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County of San Diego
Board of Supervisors

National & State Boards:

National Association of Counties

County Supervisors Association of California

Southern California Hazardous Waste Management Authority

Southern California Regional Association of Counties

Regional Boards:

Metropolitan Transit Development Board

San Diego Regional Water Reclamation Agency

City/County Reinvestment Task Force

Regional Task Force on The Homeless

LEON L. WILLIAMS
SUPERVISOR
FOURTH DISTRICT

RECENTLY, THE COUNTY GRAND JURY, COUNTY JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMISSION, AND COUNTY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE HAVE REVIEWED THE COUNTY'S CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES SYSTEM. THESE REVIEWS WERE DONE WITH THE COMMON GOAL OF PROVIDING THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS WITH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGES WITHIN THE CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES SYSTEM THAT FURTHER ENHANCES THE ABILITY OF THE SYSTEM TO OPERATE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD.

THE SAD TRUTH IS THAT REPORTS OF CHILD ABUSE AND ACTUAL CHILD ABUSE HAVE INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY IN THIS COUNTY, THIS STATE, AND ACROSS OUR NATION. CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES SYSTEMS THROUGHOUT THE NATION ARE BEING AFFECTED BY THESE UNFORTUNATE INCREASES. ON ANY GIVEN DAY IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY ALONE:

- 173 CHILDREN WILL BE REPORTED AS POSSIBLE VICTIMS OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT, AND 17 OF THOSE CHILDREN WILL BE PLACED INTO PROTECTIVE CUSTODY;
- 7,447 CHILDREN ARE INVOLVED WITH THE JUVENILE COURT SYSTEM;
- 11 BABIES WILL BE BORN WITH ILLEGAL DRUGS OR ALCOHOL IN THEIR SYSTEM; AND
- 7 CHILDREN WILL ENTER THE MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM.

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THE CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES SYSTEM WHICH IS DESIGNED TO ADDRESS CHILD ABUSE IS NOT UNLIKE OTHER SYSTEMS DESIGNED TO ADDRESS SOCIETAL PROBLEMS, E.G., THE LAW ENFORCEMENT SYSTEM. AND LIKE IN ALL SYSTEMS IN WHICH PEOPLE ARE THE SYSTEM, MISTAKES AND ERRORS IN JUDGEMENT ARE MADE. WE AS INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS AND AS A SOCIETY DEMAND THAT THE CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES SYSTEM ACT IMMEDIATELY TO PROTECT A CHILD FROM FURTHER ABUSE, AND THAT THOSE CAUSING THE ABUSE BE PUNISHED AND/OR PREVENTED FROM REPEATING ACTS OF ABUSE UPON THE CHILD.

UNFORTUNATELY, IN MEETING SOCIETY'S DEMANDS FOR A QUICK ACTING, EFFECTIVE, AND EFFICIENT CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES SYSTEM, DECISIONS MAY BE MADE WHICH RESULT IN THE CHILD BEING TAKEN FROM THE HOME UNNECESSARILY; AND SOMETIMES DECISIONS MAY BE MADE WHICH RESULT IN THE CHILD STAYING IN THE HOME AND BEING SUBJECTED TO FURTHER ABUSE AND/ OR DEATH.

SINCE OCTOBER OF 1991 THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS HAS RECEIVED SEVERAL STATUS REPORTS REGARDING ON-GOING INVESTIGATIONS OF THE CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM. WE WILL BE CONVENING A CONFERENCE ON MARCH 10, 1992 WHICH WILL INCLUDE FINDINGS, COMPREHENSIVE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLANS, AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS OF ALL INVESTIGATIONS OR REPORTS WHICH HAVE BEEN COMPLETED OR ARE PENDING REGARDING THE TOTAL SYSTEM.

HOWEVER BEFORE THE CONFERENCE HAS BEEN CONVENED, A FEW INDIVIDUALS HAVE TAKEN IT UPON THEMSELVES TO APPEAR BEFORE THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AND DEMAND THAT OUR RESPONSE TO THE PROBLEMS AND ISSUES WITHIN THE COUNTY'S CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM, BE THAT OF INITIATING ACTION TO FIRE THE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES' DIRECTOR, JAKE JACOBSEN.

BLAMING ONE MAN FOR PROBLEMS WHICH ARISE IN A SYSTEM WHICH IS NOT ADEQUATELY FUNDED NOR APPROPRIATELY STAFFED TO PROVIDE THE COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES NECESSARY TO PROVIDE TIMELY AND QUALITY SERVICES TO OUR CHILDREN IN NEED, IS VERY SHORTSIGHTED.

THE BLAME FOR THE PROBLEMS IN THE COUNTY'S CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM SHOULD NOT AND CAN NOT BE PLACED ON ONE PERSON OR A FEW PEOPLE; EQUALLY SO, THE SOLUTIONS TO THE SYSTEM'S PROBLEMS DO NOT LIE WITH ONE PERSON OR A FEW PEOPLE.

PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN ACCUSED OF CHILD ABUSE AND SUBSEQUENTLY FOUND TO NOT HAVE COMMITTED CHILD ABUSE, HAVE BEEN BLAMED AND STIGMATIZED AS CHILD ABUSERS BY OTHERS. SOMETIMES ACTIONS RESULTING FROM SUCH JUDGMENTAL BEHAVIOR HAS RESULTED IN A PERSON BEING DENIED EMPLOYMENT, MOVING FROM THE COMMUNITY, SEEKING PROFESSIONAL HELP, ETC.

WE ALL MUST DO OUR PART TO ENSURE THAT WHEN A CHILD IS BEING ABUSED, IN DANGER OF BEING ABUSED, OR REPORTED TO BE IN AN ABUSIVE SITUATION, THE PEOPLE IN THE CHILD PROTECTIVE SYSTEM HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE, TRAINING, AND RESOURCES TO CLARIFY THE SITUATION AND TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTIONS WHICH RESULT IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD BEING SERVED.

WHEN I SIT WITH MY FELLOW BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEMBERS ON TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 1992 TO HEAR FROM STAFF AND COUNTY RESIDENTS REGARDING OUR CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES SYSTEM, I WILL DO SO WITH THE INTENT AND COMMITMENT TO MAKE BOLD, RATIONAL, INNOVATIVE, AND VISIONARY DECISIONS THAT WILL HELP TO ENSURE THAT THE CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES SYSTEM FUNCTIONS WITH THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD AS ITS NUMBER ONE PRIORITY AND PROVIDING IT WITH THE RESOURCES TO DO SO AS ONE OF OUR TOP PRIORITIES.