



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 335, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92101-2470

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: December 3, 2002

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT: Keeping Sex Offenders Away From Our Children (District: All)

SUMMARY:

Overview

Parents rely on schools to be a safe haven for their children, just as they count on school administrators, teachers and volunteers to properly care for their children while they are in school. Although teachers must go through a background check as a condition of employment, the same condition is not required of school volunteers. All San Diego County school districts should have a policy that prohibits sex offenders from volunteering at schools.

Also, County employees and volunteers who work with children must be held to this same level of scrutiny. A County policy is also needed to ensure that registered sex offenders are not working in County positions that interact with children.

Recommendation(s)

SUPERVISOR JACOB AND SUPERVISOR COX:

1. Support the development of a uniform policy for San Diego County school districts that prohibits sex offenders from volunteering in schools.
2. Authorize Supervisors Jacob and Cox, as members of the Board of Supervisors' Schools Subcommittee, to work with representatives of the San Diego County School Boards Association, Region 18 of the Association of California School Administrators, Parent Teachers Associations and law enforcement agencies to develop a uniform policy that prohibits sex offenders from volunteering in schools.
3. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to draft a Board of Supervisors policy that prohibits sex offenders from working as employees or volunteers in County positions that are in direct contact with children under the age of 18, and return to the Board within 45 days for approval.
4. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to draft a Board of Supervisors policy that requires County employees and volunteers who work directly with children under the age of 18 to have their background checked for sex offenses, and return to the

SUBJECT: Keeping Sex Offenders Away From Our Children (District: All)

Board within 45 days for approval.

Fiscal Impact

There is no fiscal impact as a result of this request

BACKGROUND:

Parents rely on schools to be a safe haven for their children, just as they count on school administrators, teachers and volunteers to properly care for their children while they are in school. Although teachers must go through a background check as a condition of employment, the same condition is not required of volunteers. All San Diego County school districts should have a policy that prohibits sex offenders from volunteering in schools.

In July, an elementary school teacher was looking through the Megan's Law database and recognized Jim Smith, a volunteer at Field Elementary School in Clairemont. After reporting what she found, Mr. Smith was arrested for failing to notify the school that he was a registered sex offender. He is also being prosecuted for recent acts of molestation against three children under age 15. This individual should never have been allowed on a school campus.

In June, Richard Knapp, an employee with the Poway Unified School District, was arrested on molestation charges. The molestation offenses occurred off campus, but parents had noticed inappropriate behavior between Mr. Knapp and students. Although Mr. Knapp was not a registered sex offender, this is a haunting example of how close a predator can get to our children.

In both cases, dangerous sexual predators were interacting with children on a school campus. Sexual predators are willing to break the law for the opportunity to victimize another child. Our children are most vulnerable around people they trust. School volunteers must pose no threat to a student's well being. Preventive measures are needed to keep kids safe. There are almost 4,000 registered sex offenders residing in San Diego County and many of them are looking for ways to get close to children.

On November 20, 2002, the San Diego County School Boards Association took a position in favor of the development of a policy that prohibits sex offenders from volunteering in schools. As members of the Board of Supervisors' Schools Subcommittee, today we are proposing to work with representatives of the San Diego County School Boards Association, Region 18 of the Association of California School Administrators, Parent Teachers Associations and law enforcement agencies to develop this uniform policy.

County employees and volunteers who work with children also need to be held to this same level of scrutiny. With over 17,000 employees and over 18,000 volunteers who work for the County, many come in contact with children on a daily basis. While most County employees and volunteers go through a background check, not all do. Public Safety Group and Health and Human Services employees and volunteers that work with kids are background checked, but other Departments, such as the County Library, do not require a background check.

SUBJECT: Keeping Sex Offenders Away From Our Children (District: All)

Sex offenders can be prevented from volunteering with kids at schools and County facilities by conducting a fingerprint background check or searching on the Megan's Law database. This necessary precaution must be taken for the sake of the region's children. With the Livescan fingerprint technology available today, requests of a background check can be completed in just 1-3 days. In addition, the Megan's Law database is available free of charge at multiple locations in the region.

Allowing a sex offender to be on a school campus or in a County position having contact with children is unacceptable. This action takes preventive measures to help protect San Diego County's children by developing uniform policies to prevent sexual predators from preying on children. The safety of children should be our highest priority.

We urge your support.

Respectfully submitted,

DIANNE JACOB
Supervisor, Second District

GREG COX
Supervisor, First District

SUBJECT: Keeping Sex Offenders Away From Our Children (District: All)

AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET

CONCURRENCE(S)

COUNTY COUNSEL REVIEW	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
Written Disclosure per County Charter	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Section 1000.1 Required		
GROUP/AGENCY FINANCE DIRECTOR	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Requires Four Votes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
GROUP/AGENCY INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DIRECTOR	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
COUNTY TECHNOLOGY OFFICE	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A

Other Concurrence(s):

ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT: Board of Supervisors, District Two
Board of Supervisors, District One

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