line: 781-6401 – for volunteers or to set up a presentation  Child Welfare Services Hotline: 781-5437 – 24 hours per day / 365 days per year  Adult Protective Services: 781-1790  Victim Witness: 781-5821 or toll free 866-781-5821</p>		
<p><b>5. Public Health Report</b></p>	<p><b>Greg Thomas, M.D., Health Officer provides a Public Health Department report.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Distributed a copy of a memo (from Jeff Hamm) that was e-mailed to all Health Agency staff regarding the upcoming Health Agency budget challenges.</li> <li>▪ Answered a question from last month regarding small water systems. 5-100 hookups is considered a small water system. 3-4 homes hooked up to a water system is a private system, where you are responsible for your own water testing.</li> <li>▪ Syringe Exchange Program update will be going to the Board on 12/1//07.</li> <li>▪ Health Education Specialist (working on Obesity Prevention) starts on 12/3/07.</li> <li>▪ Children's Health Initiative, Public Health, CHC, and Arroyo Grande Hospital held a dental health fair last week, providing education and fluoride varnish to approx. 200 children.</li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gave a snapshot Power Point overview of the presentation that Dr. Edge gave to the Board of Supervisors on 10/3/07 with an update on the County budget status. A copy of the staff report is available on the County website.</li> </ul> <p>Dr. Thomas announced that he will be leaving his position at the Health Department and moving to a new position at Cal Poly Health Center, to go back to providing patient care. He presented a wish list of top 7 things he would like to see:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Putting more effort and funding into primary prevention;</li> <li>2. Realization that economics/minimum wage is highly associated with health status. If minimum wage doesn't pay for basic food and shelter, there will be homelessness, desperation, malnutrition and disease;</li> <li>3. Fluoridation of water;</li> <li>4. Universal health care (majority of bankruptcies are due to large medical debt);</li> <li>5. Outpatient detox center;</li> <li>6. Program for the medically fragile homeless; and</li> <li>7. Labeling of GMO foods</li> </ol> <p><i>Commissioners praised and thanked Dr. Thomas for his many years of service.</i></p>		
<p><b>6. Health Commissioner Updates</b></p>	<p><b>Chair Enns:</b> Attended the obesity prevention workshop held at Kennedy Fitness Center. It was an excellent workshop that was filmed and will hopefully be shown on public television. The obesity task force is working on a video clip for more public awareness. Chair Enns also attended the SART meeting. SART has moved into their new location in the old General Hospital ER. SART needs forensic nurse examiners and nurse assistants. They are also in need of comfortable furniture for their child interviewing room. SART is also working on a "cutting edge" volunteer program for bilingual translation. Dr. Nisha Abdul Cader will be replacing Dr. Thomas as Medical Director for SART.</p> <p><b>Commissioner Thielscher:</b> No report.</p> <p><b>Commissioner Guarena:</b> No report.</p> <p><b>Commissioner Heatherington:</b> Attended the Victim Witness Open House, which was well attended and a great tribute to all the people who work in the program. She also attended the Domestic Violence Task Force.</p> <p><b>Commissioner Chamousis:</b> Will report on the November and December Adult Service Policy Council meetings in December.</p> <p><b>Commissioner Horne:</b> No report.</p> <p><b>Commissioner Odell:</b> Mental Health Board has the same sad budget news. This will be a tough time, particularly in areas of direct therapy.</p> <p><b>Commissioner Warren:</b> Attended the Drug &amp; Alcohol Services Board annual retreat. They are in the process of doing some restructuring. She will report further next month.</p>		
<p><b>7. Committee Reports</b></p>	<p><b>Legislative Committee:</b> Commissioner Chamousis reports that at the last meeting there was discussion about the County's process for developing its annual legislative platform. The committee was in favor of supporting legislation that would increase state funding to counties for programs to address obesity prevention and supporting</p>		

	<p>legislation that would require health insurance providers to include alcohol and substance addiction treatment as covered benefits. Jeff Hamm indicated he would propose to the County Administrator language to be considered for these to be included into the 2008 Legislative Platform. There was also discussion about labeling of GE foods. Jeff Hamm indicated that labeling of GE foods was not a viable legislative platform that he, as Health Agency Director, would recommend, due to the federal mandates, but the commission could propose language on their own. Commissioner Chamousis asked for input from commissioners.</p> <p><b>Commissioner Heatherington:</b> Proposes partnering with other County health commissions in support of labeling. Notes at one point, there was statewide legislation.</p> <p><b>Commissioner Horne:</b> States this is a federal responsibility, not a state responsibility. Suggests putting more effort into local labeling.</p> <p><b>Commissioner Odell:</b> Agrees with Commissioner Horne that the commission should encourage more people in this County to voluntarily label.</p> <p><b>Commissioner Guarena:</b> Suggests encouraging and starting a program for restaurants to voluntarily post signs stating they do not serve GE crops in their restaurants.</p> <p><b>Commissioner Enns:</b> Notes that until there is action at the federal level, it won't be possible to determine what is in food distributed throughout the country. She adds that a local example has been set, and asking people do something voluntarily can elicit a better response. She suggests asking persons selling at our farmer's markets to voluntarily state whether their product is GE.</p> <p><b>Commissioner Horne:</b> Notes that anyone concerned about GE modified always has the option of buying organic foods, which are not GE modified.</p> <p><u>Public Comment:</u></p> <p><b>Jesse Arnold</b> recognizes that the federal government has preempted labeling, but states that it is a question of deciding to be a leader. Federal laws do get changed. He reiterates good points made by commissioners, supporting local voluntary labeling and continuing to educate the community on organic foods. He refers to a bill introduced by Dennis Kucinich on labeling and asks the commission to review this bill. He asks the commission to take a stand and support GE labeling in principle, and to review Dennis Kucinich's bill for possible support.</p> <p><b>Community Education:</b> No report.</p> <p><b>Budget:</b> No report.</p> <p><b>Nominating Committee:</b> No report.</p>		
<p><b>8. Prospective Future Items</b></p>	<p><u>Next Meeting – December 10, 2007</u> Topic: Presentations from local non-profit charitable organizations</p>		
<p><b>9. Adjournment</b></p>	<p>Motion to adjourn at 8:05 p.m.</p>	<p>Odell/Warren</p>	<p>Approved - all</p>