County of Los Angeles
Sheriff's Department Headquarters
4700 Ramona Boulevard
Monterey Park, California 91754-2169

LEROY D. BACA, SHERIFF

March 16, 2004

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisors:

REQUEST TO INITIATE "CO-PAYMENT" FOR COUNTY JAIL INMATE MEDICAL TREATMENT (ALL DISTRICTS) (3 VOTES)

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT YOUR BOARD:

1. Approve authorization for the Sheriff to begin collecting a $3.00 co-payment fee from county jail inmates, for non-emergent, self-initiated medical treatments.

PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION

For years the Sheriff's Department's Medical Services Bureau has utilized a daily "sick call" process to provide inmates with basic over-the-counter (OTC) medications. This current sick call process rarely includes any type of formal nursing assessment and documentation, except for those inmates who require additional treatment by a physician.

To address this situation, effective December 15, 2003, the Department began the initial phase to transition from the traditional sick call to a "Nurse Clinic" format. This format establishes a method to ensure required documentation is properly recorded and our delivery of services is in compliance with the requirements of the California State Nurse Practice Act.

The Department is seeking your Board's support and approval to institute a co-payment system, authorized by Penal Code §4011.2, through which inmates will be charged a nominal fee for non-emergent, self-initiated medical treatments (those typically addressed during sick call/Nurse Clinic).

Upon approval, the Sheriff's Department will begin collecting the co-pay fee from an inmate population group of approximately 300 housed within the Twin Towers Correctional Facility. The first phase of the Nurse Clinic implementation will be administered for approximately 60-90 days, at which time the results will be evaluated. The Department is currently developing plans for the ultimate expansion of the Nurse Clinic program throughout our entire jail system.

Implementation of Strategic Plan Goals

The implementation of the Nurse Clinic format and the collection of co-payment fees, supports the County's vision to provide quality healthcare services that are in compliance with statewide standards and statutes.

FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING

The collection of these fees will serve as a source of new revenue. Based on the information we have gathered from our initial phase of implementation, which is very limited in size and scope, we have developed a preliminary revenue estimate. The average monthly attendance figures from our initial group of 300 inmates indicates that potential monthly revenues will range from a low of approximately $365 to a high of $685. This estimate is based on inmates' current or future ability to pay.

Pursuant to California Penal Code Section §4011.2, all revenues associated with the co-pay fee will be deposited into the General Fund.

FACTS AND PROVISIONS/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Per the statute, your Board may authorize the Sheriff to charge inmates a $3.00 co-pay fee. Presently, the Department is one of the few remaining county jail systems in California that does not utilize this type of program.

The implementation of a process that includes nursing assessment and documentation (in our case the Nurse Clinic) is not elective; it is a regulatory requirement per the State's Nurse Practice Act. The ability of the Sheriff's Department to assess co-pay fees will assist us in successfully managing this program.

IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES

The Nurse Clinic format significantly increases the interaction time between nurses and inmates due to the formal assessment and documentation components. Other custodial systems have historically experienced a 40-50 percent reduction in inmate

attendance when changing from traditional sick call to a co-pay model. As part of the Nurse Clinic process, OTC medications have been made available to inmates via vending machines and through jail stores. This provides inmates a more financially attractive alternative to the co-pay fee. Both the Nurse Clinic and OTC vending will provide potential revenue sources for the County and the Sheriff's Department.

It is important to note that OTC's will be provided to truly indigent inmates, and they will not be denied access to medical treatment based on their inability to pay.

CONCLUSION

Upon conclusion of our implementation phase, the Department would be happy to report back to your Board with our findings and recommendations.

Please return one adopted copy of this letter to the Sheriff's Department's Medical Services Bureau, attention Captain Rod Penner.

Respectfully submitted,

LEROY D. BACA
SHERIFF