

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

566



FROM: EXECUTIVE OFFICE

SUBMITTAL DATE: August 13, 2002

FILE

SUBJECT: Response to Grand Jury Report: The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors:

- 1) Approve with or without modifications, the attached response to the Grand Jury's recommendations regarding The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997.
- 2) Direct the Clerk of the Board to immediately forward the Board's finalized response to the Grand Jury, to the Presiding Judge, and to the County Clerk-Recorder (for mandatory filing with the State).

BACKGROUND: On July 2, 2002, the Board directed staff to prepare a draft of the Board's response to the Grand Jury's report regarding The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997.

Section 933(c) of the Penal Code requires that the Board of Supervisors comment on the Grand Jury's recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the Board, and that a response be provided to the Presiding Judge of the Supervisor Court within 90 days.

TONY CARSTENS,
Deputy County Executive Officer

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FINANCIAL DATA: N/A

CURRENT YEAR COST \$

ANNUAL COST: \$

NET COUNTY COST \$

IN CURRENT YEAR BUDGET: Yes/ No/

BUDGET ADJUSTMENT FY: Yes/ No/

SOURCE OF FUNDS:

C.E.O. RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE.

County Executive Officer Signature

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

On motion of Supervisor Buster, seconded by Supervisor Mullen and duly carried by unanimous vote, IT WAS ORDERED that the above matter is approved as recommended.

Ayes: Buster, Tavaglione, Venable, Wilson and Mullen

Noes: None

Absent: None

Date: August 27, 2002

xc: E.O., Grand Jury, Presiding Judge, CPS, Co. Clerk-Recorder(2)

Nancy Romero
Clerk to the Board
By:
Deputy

3.5

Consent Policy
Consent Policy

Department Recommendation:
Per Executive Office:

SPECIFIC FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

THE ADOPTION AND SAFE FAMILIES ACT OF 1997

Findings:

1. ***The "adoptions incentive" portion of ASFA is not aimed at taking children from their biological parents, but is specifically directed at facilitating the removal of children from the foster care system and placing them into adoptive homes.***

Respondent agrees with this finding.

2. ***California Assembly Bill 2773 states that "any incentive payment received through implementation of the federal act (ASFA) must be reinvested into the child welfare system in order to provide increased post-adoptive services, as needed, to families who have adopted children from the foster care system."***

Respondent agrees with this finding.

3. ***The 2001-02 Grand Jury has found through interviews and newspaper and internet articles that there is a public misconception that Child Protection Departments, nationwide, receive bonuses for removing children from their biological parents and rushing them into adoption.***

Respondent agrees with this finding.

4. ***A June 11, 2002 letter to the Grand Jury from a Department of Child Protective Services program manager states in part, "Social workers do not now and have never in the past received case-related bonuses. Social Workers receive no monetary incentive for placing children in adoptive homes."***

Respondent agrees with this finding.

5. ***Based on numerous interviews of Riverside County Child Protective Services Social Workers, the Grand Jury also found that very few of the workers interviewed had sufficient knowledge of the federal, state, and local funding laws and ordinances to help dispel this "bonus" misconception.***

Respondent agrees with this finding.

6. ***A Federal General Accounting Office study reports that, "Many States have begun to train staff on the legal and policy changes necessitated by ASFA" (February 2000).***

Respondent agrees with this finding.

Recommendations:

- 1. Immediately begin educating and training County Social Workers on a regular basis regarding federal, state, and county laws, rules, and regulations of The Federal Adoption and Safe Families Act.***

The recommendation has been implemented.

California began to implement the Federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) in 1997. ASFA has impacted every area of Child Welfare Services. ASFA forms the basis for all regulations pertaining to our programs. By 1998 Social Workers were receiving formal training in Adoptions issues, including Concurrent Planning (working to reunite a family while establishing a permanent contingency plan for the child should reunification not occur). In addition, Adoptions issues, as well as the other regulatory aspects of ASFA were incorporated into the Induction Training for new Social Work staff. Our Child Welfare Services Division Policy Manual was revised to reflect ASFA requirements and distributed to all CWS staff in November 2001. Social Work staff is also informed of new requirements through policy communications, training sessions and staff meetings.

- 2. Set policy standards throughout the regions of the county to prevent misunderstandings when dealing with parents and relatives while moving children within the foster care and adoption system.***

This recommendation has been implemented.

All Social Work staff receive detailed training, as discussed above, in the reunification process and in helping a family transition to permanency options, including Adoptions, when reunification is not possible. In addition, the Juvenile Court requires that official notice be provided (as required by law) before each hearing. These notices serve to remind parents of the possibility that their parental rights may be terminated. The Department is currently reminding Social Work staff of the sensitive nature of permanency decisions and is emphasizing clear and frequent communication regarding these issues with families and relatives.