



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
(805) 568-2240

**Department Name:** Board of Supervisors  
**Department No.:** 011  
**For Agenda Of:** 4/14/2015  
**Placement:** Departmental  
**Estimated Time:** 30 Minutes  
**Continued Item:** No  
**If Yes, date from:**  
**Vote Required:** 4/5

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**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Board Members: Supervisor Salud Carbajal  
Supervisor Janet Wolf, Chair

Department Board of Supervisors  
Director:

Contact Info: Amy Krueger, (805) 346-7248, Eric Friedman, (805) 568-2186

**SUBJECT:** Child Welfare Safety Net Task Force

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**County Counsel Concurrence**

As to form: N/A

Other Concurrence: N/A

As to form:

**Recommended Actions:**

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Approve and authorize the convening of a Child Welfare Safety Net Task Force for the purpose of assessing the overall system of public and community based child welfare services in Santa Barbara County that address the needs of children (and their families) who become, or are at risk of becoming, dependents of the court under Article 6, Section 300 of the Welfare and Institutions Code and produce a report with findings and recommendations for the Board of Supervisors by April 14, 2016.
- b) Select target date to return to Board of Supervisors with names of Task Force Members.
- c) Appropriate up to \$25,000 for this effort.
- d) Determine that these actions are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b) (3), finding that the execution of these actions are covered by the general rule that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment, and where it can be seen with

**Auditor-Controller Concurrence**

As to form: N/A

certainty that there is no possibility that the activity may have a significant effect on the environment, the activities are not subject to CEQA.

**Summary Text:**

This item is on the Board agenda to propose the creation of a Task Force to assess the Child Welfare and Safety Net System in Santa Barbara County.

**Background:**

The Child Welfare System is comprised of at least 25 public and community based organizations, including but not limited to the Department of Social Services, Child Welfare Services, Child Abuse Listening and Mediation (CALM), Family Care Network, Inc. (FCNI), Alcohol, Drug, and Mental Health Services (ADMHS), and the Superior Court; that play a role in identifying, reporting, investigating, and responding to reports and findings of abuse or neglect. While organizations frequently assess their own systems, to date there has never been an in depth analysis of the overall Child Welfare System.

In addition, the creation of the Child Welfare Safety Net Task Force is in alignment with the mission of the newly created Bureau of Children’s Justice at the California Department of Justice. The Bureau seeks to protect the rights of children and focus the attention and resources of law enforcement and policymakers on the importance of safeguarding every child so they can meet their full potential. The Bureau will use the criminal and civil law enforcement powers of the California Department of Justice to identify and pursue much-needed improvements to policies impacting children, and work with local, state, and national stakeholders to enhance supports available for children in need. As noted by the Attorney General, officials and employees in positions of public trust have a duty to care for and protect the children placed in foster care. As part of our shared commitment to our children, it is import to evaluate the current enforcement and oversight policies and practices that have an impact on their outcomes.

**Task Force Charter**

The charter of the Task Force is to conduct a holistic assessment of the strengths, weaknesses and gaps of the Child Welfare System in Santa Barbara County and produce a report for the Board of Supervisors which:

1. Acknowledges what parts of the system are currently working well and why.
2. Identifies and makes recommendations regarding areas of the system that could be improved.
3. Identifies and makes recommendations regarding existing needs not currently addressed by the system and what could be done to fill those gaps.

The Child Welfare System is defined as including (but not limited to):

- Department of Social Services, Child Welfare Services
- Department of Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Services
- Juvenile Probation

- Department of Public Health
- First Five
- County Office of Education, Foster Youth Services
- Superior Court
- Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
- County Counsel
- Court appointed attorneys for parents and children
- Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC)
- Family Care Network, Inc.
- Aspiranet, Inc.
- Pathways Family Services, Inc
- Angels Foster Care
- Santa Barbara County Foster Parent Association
- Child Abuse Listening and Mediation (CALM)
- Casa Pacifica, Inc.
- Good Samaritan Shelter Services, Inc.
- Santa Maria Youth and Family Services (SMYFS)
- Tri-Counties Regional Center
- Network of Family Resource Centers
- People Helping People
- Community Action Commission (CAC)
- Family Services Agency (FSA)

### **Task Force Structure**

The recommended Task Force structure is five individuals (each Supervisor recommending one from his or her District) who have knowledge of child welfare, child development, and family systems issues. It is further recommended that the Deputy Director of Adult and Children Services from the Department of Social Services and a Deputy Director from Alcohol, Drug, and Mental Health Services, participate in all Task Force meetings to help members be better informed in real time about laws, regulations, policies and best practices that impact the areas being discussed by the Task Force; to explain the interconnectedness of parts of the system; and to facilitate data inquiries.

Each of the five Task Force members appointed by the Board of Supervisors:

- Should not have any conflicts of interest related to the services currently provided within the Child Welfare System or possible recommendations for service that could be part of the final report.
- Should include representation from all regions of the county.
- Should have a demonstrated passion for the well being of children and their families.
- Should commit to participating on the Task Force during its 9-12 month life-span. It is anticipated that as much as 20 hours a month will be required in the first two months of the life of the Task Force to allow for orientations to the Child Welfare System and planning activities.

### **Task Force Activities**

In addition to regular meetings, it is anticipated that the Task Force members would spend several days participating in an orientation to the Child Welfare System, including relationships between the various parts of the system, financing and funding streams, the nature of the children and families served, system mandates and practices, and State and Federal outcome measures. Additional proposed activities include but are not limited to:

- Ride-alongs, in-office and in-court observations.
- Mini-orientations to ADMHS, Public Health, Probation, CASA and the Superior Court and the role of services to our shared children within those organizations.
- Introduction to contracted community based organizations and service providers and explanations of those relationships/services.
- Discussions with a variety of public and community based organizations.

### **Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:**

It is anticipated that the Department of Social Services and the other County departments will be able to absorb costs associated with the commission as relates to management time participating in meeting and providing orientations. However, mileage for the commissioners, refreshments for meetings, clerical support, and production of the final report would be costs with no appropriate funding source within the Department of Social Services or other County Departments. The total estimated cost is approximately \$25,000 including production of the final report.

### **Attachments:**

Child Welfare Safety Net Task Force Power Point Presentation

### **Authored by:**

Amy Krueger, Division Chief, Department of Social Services