



U.S. Department of Justice

Civil Rights Division

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Special Litigation Section - PHB  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20530

May 2, 2006

The Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger  
Governor of California  
State Capitol Building  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Atascadero State Hospital, Atascadero, California

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

I am writing to report the findings of the Civil Rights Division's investigation of conditions and practices at Atascadero State Hospital ("ASH"), in Atascadero, California. On February 16, 2005, we notified you that we were investigating conditions at ASH pursuant to the Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act ("CRIPA"), 42 U.S.C. § 1997. CRIPA gives the Department of Justice authority to seek remedies for any pattern and practice of conduct that violates the constitutional or federal rights of persons with mental illness who are served in public institutions.

During the week of November 28, 2005, we conducted an on-site inspection of ASH. We reviewed a wide variety of relevant State and facility documents, including policies, procedures, and medical and other records relating to the care and treatment of patients. During our visit, we also interviewed ASH administrators, professionals, and staff, and talked to and observed patients in their living units, at activity areas, and during treatment meetings. We were assisted by expert consultants in the fields of psychiatry, psychology, medical care, and quality assurance and risk management. In keeping with our pledge of transparency and to provide technical assistance where appropriate regarding our investigatory findings, we conveyed our preliminary findings to State counsel and to certain State and facility administrators and staff during verbal exit presentations at the close of our on-site visit.

As a threshold matter, we commend the administrators and staff of ASH for their helpful and professional conduct





















