

County of Santa Cruz

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HUMAN RESOURCES AGENCY

Cecilia Espinola, Administrator
1000 Emeline Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
(83 1) 454-4130 or 454-4045 FAX: (83 1) 454-4642

June 7, 2001

AGENDA: June 19, 2001

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA. 95060

REPORT ON THE CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY SHELTER CARE PROGRAM

Dear Members of the Board:

As you recall, on December 12, 2000 your Board approved the establishment of the Children's Emergency Shelter Care pilot program to increase the availability of foster care resources for emergency placements, especially for older and special needs children. At that time, your Board also directed the Human Resource Agency (HRA) Administrator to report on the effectiveness of this pilot program on or before budget hearings. The purpose of this letter is to provide a report on the status of the Children's Emergency Shelter Care Program.

As you know, finding foster families who are willing to shelter children on an emergency basis has become extremely difficult. Considering the cost of living in Santa Cruz County, it is understandable that many foster parents are just not able to reserve beds specifically for emergency care with the current level of reimbursement. Consequently, there is now a critical shortage of emergency foster care beds for abused and neglected children in our community. The current lack of emergency foster care beds means that children often wait for hours while social workers search for an available emergency placement. The restricted number of choices for emergency placements also means that children have a higher likelihood of moving between multiple placements.

Your Board approved the development of this pilot program, which offers a retainer fee to foster parents to reserve beds specifically for emergency foster care. The program provides for 12 emergency care beds. Participating foster parents receive reimbursement in the amount of \$300 per month in exchange for each reserved emergency foster care bed. These foster parents are available 24 hours 7 days a week and agree to care for any child in need of emergency placement. In addition, these foster parents continue to receive the current emergency shelter care payment for each placement. At present we have recruited 9 reserved emergency beds and we are working diligently to

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recruit the remaining 3 beds. The preliminary results of this pilot program are very positive. The program has been operating for four months and has already significantly reduced the time that nearly **40** children have had to wait for an emergency foster home.

The Human Resources Agency recommends the continuance of the Children's Emergency Shelter Care Program. This program has improved the County's ability to provide caring, emergency foster homes, for abused and neglected children, in a timely fashion. In order to continue this essential program, annualized funding for the Children's Emergency Shelter Care Program has been requested in the FY01/02 budget. No further action by your Board is required at this time.

It is therefore **RECOMMENDED** that your Board accept and file the status report on the Children's Emergency Shelter Care Program.

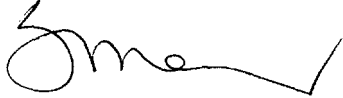
Very truly yours,

Cecilia Espinola (EX)

CECILIA ESPINOLA
Administrator

CE/JH

RECOMMENDED:



Susan A. Mauriello
County Administrative Officer

cc: County Administrative Office
HRA Fiscal