



August 18, 2022

The Honorable Shelly Averill  
Presiding Superior Court Judge  
600 Administration Drive  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

RE: Response to the 2021-22 Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury Report

Dear Honorable Judge Averill,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the 2021-22 Grand Jury Report. The Department of Health Services response to the Grand Jury Report: *Department of Health Services* is attached.

A sincere thank you to the 2021-22 Grand Jurors for their service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tina Rivera". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tina" being more prominent.

Tina Rivera  
Director

Attachments: Department of Health Services Grand Jury Response

cc:

Sonoma County Board of Supervisors  
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
Grand Jury Foreperson

## Response to Grand Jury Report Form

Report Title: Department of Health Services  
Report Date: June 14, 2022  
Response by: Tina Rivera Title: Director  
Agency/Department Name: Department of Health Services

### FINDINGS: F10, F19

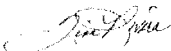
I (we) agree with the findings numbered: \_\_\_\_\_

I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: F10, F19

(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed with an explanation of the reasons.)

### RECOMMENDATIONS: R6

- Recommendations numbered: R6 have been implemented.  
(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)
- Recommendations numbered: \_\_\_\_\_ have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.  
(Attach a timeframe for the implementation.)
- Recommendations numbered: \_\_\_\_\_ require(s) further analysis.  
(Attach an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. ***This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the Grand Jury report.***)
- Recommendations numbered: \_\_\_\_\_ will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.  
(Attach an explanation.)

Date: Aug 18, 2022 Signed: 

Number of pages attached: 2 plus this one.

(See attached Civil Grand Jury Response Requirements)

**Department of Health Services Report – Department of Health Services Required Responses**

**Findings: Health Services disagrees wholly or partially with findings F10, F19**

**F10. Salaried disaster service workers worked for months on end, often seven days a week, without adequate compensation.**

The Department of Health Services disagrees with this finding.

The COVID-19 emergency and pandemic was extraordinary in that it was a significantly extended and drawn-out emergency response unlike fire, flood, earthquakes in which emergency operations presumably are short-term and would shift to non-emergent recovery operations within weeks of the event. The length of the pandemic was also inconceivable.

County employees, particularly DHS employees, performed under the most difficult of circumstances and there is no disputing of the toll the pandemic had on County staff. Salaried employees received straight-time overtime pay through June 1, 2020. At that time, the County learned many other County agencies were not paying overtime to salaried employees. Additionally, County employees know their legal obligation to be disaster service workers. The County was compelled to make the decision to end the overtime pay due to significant budgetary impacts of the increase in salaries and the lack of assurance that these additional costs would be reimbursed by the Federal government. When the County received the ARPA monies, a \$1,500 payment was provided to County employees to help offset the impact the pandemic had on their work duties.

The County's Salary Resolution includes the following:

Overtime In a Board-Designated Emergency (Amended 6/12/19)

Unrepresented Administrative Management employees and appointed Department Heads shall be eligible for straight-time overtime when working beyond forty (40) hours in a week due to a local, state or federal disaster declaration by the Board of Supervisors, and as authorized by the County Administrator. Under no circumstances, shall an employee designated as Unrepresented Administrative Management or an appointed Department Head be paid or be compensated in any manner for overtime except under such conditions as may be set forth by the Board of Supervisors.

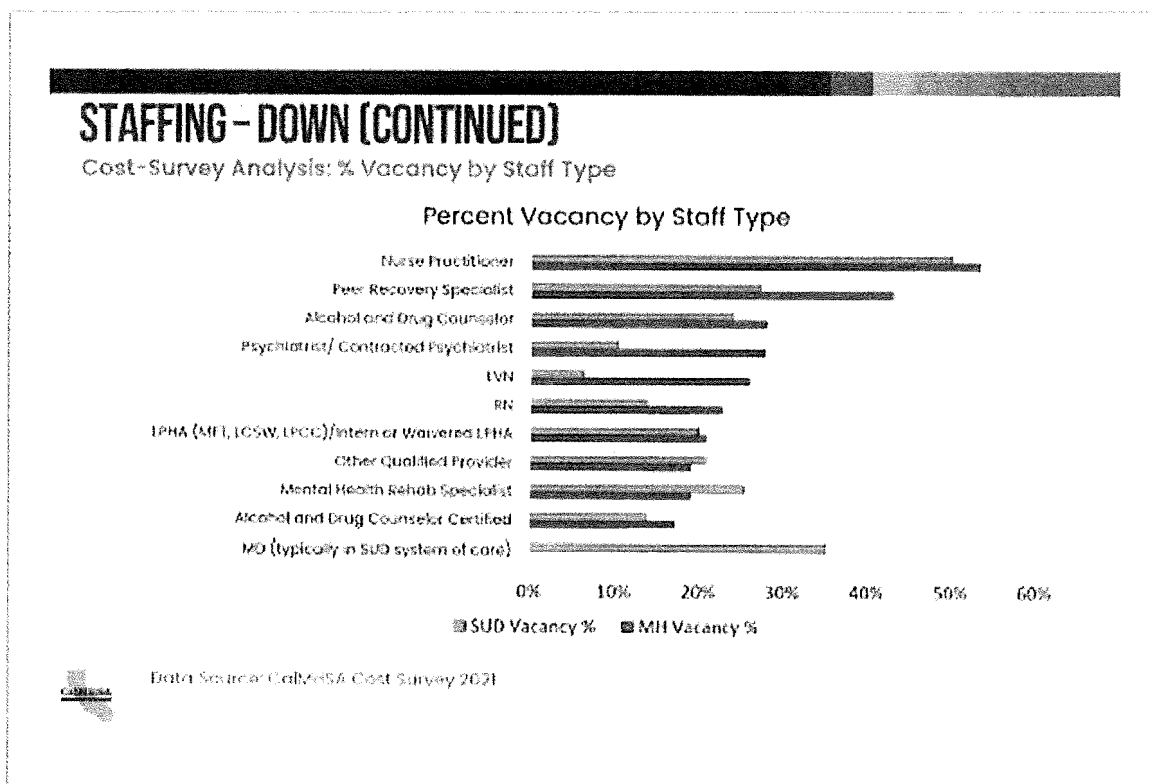
The County learned from the pandemic that emergency operations and sufficient staffing needs to be scalable to long-term, sustained emergencies. The Department of Emergency services is working collaboratively with County departments to ensure an adequate "bench" of trained and available staff to provide sustainable relief and coverage for emergency operations and continuity of operations during EOC activation.

A complete after-action report from the Department of Health Services will be provided to the Board of Supervisors by the end the first quarter of 2023.

**F19. In the Department of Health Services there are numerous unfilled positions due to slow recruitment efforts and other deficiencies.**

The Department of Health Services disagrees with this finding.

The large number of vacancies in the healthcare field is a nation-wide and state-wide problem (see statistic below); there are ongoing and current strategies where DHS has partnered with Central HR to address this problem: (1) requested full-time recruitment analyst at Central HR. to work DHS recruitments; (2) increased staffing capacity within internal DHS-HR--3 additional positions including a Program Planning Evaluation Analyst, Administrative Aide and Senior Office Assistant--to process more recruitments; and (3) internal Health Services-HR was centralized to improve efficiency in operations. It should be noted that funding sources (i.e., Federal, State, and local County) do not keep up with paying for resources required to address this job vacancy problem fully.



**Recommendation R6 has been implemented.**

**R6. By March 1, 2023, the Board of Supervisors, County Administrator’s Office, and the Department of Health Services review the Department of Health Services’ budget to ensure funding for sufficient staffing. (F10, F19)**

The Department of Health Services continuously monitors staffing and funding levels in coordination with the County Administrator’s Office and the Board of Supervisors through the annual budget process.