

Office of the *California Prison Receivership*

Letter from the Receiver, Vol. I, Number 1.
17 April 2006

Greetings to all on day one of the Federal Court mandated Receivership of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) prison medical care system. This communication serves as the first in an ongoing series to all CDCR staff to inform you of key visions, plans and activities of the Receivership and the CDCR Health Services Division. It is important that you keep abreast of our activities, help inform them and provide input -- critical or supportive -- in order that all of us, together, will improve the medical care our patients receive. All activities of the Receivership have one bottom line in mind: ***To create a system where custody and health care staff together guarantee that access to care and quality of medical services in California prisons meet constitutional standards.***

The challenge is immense, the opportunity unique and failure is not an option. The factors leading to the creation of the Receivership have been in play for decades and although the turn-around will not be completed overnight, actions toward that end will be swift to address the most critical issues and shortcomings.

While we are "fighting fires" to rid our system of the most egregious abuses we will, at the same time, engage in a methodical and organized approach to institute changes in the State prisons that will establish California as a national leader in quality medical systems of which all CDCR employees can be proud.

I understand fully that the local clinical environment is where the most important interactions occur. I assure you I will focus my efforts in this area and, working with you and the Court, will take the steps necessary to make the changes needed.

One of my key challenges and responsibilities is to provide the resources necessary to make positive change. Inhumane working conditions lend themselves to unacceptable behaviors. Shamefully inadequate health care salaries create recruitment and retention barriers to high quality care. My commitment is to work with custody and health care personnel together to, at a minimum, provide adequate clinical space, supplies, equipment, staff, training, education and support. My expectation is that you are competent, caring, compassionate and willing to participate in positive change. Nothing less is acceptable.

There is exhaustive documentation of horrid working conditions, substandard care, preventable patient morbidity and mortality, significant staff indifference and incompetence and a broken system which is unethical, immoral and illegal. No more evidence is required. Documentation of the State's inability and/or unwillingness to take effective action is, in fact, the reason the Court has removed the prison medical system from State control. We will now proceed to make the changes necessary to guarantee our patients their right to constitutionally adequate medical care. We start today.

I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,



Robert Sillen, Receiver

Upcoming letter topics:

- The Receivership -- What is it? Who is the Receiver and what is he doing here? Why did he come?
- The vision -- What, how, when?
- Priorities -- Everything can't be done at once. Why not? Where is the emphasis and what will happen?
- Systemic change -- How? Who will be involved?
- Where do I get meaningful information? How do I communicate with HSD Central Office? The Receiver? Will anybody ever answer me?
- The whole patient. Coordination and integration of other efforts (e.g., mental health, dental).

Distribution:

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