



**OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY**  
County of Ventura, State of California

**GREGORY D. TOTTON**  
District Attorney

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Chief Assistant District Attorney

June 10, 2004

**RECEIVED**

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**VENTURA COUNTY GRAND JURY**

MICHAEL K. FRAWLEY, Chief Deputy  
Criminal Prosecutions

JEFFREY G. BENNETT, Chief Deputy  
Special Prosecutions

R. THOMAS HARRIS  
Special Assistant District Attorney

GARY G. AUER, Chief  
Bureau of Investigation

The Honorable Bruce A. Clark  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
County of Ventura Hall of Justice  
800 S. Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, California 93009

Re: **Response to the Ventura County 2003-2004 Grand Jury report entitled, *Under-Served Children in Ventura County***

Dear Judge Clark:

As required by California Penal Code section 933.05, this letter is a response to the findings and recommendations of the Ventura County 2003-2004 Grand Jury report entitled, *Under-Served Children in Ventura County* (hereinafter "Grand Jury Report"). My responses below are limited to matters pertaining to the Safe Harbor program and do not reflect my opinions on other matters raised in the Grand Jury Report.

Response to Certain Findings:

With respect to findings 19 and 20 of the Grand Jury Report which read as follows:

F-19: The Ventura County District Attorney's Office, along with CFS, county law enforcement agencies and the Ventura County Health Care Agency have developed Safe Harbor to help child victims of sexual and physical abuse and severe neglect;

and

F-20: The location of the Safe Harbor site in Ventura is in jeopardy due to high cost of the rental space and current countywide budget problems;

I concur with both findings and commend the Grand Jury for acknowledging the value of the Safe Harbor program in helping child victims of abuse and neglect and their nonoffending family members access vital criminal justice, medical and counseling services. I must also state my



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strong support and concurrence with the Grand Jury's recognition that the Safe Harbor program faces financial jeopardy due to its high rent cost for its Ventura facility and local budget cuts.

Response to Recommendation:

In reference to the Grand Jury Report's recommendation:

R-03: Continued funding as well as a more affordable site should be located for Safe Harbor in Ventura;

I also concur with the above Grand Jury recommendation and will continue to implement such activities in accord with my ongoing mandate to my staff to pursue other funding sources to support Safe Harbor (see Attachment I). The District Attorney's Office has been the lead agency for Safe Harbor, bearing the brunt of funding responsibility for the coordination and operating costs through staffing and grant funding. These budget times make it difficult to maintain this challenging commitment when traditional district attorney functions have become increasingly burdened as a direct result of the loss of approximately 50 district attorney allocations since February 2002 with many more likely to be lost by the end of 2005. Accordingly, we will continue to aggressively seek out alternative funding sources as further described in Attachment I. Moreover, when the county's budget improves, I intend to seek additional general fund appropriations for this vital program.

These measures will greatly aid in stabilizing funding for the Safe Harbor program and further secure its position as a long-term asset in Ventura County.

Very truly yours,



GREGORY D. TOTTON  
District Attorney

GDT/jad

pc: Richard S. Hawley, Foreperson, 2003-2004 Grand Jury ✓  
John Johnston, County Executive Officer  
Safe Harbor Policy Board

Attachment

ATTACHMENT I

District Attorney's Response to Ventura County 2003-2004 Grand Jury report entitled  
*Under-Served Children in Ventura County.*

<u>Activity</u>	<b>Implementation of Recommendation of R-3</b>
(1) Pursuit of Local, State and Federal Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The California Office of Emergency Services recently issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) due June 15, 2004, for the Child Abuse Treatment Program (CHAT). It is the intent of the District Attorney's Office to compete for a share of these funds. If successful, the award would strengthen the mental health services component of the program by paying for staffing from the Ventura County Behavioral Health Department and provide staff funding for District Attorney Victim Advocates to aid Safe Harbor's non-profit service providers in providing crisis counseling, referral to on-going psychotherapy, and victim advocacy services such as restraining order assistance, to Safe Harbor's clients.</li> <li>• The District Attorney is poised to submit a pre-application for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Local Initiative Funding Partners (LIFP) program due July 14, 2004. This is an exciting, unique and highly competitive program requiring local funders to nominate worthy programs for LIFP funding. The LIFP program would match, dollar-for-dollar, funding raised at the local level up to \$500,000 to support Safe Harbor services. A successful LIFP pre-application requires strong evidence of dollar-for-dollar match-raising ability and a broad base of support from local funders. Soon, Safe Harbor supporters will receive an invitation to participate in aiding Safe Harbor to obtain a LIFP grant.</li> </ul>
(2) Legislative Efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As part of the Ventura County 2004/05 Legislative Agenda and Platform, the District Attorney has requested that the County of Ventura advocate for funding for the Safe Harbor program as one of Ventura County's legislative priorities. As a result of incorporation into the 2004/05 Legislative Agenda and Platform, Ventura County's lobbyists, under authorization from the Ventura County Board of Supervisors, will be empowered to contact state and federal representatives to seek financial support for the Safe Harbor program.</li> </ul>
(3) New Safe Harbor Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiated by the public's expressed interest, private citizens can now more easily financially support Safe Harbor. The Safe Harbor Policy Board (i.e., the multi-agency body that governs the program) established a Safe Harbor Fund with the Ventura County Community Foundation that will make it possible for the public to contact the Ventura County Community Foundation directly with inquiries about how to contribute to Safe Harbor, the process for qualifying their donation as a charitable gift for tax purposes, and other issues associated with becoming a financial supporter. It is hoped that over the long-term, the Safe Harbor Fund will add stability to what is currently a grants-driven program.</li> </ul>
(4) Finding a More Affordable Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The District Attorney has held discussions with the property manager of the current site as well as local nonprofit medical service providers and other local agencies in an effort to acquire a more affordable alternative site in Ventura. In July 2003, the District Attorney explored 2125 Knoll Drive, in conjunction with the Ventura County Public Health Department, but found the facilities to be impractical for Safe Harbor's purposes due to security, privacy and communication concerns. The search for an alternative site continues to the present.</li> </ul>