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April 6, 2010

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SUPERVISOR RIDLEY-THOMAS MOVES TO IMPROVE COUNTY'S OUTDATED CHILD PROTECTIVE INFORMATION SYSTEM BY ESTABLISHING INTERAGENCY INFORMATION SHARING PORTAL

LOS ANGELES -- At the request of Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, the Board of Supervisors today approved a request to explore the feasibility of establishing an interagency information sharing system to better protect the health, welfare and rights of children under the care of the Department of Children and Family Services.

In response to Supervisor Ridley-Thomas' August 18, 2009 request to explore new technology to improve how various County agencies share potentially life-saving information, the County's Chief Executive Officer issued a report on April 1 on the analysis of the FCI Replacement System.

The existing FCI system allows County departments to share information regarding children services, health services, law enforcement, mental health services, probation, schools and social service agencies. The system is currently designed primarily for information sharing, rather than prevention and early intervention.

The existing FCI's "pointer system" informs case workers that a record exists and provides the name of a contact person, who often is not able to be reached.

"Social workers responsible for the well-being of children should have every piece of available information to get our children out of dangerous situations before it's too late," Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said.

“The CEO’s recommendations serve as the first step in replacing a ‘pointer’ system with one that provides immediate case information to an investigator, first responder, or others employed or engaged by the County of Los Angeles to protect the health, welfare and rights of children under the care of DCFS.”

The CEO’s memo included research and analysis conducted by the CEO’s office, Chief Information Officer, DCFS and County Counsel, on other computer systems that could enhance or replace the FCI “pointer system” and the benefits of improving information sharing.

The CEO’s memo also discussed potential legislative changes that must be reviewed and considered in the development of any information sharing system.

The Supervisor instructed the CEO to report back in 30 days with recommendations to ensure that any system change complies with federal and state law, including funding requirements and privacy statutes. He urged the report to include a timeline of key milestones in the process.

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