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THURSDAY, JUNE 26, 2008

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L.A. CITY ATTORNEY ROCKY DELGADILLO SECURES SETTLEMENT WITH HOSPITAL OVER PATIENT DUMPING

LOS ANGELES – Los Angeles City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo, the City’s chief prosecutor, today announced that his Office has secured a settlement of its civil law enforcement action against Methodist Hospital of Southern California, which will establish court-ordered protocols for the appropriate discharge of homeless patients as well as yield more than \$200,000 for homeless recuperative care, civil penalties and costs.

“Homeless patient dumping is an unconscionable practice and we are committed to doing everything within our power, using both litigation and legislation, to put an end to the practice,” said City Attorney Delgadillo. “I am pleased that Methodist Hospital of Southern California has agreed to take the steps necessary to prevent future dumping incidents.”

The settlement, once approved by the court, will require Methodist Hospital of Southern California to implement detailed protocols for the discharge of homeless patients; enjoin the hospital from discharging homeless patients other than in accord with the protocols; require the hospital to provide enhanced training to personnel responsible for homeless patient discharges; and appoint the Honorable Lourdes Baird, a former U.S. Attorney and retired U.S. District Judge, as referee to monitor Methodist Hospital’s compliance with the order.

In connection with the settlement, Methodist Hospital has agreed to contribute \$215,000 to fund recuperative care beds for the homeless at the Salvation Army’s Bell Shelter. Methodist Hospital will also pay \$5,000 in civil penalties and \$20,000 in investigative costs to the City Attorney’s Office.

“Methodist Hospital recognizes that meeting the needs of the estimated 80,000 homeless in LA County—the 2nd largest in the nation—continues to be a challenge for society as a whole. The proper role of the hospital is to follow our mission and treat all patients, regardless of their financial status, to the same high standard of care. What happens after they are discharged, however, is a problem that requires the collaboration of multiple agencies. We are committed to participating in a solution. With the resolution of this case, Methodist Hospital can now focus its energy and resources on continuing to provide care to members of its communities—including the homeless,” said the hospital’s president, Dennis Lee.

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The settlement secured by the City Attorney follows an investigation of two incidents in late 2005 and late 2006 where homeless patients of Methodist Hospital were driven approximately 22 miles away from the hospital's location in Arcadia and dropped off at the Union Rescue Mission in the Skid Row area of downtown Los Angeles.

A similar settlement was reached with Kaiser Hospitals in May 2007 resulting in first-of-their-kind, court-ordered protocols for the proper discharge of homeless patients as well as \$500,000 in donations to a charitable foundation offering services to the homeless and \$5,000 in civil penalties. Earlier this month, the City Attorney announced a settlement with Hollywood Presbyterian Medical Center, which also required the adoption of new protocols as well as \$1,000,000 in monetary contributions and additional civil penalties. Ongoing investigations into alleged incidents of homeless patient dumping are being carried out in partnership with the LAPD, local shelters, ACLU, Public Counsel and other organizations.

City Attorney Delgadillo worked closely with Los Angeles Council Member Jan Perry to create a new city ordinance which makes it a misdemeanor for health facilities to transport patients to a location other than the patient's residence without their written consent. Violations of the law could result in fines of up to \$1,000 and three years of probation. The motion was recently approved by the Los Angeles City Council on a 12-1 vote and signed into law by the Mayor.

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