

January 20, 2004

The Honorable Board of Supervisors  
County of Los Angeles  
500 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisors:

**SAFELY SURRENDERED AND ABANDONED INFANTS  
IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY - 2002**

Enclosed please find ICAN's report entitled *Safely Surrendered and Abandoned Infants in Los Angeles County –2002*. This report was unanimously approved by ICAN's Policy Committee at its meeting on November 5, 2003 and provides a fairly comprehensive profile of safely surrendered and abandoned infants and their mothers.

Based on this report, **IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT YOUR BOARD REQUEST THAT:**

- The Chief Administrative Office (CAO) work with internal and external stakeholders to assure that the Safe Surrender public information campaign is broad enough to reach childbearing-aged women of all ethnicities, socioeconomic classes and geographic locations – as well as those individuals who surround them. The campaign should place special emphasis on targeting communities where abandonment and the possibility of safe surrenders are most prevalent.
- The Departments of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Health Services (DHS), Public Social Service (DPSS) and Mental Health (DMH) continue to support the efforts of ICAN's Speaker's Bureau to educate public and private entities. All County Departments conducting training on safely surrendered newborns should emphasize that concerned individuals should reach out to women they believe may be pregnant rather than reinforcing denial of the pregnancy.
- The Coroner's Office, District Attorney, Sheriff's Department and DCFS continue to support ICAN's efforts to collect data and provide notification of surrenders/abandonment.

These recommendations are based on ICAN's report findings, including the following:

- In 2002, 10 infants were safely surrendered and 13 were abandoned – five survived and eight were found deceased.
- Mothers who safely surrendered or abandoned their infants do not *typically* fit a stereotypical picture of an unmarried teenager with no other children. Mothers ranged in age from 16 to 42 years; spanned ethnic, socioeconomic and marital categories; and included both those with and without other children.
- While surrenders/abandonment occurred throughout the County, 14 of the 23 infants were found/surrendered in economically depressed neighborhoods in SPAs 6, 7 and 8; no infants were abandoned or surrendered in SPA 5, a SPA with significantly fewer children living in poverty.

ICAN continues to notify Board Offices, the Chief Administrative Office, State Department of Social Services, First 5 LA and others of incidents of abandonment and safe surrender as they occur. ICAN will also continue to collect and analyze data and manage the Speaker's Bureau to assure safe surrender training is available to both public and private agencies.

Questions regarding this report or ICAN's Speaker's Bureau can be directed to me or Tish Sleeper (626-455-4585).

Respectfully submitted,

Deanne Tilton  
Executive Director

c: David Jansen, Chief Administrative Officer  
Sheriff Lee Baca, Chair, ICAN  
Yolie Flores Aguilar, Children's Planning Council  
Dr. David Sanders, Director, DCFS  
Steve Cooley, DA