because she stated she didn’t trust the high in math. She called Lisa “paranoid”
expert’s conclusion on it. And despite the way. They just skip to the page with the
Judges rarely read these Psych-evals any-
CPS and feared they would take her baby.
actually penalized Lisa for scoring rather
foundly budgets more than is requested. If, at
San eighteen County? Reading the Santa
mends further state interference.
How big is Child Protective Services
is Child Protective Services
of Santa Cruz County? Reading the Santa
The 1996-97 budget reports
According to David Silva, a retired
the county typically budgets more than is requested. If, at the end of the year, the money has not
This provides a built-in incentive for CPS to go out and get more cases.”
At this writing, Lisa’s daughter Star is
in a foster care home, and Lisa must fight
even be allowed to visit Star, who is now 19 months old. Lisa sold her camper
for badly needed funds. She was later told
the baby would have been returned to her, if only she had not sold her camper.
Heather Hanson, her face haggard, her
demeanor weary, shuffles between motels,
shelters, the couches of friends, and sometimes the street. Gone are her dreams of
go to college, of reuniting with her
children, or even of being happy again. She is filled with anger, depression, and grief. Who could blame her?
Gov. Pete Wilson, when confronted
accusations that massive AFDC cuts
would cause mothers to be unable to pro-
due to the parent is
homeless or under-housed? According to
Chair of the Santa Cruz
she was clearly being abusive or neglectful towards their children’s rights.
A concomitant right is the right of the
children, again apart from clearly abusive
or neglectful situations, to know, to be
with daily and continuously, and to be
raised by both of their own parents with
all their faults and inadequacies.”
While this is the law of the land, CPS
has its own law. In an official statement
reminiscent of Nixon’s refusal to give out
information on public agencies “for rea-
s of national security,” CPS maintains
its secrecy “to protect the children.”
But in a system where there are no
checks and balances, where each placement
financially rewards the placers, no baby is
safe, and no mother, especially if she is
poor or homeless, can give birth without
fear of the agency whose stated purpose is
to protect and serve her children.

**IS IT LEGAL FOR CPS TO TAKE THE CHILDREN OF HOMELESS MOTHERS?**

Is it legal for Child Protective Services
to take a child solely because the parent is
homeless or under-housed? According to
Linda Lemaster, Chair of the Santa Cruz
Commission for the Prevention
of Violence Against Women and long-time
welfare rights advocate, the answer is no.
At least not legally.

Lemaster explained: “California made
an out-of-court agreement with the
Western Center on Law and Poverty’s
lawyers which led to our state’s AFDC
Homeless Assistance program. This pro-
gram provides for security deposits to
AFDC-eligible families who are homeless.
When AFDC Homeless Assistance was
created to prevent the lawsuit’s going to
court, California’s Department of Social
Services was admitting to their habit of
seizing children from their parents solely

because of homelessness. The State, in
making this backroom deal, also promised
to cease and desist tearing families apart
where homelessness is their only excuse.”

In many cases, a family in crisis could
with a little support, resolve the crisis and
stay together. A family at risk of home-
lessness often just needs help with hous-
ing, but CPS doesn’t help houseless fam-
ilies find homes. They “remove” their chil-
dren and place them in foster homes as a
matter of public policy. In virtually every
case, this is done to the detriment of the
family and at far greater public expense.

Tama found a clue as to why CPS had
picked her out: “I saw the mobile home
park I now live in mentioned in a
brochure the County gives out, listing
services for homeless people. The brochure
names food services, where to get cloth-
ing, counseling, etc. Under the section
marked ‘Shelters’ is our trailer park.”

Undoubtedly, in some CPS file which
neither Tama nor any other member of the
public will ever see, under housing, the
worker has written “lives in a shelter.”

**Anyone with complaints involving Child Protective Services of Santa Cruz should contact the Santa Cruz County Women’s Commission at (408) 454-2772, attention Rita Flores.**

March 1997