

County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors


Supervisory District Four
Supervisor James T. Beall, Jr.



SSB.Budgetrequest

DATE: May 10, 2006

TO: Supervisor James T. Beall, Jr., Chairperson
Supervisor Don Gage, Vice-Chairperson
Children, Seniors & Families Committee

FROM: 
Blanca Alvarado
Supervisor, Second District

SUBJECT: Budget Inventory Request – Outreach Funding for Safely Surrender Baby Program.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Consider one-time budget request in the amount of \$50,000 to support outreach and education efforts for the Safely Surrender Baby Initiative and forward to the Board of Supervisors with favorable recommendation.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

This action would result in a one-time reduction to the County General Fund in the amount of \$50,000. These funds will be dedicated to support outreach and education efforts. Specifically, these funds will be used for the following:

1. \$15,000 for teen outreach, consisting of production/dissemination of training video and curriculum, training for school personnel, refreshments for events, etc.
2. \$20,000 for multicultural outreach, through advertisements in ethnic community newspapers, translations of outreach materials, training for community organizations, public transit advertisements.
3. \$15,000 to hire extra help trainers to make presentations throughout the community in various languages (such as Korean, Chinese, Spanish), as well as work with local ethnic media to obtain coverage of outreach events, safe surrenders, etc. (This amount assumes part-time trainer, 16+hrs per week, hourly wage with no mileage/benefits).

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The Board of Supervisors approved the establishment of a Safe Haven Taskforce to develop an extensive outreach campaign that builds community awareness of the law and locations of sites. Cities throughout the County adopted resolutions supporting the designation of fire stations as official drop-off sites.

The Safe Haven Task Force was convened in response to the abandonment of four newborns, three of which died in 2002–2003. Since the County increased its outreach efforts and awareness of this program, four newborns have been safely surrendered in Santa Clara County. Unfortunately, outreach is still needed to ensure everyone in all parts of our community is aware of the option to safely surrender their baby without fear of prosecution. In the last year, two infants were abandoned in Santa Clara County, one in the Burbank area and the other in the Mayfair area at Our Lady Guadalupe Church. In response to the most recent abandonment at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Social Services Agency staff will be meeting with faith-based partners to discuss how to include clergy in outreach efforts to the community and youth groups, so that they can speak to the importance of surrender to a designated site rather than individual churches.

County representatives met with the Mayfair Improvement Initiative to discuss outreach in the area surrounding the Church. Social Services Agency will also be providing SSB outreach

material to Most Holy Trinity Church for their upcoming health fair. Staff also met with Catholic Charities and are working with them to distribute educational materials, draft informational articles for their newsletter and partnering with them on education to youth groups.

Additionally, the Social Services Agency is partnering with Public Health, School Linked Services, and San Jose Police Department to produce a teen training video. SSA has received offers of assistance in presenting these videos to teens/schools from local fire personnel and nonprofits that work with at risk teens.

In 2005, the Social Services Agency applied for funding from four grantors, Health Trust, Valley Foundation, Lucile Salter Packard, and First 5 Santa Clara County, to support county SSB outreach efforts. Unfortunately, only one of the grant proposals, Lucile Salter Packard, resulted in an award.

Although funders are universally supportive and recognize the need to conduct outreach, the feedback we have received is that child abandonment occurs so infrequently, that the benefit of funding this proposal has to be weighed against funding other equally compelling needs in the community that affect a much larger number of children and families.

It is essential for the County to achieve the goal of no babies being abandoned in Santa Clara County. Expanding the program to educate and outreach to Faith-based and non-English speaking communities is a critical next step.

BACKGROUND

The Safely Surrendered Baby Law (also known as the Safe Haven Law) allows a parent or person with lawful custody to surrender a baby confidentially to a Safe Haven site, without fear of arrest or prosecution for child abandonment.

A parent who is unable or unwilling to care for an infant can legally and confidentially surrender their baby within 3 days of birth to any public or private hospital emergency room in California. A bracelet will be placed on the baby for identification and a matching bracelet

will be given to the parent. The bracelet will help identify the child if the parent changes their mind during the 14-day cooling off period. During this period, the person who surrendered the child can return to the hospital or Safe Haven site to reclaim the child. A baby can be safely surrendered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.