

2017 - 2018 Grand Jury Report

Palo Verde Health Care District: Lack of Medical Services

Background

The Palo Verde Hospital (PVH) is an accredited 51 bed acute care district hospital that is dedicated to providing inpatient and outpatient services to Palo Verde Valley and the surrounding communities. PVH first opened its doors in 1937, as a 25 bed official unit of the Riverside County Medical Administration, referred to as the Blythe Branch of Riverside County Hospital.

In 1948, a non-profit corporation was formed to create what is now known as the Palo Verde Healthcare District (PVHD), a California Independent Enterprise Special District. The PVH supports and operates like a business in that they charge fees to their customers for services.

The PVH has a troubled history demonstrating leadership in the community in providing adequate wellness and prevention.

Methodology

Interviews:

- Palo Verde Healthcare District, Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
- Riverside University Health System (RUHS), CEO
- Riverside County Department of Mental Health, and Substance Programs, Supervisor, Blythe
- Riverside County Department of Social Services, Social Services Supervisor II, Blythe

Tours/Visits:

- PVH, Blythe
- Desert Air Ambulance, Blythe
- American Medical Response, Blythe

Internet Resources/Documents:

- Riverside County Grand Jury Reports
<https://countyofriverside.us/Home/PastReportsResponses/2007-2008.aspx> (2007-2008)

Findings

1. The citizens of Riverside County who reside in Blythe and/or near the surrounding areas of the Colorado River, as well as tourists traveling on US Interstate Highway 10 and State Highway 78, have only limited availability for medical care. PVH is the only hospital within an average radius of 100 miles from other medical facilities. Currently, emergency ambulance services and helicopters, which operate at an extremely high cost, often transfer those in need of emergency care to distant emergency service providers rather than to nearby PVH.
2. PVH has historically experienced extreme staffing shortages and a lack of physician coverage, including mental health. Such shortages contribute to financial hardships resulting in unrealistic progress performance and stabilization for the hospital.
3. The Palo Verde Hospital District has many operational problems in servicing the Palo Verde Valley region. These problems include, but are not limited to: a) lack of sufficient number of professional medical staff, b) lack of provisions for mammogram testing, and c) unavailability of intensive and constant care units.

Recommendations

**Riverside County Board of Supervisors
Palo Verde Health Care District
Riverside University Health System**

1. PVH, which is geographically remote from any other acute care facility shall be utilized to the extent possible in the stabilization of patients prior to transferring to other medical facilities.
2. PVH shall have trauma, surgery and emergency service teams available for 24-hour coverage. It is recommended that the Riverside County Board of Supervisors (BOS) and Riverside University Health System (RUHS) assist in the establishment of these services.
3. The BOS, Palo Verde Hospital, and Palo Verde Healthcare District shall work with RUHS authorities for the purpose of improving the

Palo Verde Healthcare District operations to provide necessary and acceptable community standards of care by re-establishing its link and partnership with RUHS.

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