

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR DON KNABE

May 10, 2016

As the ultimate safety net, Los Angeles County has a responsibility to protect its most vulnerable population. Sadly, children are exposed to terrible situations, and at times, they have no family to turn to for help. Kids who are abused, lost, frightened or in danger on the streets often do not have a place within the community where they can run and hide. In 1997, to address this issue, I put forth a motion to create the Safe House Program as a way to ensure a temporary haven for any child or adult facing a potentially threatening situation and needing a place to go.

Our program currently includes all Los Angeles County Fire Stations, while other local municipalities and organizations have similar safe houses in place. These locations are outfitted with an easily identifiable white and yellow sign. When a young person is in trouble, they can seek out a local Safe House and be protected and connected with any services they need. These incidents are not tracked by the County, but we know that they do occur a few times each year.

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Nearly 20 years ago, we had no idea our children would need protection from monsters looking to sexually exploit them for money. Over the past five years, Los Angeles County has been working to protect one of our most vulnerable populations: victims of child sex trafficking. Children, some as young as 10 years old, are being forced by adults to sell themselves on the streets for money. These kids are threatened with brutal abuse and violence against themselves and their family if they attempt to escape or do not make their quota. Often times, these children have no place to go for help, and end up going back to their pimp and trafficker where they are subjected to more abuse and exploitation. We've made significant strides to combat child sex trafficking of minors across our region and support the victims of this heinous crime, but there is still much more we can do.

The Safe House program is similar to our Safe Surrender program, which allows a mother to confidentially handover an infant to any fire station or hospital. Safe Surrender sites are easily identified by the white and blue placard placed at fire stations and hospitals. Since we implemented the program in 2001, 145 newborn babies have been saved.

For the last several months, our Integrated Leadership Team has been working on ways to rebrand and expand the Safe House program to create safe harbors for victims of child sex trafficking. I believe now is the appropriate time to move forward with developing a protocol to help victims who seek help and a strategy to implement it.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board direct the Los Angeles County CSEC Integrated Leadership Team (ILT) to engage the Office of Child Protection, Department

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of Public Social Services, Department of Mental Health, Department of Public Health, Department of Health Services, Department of Children and Family Services, Probation Department, Sheriff's Department, and County Fire Department, and report back in 60 days on the following:

1. Renaming and rebranding Los Angeles County Safe House Program as Los Angeles County Safe Youth Zone Program.
2. Develop a protocol for when victims of child sex trafficking seek help at a designated Safe Youth Zone.
3. Implementation plan that includes strategies to engage County departments and other public safety agencies, train appropriate employees, and outreach to the public to educate them on the Safe Youth Zone Program.
4. Funding plan for implementation, training and other necessary resources for Los Angeles County Safe Youth Zone Program.

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