



COUNTY OF DEL NORTE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

880 Northcrest Drive
Crescent City, California 95531

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Gary R. Blatnick, Director/Public Guardian

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BOARD REPORT

DATE: February 19, 2008

AGENDA DATE: February 26, 2008

TO: DEL NORTE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT: Gary Blatnick, Director
Health and Human Services

SUBJECT: Local Public Health Services Program

RECOMMENDATION FOR BOARD ACTION:

Approve and authorize the Director of Health and Human Services to notify the State Department of Public Health of Intent to Contract for Local Public Health Services.

DISCUSSION/SUMMARY:

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has relied upon Local Public Health Services Program (LPHSP) staff provided through the State Department of Public Health, Office of County Health Services. For over two decades this arrangement has proved to be effective in providing a high quality trained workforce serving critical environmental health and public health nursing services.

The environmental scientists provide inspections related to the environmental health and safety of our community. These inspections include safe food handling and processing facilities, organized camps and dwelling units, water well construction, water supply systems, sewage disposal systems, solid waste disposal facilities, and underground and above ground storage tank facilities installations and removals. In addition, they respond to hazardous materials incidents, insect problems, animal bites, unsanitary waste disposal and working with local governing bodies and the Public Health Officer to implement ordinances and standards to meet local needs.

Public health nursing services assist with the prevention and control of communicable diseases by carrying out epidemiological investigations and by teaching patients or family members the safe care of infected individuals and the prevention of the spread of infection. They perform direct public health nursing services including promotion of

maternal and child health services for local perinatal, child and adolescent health, and family planning services. Public health home visiting services are a critical part of the differential response to child abuse by providing preventive and early intervention assisting parents. Our public health nurses are provided access to homes as families trust and appreciate their information, counsel and support. Without a doubt many more families would require higher levels of intervention, including child removal, were it not for their work. Professionals throughout the County depend on the guidance and information public health nurses can provide to develop programs and tailored responses to families in need.

The public health nurses facilitate nursing activities in connection with handicapped persons, and coordinate with other health and social service agencies to provide health education and interpret public health to the community. They maintain avenues of communication to public and private sectors within the community to assure good working relationships.

While your Board approves authorizing the attached Letter of Intent be sent to the Director of the State Department of Public Health to continue the contract, our County may withdraw that notice prior to May 1, 2008. It is our intention to come before your Board no later than the last Board meeting in April, with an update and final recommendation regarding the future of the contract.

The new Director of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) decided it was necessary to increase administrative costs to approximately 35% from the current contract rate of 15%. DHHS and the other ten counties who contract with CDPH believe these charges are excessive and unnecessary. While DHHS continues to negotiate, we are also thoroughly and assertively examining other options. The State was presented with proposals drastically reducing administrative costs by identifying the unnecessary State administrative staff assigned to the Office of County Health Services. Our most current communication from CDPH tells us they are seriously considering our proposals.

The community relies heavily on our three environmental scientists and three public health nurses. This workforce has been stable and reliable. DHHS has experienced very little staff turnover or recruitment difficulties over the years the program has been in operation. High turnover rates, accompanied with high vacancy rates and difficulty in recruiting and retaining skilled professionals has been occurring throughout DHHS except in the environmental health and public health nursing areas. Workforce turnover creates inefficiency, higher financial cost and compromises service delivery to the community. These professionals receive their salary and benefits through the State of California.

These critical environmental scientists and public health nurses must be ready to respond to wide and diverse demands. Due to our sparse resources, staff must be

knowledgeable in a broad spectrum of public health issues responding on a moments notice. Also, as you are well aware, as State regulations become more complex and difficult for our rural community, we require local trusted experts to respond.

As mentioned above, we are very concerned about the increase in administrative costs which we find excessive and unnecessary. While we continue to negotiate and believe the State is intending on reducing those costs, we are actively pursuing other options.

ALTERNATIVES:

Modify Letter of Intent to continue local public health services.

FINANCING:

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

County Administration

SIGNATURES REQUIRED:

Chair, Board of Supervisors; Clerk of the Board

ADMINISTRATIVE SIGN-OFF:

AUDITOR:

COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER: YES

COUNTY COUNSEL: YES

PERSONNEL:

OTHER DEPARTMENT:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be a stylized 'M' or similar character, located to the right of the administrative sign-off list.



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February 26, 2008

Mark B. Horton, M.D., M.S.P.H.
Director
California Department of Public Health
Health and Information and Strategic Planning, MS 5000
P.O. Box 997377
Sacramento, CA 95899-7377

Re: Fiscal Year 2008-09 Contract for Local Public Health Services Program

This letter is written in response to the request on behalf of the Del Norte County Board of Supervisors regarding Intent to Contract for Local Public Health Services.

While we have serious reservations regarding the excessive increases in charges for administrative services, at this point, it is our intent to continue the contract for the Local Public Health Services Program for three Environmental Scientists and three Public Health Nurses.

As provided in H&S Code Section 101300, we may withdraw this Letter of Intent and, in fact, will consider this matter before the May 1st deadline.

Sincerely,

Gary Blatnick

cc: David Finigan, Chair, Del Norte County Board of Supervisors
Leslie McNamer, Vice Chair, Del Norte County Board of Supervisors
Martha McClure, Del Norte County Board of Supervisors
Gerry Hemmingsen, Del Norte County Board of Supervisors
Mike Sullivan, Del Norte County Board of Supervisors
Jeannine Galatioto, County Administrative Officer