



## FIRST 5 Santa Clara County Joint Meeting of Program and Evaluation Committees

Meeting Date: January 18, 2006 Submitted By: Barbara Bernard, Training Director  
 Action: X Discussion: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Selection Process: RFP \_\_\_\_\_ RFQ \_\_\_\_\_ Sole Source \_\_\_\_\_ Not Applicable X

### TITLE:

Santa Clara County Safely Surrendered Baby Project

### RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Accept the Santa Clara County Safely Surrendered Baby Project Letter of Inquiry and refer to staff to review in preparation for the Commission's 2006 Budget Workshop.

### SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

Santa Clara County Social Services Agency is requesting \$50,000 for a one year period to fund a public education strategy regarding the local Safely Surrendered Baby Project. The funding for this public education strategy will focus in three areas: 1) \$15,000 will be used for advertising in targeted ethnic media publications that reflect County demographics, 2) \$15,000 for interior and exterior bus signage, and 3) \$20,000 will be expended for junior and senior high school personnel training. This training is geared to equip teachers and other school personnel with information on what to do when they suspect a student is pregnant and to better understand and respond to the young's women's fears.

California's Safely Surrendered Baby Law (also known as Safe Haven Law) allows a parent or person with lawful custody to legally and confidentially surrender a baby to a Safe Haven site without fear of arrest or prosecution for child abandonment, provided the child has not been abused. Not everyone in Santa Clara County is aware of the alternative as last year four infants were found discarded in this County, three of whom were deceased.

### BACKGROUND:

In 2004, FIRST 5 Santa Clara County joined Santa Clara County government, along with representatives from cities, fire departments, and other governmental agencies, faith-based organizations, community-based organizations and the community at large, in participating on the Santa Clara County Safe Haven Task Force. In addition, FIRST 5 partnered with Santa Clara County Public Health Department in distributing literature regarding the Safe Haven Law.

### FISCAL IMPACT:

There are not fiscal implications at this time. The proposal will be considered by the Commission at their 2006 Budget Workshop.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- A. Letter to Jolene Smith from Greta Louise Helm dated December 21, 2005
- B. Letter of Inquiry for FIRST 5 Santa Clara County funding for the Santa Clara County  
Safely Surrendered Baby Project dated December 21, 2005

# County of Santa Clara

Social Services Agency

333 West Julian Street  
San Jose, California 95110-2335

Item 4  
Attachment A



December 21, 2005

REC'D DEC 21 2005

Ms. Jolene Smith  
Executive Director  
First 5 Santa Clara County  
4000 Moorpark Avenue, Suite 200  
San Jose, CA 95117

Dear Ms. Smith,

On behalf of the Santa Clara County Social Services Agency, I am pleased to submit the enclosed Letter of Intent requesting funding for a public education campaign to raise awareness in the community about the Safe Surrender Baby alternative to infant abandonment. As you are aware, California law allows mothers to surrender their infants at a hospital emergency room, or local fire station, no questions asked, if they feel that they are unable to care for their child. This law was enacted to prevent the needless abandonment of babies, in dumpsters, public restrooms, and other inappropriate places, which often results in the child's death. The County has made a concerted effort to raise awareness of the law in the community, through press conferences, media releases, distribution of over 60,000 posters, brochures and flyers. In this Letter of Intent, we are seeking funding to enhance this education campaign, through the use of advertisements in ethnic media, bus/public transit signage, and distribution of information kits for teachers, school administration, and other community organizations.

It is my understanding that Letters of Intent are being accepted through the end of the month. In the event that you require additional information or have specific feedback about the enclosed letter of intent, I would appreciate you calling our grant writer, Ms. Jean McCorquodale, at 259-4740, as I will be out of the office and unavailable until January 3, 2005. After that date, I will be available to discuss the funding request at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Greta Louise Helm, Director  
Government Relations and Planning

REC'D DEC 21 2005

**LETTER OF INQUIRY FOR FIRST 5 SANTA CLARA COUNTY FUNDING  
FOR THE SANTA CLARA COUNTY SAFELY SURRENDERED BABY PROJECT**

Item 4

Attachment B

**Contact Information**

Will Lightbourne, Director, Santa Clara County Social Services Agency  
Greta Helm, Director, Governmental Relations and Planning, Santa Clara County Social Services Agency  
333 W. Julian Street, San Jose, CA 95110-2335; Phone (408) 491-6750; Fax 975-4525; Email greta.helm@ssa.co.santa-clara.ca.us

a) Description of the proposal. Funding is requested to help prevent the needless death of babies through abandonment. People working in the field estimate that 57 babies are deserted each day throughout the country in dumpsters, parking lots, ditches, public restrooms and other perilous places. Last year, four infants were found discarded in Santa Clara County, three of whom were deceased. How many more suffered this cruel fate? One researcher has said, "There is little reason to believe that even a small percentage of the cases are discovered."

Babies are abandoned for a number of reasons, including desperation, fear, isolation, rape, shame, poverty, mental illness, and addiction. In response to this tragedy, California is one of 48 states that provides a safe alternative to perilous abandonment. California's Safely Surrendered Baby Law (also known as the Safe Haven Law) allows a parent or person with lawful custody to legally and confidentially surrender a baby to a Safe Haven site without fear of arrest or prosecution for child abandonment, provided the child has not been abused. Unfortunately, not everyone in the community is aware that this alternative exists.

As with other public health issues, an intense local public education is critical to effectively address child abandonment. However, printed materials alone have not demonstrated sufficient effectiveness. Santa Clara County Social Services and Public Health staff members have distributed more than 60,000 posters, brochures and information cards describing safe surrender options. Materials have been posted in libraries, parks, health clinics, county buildings, and many other sites. In addition, staff has given a number of public presentations, has provided training on the protocol, and assisted with press conferences to increase public awareness. Sadly, however, more babies continue to be abandoned each year than are safely surrendered.

Moreover, these materials do not contain critically important local safe surrender site information. In Santa Clara County, in addition to emergency rooms as provided by State law, all 95 fire stations are Safe Haven sites and 911 will arrange for American Medical Response (AMR) to transport a surrendered baby to the nearest hospital in situations where a parent is afraid or unable to deliver the child in person.

Research indicates that infant abandonment occurs most frequently among desperate young, single mothers. A study of cases over a seven-year period found the vast majority of perpetrators live either with their parent(s), guardian(s), or other relatives. Virtually none were married or lived with their male partners, and virtually all lacked independent financial resources. An even more fundamental similarity among cases is silence and isolation during pregnancy. Very few told their families or friends that they were pregnant. Many of the other women and girls who did disclose their pregnancies did not disclose them to people with whom they were intimate, such as their parents, relatives, friends, or male partners.

With this in mind, Santa Clara County Safe Haven Task Force subcommittee worked to devise a public education strategy concerning local options for the safe and anonymous surrender of infants among junior and senior high school students. As a result, a pilot training will begin at three middle schools and four high schools this coming spring semester. A training video (DVD format) has been developed by the subcommittee and produced through the in-kind contribution of the San Jose Police Department.

It is recognized, however, that further support is needed for this critically important educational effort. By virtue of pregnancy, a teenage girl is not miraculously transformed into a mature woman, aware of her alternatives and able to make comprehensive, long-term plans for the pregnancy and beyond. At the individual level, the girls involved typically possess so little self-esteem that they are incapable of acting to protect themselves. Their insecurity almost certainly contributes to their becoming pregnant in the first place, and it leads to their paralysis once pregnant. Regrettably, the literature is rife with examples of the many missed opportunities for intervention in cases studied of abandoned or killed newborns.

Therefore, the proposed project will provide teachers and other school personnel with training on what to do when they suspect a student is pregnant and to better understand and respond to the young women's fears and the parents' frequent denial. Again, studies have shown examples of teachers, counselors and school nurses knowing or suspecting that a teen was pregnant but assuming that the family was making appropriate plans. In other instances when questioned, teachers have revealed that they simply didn't know how to approach the subject or what to say.

The project also will insure that the safe-surrender message receives repetition and reinforcement in targeted local media. While non-English-language papers have readership throughout the county, they often have predominant readership in certain areas. Likewise, several bus routes traverse great distances across the county (i.e., Route 22, Eastridge Transit Center to Palo Alto/Menlo Park, or 121, Gilroy to Sunnyvale), while other routes are more localized in First 5 Community Investment Strategy-targeted neighborhoods (i.e., Route 17, Gilroy Transit Center to St. Louise Hospital, or 71, Eastridge Transit Center to Great Mall/Main Transit Center). Both countywide and targeted efforts will be included.

**b) Identification of the location.** The educational campaign that is proposed will reach throughout Santa Clara County. As described in the paragraph above, however, a substantial portion of the proposed project venues will be selected to be most effective in communicating to high risk individuals.

**c) Description of the population it will serve.** The goal of the project is to save lives by promoting a safe and non-threatening alternative to abandonment and death of infants in Santa Clara County. At the primary level, the population served is infants. Of course, the mothers will be spared lifelong grief as well as the possibility of detection and prosecution. The public avoids the substantial costs of the criminal justice system. Society promotes a more humane environment for distraught mothers. Teachers and other school personnel are more confident and better able to help the young people in their charge. But, again, most importantly, the project advances a life-sustaining opportunity for newborns.

**d) Furtherance of First 5's Community Investment Plan.** First 5 Santa Clara County is well known for its emphasis on prevention and early intervention through innovative collaborations. Fully in concert with those objectives, the proposed project supports the First 5 goal "to provide information and access so that young children are born healthy and experience optimal health and development." The funding is requested as an element of the First 5 strategy of "Community Engagement and Awareness (universal/county-wide)."

The project also will utilize the valuable information resulting from the High-Risk Design strategy of First 5 Santa Clara County's geomapping of the prevalence of risk factors and combined cumulative risks. These high-risk areas will be more heavily targeted with the outreach and educational messages to the extent it is possible, such as selection of bus advertising on targeted routes.

First 5 Santa Clara County joined Santa Clara County government, along with representatives from cities, fire departments, other governmental agencies, faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, foster parents, and the community at large, in participating on the Santa Clara County Safe Haven Task Force. Task Force members devoted countless hours to the creation of the local safe surrender procedures as well as plans to promote and publicize the law and the local Safe Haven sites. Santa Clara County government, through the leadership of its Social Services Agency, would like to continue the partnership with First 5 Santa Clara County on this vital effort. In acknowledgement of its important contribution, it is further proposed that the logo of First 5 Santa Clara County be included along with the Santa Clara County logo on project-produced materials and advertising instruments.

**e) Funding amount being requested.** This request is for \$50,000 to be utilized over a one-year period in the following categories: (1) \$15,000 will be used for advertising in targeted ethnic media publications that appropriately reflect county demographics and will focus on individuals/groups less likely to read English language publications. (2) \$15,000 will be budgeted for a mix of interior and exterior bus signage. (3) \$20,000 will be expended for junior and senior high school personnel training, including kits that contain copies of the locally produced DVDs, information and suggestions for teachers and other school personnel, and materials for distribution to students. Schools will be selected based on risk factor criteria.

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Posted on Thu, Jan. 12, 2006

## Abandoned baby found dead at fast food restaurant

By Sandra Gonzales  
Mercury News

A dead newborn baby boy was found inside a garbage can in front of a Jack in the Box restaurant in Newark Wednesday afternoon.

A transient searching for food discovered the body inside a shopping bag at about 4:30 p.m., said Newark Police Detective Sgt. Bob Douglas. A customer at the fast food store at 39017 Cedar Boulevard near Mowry Avenue attempted to revive the baby with cardiopulmonary resuscitation, but was unsuccessful.

When police arrived, they determined the baby was dead. Authorities estimate the baby, who was wrapped in infant sleeping clothes, was less than two weeks old. The baby boy, who was born full-term, did not appear to be injured or abused. Authorities say he was probably left in the garbage can after 1 p.m., the last time it was emptied.

The baby's race has not yet been determined, but he has a dark complexion and dark hair.

The Alameda County Coroner's Office will conduct an autopsy to determine the cause of death.

No arrests have been made, and authorities have no active leads.

It is unclear why the baby was left in the garbage can instead of a hospital, particularly in light of a law that allows parents to surrender newborns.

Safe Arms for Newborns passed in 2001 allows parents to surrender newborns within 72 hours after birth without fear of arrests.

The law allows parents to leave the unwanted newborns at hospitals and a number of fire stations.

Anyone with information about this case is asked to call the Newark Police Department Detective Bill Shaffer at (510) 793-1400 ext. 231 or Detective Sgt. Bob Douglas at (510) 793-1400 ext. 247. Information can also be provided anonymously via the Silent Witness Hotline by calling (510) 793-1400 ext. 500.

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**ANNUAL STATISTICS**  
**Safely Surrendered/Abandoned Alive/Abandoned Dead Babies**

	<u>cy2001</u>	<u>cy2002</u>	<u>cy2003</u>	<u>cy2004</u>	<u>Jan - Sep 2005</u>	<u>Total to Date</u>
<b>Safely Surrendered Babies</b>	2	16	23	30	39	<u>110</u>
<b>Abandoned Alive Babies</b>	30	33	25	23	16	<u>127</u>
<b>Abandoned Dead Babies</b>	11	11	1	1	0	<u>24</u>
<b>Total Babies</b>	<u>43</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>261</u>

## **COUNTY TASK FORCE CONTINUES TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE SAFELY SURRENDERED BABY LAW**

In 2001, California enacted SB 1368 (Brulte), commonly known as the Safely Surrendered Baby (SSB) or "Safe Haven" Law, in response to the rise in abandoned baby deaths throughout the State. In Santa Clara County alone, three babies were found abandoned during the summer of 2004. The Board of Supervisors believes, however, that one abandoned baby is too many. As a result, the Board approved the formation of the Safe Haven Task Force on August 3, 2004 to help increase public awareness about the SSB Law. The Task Force is comprised of 120 children's and women's advocates, health and medical professionals, educators, emergency services personnel, social workers and community outreach staff.

Under the SSB Law, parents or other lawful custodians may safely and anonymously surrender their baby within seventy-two hours of birth at a designated Safe Surrender site. The SSB Law grants the surrendering individual(s) immunity from criminal prosecution for abandonment, provided the baby shows no visible signs of abuse or neglect. It additionally provides a fourteen-day "cooling off" period during which the parents or legal custodians may begin the process to reclaim their baby if they so choose. In Santa Clara County, parents also have the unique option to call 911 to arrange for a Safe Surrender. In those cases, the County will dispatch an ambulance to the infant's location and conduct an on-site Safe Surrender.

Since the SSB Law has taken effect, at least 151 babies have been found abandoned and 110 newborns have been safely surrendered in California. The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) reports that the statewide number of babies abandoned each year has decreased while the number of safely surrendered babies has steadily increased. For example, data shows that 41 babies were found abandoned and 2 babies were safely surrendered in 2001. In comparison, by the third quarter of 2005, 16 babies were found abandoned and 39 were safely surrendered.

While the statistics from CDSS show promise, they also reveal the need for further public education about the existence of a safe and legal alternative to abandonment. To meet this objective, the County's Safe Haven Task Force has focused its efforts on educating a broad spectrum of females of childbearing age and their families about the SSB Law. Recently, these efforts have helped the County earn a \$5,000 grant from the Lucile Packard Foundation to produce a training video for use with teens and other target groups. County staff expects to finish production of the video this February and begin showing it in schools this spring.



## **COUNTY TASK FORCE CONTINUES TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE SAFELY SURRENDERED BABY LAW**

In addition to creating an effective public education program, the Task Force has been instrumental in pushing through key legislative initiatives, policies and procedures relating to Safe Surrender. Some of its major accomplishments to date include:

- Endorsing legislation to permanently remove the SSB Law's sunset date previously set for January 1, 2006, which the State Legislature approved in August 2005.
- Working with the Board of Supervisors to encourage all jurisdictions within Santa Clara County to pass Safe Haven resolutions. Now every fire station in every city in the County is a designated Safe Surrender site.
- Developing a detailed Safe Surrender protocol for all County and non-County agencies that may be involved in handling a Safe Surrender. In May 2005, the County successfully conducted a countywide drill to assess the readiness and reliability of this plan.

Surrendering an infant is undoubtedly one of the most difficult choices a parent may face. Parents who make this decision, however, can be assured that their baby will be placed in the care of competent medical staff and ultimately, into a welcoming home. As a member of the Board of Supervisors, I remain committed to keeping our children safe and healthy by continuing to support the Safe Surrender alternative.