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COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES  
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June 8, 2004

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Thomas L. Garthwaite, MD  
Director and Chief Medical Officer

**SUBJECT: DHS CONTRACT WITH THE CAMDEN GROUP**

At the May 24, 2004, meeting of your Board, you requested that the Department of Health Services (DHS) respond to allegations made by Genevieve Clavreul regarding the performance of The Camden Group under its contract with the County for the provision of nursing administration services at King/Drew Medical Center.

The Department initially engaged The Camden Group in December 2003 to assist in correcting substantial deficiencies that existed at King/Drew in the provision of nursing care services. As you will recall, the facility was under review by the federal and state governments that identified inadequate clinical competence on the part of the nursing staff as a major issue.

The Camden Group's contract contains six specific components, which are:

- Executive Nursing Management Support and Oversight.
- A comprehensive assessment of staffing levels within all nursing departments.
- An assessment of the clinical competency of all nursing staff.
- A review and restructuring of the Nursing Performance Improvement Program, in accordance with Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) and licensing standards.

- Assistance in preparation related to the nursing component of the recently-completed JCAHO Accreditation Survey and correction of CMS-identified deficiencies in nursing.
- Assistance in developing the Fiscal Year 2004-05 nursing budget for King/Drew.

The contract term was established as December 23, 2003 through June 23, 2004 and the maximum obligation of the original agreement was \$653,400. In May the Department executed an amendment to the agreement for \$73,500 for supplemental services related to preparation of the operating rooms for the JCAHO survey, training and competency validation of registry nursing staff, correction of CMS identified deficiencies in medication management, and additional mid-level nursing management support required as the result personnel changes at the hospital.

The Camden Group has provided Larry Kidd, RN, on full-time basis at the hospital to provide executive nursing oversight and management. Mr. Kidd has worked far in excess of the standard 40-hour work-week in fulfilling his obligations under this contract. He has been available, and often on-site, on a 24-hour per day, seven-day a week basis since the inception of this agreement. Mr. Kidd has made himself available to the Department's executive leadership and the hospital staff on weekends and during evening and night shifts at the hospital.

Additionally, Barbara Patton, RN, the Senior Vice President for Hospital Operations at The Camden Group was committed under the agreement to provide up to 50 days of administrative oversight and support as The Camden Group's engagement manager. Due to the magnitude of the problems identified at King/Drew, Ms. Patton, at no additional charge to the Department, has to date been on-site over 90 days.

Ms. Clavreul alleged to your Board that The Camden Group has been improperly billing the Department activities related to this contract, such as airfare and hotels, even though the firm is based in El Segundo. What Ms. Clavreul failed to recognize in her comments is that the agreement called for The Camden Group to provide specialized reviews in the areas of nursing competency verification, development of a Nursing Performance Improvement plan, and assessment of nursing staffing levels throughout the hospital. The Camden Group engaged a number of subject experts to perform these tasks and one of these individuals resides in Texas, thus necessitating the purchase of airfare to bring her to King/Drew to assist in this work. The work of these experts and the related travel expenses was included in the work plan established in the contract with The Camden Group.

A review of the invoices submitted by The Camden Group indicates no irregularities in what services for which they have billed the County. Each invoice contains a monthly management fee, which covers the services of Mr. Kidd and Ms. Patton. The invoices also include the additional projects, described above, on which they have worked. Ms. Clavreul stated her belief that The Camden Group was, in essence, double-billing the Department for its work, citing two bills for the month of January that included the same tasks. Ms. Clavreul was provided with all the invoices submitted by The Camden Group to DHS at the time of her request. The January invoice, which she cited, was revised and resubmitted by The Camden Group, at the Department's request, because it lacked all the detail for that month's charges. The Department did not pay The Camden Group twice for the performing its tasks during that month.

The work and expertise provided by The Camden Group has been invaluable to the Department's efforts to restructure the nursing organization at King/Drew. They have reviewed and revised every existing Nursing Policy and Procedure, as well as developed additional new protocols for medication management, pain assessment, and other clinical practices. They also developed an extensive new Nursing Performance Improvement Plan. Both of these sets of documents were critical to the facility's success in both the JCAHO and CMS reviews. The result of their efforts were the significant improvement noted by both agencies during their surveys of the hospital.

The Camden Group also has conducted a competency assessment of every licensed nursing professional and is developing a training program that can be managed by King/Drew personnel to ensure that the clinical skills of all nursing personnel are brought up to the appropriate standard.

Since Mr. Kidd's arrival at the facility, the overall mood among nursing personnel at King/Drew has improved dramatically. The number of nursing staff calling off sick has fallen substantially and the general work environment has improved greatly. The executive nursing management team, as a result of Mr. Kidd's leadership, is much more engaged, interactive, and responsive to the nursing staff. Among the operational improvements implemented by Mr. Kidd are the initiation of daily staff meetings and daily ward rounds to identify and immediately resolve problems. Additionally, as a result of the dramatic personnel actions taken by the Department in the area of nursing administration at King/Drew, Mr. Kidd has had to shoulder additional administrative responsibilities that in a more stable organization would have been delegated to others.

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The Department has initiated a search for a permanent Chief Nursing Officer for King/Drew. However, this recruitment will not be completed by the June 23 termination of the current agreement with The Camden Group. In order to facilitate a smooth transition to a newly hired Chief Nursing Officer and to ensure that the progress made in restructuring the nursing organization at the hospital continues, the Department will be seeking an extension of the current agreement, on a month-to-month basis, through December 31, 2004 for the provision of continued executive nursing management and oversight by The Camden Group. I will be providing you with the detail of the scope of work of this contract extension shortly.

I hope this answers any questions you may have had regarding this agreement. Please let me know if you have any further questions.

TLG:ak

c: Chief Administrative Officer  
County Counsel  
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors