



County of Orange
California

Thomas G. Mauk
County Executive Officer

September 19, 2006

Jon Michael Penn
FY 05/06 Grand Jury
Superior Court of California
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92702

Subject: Response to Orange County Grand Jury Report, "Safely Surrendered
Unwanted Infants - No Shame! No Blame! No Name!"

Dear Mr. Penn:

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 Theresa Stanberry at (714) 834-3727 in the County Executive Office who will either assist you or direct you to the appropriate individual.

Very truly yours,

Thomas G. Mauk
County Executive Officer

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2005-06 Grand Jury Report
“Safely Surrendered Unwanted Infants - No Shame! No Blame! No Names!”
Response to Findings and Recommendations

Responses to Findings 6.1, 6.3, 6.4, and 6.5

- 6.1 Additional drop-off sites:** Communities outside of Orange County have elected to have both fire stations and law enforcement facilities participate as Safe Surrender drop-off sites, thereby increasing the availability of places for infants to be rescued. In Orange County, fire stations but not law enforcement stations provide safe sites.

Response: Agrees with finding.

- 6.3 Lack of funding:** A lack of funding is reported as the reason why public awareness programs about Safe Surrender are not available; however, the SSA does not avail itself of tobacco tax funds and free state promotional literature, nor does the SSA seek grants from the California Children and Families Act.

Response: Disagrees wholly with finding.

SSA disagrees that Safe Surrender public awareness campaigns are not available in Orange County. Several Orange County agencies, including SSA, the Health Care Agency, Orange County Fire Authority, the Raise Foundation, and the Children and Families Commission of Orange County (the organization managing tobacco funds/California Children and Families Act grant funds in Orange County), have collaboratively promoted public awareness of the safe surrender law.

SSA and collaborative partners developed and funded an informational flyer and brochures that included the locations of county safe surrender sites and a local telephone number to phone for assistance. SSA and collaborative partners distributed thousands of Safe Surrender flyers and brochures to local service providers with community relationships, Family Resource Centers, hospitals, health offices, community service organizations, shelters, colleges, universities, the Orange County Department of Education, and most recently, at the Orange County Fair. In addition, the Children and Families Commission of Orange County specifically funded safe-surrender public signage and surrender kits for county fire stations designated as safe surrender sites.

On June 7, 2006, the California Department of Social Services notified counties of the availability of state public awareness materials with space for county specific information. Previously, SSA opted to create Orange County specific literature outlining local surrender sites and the local telephone number to phone for assistance. SSA will utilize the new state public awareness publications and opt to have county information added, for dissemination throughout Orange County.

- 6.4 **Promoting Safe Surrender:** Public education and promotion to increase awareness of Safe Surrender as a safe alternative to infant abandonment by mothers at risk is lacking.

Response: Agrees with finding.

- 6.5 **Statistics:** Lack of adequate statistical public information related to live and dead infant abandonment makes assessment of this problem challenging. The SSA has kept official records on live Safe Surrender infants for reporting data to the State. The Orange County Sheriff's Department/Coroner Division knows of no dead abandoned infants since 1999.

Response: Agrees with finding.

Response to Recommendation 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.5, and 7.6

- 7.1 **Increasing Safe Surrender sites:** The SSA should work with Orange County law enforcement agencies to increase the number of safe drop-off sites by including their many facilities to expand the Safe Surrender safety net. (See Finding 6.1)

Response: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

The Safe Surrender law permits a parent to voluntarily surrender a minor to personnel of a Safe Surrender site, anonymously and without threat of prosecution. Currently, Orange County drop-off sites include Orangewood Children's Home (OCH), the majority of county fire stations, and hospitals; these sites are equipped to meet the medical needs of surrendered, fragile infants. This distinction, coupled with the total number of strategically located drop-off facilities within Orange County indicates that the current number of sites provide geographic coverage throughout the county.

SSA encourages and supports a collaborative relationship with law enforcement in promoting the safe surrender of infants in Orange County. On June 22, 2006, representatives of SSA, the Raise Foundation, the Orange County Fire Authority, and the Orange County Sheriff's Office discussed the possibility of implementing training on the Safe Surrender law among county law enforcement 911 dispatchers and law enforcement patrol officers for the purpose of raising law enforcement worker awareness of the Safe Surrender law. SSA encourages and supports the development of a partnership with the Orange County Sheriff and law enforcement groups in raising public awareness of the Safe Surrender law and in directing the public to Safe Surrender sites.

- 7.2 **Funding public awareness:** The SSA should seek tobacco tax funds and other state grants to promote public awareness about Safe Surrender (See Finding 6.3 and 6.4)

Response: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

The Raise Foundation, in collaboration with SSA and other public and private agencies, will seek public funding sources, including participation from the Children and Families Commission (the organization managing tobacco funds/California Children and Families Act grant funds in Orange County) for an upcoming media campaign and fundraising effort promoting the Safe Surrender law. The Raise Foundation, SSA, and collaborative partners are scheduled to meet in this matter in August 2006.

- 7.3 **Educating students:** SSA should utilize the free state pamphlet titled "No Shame. No Blame. No Names;" should give available Safe Surrender materials to secondary school district nurses; and, should develop additional Safe Surrender materials for educating students and other members of the public. (See Finding 6.3 and 6.4)

Response: *The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.*

SSA has contacted the Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) Coordinator of Sex Education, School Nurse Services, Health Prevention Educators and Teen Pregnancy Prevention. The OCDE is interested in working with SSA in promoting the Safe Surrender law among educators, school nurses and secondary school students. On May 11, 2006, SSA forwarded an electronic flyer containing Safe Surrender information for mass distribution to OCDE educators and school nurses. SSA has provided OCDE with a supply of published materials and will provide additional materials, including the new California Department of Social Services posters and pamphlets that include county specific information, in the upcoming 2006-2007 academic year.

- 7.5 **Public Education and Awareness:** The SSA should seek funds for a media campaign to educate females that there are alternatives to abandoning an infant without fear of arrest and/or prosecution. (See Finding 6.3 and 6.4)

Response: *The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.*

On June 22, 2006, representatives of SSA, the Raise Foundation, the Orange County Fire Authority, and the Orange County Sheriff's Office met and discussed developing a fundraising and media campaign to raise public awareness of the Safe Surrender law. SSA will work closely with these community agencies to raise funds for an upcoming media campaign and the enhancement of public education materials to further promote the Safe Surrender law during the 2006-2007 year. At the next meeting, the group plans to discuss marketing, a budget for the campaign, training, and media coverage. SSA will encourage collaborative efforts to address the unique demographics of each community and ensure that communication is culturally sensitive and appropriate.

- 7.6 **Statistics:** The SSA should set up official and public retrievable statistics on rescued Safe Surrender infants. The Chief Deputy Coroner should continue to act as the collection and reporting focal point for dead abandoned infants. (See Finding 6.5)

Response: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

SSA is in the process of releasing Safe Surrender educational materials to the public by means of the SSA Internet; the information is expected to be accessible within weeks. SSA will analyze the feasibility with the Chief Deputy Coroner to also publish annual Orange County Safe Surrender statistics on the same publicly accessible site.