

CROSS-REPORTING CHILD ABUSE TO CITY ATTORNEYS

California Penal Code § 11166(j) requires the Department of Children and Family Services to cross-report to law enforcement and the District Attorney's Office all allegations of suspected child abuse other than reports of general neglect. The Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services receives approximately 200,000 reports of suspected child abuse annually from both concerned individuals (relatives, neighbors and anonymous individuals) as well as mandated reporters. Of these, approximately 100,000 allegations must be reported to the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office, in accordance with Penal Code § 11166(j). The cross-reporting laws were enacted to ensure, in every possible case of child abuse, that the affected agencies perform their unique responsibilities, including but not limited to reviewing, responding to and investigating the allegations; and auditing statutory compliance, all in an effort to protect the child victim.

While there have been many calls to reform the manner by which our County protects children, no one has called for the elevation of the role of misdemeanor prosecutors countywide in the fight against child abuse. At the beginning of the cycle of child abuse, the additional scrutiny of the criminal justice system can act as a powerful deterrent to future abuse. On my November 13, 2001 motion, the Board of Supervisors unanimously directed the Department of Children and Family Services to begin cross-reporting to the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office all incidents of child abuse occurring within the City of Los Angeles. From January 2008 through September 2009 alone, the Department of Children and Family Services cross-reported 23,900 incidents of child abuse to the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office, substantially increasing the number of criminal prosecutions, holding more abusers accountable, providing needed services to both parents and children living in abusive homes/relationships, preventing further child abuse, and enhancing the efforts of Children's Social Workers and the Dependency Court in their mission to protect children.

M-O- R- E

MOTION

MOLINA _____

RIDLEY-THOMAS _____

YAROSLAVSKY _____

ANTONOVICH _____

KNABE _____

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November 24, 2009

There are a total of ten (10) City Attorney's or City Prosecutor's offices throughout Los Angeles County that prosecute misdemeanor child abuse cases. These are the City Attorney's Offices of Los Angeles, Burbank, Hawthorne, Santa Monica and Torrance; and the City Prosecutor's Offices of Hermosa Beach, Inglewood, Long Beach, Pasadena and Redondo Beach. Each office is committed to protecting the safety of the citizens residing in the communities they serve. Although California Penal Code § 11166(j) names the District Attorney's Office as the recipient agency for child abuse reports, these local prosecutorial agencies fulfill a key role in the justice system on a local level. By expanding the partnership between the Department of Children and Family Services, law enforcement, the Dependency Court and our criminal justice partners countywide, specifically City Attorneys and City Prosecutors, we can more effectively protect the children of this County.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Officer, in conjunction with the Department of Children and Family Services and with the assistance of the District Attorney and the Sheriff, to report back in 30 days with a plan to expand cross-reporting to the City Attorney's and City Prosecutor's Offices in Burbank, Hawthorne, Santa Monica, Torrance, Hermosa Beach, Inglewood, Long Beach, Pasadena and Redondo Beach all reported incidents of child abuse occurring within their respective city limits, which are required to be cross-reported to the District Attorney pursuant to California Penal Code §11166(j).

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