

Analysis of Suggestions for Improvement as part of the FY 2010 County's Line of Business & Schools Program Review Processes Fall 2008

Request By: Public

Suggestion: Reduce the inmate medical department at the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center.

Response By: Office of the Sheriff

Background:

If there were insufficient medical staff available at the jail, inmates would have to be seen in the emergency room or at a doctor's office. For every trip away from the jail, Sheriff Deputies are needed to maintain the safety of the travel experience and the security of the inmate. By their very nature, trips away from the jail provide inmates with opportunities they do not have in the confinement of the Adult Detention Center (ADC). The Office of Sheriff constantly evaluates the appropriateness of the ADC staffing to ensure the right balance of nursing staff is available at the jail to prevent any unnecessary trips away from the jail. As a point of comparison, Fairfax County remains amongst the lowest staffed per inmate and medical staff to other similar-sized regional jurisdictions.

For example, during the month of July 2008, members of the medical staff assisted with 12,087 medical encounters with inmates. There were 61 medical emergencies reported by Deputies in the facility, of which seventeen inmates required some level of treatment off the ADC premises. Amongst the seventeen, eight inmates were referred to the emergency room for additional assessment and treatment, and nine inmates were referred and admitted for treatment at the hospital. It should be noted that less than one tenth of one percent of the medical encounters require transportation off the premises for additional assessment by other medical staff or referrals to the hospital by ADC medical staff.

Recommendation:

The alternative of reduced medical staff is not cost effective; and results in the constant need for transporting inmates to medical facilities, which is costly and inefficient due to heightened security concerns, transportation issues, and per encounter cost (because hospital charges far exceed preventative and minor medical care currently provided by the ADC medical staff). In any given 24 hour period, there are about 1,900 medications dispensed by the ADC medical staff that would otherwise need to be administered off the premises. In conclusion, the ADC medical staff provides medical preventative care to inmates that greatly offsets expensive and security threatening situations, which far exceed the current staffing costs.