County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

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August 13, 2007

To: Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina
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From: Patricia Ploehn, LCSW
Director

JANUARY 10, 2006 AGENDA ITEM #2: FEASIBILITY OF CRISIS NURSERIES, MOTION BY SUPERVISOR BURKE AND AN AMENDMENT BY SUPERVISOR KNABE Re: POTENTIAL SITES

On January 10, 2006, in response to a motion by Supervisor Burke, the Board ordered the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) along with the Community Development Commission to report back, in 180 days, on the feasibility of developing a series of "Crisis Nurseries" in Los Angeles County. Crisis Nurseries are State licensed nurseries that operate with modified staffing levels, which may include volunteers. Further, these nurseries offer short-term residential care and supervision of children, ages 0 to 6, placed due to a crisis or stressful situation such as homelessness.

On January 30, 2007, the Department provided an analysis (based on research and literature regarding existing Crisis Nurseries, an analysis of legislative issues, a site visit to the Relief Nurseries, Inc, in Eugene, Oregon and visits to the Sacramento Regional Crisis Nursery Collaboration, Sacramento Crisis Nurseries North and South, and Yolo Crisis Nursery in Davis). An extension was requested when the Second District asked to conduct a site visit in conjunction with DCFS to the Sacramento Regional Crisis Nursery Collaboration.

On May 4, 2007, the Department requested an additional extension to allow the Second District to complete all site visits, and to allow the Second District to provide their input to DCFS for the final feasibility report to the Board.

We are pleased to report that the site visit by the Second District, along with DCFS staff, was completed on July 30, 2007. The Sacramento Crisis Nurseries allowed us to see one of their residential sites. Further, we were able to engage in a lengthy discussion with three nursery administrators from three separate programs: Sacramento Crisis Nursery South and North, and KARE (Kids Assistance and Respite in Emergencies) Crisis Nursery Inc.

It is clear, from all of the above activities, which include research and literature reviews and numerous site visits to existing crisis nursery programs (Oregon and Sacramento), that temporary emergency residential respite care may assist us in achieving prevention outcomes as outlined below:

1. Primary Prevention: For those families, who have children at risk, these services have the potential to prevent involvement in the County or Court systems.

2. Secondary Prevention: Under the following circumstances these centers can be a valuable resource for families, who come to the attention of the Department through a hotline referral, and are deemed to be in need of supportive services and resources:

   a) When the the nature of the allegations do not rise to the level of an investigation; and,
   b) Where the referral investigation results in closure.

3. Tertiary prevention: For families with open cases, the availability of these centers may reduce our Department's re-referral and re-abuse rates.

There are clear feasibility obstacles and issues that need to be addressed by Los Angeles County in order to realize a replication of temporary emergency respite care centers. Funding is the primary issue. All three Sacramento programs do not rely upon on federal, state or county monies to provide their services (although one applied for and received a short-term First 5 grant). There are State regulations, which govern the development and implementation of these types of programs, but do not provide any funding source to bring these programs to fruition. To keep their project going, all three programs rely primarily upon grants, foundation monies and fund-raising dollars. The approximate cost for one center to maintain up to 12 beds is $200,000 annually. This same agency indicated that the start-up cost to achieve their current residential location was approximately $1.4 million. This included renovations to ensure that the facility's overall physical environment was family friendly for both the children placed in their care and the visiting parent(s).

In summary, the Second and Fourth Districts have indicated to the Department that they would like to further pursue the feasibility of starting a pilot program, within these districts, with at least one crisis nursery each. One of the suggested first steps towards this endeavor would be to convene a community forum, with key stakeholders, and initiate a dialogue on the concept of the crisis nursery centers. This discussion may allow us to explore how community collaboration may help us realize this pilot.

Unless directed otherwise, my staff will work directly with the Second and Fourth Districts to initiate work on this exciting project. If you have any questions, please call me, or your staff may contact Armand Montiel, Board Liaison, at (213) 351-5530.

PP:AC:HK:mf

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