

**CALIFORNIA
PRISON HEALTH CARE
RECEIVERSHIP CORP.**

Robert Sillen
Receiver

Letter from the Receiver, Vol. 2, Number 1
23 January 2007

Happy New Year!

The past year brought tremendous change, and the anticipation of more to come. Across California's 33 adult prisons, and throughout the state, there is a broad spectrum of response to the Receivership – from relief and inspiration to fear and suspicion. It is natural to be uncertain in times of transition. I urge you to be patient and thoughtful as you consider the turnaround of prison medical care, and your own role in it.

After nine months, my team has its boots on the ground and the Receivership has set many practical changes in motion to improve California's prison medical care system. These include:

- Raising medical staff salaries to competitive levels to improve quality care, fill vacancy rates, and increase continuity of care by reducing reliance on costly temporary agencies.
- Launching a turnaround of the 33-prison pharmacy system, which multiple audits have found to be a chaotic operation lacking in inventory and purchasing controls, rife with medical error and responsible for wasting millions of taxpayer dollars.
- Taking the first steps to improve prison nursing by creating a classification for Licensed Vocational Nurses to replace Medical Technical Assistants, who may choose to remain in nursing or become Correctional Officers. This action clarifies roles in the prison medical system. It also will save \$39 million taxpayer dollars in the first year of full implementation alone.

In addition, the Receivership's team of health care and corrections experts is working with prison leaders to devise a new, constitutional prison medical care system. I invite you to keep track of our progress by reading our bi-monthly reports to U.S. District Judge Thelton E. Henderson, on our web site at www.cprinc.org.

In visits to 13 prisons so far, I have been impressed with the dedication to patient care and determination to make a broken system work that so many clinicians and medical staff have shown. There are countless heroes in the trenches, and there can be no successful remedial efforts without them.

In the year ahead, we will deepen our understanding of the system, continue to set priorities in order to tackle its myriad problems, and press forward with the initiatives listed above and many others. For example, we will make use of our intensive efforts at San Quentin to develop and pilot programs in other prisons. We will address the issue of inadequate emergency response. We will work to improve physician and all clinical caregivers' performance.

And, we will continue with the project to build 5,000 medical and 5,000 mental health beds in collaboration with the federal Special Master for prison mental health care, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Department of Finance and other state agencies. It was encouraging to see the Governor move in that direction in his recent budget proposal, and the Legislature's deliberations have just begun. Rightly, the Receivership is not beholden to the outcome of the budget process. That means the construction of these needed facilities cannot be held hostage to politics, which we all know have contributed to derailing past efforts to fix the prisons.

Don't forget that prison medical and custody staff have their hands full every day, dealing with the challenges and hazards posed by overcrowding and the inevitable threat of communicable disease. Recently San Quentin staff responded admirably to identify and contain a Norovirus outbreak that started just after Christmas and affected about 900 inmates and 50 employees all told. At Chuckawalla Valley State Prison and California State Prison Solano, medical and custody leaders also diligently responded to Norovirus episodes in November; at the same time their counterparts at R.J. Donovan did yeomen's work containing a tuberculosis threat. As I write this, leaders at California Medical Facility were preparing to declare an "all clear" on a spate of Norovirus there. These crises will continue to arise – they are a fact of life. We need to make sure the prisons are prepared with sufficient staff and resources to handle them.

As the work to repair prison medical care takes shape, many are stepping up to the challenge. Throughout the CDCR and state government, capable, dedicated individuals are making valuable contributions to operate and improve the prison medical system.

However, their's is not the only response. With change comes resistance to change. That is fully expected. After all, there are many deeply rooted reasons why the prison medical system has not been fixed before, and most of those are still present today. Improving care for inmates is not a politically popular position, so few in state government have shown leadership to solve the problem.

Incarcerating people, however, creates many responsibilities, including the provision of constitutionally adequate medical care. Failing to do this, the State did not object to the establishment of the Receivership, acknowledging it could not or would not get the job done without federal court intervention. Now, that work has begun. Clearly, it will not be to everyone's liking. If it were, it would have been done already and there would be no need for a Receivership. It is time for CDCR and DCHCS to step up to the plate with the Receiver and right all the wrongs of the past and present. This will be done!

Rooting out waste, instituting accountability, redirecting resources, creating efficiencies, rectifying under-spending on staff, infrastructure and equipment, building adequate facilities and paying for the talent capable of leading the turnaround – these activities can rankle those they don't reward. It's not business as usual. The Receivership is an emergency response to a constitutional crisis. Remember, all of our actions 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.

I look forward to working with you in this new year and this exciting new era to achieve that goal.

Sincerely,



Robert Sillen
Receiver

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