

# Local

✓ CP Child Protective Services RP 4/30/92 p. 11

## County child welfare program gets high marks from state

### Pointer child-abuse case an anomaly, report says

The county's handling of the Ruby Pointer child-abuse case was "an anomaly," according to the state Department of Social Services, which has reviewed the county's Child Welfare Services programs.

The county Human Resources Agency came under fire in the case, in which police found Pointer's small children living in filth

and unable to speak due to neglect. Social workers had been aware of the family's problems, but had failed to take action.

The state department released its review, begun in September, this week. It was the first such review since 1986.

The state reviewed the CWS program for compliance with six "critical" program elements, which

'Overall, (Santa Cruz) county is staffed with competent professionals who work diligently to provide needed services to children and families within state and federal guidelines.'

*State Department of Social Services report*

directly relate to the safety and health of at-risk children, and found the county in compliance with all of them. The Pointer case "was an anomaly vis a vis the overall provision of child welfare in Santa Cruz County," the report

concluded.

The state said it was pleased with the program's attempts to deal with problems in the system that had been identified in light of the Pointer case.

Will Lightbourne, the administrator for the county Human Resources Agency, said the county rated among the top of agencies reviewed by the state this year.

The state also reviewed 32 ele-

ments it considers "essential," related to case documentation and handling, and found the county in compliance with 26 of those. The county will submit to the state plans to correct those problems within 60 days.