



County of Santa Cruz

DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

701 OCEAN STREET, SUITE 200, PO BOX 1159, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060
(831) 454-2400 FAX: (831) 454-2227 E-MAIL: dat015@co.santa-cruz.ca.us

RONALD L. RUIZ
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

June 8, 1999

Agenda: June 15, 1999

The Honorable Jeff Almquist, Chairperson
and Members of the Board of Supervisors
County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

SUBJECT: EQUIPMENT PURCHASE

Dear Chairperson Almquist and Members of the Board:

The Family Support Division of the District Attorney's office is currently in need of several items of equipment. I am writing your Board to identify that equipment, explain the need and request authorization for purchase.

First, we are seeking to purchase five IBM Thinkpad® Computers (laptops). A critical function of this office is accurately calculating the correct amount of child support a non-custodial parent should pay. There are many variables in the complex equation as each individual circumstance is different. In fact, the formula for calculating child support has become so complex that the law community relies on one of several approved software applications to compute support which uniformly credits and values these variables then applies the mandated support schedule. Our Family Support Division attorneys are often required to make these calculations in the courtroom. It is common for one attorney to be in one courtroom while another is in a second courtroom down the hall and both have a pressing need for a computer to calculate child support.

□ WATSONVILLE OFFICE
PO BOX 228
FREEDOM, CA 95019

1430 FREEDOM BLVD.
WATSONVILLE, CA 95076
(831) 763-8120
(831) 763-8029 FAX

□ FAMILY SUPPORT DIVISION
PO BOX 1841
420 MAY AVENUE
SANTA CRUZ, CA 95061
(831) 454-3700
(831) 454-3752 FAX

□ PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR
PO BOX 1159
420 MAY AVENUE
SANTA CRUZ, CA 95061
(831) 454-2442
(831) 454-3752 FAX

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Another need which the laptops will fill is our desire to increase training, education and presentation capabilities. Laptop computers can also serve in lieu of the attorney's standard desktops using a port replicator and related accessories thus serving the function of two computers making their desktop computers available for internal training and other staff needs.

The laptop computers will also allow us to better engage and conduct training beyond our own office; thus, expanding our outreach efforts to the community. Due to the critical juncture the child support program finds itself, there is an ever increasing demand to serve the needs of welfare participants who will soon reach their life time limits of assistance. Securing support for these single parents is of utmost importance. One of the ways to enhance our ability to meet this need is to better educate our community about the importance of child support and to work more effectively with agencies such as the Human Resources Agency. Our present outreach component includes a curriculum which is presented in local junior high and high schools. These presentations are made by representatives from our agency who make verbal presentations to large groups of students. We would like to build our capacity in this area and enhance and expand our efforts to include community agencies, correctional agencies, civic groups and others. A portable laptop computer will enable us to use presentation software.

In view of these needs it is our intention to assign one of the computers to each of our four Family Support attorneys to be used in court as well as for in-office work. The fifth laptop computer will be used for staff development and training; at co-location sites (including the Human Resources Agency) and for outreach presentations to local schools and community agencies. The estimated cost of these computers and associated equipment is \$12,500.

To more effectively train our Family Support staff, both prior to and after our conversion to the new Computer Assisted Support Enforcement System (CASES), and to conduct community presentations, we are also requesting your Board's authorization to purchase a multimedia projector at a cost of approximately \$9,000. This device will enhance our staff development and outreach presentation abilities by allowing the projection of charts, graphics and text on a large screen. We are presently in the process of converting to a new computer system, one which is Y2K compliant and sophisticated enough to meet new performance, payment distribution and reporting requirements. This rapidly changing environment has necessitated a unit in our agency devoted to staff development and training. Our current training mode involves one person making a verbal presentation in front of a large group, using hard copy handouts to train staff on legal procedures and computer use. The projector will allow us to abandon the archaic training procedure we must currently use and, instead, provide a much more speedier and efficient training of our staff and education of the public sector.

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In addition, we are requesting your authorization to purchase two CD ROM towers to integrate into our PC network, at a total cost of \$6,000 giving our attorney staff immediate access to legal reference materials in the course of performing their daily tasks. Case law, regulation and policy regarding child support is constantly changing. Our hard copy reference materials (such as the California Family Law Reporter) are cumbersome and can only be accessed by one person at a time.

The CD ROM towers will provide more efficient access to these legal references and will also be used to access directories and indexes produced on CD ROM which will help us locate non-custodial parent addresses and assets until such time when the Family Support Division has Internet access. One of the most important functions of our office is the locating of absent parents and their assets. Presently, some of the locate resources available to us include looking through phone books from other counties writing to friends and relatives of absent parents, using automated tape match systems which provide information that is 90 days old and sending inquiry forms to Assessor's offices, jails and other agencies. Locating assets and addresses of absent parents is a frequent activity throughout the life of the case. The CD ROM towers will greatly improve our capabilities in this regard.

Recently the Information Services Department (ISD) informed us that they operated CD ROM Towers, This ISD Director has offered his assistance to us to determine if a separate system will be required. Our office has agreed to purchase CD ROM Tower only if the current ISD system cannot accommodate the increased usage by Family Support.

Finally, the postage machine which the Division has used for many years has needed increasingly frequent repairs over the last several months. We planned to include a request in our budget for fiscal year 1999/2000 but at the most recent repair, we were informed the machine could not be repaired again. We are requesting authorization for a comparable replacement at a cost of \$4,500.

Federal funding provides 66% reimbursement for all Family Support Division's administrative costs. Because of our high child support collections, the remaining 34% of Family Support's costs is paid by collection based incentive revenues. No County General Fund cost will be incurred for any of these expenditures.

IT IS THEREFORE RECOMMENDED that your Board:

1. Authorize the purchase of a multimedia projector at \$9,000, five IBM Thinkpad® computers and accessories totaling \$12,500, and a postage meter at \$4,500, and; Adopt a Resolution accepting and appropriating \$32,000 in unanticipated revenue in federal reimbursement funds.

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2. Adopt a Resolution accepting and appropriating \$32,000 in unanticipated revenue in Federal reimbursement funds.

Sincerely,

RONALD L. RUIZ
DISTRICT ATTORNEY



GEORGE J. KOVACEVICH
CHIEF DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

RLR/DLO/df:jmr

RECOMMENDED:



SUSAN A. MAURIELLO
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER