



OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF
COLLIN COUNTY, TEXAS

JIM SKINNER, SHERIFF

July 17, 2024

Hon. Chris Hill, County Judge
Hon. Susan Fletcher, Commissioner
Hon. Cheryl Williams, Commissioner
Hon. Darrell Hale, Commissioner
Hon. Duncan Webb, Commissioner
Collin County Administration Building
2300 Bloomdale Road
McKinney, TX 75071

Re: Health Services Agreement – Renewal Year 2024; Support for Additional Personnel

Dear Judge Hill and Commissioners Fletcher, Williams, Hale, and Webb:

I support Wellpath's request for a staffing increase in the county jail for the next contract year. Wellpath asks for:

- an additional 4.20 FTE (168 hours) of Registered Nurse (Charge, Days) and
- an additional 4.20 FTE (168 hours) of Registered Nurse (Charge, Nights).

The County must provide adequate medical care to detained persons, and the medical workload more than justifies these staff additions. As of Tuesday, the CCDF's total population was 1,281, with 132 in minimum security and 81 housed in other counties' jails. These numbers reflect the fact that our average daily population has increased over the past several years. These numbers are reaching critical levels this year.

Moreover, my staff reports that a greater percentage of persons coming to the county jail tend to be sick and that those persons tend to be more sick than in past years. We're especially seeing greater numbers of persons suffering from mental illness or intellectual or developmental disability (MHIDD) and greater numbers who need substance-withdrawal management.

We need medical care from the professionals at Wellpath in three general locations: (1) admissions, (2) main-jail housing, and (3) minimum-security housing. We're experiencing problems in providing medical care throughout the jail and minimum security.

As to (1), in admissions a nurse from Wellpath initially screens incoming arrestees for signs that a person may be unfit for confinement (if so, we send the person to a local emergency dept. for a screening under EMTALA), for signs of MHIDD or suicidal ideation (CCP art. 16.22 or the Sandra Bland Act), and for special medical or mental health needs (37 TAC 265.5, 273.2). This is a full-time job for a nurse.

In addition, however, a greater number and percentage of persons who arrive at the jail need withdrawal management, and withdrawal from alcohol, benzodiazepines, and fentanyl and other opioids is often accompanied by harsh symptoms. Many times, we need a second full-time nurse to manage withdrawal for arrestees *while they are in admissions*. Again, this workload is growing, and I don't think the County has ever specifically staffed for this. We must address it.

As to (2), we have exceeded the capacity of our 24-bed infirmary for years. In fact, the County is building a new infirmary, with over 400 beds, for the county jail. Over the years, we have been forced to house persons with MHIDD in special housing units, which are not designed for this purpose. Because this population continues to grow, we are experiencing difficulties in caring for persons with such special needs. We need more nursing care.

As to (3), for years we've been able to house people in minimum security who were not likely to need medical care from a physician or nurse on an expedited basis. With the growing population and the increase in sick persons, however, a growing number of persons in minimum security need nursing care on a more regular basis. We need more staffing for this as well.

As a snap shot in the growing medical workload: In 2021, the medical staff wrote appx. 34,000 prescriptions for detainees. At current 2024 rates, the staff will write 54,000 prescriptions by year's end. This is a 60% increase in four years.

Over the years, Wellpath has been an excellent contractor in providing medical care in the county jail. With the population growth and ongoing substance-use crisis, however, we need more nurses in the county jail. I support Wellpath's request for additional staffing for the next contract year. As always, I appreciate your continued commitment for public welfare.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jim Skinner". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "J" and a long, horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Sheriff Jim Skinner