

Officials say child assault unit needed, 'But. . .'

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

The mother of a molested 6-year-old made a convincing argument on behalf of a Child Sex Assault Unit proposed by the Oakland County prosecutor.

But plans to have four assistant prosecutors and two social workers specialize in sexual abuse cases involving children must be considered in the context of next year's budget, according to county commissioners who will continue reviewing the proposal this week.

"I admire Mrs. Faust for her courage," said county commissioner Nancy McConnell, R-Bloomfield

Hills, referring to the mother from Union Lake who talked about her own sexually abused daughter at Thursday's county Board of Commissioners meeting.

Faust, 37, presented petitions she said have the signatures of more than 1,200 people supporting the Child Sex Assault Unit that would cost almost \$394,000.

The unit — and the Child Abuse Resource Effort (CARE) House which opens this week in Pontiac — might help other molested children avoid the double trauma Faust said her daughter endured.

THE FIRST TRAUMA was being fondled by a friend of the family

nearly two years ago, Faust said.

The second was going through the ordeal of prosecuting her assailant who is now in prison for the incident, she said.

McConnell, vice chairwoman of the board, and other commissioners said Faust made a compelling case on behalf of the Child Sex Assault Unit. "I think we'll come up with the money to fund it, but it's got to come from somewhere."

Commissioner G. William Caddell, R-Walled Lake, said the board may juggle components within the proposed unit. "We may, for example, want to provide the two social workers some other way."

"But I think the unit will be funded

one way or another," said Caddell, who is chairman of the finance committee that is scheduled to review the prosecutor's budget on Nov. 6.

He predicted Thompson might have to make some adjustments, like reassigning some assistant prosecutors already on his 78-member staff. "It's a matter of priorities," said Comm. John G. Pappageorge, R-Troy.

AS OUTLINED by Thompson at previous meetings with commissioners, assistant prosecutors assigned to the child sex assault unit will have a lighter caseload — about 50, compared with 500 for others on the staff — in order to specialize and concentrate.

Such an approach would help the traumatized youngster, Thompson said, and assure better prosecution by having a less fearful victim who is more prepared to give convincing testimony.

Thompson said the existing system simply isn't geared to young victims.

Faust is more emphatic. "If we do not drastically change the system, it will continue to make victims think they are the guilty ones," she told commissioners. "The children of Oakland County deserve better treatment" than her daughter received.

Asked for examples of how the proposed unit will treat youngsters differently, Faust privately cited the assistant prosecutor assigned to the preliminary examination of her daughter's assailant in Walled Lake District Court.

"He didn't know us from Adam," according to Faust, who said they met about five minutes before the first court appearance.

That assistant prosecutor simply didn't have time to chat with the child or get to know her, Faust explained. Her daughter was "terrified" by the process.

UNDER THOMPSON'S proposed unit, an assistant would be assigned to each case as soon as an incident of

sexual abuse was reported. That assistant would have the time and training to meet with the victim and his or her family to build rapport and even explain the court process.

That assistant would stay with the youngster as the case moved vertically up through the courts in what Thompson calls "vertical prosecution."

Faust said her daughter, now an alert third grader, has partially recovered from the incident and traumatic prosecution. "She's not quite back to normal," she said. "She still has nightmares."

After the incident, Faust helped organize Parents Against Crime on Kids (PACK), to help others going through the same trauma.

The Child Sex Assault Unit is a big step in that direction, she said.

"Since Thursday (when she spoke to the commission) lots of people have contacted me to voice their support," she said. "We think it's a great idea."

Job Fair '89 has skilled, unskilled positions

Job Fair '89 will have more than 1,500 jobs available when it opens at 9 a.m. Wednesday in Southfield.

The majority are entry level jobs in the clerical, custodial and food service industries, according to Linda L. Stortz, co-director of the fair. "But we also have some high-skill and technical areas," she said. "We'll be looking for registered nurses and

people with computer skills."

At last year's job fair, about 1,100 jobs were available, she said. Job-seekers from Oakland, Macomb and Washtenaw counties were able to make contact with the companies looking for qualified workers, Stortz said.

This year's format will be similar, she said. Job Fair '89 will be from 9 a.m. to

5 p.m. at the Michigan Inn in Southfield. Companies will take applications and, in some cases, conduct interviews.

Applicants can get free assistance with resumes and developing interview skills by contacting the Detroit Public Library.

Additional information on Job Fair '89 is available at 226-9889.

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