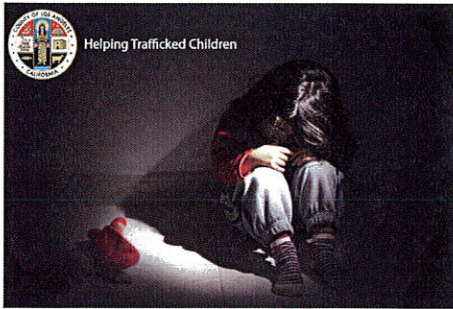


BOARD OF SUPERVISORS APPROVES FUNDING TO HELP TRAFFICKED CHILDREN

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The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has set aside nearly \$7 million to address child sex trafficking as part of the 2015-2016 budget. The funds are expected to be used for sex trafficking prevention initiatives, programs and services including the creation of a specialized court for trafficked children in the foster care system to help stabilize them, provide comprehensive services, such as crisis counseling, educational classes, and advocacy to improve their chances of recovery.

In addition, the Board has asked for recommendations from the Departments of Children and Family Services, Health Services, Mental Health and Public Social Services on how best to serve children who are trafficked.

The commercial sexual exploitation of children is not only an international problem, but one also prevalent in Los Angeles. A large percentage of children that have been trafficked have also been in the child welfare system. Currently, children who have been trafficked and arrested are eligible to attend a special court called the STAR Court, or Succeeding Through Achievement and Resilience. Among the girls involved with the court, nearly 80 percent had prior contact with the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services.

"This funding shows our commitment as a board to address the issue of child sex trafficking. We are determined to do whatever we can to help these children escape the life of trauma and exploitation that they have been forced into," said Supervisor Ridley-Thomas. "A specialized court for children in the foster care system is only one component of what we hope will be a comprehensive approach to bringing these children the specialized services and attention that they need."

"I am very pleased to stand with my colleague Supervisor Ridley-Thomas in opening up the process that will strengthen dependency specialty court programs," said Supervisor Hilda Solis. "It's important that we increase the number of attorneys who help children through the court process. We also plan to determine the appropriate solutions needed to support sexually exploited children."

A dedicated court with a hearing officer, county counsel, child's attorney, investigators and service providers specially trained to recognize and understand the serious trauma, stages of change, and unique issues surrounding recovery and high probability of relapse would likely lead to better outcomes for these children.

In addition, Supervisor Ridley-Thomas has asked for a report back on how the county can track the magnitude of sexually exploited children within the County of Los Angeles and an assessment of the outcomes of the services rendered to this population including the impact of the STAR Court Program.