



PUBLIC HEALTH
DEPARTMENT

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Valley Health and Hospital

March 24, 1997

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Robert Sillen, Executive Director, Valley Health and Hospital System

SUBJECT: Report on Firearm Violence Prevention Educational Symposium

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors direct to the Public Health Department to begin working with the 15 cities in Santa Clara County to develop common strategies for reducing firearm violence throughout the County; these strategies would include programs, education, and ordinances.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

There will be no impact on the General Fund resulting from this action. The work falls within the scope of the Violence Prevention Program in the Public Health Department.

CONTRACT HISTORY

Not Applicable.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The mission of the Public Health Department includes the reduction of injury and death prevention and one mechanism is mobilizing the community in the area of violence prevention. The Public Health Department Violence Prevention Program uses the ten initiatives detailed in the 1995 State Attorney General's Report, **Violence Prevention: A Vision of Hope**, as a framework for developing a comprehensive strategy for violence prevention using the public health approach in Santa Clara County. One of the Initiatives focuses on Firearms, and recommends strategies including the regulations which control for access and safety and community education. Uniform firearm ordinances in all the cities and the County will provide a consistent approach that will prevent the movement of dealers from one area to another within the County. Specific ordinances will be introduced and considered by the Board in the future.

The Public Health Department is a division of the Santa Clara Valley Health & Hospital System. Owned and operated by the County of Santa Clara.

BACKGROUND

The **Firearm Violence Prevention Educational Symposium** was held on February 20, 1997, to educate city and county policy makers in Santa Clara County about the increasing incidence of injuries and deaths due to firearms in California and across the country. Firearms have become the number one cause of death for youth aged 15 to 24 in California. In 1993, the costs of medical care for gun related injuries in Santa Clara County was over \$13 million, with the majority of costs becoming the responsibility of the County. In addition, there are the unquantifiable costs which include the emotional toll to the families and friends and the loss of productive life due to these injuries and deaths.

The Educational Symposium was planned after convening a large group of representatives from the community who are concerned about firearm violence and want to take an active role in working for prevention. The Community Alliance to Prevent and Reduce Firearm Violence included representatives from schools, churches, community organizations, advocacy groups, and others. The strategy subcommittee planned the Symposium to involve leaders from throughout Santa Clara County in this effort. The Mayors, City Managers, Police Chiefs, City Attorneys, and Council members of all 15 cities in Santa Clara County, as well as all of the Supervisors, District Attorney, and Sheriff, were invited to the Symposium. Eleven of the 15 cities were represented at the Symposium, as was the County and the Offices of Elaine Alquist, Barbara Boxer and John Vasconcellos.

Presentations were made on the following topics (see attached agenda): public health approach to firearm violence, Police Chiefs' Association's position on firearm violence control, medical consequences, victim family impact, firearm safety, East Bay Public Safety Corridor experience, and the legal perspective. Several strategies were suggested by speakers at the Symposium, including community education, increased safety requirements, and uniform ordinances throughout the jurisdictions in the County. The Strategy Task Force is committed to continuing to develop these strategies, and the Public Health Department is committed to taking a lead in organizing the effort. There was significant interest expressed by the city leaders about participating in a county-wide strategy. Having a uniform approach will be more effective in accomplishing the goals of reduction in injuries and deaths related to firearms.

CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION

The Public Health Department would not take a lead role in pursuing a county-wide approach to firearm violence prevention.

STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL

Please forward two (2) approved copies to SCVHHS Administration.