

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR KATHRYN BARGER

JUNE 26, 2018

DEATH OF MINOR ANTHONY AVALOS

We have all been shocked and saddened by the horrible and tragic death of Anthony Avalos. Once again, the County is suffering a senseless murder of an innocent child, allegedly at the hands of someone inside the home while law enforcement, social workers, and family preservation workers all interacted with the family. And again, this tragedy strikes in the Antelope Valley.

Previously, in response to the heinous Gabriel F. case, the Board of Supervisors established the Office of Child Protection (OCP) as a way to transform our child welfare system and ensure an integrated approach to child protection. And while the County's involvement with Anthony Avalos ended shortly after the OCP was created, we need to understand how our efforts to integrate have succeeded and determine where there are continuing gaps and barriers.

While we mourn and avow change to prevent such senseless abuse, we need to assess the services and programs in place throughout the County, with a focus on the Antelope Valley and the quality and accessibility of programs and services for families in the region.

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We also need to take this opportunity to assess the ongoing collaboration between child protective services and law enforcement, and other County agencies that support children and families in need.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct:

1. The Office of Child Protection (OCP) to collaborate with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, and any other agencies that may have had contact with the family in the Anthony Avalos case, to review the history of contacts and identify any systemic issues that may have impeded the coordination of services.
2. DCFS to review the staffing levels in the Antelope Valley regional offices (Lancaster and Palmdale) and report back on the assessment of appropriate staffing ratios and adequate supervision of case carrying social workers, taking into consideration the region's uniquely remote location and diminished access to necessary prevention and support services. This review should also include an evaluation of the relative experience and length of service of social workers in the Antelope Valley compared to other regional offices within the County.
3. The Health Agency, the Department of Health Services, the OCP and DCFS to report back to the Board on existing medical hub services in the Antelope Valley, and ways to improve its access and availability, quality of care and appropriate staffing resources.
4. OCP to report back to the Board on the ongoing collaboration of law enforcement with DCFS in child abuse and neglect referrals, especially since the implementation of Electronic Suspected Child Abuse Reporting System (ESCARS) and other protocols identified by the Blue Ribbon Commission on Child Protection, and identify any gaps and issues that still need to be addressed.

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5. DCFS to collaborate with the OCP to develop a standing case-quality assurance team that will review random samples of cases throughout the County and conduct targeted reviews based on exigent circumstances to provide feedback on: the quality of services and oversight provided to families; the efficacy of engagement with other County agencies or contractors; and any systemic issues potentially impacting service quality.
6. Aforementioned reports back to the Board to be due in 45 days.

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