



# County of Santa Cruz 167

## DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

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**RONALD L. RUIZ**  
**DISTRICT ATTORNEY**

April 23, 1999

BOARD AGENDA: May 4, 1999

The Honorable Jeff Almquist, Chairperson  
and Members of the Board of Supervisors  
Governmental Center  
701 Ocean Street, Room 500  
Santa Cruz, California 95060

RE: PROPOSED IMPOSITION OF PENALTIES

Dear Chairperson Almquist and Members of the Board:

On April 13, 1999, the Board approved the execution of the Independent Contractor Agreement between the County of Santa Cruz and the vendor, Informatix, in the provision of technical services to support the Family Support Division's conversion to the "CASES" automated child support system. The costs for these services will be reimbursed by the state. The purpose of this letter is to advise the Board of recent events which may impact the Family Support Division, during or after conversion to "CASES."

As you know, the federal government required California to implement a statewide automated child support system by October 1, 1997. When the system failed to materialize, a federal penalty in the form of reduced federal administrative funds was imposed. AB2779 set forth California's plan to implement an alternative statewide automated system requiring each county to use one of four approved child support enforcement systems which would be ultimately linked to a hub in Sacramento. This consortia system would serve California's child support programs pending the development of one statewide system in three to five years. "CASES" is one of the approved child support enforcement systems.

Governor Wilson agreed that the state would absorb the federal penalty imposed in 1997 and the state submitted an Interim Automation Planning Document (IAPD) to the federal government. We have recently learned that the federal government has rejected the state's IAPD and statewide automation is on hold pending a new plan from Governor Davis. While the governor's new plan may or may not include the "CASES" system, Santa Clara and San Francisco Counties have already converted to "CASES," and many other counties have either converted or are in the process of

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converting to this proven system.

Apparently, Governor Wilson's agreement is not binding and Governor Davis' budget proposes to pass all the federal penalties on to the counties. This could mean approximately \$800,000 in reduced administrative cost revenues to the Family Support Division in fiscal year 1999-2000, with an additional \$1,000,000 penalty the following year. It is clear that such a penalty would severely restrict the ability of the Family Support Division to serve the community. We are working with the California District Attorneys Association/Family Support Council in organized opposition to these penalties.

Though we know that the penalties are to be reconsidered at the May budget revise, we are reviewing our FY 1999-2000 budget to determine any areas which could absorb a portion of this sanction in the event these sanctions are imposed.

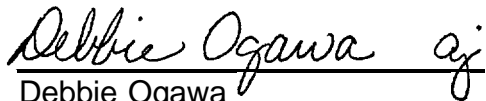
Additionally, a number of bills are pending in the Senate and the Assembly which propose to improve performance of the child support program statewide by having a state agency other than the Department of Social Services administer the program and/or move it from the District Attorney's Office. Senate Bill 240 (Speier), which proposed to move the child support program to the Attorney General's Office is presently in committee. Related bills include AB196 (Kuehl) and SB524 (Burton and Schiff).

Our initial analysis is that none of the bills provide sufficient access to services for our residents nor do they propose changes which actually improve the provision of services. Further, it is NOT clear how such programs would be funded. At this time, we do not support any of the proposed bills. We will continue to track these bills and will report any meaningful changes as they occur.


IT IS THEREFORE RECOMMENDED THAT YOUR BOARD accept and file this report.

Sincerely,

RONALD L. RUIZ  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

  
Debbie Ogawa  
Family Support Program Manager

RECOMMENDED:

  
SUSAN A. MAURIELLO  
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

RLR/DO/aj