



County of Orange
C a l i f o r n i a

James D. Ruth
Interim
County Executive Officer

May 19, 2003

Honorable Frederick P. Horn
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court of California
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92702

Subject: Response to Orange County Grand Jury Report, "Into Safe Arms"

Dear Judge Horn:

Per your request, and in accordance with Penal Code 993, enclosed please find the County of Orange response to the subject report as approved by the Board of Supervisors. If you have any questions, please contact Frank Kim at the County Executive Office who will either assist you or direct you to the appropriate individual.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James D. Ruth".

James D. Ruth, Interim County Executive Officer

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**RESPONSE TO FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO
2002-2003 ORANGE COUNTY GRAND JURY REPORT
“INTO SAFE ARMS”**

RESPONSE TO FINDINGS:

- 1. The Board of Supervisors has not designated fire stations as locations to surrender newborns.**

Response to Finding #1: Agrees with finding.

While the Grand Jury’s intentions are well founded, the Orange County Board of Supervisors has no legal authority over City Fire Departments or the Orange County Fire Authority, and therefore is powerless to require them to receive newborns at their fire stations.

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. Work with the Orange County Fire Authority and the cities in Orange County that operate their own fire departments to implement a plan whereby each fire station in Orange County will become a designated location for the surrender of newborns. (Finding 1)**

Response to Recommendation #1: The recommendation has been implemented.

County of Orange staff from the County Executive Office (CEO), the Social Services Agency (SSA), and the Health Care Agency (HCA) have met with the President of the Orange County Fire Chief’s Association, which represents every City in Orange County with a Fire Department and the Orange County Fire Authority, to encourage and support the implementation of Finding 1. It is the County’s understanding from discussion held at that meeting that several Cities are considering designating their fire stations as locations for the surrender of newborns.

Furthermore, the Fire Chiefs have developed a uniform plan that Cities and the Orange County Fire Authority can implement to transfer a newborn from their custody to the custody of the County SSA for placement in a foster home. Fire station personnel will consider the surrender an “incident” and transport the newborn by ambulance to the nearest Hospital Emergency Room. The Hospital will treat and care for the physical needs of the child and then call SSA. All that is required for this to occur is for a city or the OCFA to request that their fire station(s) be designated as a location to surrender newborns, and the County Board of Supervisors will be happy to accommodate their request through an appropriate Resolution. In the meantime, the law provides that local hospitals are the designated locations where newborns can be surrendered by a parent or other legal custodian without fear of prosecution.

2. Continue to educate the public, especially teenagers, regarding designated safe surrender points. (Finding 2)

Response to Recommendation #2: The recommendation will be implemented.

The County of Orange will utilize the existing Family Resource Centers (FRC) to educate the public, especially teenagers, regarding designated safe surrender points. Family Resource Centers are the most effective and appropriate venues to implement Recommendation #1, as they are located throughout the County; they are community-based; and they are trusted by the families and teens in each neighborhood. The FRC staff will be notified when local city or Orange County Fire Authority fire stations in their area have been designated as surrender locations. Further, FRC staff will be encouraged to utilize the California Department of Social Services extensive "*Safe Arms for Newborns*" public education campaign materials, which the California First Five Commission contributed \$1 million to support. In addition, the County's Child Care Coordinator will work with the Children and Families Commission of Orange County to distribute the State's education materials to local community based organizations.