

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 5, 2011

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CA prison medical care showing signs of improvement in round two inspections

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Federal Receiver J. Clark Kelso announced today that efforts to meet federal court mandates to improve medical care in California’s prisons are working with the release of the Office of the Inspector General’s (OIG) reports on round two inspections at five California prisons that reflect higher overall scores for medical care.

The five institutions that have completed round-two inspections show improvement in key areas such as management of chronic illness, access to specialty services and clinical staffing. Overcrowding in many of the prisons continues to be an issue with areas that still need improvement, such as primary care clinical services, medication management and health information access.

“The higher scores reflect real progress in improving both the quality of medical care and access to it,” said Kelso. “While there is still significant work to be done across the system, particularly in our most severely overcrowded prisons, I am pleased to see these improvements over the round one scores, which demonstrate our effort to meet court mandates while simultaneously driving down medical expenses,” Kelso added.

In the first round of inspections, which began in 2008, the OIG established benchmark scores for California’s 33 prisons, based on 19 components of medical care such as how well the prison provides care and medication to inmates with chronic care conditions; access to medical care; pharmacy services; health screenings; urgent care; emergency care; diagnostic services; preventive services and clinical staffing levels. The round one summary report is posted on the OIG website and offers a point of comparison to the improved round two scores.

The receiver is also launching an online health care services dashboard this week that will allow the public to monitor progress in improving the prison health care system.

“We are on the right track to finish the job of turning around California’s prison health care system with initiatives that will further improve access, quality, and efficiency, including an expanded provider network, health care technology projects, and construction of the Stockton facility,” said Kelso.

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Prison health care 2-2-2

Another important project that has resulted in improving access while reducing expenses is the new statewide provider network, which launched in January of this year. According to claim data, the network is saving California taxpayers approximately \$2 million a month in reduced contract medical services. This is on top of the \$408 million of savings in fiscal year '09/10 achieved through permanent reductions in operations.

“We are committed to meeting federal court mandates to improve medical care, while at the same time doing everything in our power to contain costs and reduce expenses across the prison health care system, and we are making substantial progress in both areas,” said Kelso.

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Media note: The complete OIG reports on the five institutions that have completed their round two inspections can be found at <http://www.oig.ca.gov/pages/reports/medical-inspections.php> Click on the provided links to view the Receiver’s Turnaround Plan of Action and Tri-annual progress reports.