

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR DON KNABE

June 16, 2015

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 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.

-- MORE --

MOTION

SOLIS _____

RIDLEY-THOMAS _____

KUEHL _____

KNABE _____

ANTONOVICH _____

Over the past three 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 profit. 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, 131 newborn babies have been saved.

I believe that the Safe House program can be a tool that can help save the lives of victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Chief Executive Office work with the Los Angeles County Fire Department, Probation Department, Department of Children and Family Services, Department of Health Services, Sheriff's Department, Public Health Department, Department of Public Social Services, Department of Mental Health, and Libraries to explore options to refresh, rebrand and expand the Safe House Program to additional County facilities and include commercially sexually exploited children.

-- MORE --

The Chief Executive Office report back in 45 days with a plan and timeframe to:

- Outreach to the public, in culturally and linguistically appropriate materials, to educate them on the Safe House Program and locations in Los Angeles County they can go to seek a safe place.
- Train necessary employees to identify warning signs of a commercially sexually exploited child and the protocol to follow when a victim is identified.
- Implement an expansion of the Safe House Program to include Sheriff's stations, hospitals, community health clinics, DPSS offices, DCFS offices, County libraries, and other County facilities throughout the region and track program results.

#

DK:AV:jw