

# **El Dorado County Jail**

## **Mental Health Screening Policies and Procedures**

*By Dr. Stephen Clavere, Commissioner  
West Slope Council of the El Dorado County Mental Health Commission*

During the October 26, 2016 El Dorado County Mental Health Commission meeting I requested and was assigned the task to review the county jail's policies and procedures for admitting and screening new inmates. This was in response to an inmate suicide that occurred in that facility on 9/19/15. and was reported in the Sacramento Bee on 9/24/16. The Commission has no desire to investigate the incident itself; its only interest is to ensure that our county has implemented measures to reduce the likelihood of its reoccurring.

My first request, sent on 10/31/16 to CPT Jackie Noren, the Jail Commander, was answered very promptly on 11/4/16 by LT Matthew Foxworthy, resulting in my receiving a CD containing seven policies on the following topics:

- 4.01-Inmate Processing-Intake
- 8.02-Intake Medical Evaluations
- 8.03-Mental Health Services
- 8.04-Special Mental Health Disorder
- 8.05-Mentally Disordered Inmates
- 8.06-Developmentally Disordered Inmates
- 8.12-Suicide Prevention

However, the Suicide Prevention Policy directed the California Forensic Medical Group (CFMG, a contractor) to further develop and Suicide Prevention Plan and additional operational procedures for ensuring custody-health staff communication and monitoring potential suicides. A follow-up request was sent on 11/10/16 for the aforementioned documents. Nine weeks later having received no response, a second request was sent on 1/17/17. LT Foxworthy replied on 1/24/17, stating that the Sheriff's office did not possess the documents, and suggested I ask the CFMG. I did so on 1/24/17, and haven't heard anything since. I requested assistance in the matter from District One Supervisor John Hidahl on 2/7/17 with action pending.

The following observations are made, based on the above available documents:

- The relevant policies and procedures are extremely out of date. The four mental health related policies have not been updated since their issuance in 2001, and the suicide prevention policy was last revised in 2005.
- There are no standard screening instruments for mental health or suicide currently in use.
- Mental health inmates only receive timely medication when they have a documented valid prescription. Otherwise, they may have to wait up to a week to see a psychiatrist.
- The CFMG contract calls for mental health staff to be on site for only eight hours a week.
- There is no specified timeframe for making mental health referrals.
- There is no established procedure for placing inmates in observation cells.
- There are no specified criteria for contacting on-call mental health staff.

The above observations strongly suggest that further continuous review is necessary.