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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES
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September 21, 2015

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Sheryl L. Spiller, Director

SUBJECT: MOTION BY SUPERVISORS RIDLEY-THOMAS AND KNABE AND AMENDMENT BY MAYOR ANTONOVICH AND SUPERVISORS SOLIS AND KUEHL ON PREVENTING CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING AT HOTELS/MOTELS RECEIVING COUNTY VOUCHERS (AUGUST 18, 2015, AGENDA NO. 19, 48)

This is to provide the Board with a report on the two action items raised by Supervisors Mark Ridley-Thomas and Hilda L. Solis, during the Department of Public Social Services' (DPSS) August 18, 2015 report on the progress to prevent child sex trafficking at Hotel/Motels that participate in the General Relief (GR) Housing Voucher Program. The Supervisors asked the Department to report back in 30 days on the following:

- **The Department's efforts to collaborate with the hotel/motel industry and the Police and Sheriff's Departments in the unincorporated areas; and**
- **The efforts by the Department's Homeless Coordinator in addressing homelessness and the reasons for the low bed utilization rates given the increase in homelessness in the County.**

1. Collaboration with the hotel/motel industry and the Police and Sheriff's Departments in the unincorporated areas:

Since June 2015, the Department has collaborated with law enforcement agencies to establish reporting protocols so that DPSS is notified when criminal or sex trafficking activities occurs at one of the participating hotels/motels. Since not all our hotels/motels are covered by the Los Angeles Sheriff Department (LASD), DPSS initiated partnership with other law enforcement agencies such as Los Angeles, Burbank, El Monte, Long Beach, Inglewood, etc.

In order to address the Board's concern regarding sex trafficking activities within the hotel/motel industry in the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County, specifically in San Gabriel Valley, we met with the LASD to discuss strategies they can implement to

reduce crime in this area. LASD along with LAPD will be co-sponsoring a three-year Community Outreach Plan that includes the sex trafficking prevention component. The plan includes the creation of a Human Trafficking Taskforce responsible for conducting outreach to citizens and businesses including hotels/motels. On September 23, 2015, LASD will conduct a regional conference for hotel owners and members of the Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA) to discuss human sex trafficking. The AAHOA has over 1,200 members in the South Pacific Region and the majority of the members are from Los Angeles County.

LASD is prepared to provide the Board with additional information on their Community Outreach Plan. We are prepared to continue collaboration with LASD as they work on educating the hotel/motel industry; specifically with hotels/motels participating in our program.

2. Efforts by the Chief Executive Office's (CEO) Homeless Coordinator in addressing homelessness and the reasons for the low bed utilization rates given the increase in homelessness in the County:

DPSS, along with other county departments, is a key stakeholder in the countywide homeless initiatives currently being led by the Chief Executive Office's (CEO) Homeless Coordinator.

The Board asked us to explain the low bed utilization in the General Relief Emergency Housing Program. The DPSS' GR Emergency Housing Program was developed to provide temporary housing services to homeless GR applicants during the time that their application is pending. While we issue over 3,000 housing vouchers per month, about 57% of these individuals actually utilize the housing voucher. If all of the housing vouchers issued daily were actually utilized, our utilization rate would be at 100% and no bed would go unused each night.

We believe that individuals take the vouchers but do not utilize them because:

- Based on the GR Program's broad definition of homelessness, not all of the applicants who self-disclose as homeless are actually living on the streets. Many find temporary shelter with family or friends, until they are fortunate enough to obtain a permanent living arrangement. The definition of homelessness used in the GR Program is more lenient than definitions widely used in Los Angeles County. Per GR policy, a person is considered homeless if their living condition(s) is defined as follows:
    - *Lacks a fixed (permanent), and regular night time residence, i.e., couch surfing;*
    - *Resides in a supervised publicly or privately-operated shelter, designed to provide temporary living accommodations;*

- *Resides in a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily use as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings; or*
- *Has a history of previously receiving GR benefits as a homeless person.*

- GR applicants who accept and use the housing voucher, once their case is approved, will have a $4.53 deduction from their GR grant for each day they use the voucher. This policy can serve as a major deciding factor for GR applicants as the maximum GR grant amount is only $221 per month. If an applicant uses the housing voucher for 14 days, which is the current average usage period, then a deduction of $63.42 from their first month's benefits would be applied. Under these circumstances we found that GR applicants preferred to acquire emergency housing through other means, e.g., free shelters, couch surf, to ensure they receive the maximum GR grant amount.

- Some GR applicants would prefer not to stay at the hotels/motels participating in our GR Emergency Housing Program.

Our goal is to continue working with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority on expanding our shelter capacity in order to reduce dependency on hotel/motels. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me at (562) 908-8383, or your staff may contact Jose R. Perez, Assistant Director, at (562) 908-8633, or via email at JosePerez@dpss.lacounty.gov.

SLS:mk

c: Interim Chief Executive Officer
Acting Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel
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