

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS AND SHEILA KUEHL

October 11, 2016

Juvenile Indigent Defense System Reforms

Los Angeles has a larger delinquency system than any other California county and is larger than many states. The County of Los Angeles (County) has an obligation to ensure that indigent juveniles are provided with quality, competent and effective attorneys.

On February 11, 2014, the Board of Supervisors (Board) directed the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to retain an independent neutral consultant to perform a comprehensive review of the County’s juvenile indigent defense structure, and to provide recommendations for system improvements. The Chief Justice Earl Warren Institute on Law and Social Policy at UC Berkeley School of Law was chosen to perform the analysis.

The report looked at the County’s juvenile indigent defense system, as it exists now and identified the strengths and weaknesses of that system based on data, stakeholder input, national and local standards, and comparisons with other California counties.

Key findings from the report were: the current structure lacked appropriate oversight; a payment structure was established that incentivizes rapid resolution of as many cases as possible; and given the lack of administrative oversight the County was unable to identify and respond to critical issues such as ineffective assistance of counsel, unmanageable

- MORE -

MOTION

RIDLEY-THOMAS _____

KUEHL _____

KNABE _____

ANTONOVICH _____

SOLIS _____

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS AND SHEILA KUEHL
OCTOBER 11, 2016
PAGE 2**

caseloads, and billing and contract irregularities. The County's juvenile indigent defense system was established more than twenty years ago and the basic structure remains unchanged today despite substantial changes over the years to the juvenile justice system.

The report also indicated that unlike adult defense, juvenile defense attorneys, fulfill a dual role: they must defend their clients against the allegations and must advocate for their clients' broader care, treatment, and guidance both before and after disposition of the criminal charges. This expanded scope includes the thorough mental health, substance abuse, educational and developmental evaluations and services and treatment as deemed necessary. Such representation is not only both ethically and legally required but it is smart, as research shows that youth receiving more comprehensive wraparound representation have better outcomes in areas including emotional and behavioral health, family functioning, education, delinquency, and police contact.

On April 5, 2016, the Board directed the CEO, in coordination with an outside consultant retained by County Counsel, to evaluate various options designed to further improve the indigent defense system in the County. The options considered would determine who should represent juveniles when the Public Defender has a conflict or is unavailable and how the County should select, manage, train, compensate and oversee conflict panel attorneys. Several options were considered and assessed and ultimately, it was determined that major reforms to the County's juvenile indigent defense system are not only warranted but long overdue.

WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Approve the establishment of a new County Juvenile Indigent Defense structure, effective November 1, 2016, whereby all legal defense services for indigent juveniles who would be entitled to representation by the Public Defender but because of a conflict of interest or other lawful unavailability are unable to be represented by the Public Defender, shall be represented by the Alternate Public Defender. Further, the County shall enter into an agreement with the Los Angeles County Bar Association to provide administration, oversight and court appointed attorneys for the representation of indigent juvenile defendants in the Los Angeles Superior Courts when the Public Defender and the Alternate Public Defender are both lawfully unavailable or have a conflict of interest;
2. Direct County Counsel to draft an ordinance within 30 days expanding the services of the Alternate Public Defender to include juvenile defense, if necessary;
3. Direct the Chief Executive Officer to execute an amendment to the existing contract with the Los Angeles County Bar Association to assume responsibility for the third level conflict of juvenile cases effective November 1, 2016; and to execute any and all necessary agreements with the Los Angeles County Bar Association to implement a new countywide juvenile indigent defense program no later than January 31, 2017;

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS AND SHEILA KUEHL
OCTOBER 11, 2016
PAGE 4**

4. Direct Public Defender and Alternate Public Defender to implement a new integrated case management system on a common case platform for the juvenile indigent defense population, within 18 months of Board approval of the selected vendor;
5. Direct the Chief Executive Officer to report back in two weeks with options for a non-justice related, neutral business entity with technical expertise to monitor the governance of this integrated case management system to ensure that the County employs best practice strategies. This report back should include the process of how this entity shall be selected, retained, and if necessary, funded; and
6. Execute an agreement with the existing juvenile panel attorneys if necessary, to continue to provide all requisite legal services for juvenile cases assigned to them prior to November 1, 2016.

###

(WP)