County of Santa Clara
Office of the Board of Supervisors
County Government Center, East Wing
70 West Hedding Street, 10th Floor
San Jose, California 95110
(408) 299-5040
Fax: (408) 299-2038 TDD 993-8272
www.jimbeall.org



James T. Beall, Jr.
Supervisor Fourth District

MEMORANDUM

DATE: **May 30, 2006**

TO: **Child Abuse Council – Executive Committee**

FROM: **James T. Beall, Jr.** Jim Beall
Santa Clara County Supervisor, District 4

SUBJECT: Budget 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.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

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.

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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–of 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 from Social Services Agency 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.

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 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.