



COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION
DRIVE, ROOM 102A
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 3/26/2024

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): District Attorney

Staff Name and Phone Number: Shane Lewis 565-3150 / Tatiana Lopez 565-2822

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:

California Governor's Office of Emergency Services Unserved/Underserved Victim Advocacy and Outreach Program

Recommended Action:

Execute a contract with the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services for the Unserved/Underserved Victim Advocacy and Outreach Program.

- A. Adopt a resolution authorizing the District Attorney or designee to execute a contract with the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services to accept the award in the amount of \$196,906 for the term January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024.
- B. Adopt a resolution to amend the Department Allocation List extending the 1.0 FTE time-limited Victim Witness Advocate II position through March 31, 2025, to support this program. Extending the position beyond the grant term will allow for continuity in the program in the event that grant renewal notification is delayed as it has been in the past.

Executive Summary:

Board approval and authorization is requested to allow the District Attorney or designee to sign a contract to participate in the Unserved/Underserved Victim Advocacy and Outreach Program funded by the State of California, Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) for \$196,906 from January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024. The program is supported through the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Victim Assistance Formula Grant Program. Approval is also requested to extend the Victim Witness Advocate II position through March 31, 2025.

The objective of the Unserved/Underserved Victim Advocacy and Outreach (UV) Program is to provide culturally appropriate direct services to victims of crime who are immigrants, increase outreach and education to immigrant communities, raise awareness of available services, and strengthen understanding of the criminal justice system.

Discussion:

The UV program is comprised of five one-year awards that were first granted in January 2023 and funding is expected to continue through December 2027, despite recent and anticipated cuts in overall VOCA funding. First-year funding was awarded through a competitive process, and each subsequent application is non-competitive. This grant enables the District Attorney's Office Victim Services Division (VSD) to increase its

capacity to provide trauma-informed, culturally appropriate services for immigrants that meet their holistic needs, providing funding for a 1.0 FTE time-limited Victim Witness Advocate II (UV Advocate) dedicated to serving victims who are immigrants and collaborating with immigrant-serving organizations. The UV Advocate, hired in July 2023, has worked to strengthen relationships with community-based organizations that serve immigrant populations to better understand and respond to the unique needs of immigrant victims. Annual salary and benefit cost of the UV Advocate is estimated to be \$114,753 and is fully covered with grant funds. The grant term ends on December 31, 2024 and is expected to be renewed for a new one-year term in 2025. Due to delays in the renewal process, we have requested to extend the position to March 31, 2025. In the event the contract is not renewed, salary and benefits for the UV Advocate for January 1, 2025 through March 31, 2025 will be paid with salary savings by the department.

Immigrants represent 17% of the County's 485,887 residents, including an estimated 38,500 who are undocumented. A significant number of the County's immigrants live in Santa Rosa, where the Latino population is concentrated in regions that experience high crime rates for youth violent crime, narcotics crime, gang crime, and child abuse and neglect. The almost 42,500 immigrant women are at particular risk of victimization since immigrant women experience abuse at rates almost three times the national average. Immigrants in low-wage jobs, such as the 11,000 vineyard workers in the County, are at risk of labor violations and physical and sexual abuse. It is difficult to document the full extent of victimization because the District Attorney staff and law enforcement do not ask about a person's immigration status and immigrants report crimes at lower rates.

Eighty-five percent of the County's immigrants speak a language other than English at home and 55.5% speak English less than "very well". Eighteen percent of the foreign-born population lives below 150% of the poverty level, compared to nine percent countywide. The most common countries of origin include Mexico, the Philippines, and China. Community partners also report a significant Mixtec (indigenous migrants from Mexico) population who speak indigenous languages and are often isolated from other Latino populations.

Immigrant victims face unique forms of abuse, especially individuals who are undocumented or whose legal status depends on the abuser. Victims may be isolated, prevented from learning English or speaking with friends and family in their home country. Cultural stigma around victimization in some communities means that immigrants may be less likely to seek help. Some immigrants are not familiar with the laws and their rights in the United States, lack an understanding of the justice-seeking process, and mistrust the justice system. A fear of deportation means undocumented immigrants are even less likely to report crimes.

The Sonoma County Immigration Initiative launched in 2017, identified service needs based on input from immigrant communities, which included the need for specialized educational materials and outreach efforts, and better coordinated services. Through the Unserved/Underserved Victim Advocacy and Outreach Program (UV), the Victim Services Division of the District Attorney's Office continues to develop and strengthen relationships with immigrant-serving agencies and build connections between these agencies and other service providers. VSD has shared information about new services available through the UV program with all partners and teams, and continues to promote coordinated efforts to conduct outreach, improve access, and provide services to better address the needs of immigrants.

Established by the County Board of Supervisors in 2020, the Office of Equity develops and delivers equity focused training curriculum for County departments and supports equity-centered planning. The UV Advocate

Agenda Date: 3/26/2024

will coordinate with the Office of Equity to seek and analyze relevant data and develop specific strategies and interventions to ensure culturally responsive services. In 2023, the Office of Equity dedicated staff to provide a one-day equity-focused training to the District Attorney VSD staff and the partnership is expected to continue in 2024.

The UV Advocate is trained to provide intervention and immediately reposing to victims who are in crisis. The Advocate assists with referrals for immediate needs to relevant support and links victims to ongoing, comprehensive care as well as to resources within the legal system for criminal prosecution and victim restitution. Victims of domestic violence or sexual assault are referred to the YWCA and Verity for additional crisis intervention services. Counseling partner Humanidad Therapy & Education Services has provided culturally sensitive bilingual therapy services in Sonoma County for 10 years. VSD will continue to refer victims to Humanidad for culturally sensitive individual counseling. The provision of culturally competent mental health services is critical for serving immigrant victims because culture affects whether and how people seek help, how they cope with symptoms, the presence and quality of social supports, and how they impart meaning to their symptoms.

Providing education about the criminal justice process and support services to the many underserved populations that make up the immigrant community is vital to ensuring access and halting the cycle of violence. VSD will continue to increase outreach and education to immigrant communities through this program, to build trust, raise awareness of available services, and increase understanding of the criminal justice system. A critical first step to providing culturally sensitive services is to build trusting relationships. VSD will continue to consult with the Office of Equity and immigrant-serving organizations, including Petaluma Health Center, Alliance Medical Center, Latino Service Providers, California Human Development, and Catholic Charities to develop a plan to conduct outreach that uses trusted messengers to reach a population that is understandably wary of public institutions.

VSD will also produce informational materials in multiple languages with information about victims' rights and available services. VSD will distribute these materials to partner agencies, including community-based organizations and first responders such as law enforcement and medical providers.

Strategic Plan:

N/A

Racial Equity:

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

No

Prior Board Actions:

On March 14, 2023, the Board of Supervisors approved the acceptance of grant funds from the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services to fund the Unserved/Underserved Victim Advocacy and Outreach Program.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY23-24 Adopted	FY24-25 Projected	FY25-26 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	\$98,453	\$98,453	
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures			
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal	\$98,453	\$98,453	
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies			
Total Sources	\$98,453	\$98,453	

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

The CalOES funds of \$196,906 will be portioned between FY 2023/2024 and FY 2024/2025 budget. The revenue and appropriations for FY 2024/25 will be included as part of budget development.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)
Victim Services Advocate II (time-limited)	\$6,231.79 - \$7,572.77	0 <input type="checkbox"/>	0 <input type="checkbox"/>

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

The time-limited UV Advocate is dedicated to serving victims who are immigrants, collaborating with immigrant-serving organizations, making referrals as necessary and appropriate, and will continue to provide outreach and education to immigrant communities.

The end date of the grant-funded Victim Witness Advocate II will be March 31, 2025, which will allow the position to continue beyond the contract’s expiration in order to accommodate common contract renewal delays. In the event that the contract is not renewed beyond December 31, 2024, the non-grant funded position costs from January 2025 through March 2025 would be paid with salary savings by the department.

Attachments:

Resolution A - Grant Acceptance

Resolution B - Resolution Amending the Department Allocation List for District Attorney’s Office

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

CalOES Grant Award Document