

YOLO COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY

SUMMARY

The 2010-11 Grand Jury initiated an inquiry into the Yolo County Housing Authority (YCHA) this year to determine whether and how the agency was implementing resident safety improvements discussed in last year's Grand Jury report. The Grand Jury determined that YCHA had successfully improved resident safety in several ways.

REASON FOR INVESTIGATION

California Penal Code Section 925 provides: "The grand jury shall investigate and report on the operations, accounts, and records of the officers, departments, or functions of the county including those operations, accounts, and records of any special legislative district or other district in county created pursuant of state law for which the officers of the county are serving in their ex officio capacity as officers of the districts."

The 2009-10 Grand Jury investigated resident safety issues at the YCHA Riverbend Senior Manor (RSM) site on Lighthouse Drive in West Sacramento. RSM is an independent living facility that houses senior and disabled residents. The 2009-10 Grand Jury found shortcomings by YCHA in response to a resident's complaints regarding a disruptive resident and the emergency pull cord system.

ACTIONS TAKEN

The 2010-11 Grand Jury investigated RSM to determine whether improvements had been made in the emergency pull cord system such that it serves as a reliable method to notify others when a resident is in distress.

The Grand Jury interviewed last year's complainant to obtain the resident's observations of changes made by YCHA in the past year. The resident also provided a written report to the Grand Jury.

The Grand Jury performed a visual inspection of the RSM site including living units, grounds and entryway, walkways, and common areas.

WHAT THE JURY DETERMINED

- Living units for seniors and the disabled are equipped with emergency pull cords in bedrooms and bathrooms. Cords are pulled when residents need emergency assistance and cannot use the telephone. Cords are required to hang free and extend close to the floor to allow access to the system. When the cord is pulled, a light and a horn outside of the

resident's unit are activated, alerting others in the area. Residents are instructed to call 911 when noticing the emergency light or horn.

- YCHA inspects the units twice per year. The YCHA finds that about one-third of the units have inaccessible cords. The cords are either blocked by furniture or tied up out of reach.
- The Grand Jury interviewed YCHA staff and RSM residents and learned that YCHA is conducting ongoing training sessions with residents regarding the need to keep the cords correctly deployed, and how to use the pull-cord system correctly.
- YCHA has relocated the exterior emergency lights to increase their visibility when activated.
- While there have been no reports of gang activity with respect to RSM, the site is adjacent to areas that have been impacted by gang activity. Entrance gates, previously left open for years due to the lack of repair and upkeep, have been repaired within the last year. These gates are now closed at dark daily.
 - *Several residents expressed the fact that RSM is now a safer place to live due to this one change, the closing of the gates at dark.*
- The Grand Jury notes that there has been turnover in the RSM office staff since last year. Residents report that staff is more responsive in enforcing resident complaints about those who are violating policies and procedures. For example: a written response is now given to residents who submit a safety complaint instead of a verbal response.

FINDINGS

- F1.** YCHA has increased resident safety via the emergency pull-cord system by relocating emergency lights at RSM. YCHA is providing related resident training which increases resident awareness of how to best utilize the system.
- F2.** YCHA has improved the safety and security of the grounds at RSM.
- F3.** YCHA has improved staff responsiveness to resident safety complaints at RSM
- F4.** Although there were disagreements between the previous Grand Jury and YCHA, the YCHA acted in response to the 2009-2010 GJ report by improving resident safety. The Grand Jury commends YCHA on resident safety improvements made at RSM in the past year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

None

REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

None