



Agenda Date: 6/5/2007
Agenda Placement: 6A

NAPA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS Board Agenda Letter

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Natasha Merkuloff Nichols - Director
Child Support Services
REPORT BY: Natasha Merkuloff Nichols, Director of Child Support Services, 253-4250
SUBJECT: Budget Transfer

RECOMMENDATION

Director of Child Support requests approval of the following (4/5 vote required):

1. Budget Transfer No. 70 in the amount of \$17,772 transferring funds within the Child Support Services budget to establish a fixed asset for the purchase of WiFi equipment for the Napa County Superior Court; and
2. Budget Transfer No. 71 in the amount of \$12,228 transferring funds within the Child Support Services budget to establish a fixed asset for the purchase of WiFi equipment for the Napa County Superior Court.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

County child support departments are converting to a single statewide automated system for the enforcement of child support. In order for this system to meet federal certification requirements, all documents relating to a child support case must be produced from this new system, the system of record in the case. All stipulations and orders which were previously prepared by hand on carbon copies in the courtroom must now be produced from the system. In order to access the statewide system from various courtrooms, connectivity from the Courts to the County's network must be available; the simplest way to obtain this access is through a secured wireless network. This action establishes a fixed asset in the Child Support Services budget in the amount of \$30,000 for the purchase of WiFi equipment to provide wireless access in the Napa County Superior Court buildings.

FISCAL IMPACT

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|-----------------------------|---|
| Is there a Fiscal Impact? | Yes |
| Is it currently budgeted? | No |
| What is the revenue source? | Funds are available because of salary savings in the Child Support budget |

and from escheated funds in the Child Support Welfare Trust Fund.

Is it Mandatory or Discretionary? Discretionary

Discretionary Justification: Approval of this item is necessary to meet federal certification requirements. All counties are mandated to produce all documents in a child support case in the system of record. By installing wireless internet access in both court buildings, Child Support staff will be able to log on to the County network using a secure password protected connection. From there, Child Support staff will be able to access the statewide network, enter the required data and print the required forms.

Is the general fund affected? No

Future fiscal impact: None.

Consequences if not approved: Producing stipulations and court orders in court is a child support best practice, recognized nationally as a way to speedily get signed orders and stipulations into the hands of both parties. Installing wireless internet access increases the speed with which child support payment commences and assists the local department in meeting federally mandated time frames. If no connectivity is obtained, staff would need to take stipulations and orders back to the office, enter them into the system there and then circulate for the various signatures. This would be an extremely time consuming exercise, slowing the collection of support significantly. Currently, the parties leave the courtroom with the stipulation/order in hand. This alternative would mean that rather than have the orders immediately, parties would have to wait approximately 30+ days to receive orders. This would delay payment of child support by at least that length of time, negatively impacting approximately 120 families monthly. This would also negatively impact the performance measures in collections for Napa's Child Support Services.

Additional Information: None.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION: The proposed action is not a project as defined by 14 California Code of Regulations 15378 (State CEQA Guidelines) and therefore CEQA is not applicable.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

The State of California is in the process of implementing a statewide computer system, the California Child Support Automated System (CCSAS), to be used by all 58 counties. Part of the conversion process is to ensure that this system will meet federal certification as an authorized child support system. One of the requirements is that all documents in a child support case be produced out of the system of record, so that the system automatically records documents generated.

Currently many orders and most stipulations are hand written on NCR documents in the courtroom, signed by the judge and immediately given to the parties who are present in the courtroom. This is a national best practice. It accomplishes several things:

1. Stipulations are signed by the parties at the time they have agreed to the terms, eliminating the need to forward documents to parties and their lawyers for signature.
2. With the judge immediately signing court orders, those orders are given to the parties immediately, eliminating lag time between the date of the order and when the order is actually received by the payor. This reduces delinquencies and speeds funds to the children concerned.
3. Arguments about what should be in a stipulation or order are eliminated since parties are still in the courtroom if clarification is required.
4. By doing business this way, Napa County's federal statistics in collections improve.

Because federal certification requires all documents to be produced in the system of record, we cannot continue to utilize NCR forms for stipulations and orders. The only way to continue to produce documents in the courtroom is to have access to the statewide system and the ability to print the documents in the courtroom.

After reviewing the needs with Courts administration and with County and Court IT staff, a number of options were explored including the use of evolution-data optimized cards or requiring staff to return to the office to generate documents to be mailed to all parties for signature. After consideration, the recommendation is to install wireless internet in the Courts buildings. Installation of this network would not only ensure continued effective child support services to the children of this county, but would also allow other county departments as well as members of the public to access the internet via this system. County departments would have access to a secured, password protected area while members of the public would have unsecured access.

The State of California has authorized purchase of this system. The amount authorized for expenditure from the Child Support operating account is \$17,772. As several individual components are in excess of \$5,000 and therefore must be depreciated, the remainder of the funds must be depreciated. In order to purchase the system, the balance of the funds must come from local sources, and will be repaid with depreciation over the next five (5) years. The local source for the balance of \$12,228 will be the Child Support Welfare Trust Fund. Monies in this fund are currently being escheated. Based on responses in other counties, it is expected that there will be a very low percentage of funds returned to the payors from this fund and that there will be sufficient monies available to fund the equipment purchase.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

None

CEO Recommendation: Approve

Reviewed By: Molly Rattigan