

# *California Prison Health Care Receivership*

## *Office of the Receiver*

Date: 24 August 2006

To: San Quentin Inmates

From: Robert Sillen, Receiver

Re: San Quentin Project Update: Putting San Quentin Under a Microscope

I am the federal Receiver appointed by Judge Thelton E. Henderson to make changes to improve medical care in California's prisons. That action sprang from the *Plata v. Schwarzenegger* law suit brought by the Prison Law Office over the poor quality of medical care delivered to inmate patients. One of my first steps is a special project at San Quentin, where this work is greatly needed. The SQ project began on July 5 and will last about 90 days. Some of the work led by my team will take place during that time. Other items will be planned now, and happen later, such as new building construction.

The San Quentin Project will not fix everything wrong with San Quentin's medical system, but it will deliver some immediate help to the staff and patients, who provide and need care. It will also pave the way for on-going improvements in the future.

The SQ Project Team includes members of the Receiver's staff -- including the Chief of Staff, Director of Custody Support Services, Chief Medical Officer and Director of Facilities Engineering. San Quentin medical and custody staff also are involved, including the Chief Medical Officer, Warden and Associate Warden for Health Care. In addition, we have brought in leadership from the CDCR Division of Correctional Health Care Services, including the Regional Director of Nursing.

### **What has happened so far?**

In the past several weeks, people have been working very hard to begin to make changes to many parts of San Quentin's medical services, always with an eye on the goal of improving the quality of care delivered to inmate patients. Here are some highlights of the work to date.

- Building maintenance and improvements.
  - The Project team has hired union workers to paint medical clinics, patch holes in walls and ceilings and make needed, overdue repairs.
- Access to specialty care improved, back log reduced.
  - The Project team found 108 patients with urgent specialty referrals that had not been seen – some delays as long as two years. Those patients started going out to appointments the week of August 7.

- Patient advocate program launched.
  - The Project team hired a Nurse Patient Advocate to look at patient medical appeals on a daily basis and to provide immediate urgent medical care as necessary. You may already have received a visit from her to follow up on your medical problem.
- Reception center physicals moved.
  - Physical exams for reception center inmate patients now take place in private, medically equipped exam rooms on the third floor of the Neumiller building. Before, they were held in a portion of the non-private first floor waiting room that lacked proper medical equipment.
- Major reorganization of the medical supplies system.
  - San Quentin now has a staff person responsible for medical supplies ordering, storage and inventory. In addition, the time it takes to get medical supplies into the prison has been cut from 45 days or more to a month or less. That means medical staff gets what they need to treat you quicker.
- Laboratory services faster, backlog reduced.
  - San Quentin's lab has started a new policy to complete all ordered blood draws in 72 hours or sooner. Two new lab assistants have been hired, and the backlog of overdue lab tests has been eliminated. That means less waiting for lab work and quicker results.
- Medical records staffing improved, backlog reduced.
  - The medical records department has hired 13 new staff and will soon begin recruiting for a Medical Records Director. By staffing both second and third watch, the department no longer has a backlog of loose filing, and charts are pulled for the next day's appointments the night before. That will help to fix those times when charts are missing or incomplete for your appointment.

### **What is still to come?**

- Hiring more medical staff to provide better quality care to inmate patients.
- Housing block and reception center clinics will be replaced by a new medical building for all clinics, lab, X-Ray, pharmacy, medical records, primary, specialty and urgent care under one roof.
- Medical supplies and equipment will be put into a single new medical warehouse, improving organization, storage and delivery of needed supplies.

We will continue to provide you with updates on the Project as it develops. The San Quentin staff and Receiver's team have worked hard together and taken significant first steps toward a quality medical care system for inmate patients.