



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
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September 16, 2021

TO: Jonathan E. Sherin, M.D., Ph.D., Director
Department of Mental Health

FROM: Robert G. Campbell, Chief
Office of County Investigations

SUBJECT: **DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH – IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES NOTED DURING LIMITED REVIEW (REPORT #IOR-2019-15110) - FIRST AND FINAL FOLLOW-UP REVIEW**

We followed-up on recommendations contained in our December 19, 2019, Improvement Opportunities Report (Report #IOR-2019-15110). As summarized in Table 1, the Department of Mental Health (DMH or Department) implemented the recommendations to strengthen its internal controls to safeguard incoming mail delivered to DMH Office of the Public Guardian.

Table 1 - Results of First Follow-up Review

PRIORITY RANKINGS	TOTAL RECOS	RECOMMENDATION IMPLEMENTATION STATUS		
		FULLY IMPLEMENTED	PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED	NOT IMPLEMENTED
PRIORITY 1	2	2	0	0
PRIORITY 2	0	0	0	0
PRIORITY 3	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	2	2	0	0
				0

Please see 'Improvement Opportunities Noted During Limited Review' (attached) for details of our review and the Department's corrective actions. Since DMH implemented all the recommendations, this is our first and final follow-up.

Jonathan E. Sherin
September 16, 2021
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We thank DMH management and staff for their cooperation and assistance during our review. If you have any questions please contact me at (213) 893-0058 or via e-mail at rcampbell@auditor.lacounty.gov, or your staff may contact Supervising Investigator Tim Takara at (213) 893-0918 or ttakara@auditor.lacounty.gov.

RGC:GH:TT:gls

Attachment

c: Arlene Barrera, Auditor-Controller
Audit Committee
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Office of County Investigations

Report #F1-2019-15110

**DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH
IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES NOTED DURING LIMITED REVIEW (#IOR-2019-15110)
FIRST AND FINAL FOLLOW-UP REVIEW**

	RECOMMENDATION	A-C COMMENTS
<p>1 Priority 1 – Department of Mental Health (DMH) management:</p> <p>a. Revise DMH Policy 124 to require the mail log to identify the staff opening mail in dual-custody, and expand the mail log to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any mail sent with a tracking identifier (i.e. registered, certified); and • Any misdirected mail received in the mailroom for recipients in other departments; <p>b. Implement a formal mechanism to document the transfer of mail from DMH Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) to other departments;</p> <p>c. Consider options for maintaining mail tracking logs electronically; and</p> <p>d. Distribute the revised policy and procedures to impacted staff and obtain documentation of their understanding and agreement.</p> <p>Original Issue/Impact: Mail Tracking: DMH OPG mailroom staff do not consistently log DMH mail when it is opened and found to contain items of value (e.g., cash, checks, wills) as required by DMH Policy 124. We also noted that OPG staff routinely receive, and forward mail addressed to other departments that may contain valuables, but do not have an effective mechanism to log/track non-OPG correspondence/parcels or their subsequent transfer to the intended recipient.</p> <p>Inadequate controls over mail handling create the risk that packages containing valuable property and currency may be lost, stolen, or mishandled.</p>	<p>Recommendation Status: Implemented</p> <p>a. Implemented. We confirmed that DMH has revised DMH Policy 124 to require staff open mail in dual-custody and initial the log identifying the staff that opened the mail. Additionally, DMH expanded the mail log as recommended.</p> <p>b. Implemented. We confirmed that DMH has implemented a formal mechanism as addressed in DMH Policy 124 to document transfer of mail from OPG to other departments. Specifically, the revised procedures require that mailroom staff to utilize a “Misdirected Mail Log” to identify any transfer of misdirected mail.</p> <p>c. Implemented. We inquired whether DMH considered and implemented electronic logs for mail tracking and DMH executive management reported to us that the Deputy Director, OPG Division Chief, and OPG Assistant Division Chief met to discuss and consider implementing electronic logs. DMH management reported that they collectively decided to implement procedures that require mailroom staff to scan copies of all incoming mail and checks received daily to serve as an electronic log.</p> <p>d. Implemented. DMH distributed the policy to all clerical staff that rotate through the mailroom. Specifically, we obtained and reviewed the acknowledgment forms for the assigned clerical staff and noted that staff signed and dated the acknowledgment forms indicating they received the revised DMH Policy 124.</p>	

Priority Ranking: Recommendations are ranked from Priority 1 to 3 based on the potential seriousness and likelihood of negative impact on the Agency’s operations if corrective action is not taken.

	RECOMMENDATION	A-C COMMENTS
2	<p>Priority 1 – DMH management strengthen physical security controls over the OPG mailroom.</p> <p>Original Issue/Impact: Mailroom Security: We noted opportunities for DMH OPG to strengthen physical security controls over the mailroom. For example; the mailroom is sometimes left unattended during business hours, that the OPG mailroom does not have a locking mailbox where postal carriers can deposit/deliver parcels when mailroom staff are not present, and mail/packages are left outside the mailroom in an unsecured area accessible by anyone housed within the PA office area. We also noted that the OPG does not have surveillance cameras in the mail handling/storage areas.</p> <p>The lack of physical security controls increases the risk that valuable mail and packages directed to the OPG may be lost or stolen.</p>	<p>Recommendation Status: Implemented</p> <p>We confirmed that DMH implemented additional physical security controls, including requiring staff to alternate breaks and lunches, to ensure the mailroom is open and available during business hours for any mail deliveries and added surveillance cameras over the mailroom area. We requested and reviewed the mailroom’s schedule for the week of June 14-18, 2021, and noted DMH management scheduled mailroom staff to ensure the mailroom was open and available during business hours. Additionally, we reviewed Delivery Order – MH-21046807-1, which included the purchase of two surveillance cameras and respective software from vendor MCM Integrated Systems in November 2020. Further, we surveyed the two new cameras installed in the mailroom and reviewed a sample of security video footage recorded on three previous days to ensure the cameras are fully functional.</p>

We conducted our review in conformance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing. For more information on our auditing process, including recommendation priority rankings, the follow-up process, and management’s responsibility for internal controls, visit auditor.lacounty.gov/audit-process-information.