

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS
AND DON KNABE**

MARCH 25, 2014

**Strengthening Safeguards for At-Risk Children in Foster Care and Group Homes
to Prevent Sexual Exploitation by Human Traffickers**

Each year in Los Angeles County (County) hundreds of children are sexually exploited for commercial purposes (i.e., sold for sex). Children as young as 12 years of age are sold for sex by pimps and gang members. Many of these children have had contact with the foster care and/or juvenile justice systems. Between January 2013 and January 2014, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) received referrals on 281 children who were identified as sexually exploited children.

Children in foster care and group homes are specifically targeted by pimps and gang members because the circumstances that caused them to be removed from their homes (i.e., parental abuse and/or neglect) often makes them especially vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Currently, DCFS contracts with 46 foster family agencies and 73 group homes to care for children under the jurisdiction of the Dependency Court. The Department of Probation also contracts with group homes to care for youth placed

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under the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Court. An additional 586 foster parents, licensed by the State of California, are used by DCFS for foster care placements. These foster family agencies, group homes and foster parents are required to complete annual training to maintain their out of home care licensing.

Foster family agencies and group homes are required to ensure that their parents complete required training each year. State licensed foster parents are responsible for completing annual training requirements. While there are basic mandatory training requirements in subject areas relating to the fostering of a youth, training on sex trafficking is not one of them.

The Board of Supervisors has taken numerous steps to reduce and eliminate sex trafficking in the County, including a directive on September 24, 2013 to create a countywide response protocol for sexual exploitation victims. Given that children touched by the foster care and juvenile justice systems are being sexually exploited, the adults responsible for their safety and welfare are in the best position to help prevent exploitation, or at a minimum, to notify DCFS and law enforcement of any concerns related to possible or actual sexual exploitation. Training these providers to identify signs of sexual exploitation will help them to partner with DCFS and law enforcement to save children before they are sexually exploited or help exploited children receive the necessary services to prevent further exploitation.

WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS DIRECT:

1. The Directors of the Departments of Children and Family Services and Probation to report back to the Board in writing within 30 days on the feasibility of, a plan for, and any cost associated with:
 - a. Entering into an agreement with local institutions of higher learning, requiring the institutions to develop and deliver training aimed at: identifying victims who have been Commercially Sexually Exploited (CSEC); understanding the underlying needs of CSEC victims; understanding the pattern of behavior of CSEC victims; and identifying emergent best practices that address the behaviors and unique needs of CSEC victims;

WE FURTHER MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS DIRECT:

The Directors of the Departments of Children and Family Services and Probation to report back to the Board within 30 days on the feasibility of implementing the following:

- a. Requiring State licensed foster parents to complete annual CSEC training substantially similar to the training described in paragraph 1, subdivision (a);
- b. Entering into an agreement with foster family agencies who care for DCFS-placed children requiring the agencies to ensure that their staff and certified foster parents complete annual CSEC training that is

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substantially similar to the training described in paragraph 1, subdivision (a); and

- c. Entering into an agreement with group homes who care for DCFS-placed or Probation-placed children requiring the group homes to ensure that their staff and providers complete annual CSEC training, that is substantially similar to the training described in paragraph 1, subdivision (a).

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