

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS  
AND SHEILA KUEHL**

**September 29, 2020**

**ENSURING THE LONG-TERM VIABILITY OF THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

For families who have lost a loved one due to the fatal use of force by law enforcement, the trauma of this loss has too often been compounded by an indifference to the hurt and pain of the family, through a lack of communication, or miscommunication, or even mistreatment. Since July 2019, 14 individuals, including Andres Guardado and Dijon Kizzee, have been killed in cases of fatal use of force by Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (LASD) deputies. On Monday, August 31, 2020, after two LASD deputies shot and killed 29-year-old Dijon Kizzee, his body remained in the street, handcuffed, for nearly nine hours while LASD personnel conducted its investigation. By the time the Department of Medical Examiner-Coroner (DMEC) removed Mr. Kizzee, the community was forced to suffer not only the pain of another young man killed by law enforcement but also the indignity and inhumanity of his remains left on the pavement for an inordinate amount of time. This kind of trauma not only impacts the family -- it reverberates throughout the community, impacting multiple generations.

The community deserves a compassionate and considerate response when these much-too frequent incidents take place. Families and communities deserve full and complete information when personnel from various Los Angeles County (County) departments respond to deaths by deputy-involved shootings and how the County's Family Assistance Program (FAP) is implemented in such cases. Similarly, an

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**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS RIDLEY-THOMAS AND KUEHL**  
**SEPTEMBER 29, 2020**  
**PAGE 2**

assessment is needed to ensure that personnel from the relevant County departments who respond to fatal deputy-involved shootings such as Mr. Kizzee's and Mr. Guardado's do so in accordance with established policies and that the FAP is implemented to provide trauma-informed, responsive and necessary services to the impacted families.

The FAP was created by the Board of Supervisors (Board) on July 9, 2019 (*Supporting Families Following an In-Custody Death or Fatal Use of Force*, Ridley-Thomas/Kuehl July 9, 2019) upon the recommendation of the Civilian Oversight Commission. This program was proposed in response to community concerns about the needs of families whose loved ones have died while in the LASD's custody, or during out-of-custody incidents involving fatal uses of force by LASD deputies. At its core, the FAP was designed to provide a trauma-informed response to these tragic incidents. A key element of the FAP is the employment of "advocates" to be present during next-of-kin notifications to provide crisis intervention and grief counseling, explain available resources, and serve as liaisons between LASD and other County departments as needed. In addition, the FAP provides up to \$7,500 at the request of families to alleviate the financial hardship of burial costs, which only compounds the emotional trauma caused by the loss of a loved one.

The Department of Mental Health (DMH) was initially allocated \$437,000 to fund the FAP. However, revenue shortfalls resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic could result in the FAP exhausting its funds by the end of December 2020 with no new funding identified to continue the program. Additionally, the Inspector General has identified several challenges with the FAP that require redress, including mistrust from impacted families of program services; timeliness and efficiency of service provision; and identifying an ideal lead department.

Since the FAP's inception in 2019, 14 individuals have died at the hands of LASD, but the program has only distributed \$10,300 among two families in Fiscal Year (FY) 2019-2020. This low dispersal rate is due in part to families refusing payments which are

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS RIDLEY-THOMAS AND KUEHL**  
**SEPTEMBER 29, 2020**  
**PAGE 3**

classified as taxable income, for which the families must bear the financial burden. More information is needed to understand the barriers and deterrents that keep families from accepting this assistance.

The fatal shootings of Dijon Kizzee and Andres Guardado underscore the critical need of the FAP. The protests that have followed these tragedies speak to the substantial trauma and pain these officer-involved use of force deaths inflict on families and the community, as all attempt to cope with mounting inequalities, grief and loss. The FAP presents a humane and compassionate model for meeting the needs of these families and the larger community. However, without future funding and further refinement, this important and critical program cannot meet the needs of the community.

**WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:**

1. Instruct the Acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO), in consultation with the Inspector General (IG), County Counsel, the Director of the Department of Mental Health (DMH) and the Medical Examiner-Coroner, and request the Sheriff, to report back to the Board of Supervisors (Board) in writing in 15 days with an assessment of the response to the deaths of Dijon Kizzee and Andres Guardado by all relevant Los Angeles County (County) departments, as well as the utilization of the Family Assistance Program (FAP), including response times and any resources provided to the families of Mr. Kizzee and Mr. Guardado.
2. Instruct the Director of Public Health and the CEO, in collaboration with County Counsel and the Director of Mental Health, Medical Examiner-Coroner, and the Executive Director of the Civilian Oversight Commission, the IG, community and other relevant stakeholders, and request the Sheriff, to report back to the Board in writing in 30 days with an overall review of the FAP, including:
  - a. Outcomes to date; and

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS RIDLEY-THOMAS AND KUEHL  
SEPTEMBER 29, 2020  
PAGE 4**

- b. Recommendations for improving the FAP, including addressing the tax burden imposed on families by the FAP's dispersal of benefits, identifying the ideal lead department for the FAP, developing a clear mission statement and outcome measures, strategies for gaining the trust of impacted families to provide them with FAP services, streamlining of any processes to provide services in a timely manner, and a long-term funding plan.
3. Instruct the CEO, in consultation with the IG and County Counsel, to identify funding for the FAP to cover costs for staffing, burial expenses, supplies, and other relevant and associated costs to keep the FAP fully operational and report back, in writing, in 30 days.

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(JB/CAS/DBV)

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS RIDLEY-THOMAS AND KUEHL  
SEPTEMBER 29, 2020  
PAGE 5**

**ENSURING THE LONG-TERM VIABILITY OF THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

CATEGORIES:

- 1. Child Welfare
- 2. Community and Youth Empowerment
- 3. County Services
- 4. Economic Justice
- 5. Economic and Workforce Development
- 6. Education
- 7. Environment
- 8. Fiscal
- 9. Governance
- 10. Health
- 11. Homelessness
- 12. Immigration
- 13. Public Safety
- 14. Social Justice and Human Rights
- 15. Technology and Data
- 16. Arts, Culture, and the Creative Economy
- 17. Legislation
- 18. Parks and Open Space
- 19. Planning/Land Use
- 20. Transportation
- 21. Veterans