

New Head of Developmental Services visits Porterville facility

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Santi Rogers returns to facility he once led

Santi Rogers did not need directions to the Porterville Developmental Center on Monday. The newly appointed director of the Department of Developmental Services served as the executive director of the local facility from 1987-94.

He said coming back to Porterville was a bit “nostalgic” and he was pleased with what he saw at the facility that has changed considerably since he was director.

Rogers replaced Dr. Jim Shelton as head of the facility, then minus its secured treatment program and with far more clients than today.

He then worked at other facilities in the Developmental Services system, retired, then was appointed in March to be the new head of the Developmental Services Department, a department that had made the news for not all the right reasons.

In the past few years the department has been accused of having excessive overtime costs, of poor investigations of incidents at facilities and of abuses of clients.

While admitting there are issues, Rogers was upbeat about the department and the Porterville facility, going so far as to hint at possible expansions of the local facility.

“The department has put some pretty stringent processes in place,” he said of actions taken to correct some deficiencies. He was also upbeat that the budget just signed by the governor bodes well for the department and the four facilities.



Santi Rogers

Santi Rogers, Director of Department of Developmental Services Director's Office, discusses about Porterville Development Center Monday, June 30, 2014.

Porterville was one of three facilities targeted in a federal enforcement action to decertify them that would have resulted in the loss of federal funds. The federal government, through Medicaid, covers half of the costs of housing clients in developmental centers, but excludes the secured treatment center at Porterville.

However, that issue was settled with an agreement by the department to take corrective actions.

“Yes, we want to stay compliant with the federal government,” said Rogers during a lengthy interview Monday. He said specific plans are in place to meet the requirements of the Performance Improvement Plan it agreed to, including “gaps” in the system that needed correction, said Patricia Flannery, deputy director with DDS. She oversees the developmental centers.

Rogers and PDC executive director Theresa Billeci said steps have been taken to reduce overtime costs at not just Porterville, but at all the centers. Overtime became a big issue after it was revealed some officers at PDC had accumulated tens of thousands of dollars in pay just for overtime.

“I don’t think there’s a 24-hour facility that doesn’t operate without overtime,” said Flannery, who added they have seen an overall decrease of 15 percent in overtime system wide.

PDC Future Solid

Rogers said the future of PDC is solid.

The facility has 1,339 employees and 401 clients. Of those clients, 168 are in the secured treatment program. Those are developmentally disabled people who have run afoul of the law, but cannot be adjudicated.

“Day in, day out work of people employed in Porterville evolves and continues to get better,” he said.

“We have a service to provide and that service has a need. We are here to stay,” he added.

He said recent work at the facility included infrastructure to accommodate more expansion.

Task Force

He said work has already begun to implement some of the six recommendations made by a state task force looking into Developmental Services. That report came out at about the same time of Roger’s appointment.

Those recommendations were developing more community style homes/facilities to serve individuals with enduring and complex medical needs using existing models of care; setting up acute crisis facilities; continuing to operate the Porterville DC-STP and the transitional program at

Canyon Springs Community; studying a workable health resource center model and entering into public/private partnerships to provide integrated community services on existing State lands; considering repurposing existing buildings on DC property for developing service models identified in recommendations 1 through 4, and establishing a second task force.

The task force was created by Secretary Dianna Dooley, formerly of Hanford, in response “to the legal, fiscal, and legislative environment, and recognizing the need to define a path for the future of the DCs.” The task force was formed following several damaging reports about abuses, overtime cost and poor investigations into charges of abuses at the facilities, although the report does not directly deal with such issues.

Rogers was pleased the budget has funding to implement many of the recommendations.

He also said the department is preparing for a shrinking client population and an aging disabled population.

As to the secured treatment facility, a cap still remains on the number of those who can be housed in Porterville. That is 170 in the housing units and 60 more in transitional housing. One of the events Rogers attended on Monday was the high school graduation of two residents in the transitional program.