

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH AND  
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October 4, 2016

**SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN IMPACTED BY HOMICIDE AND VIOLENT CRIME**

Nearly two decades ago the groundbreaking Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACE Study) was published by the Centers for Disease Control, demonstrating a correlation between adverse childhood experiences with health and social problems as an adult. As examples, these encounters include early exposure to abuse or neglect, the death of a parent, the incarceration of a household member, chronic economic hardships and witnessing domestic violence and/or a violent crime. These early experiences and environmental influencers can leave a lasting signature on genetic predispositions that has the potential to affect the developing adolescent brain and long-term health overall.

The cumulative burden over time of these traumatic experiences can be particularly damaging to physical and mental health as children reach adulthood. Researchers have explored the impact of trauma on childhood brain development and links to poor outcomes. The article, "Creating Trauma Informed Systems: Child Welfare, Education, First Responders, Health Care and Juvenile Justice" cites a link between traumatic stress with an increased use of health and mental health services and increased involvement with other child-serving systems, such as the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Recent articles in the *Los Angeles Times* and *Newsweek* have highlighted the need for trauma-informed care, and efforts to treat children accordingly, to address learning and behavioral issues, and provide a support system necessary to enable coping and stress strategies.

Scientists, mental health professionals, behavioral specialists, academics, child welfare leaders, and educators across the Country have all begun to focus on the effects of trauma on the health and behavior of children and have launched various programs to address these specific needs

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The heightened recognition for providing additional services to children who have experienced trauma has spawned innovative programs, such as grief or bereavement camps, where children grieving the loss of a loved one can interact with counselors to help break emotional isolation and grief, and develop their own capacity to grow and heal.

By way of example, Camp Good Grief is a collaborative partnership between the San Bernardino District Attorney's Office and the Loma Linda University Children's Hospital. This three day camp is funded using unclaimed victim restitution funds and free of cost for the children. There are other similar camps, such as Comfort Zone Camp and Camp Erin, which provide children with the opportunity to interact with kids their own age and share similar feelings and emotions.

Los Angeles County should explore opportunities to serve children impacted by homicide or suicide of a loved one, including the potential of developing a youth camp for children dealing with grief, similar to a grief or bereavement camp. In addition, County restitution funds have been underutilized for years, and this plan of action may help to redirect much needed resources to individuals/children/families who could benefit from services.

**WE, THEREFORE, MOVE** that the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors direct the Department of Mental Health, in collaboration with the District Attorney's Bureau of Victims Services, Interagency Council for Abuse and Neglect, Department of Health Services, Department of Children and Family Services, Office of Child Protection and in consultation with the Association of Community Human Service Agencies, to report back in writing in 30 days with a plan of action to best serve the targeted population, with the inclusion for the potential to establish a children's grief camp in Los Angeles County if that is recommended, which should include the following:

- An overview and evaluation of 'grief camp' programs throughout the United States to serve children impacted by trauma
- An exploration of other best practice models that address trauma-informed services for children and adolescents impacted by violent crime and/or homicide;
- An itemized budget with funding from the unclaimed victim restitution funds previously transferred to the District Attorney's Bureau of Victims Services and an assessment of additional funding sources that may be available to sustain programmatic deliverables and data tracking for outcomes;

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- Integration with service providers, hospitals, colleges/universities and other relevant community-based organizations; and,
- A timeline to roll out recommended programs in 2017.

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