



COUNTY OF SONOMA

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

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 1/7/2025

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): District Attorney's Office; Human Resources; Health Services: Human Services; Probation Department; Sheriff's Office

Staff Name and Phone Number: Andrew Lukas 565-2311

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Recommended Action:

Adopt a Gold Resolution proclaiming January 2025 as Human Trafficking Awareness Month in Sonoma County.

Executive Summary:

On behalf of the many public and private agencies working together to raise awareness of and combat human trafficking, six departments - Human Resources (the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on the Status of Women), the District Attorney's Office, Department of Health Services, Human Services Department, Probation Department and the Sheriff's Office, along with ten community-based organizations, have come together to seek a proclamation naming January 2025 as Human Trafficking Awareness Month in Sonoma County.

Discussion:

In January 2010, President Obama instituted an annual month-plus of awareness events on human trafficking with a proclamation declaring January as National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month. All of these events culminated in the annual celebration of National Freedom Day on February 1. Likewise, many state and city governments, along with civil society, are taking time to acknowledge and focus on human trafficking.

Human Trafficking is modern-day slavery. It is defined as "the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act, in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person forced to perform such an act is under the age of 18 years." The victims are among the most vulnerable members of society, including women and children, who are forced, defrauded or coerced into labor, commonly in sweatshops, on farms, or for domestic service, or into sexual servitude.

The statistics on the extent of human trafficking are astounding:

1. The International Labor Organization of the United Nations estimates that 40.3 million people around the world fall victim to human trafficking. 81% are trapped in forced labor, 25% are children, and 75% are women and girls.
2. The United States State Department estimates that up to 800,000 people are trafficked across international borders each year.
3. The United States Department of Justice estimates that between 14,000 and 17,500 victims of human trafficking are brought into the United States each year.

4. On a local level, the Human Rights Center, University of California, Berkeley, reported in a 2005 study that 80 percent of the documented human trafficking cases in California occurred in San Diego, Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area.

These figures are even more alarming when one considers that victims of this crime live in fear and often avoid law enforcement, so human trafficking violations are often not reported.

This annual national observance is intended to enhance the fight against and increase the awareness of human trafficking. Our community must be aware of the realities of human trafficking, and we must be dedicated to stopping and eliminating this contemporary manifestation of slavery. Victims of human trafficking need support in order to escape and recover from the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual trauma associated with their victimization. Increased awareness remains a critical function of the fight.

District Attorney's Office

As the Chair of the Sonoma County Human Trafficking Task Force, the Sonoma County District Attorney's Office is dedicated to providing the members of our community with a safe place to live by holding the guilty accountable, protecting the innocent, and preserving the dignity of victims and their families.

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) estimates that each year 100,000 children are the victims of commercial sexual exploitation in the United States. In 2022, the NCMEC Cyber Tipline received more than 32 million reports, most of which related to apparent child sexual abuse images; online enticement, including "sextortion;" child sex trafficking; and child sexual molestation.

The Sonoma County Human Trafficking Task Force, with the invaluable assistance of the member agencies, has furthered the mission in five key areas:

1. Community education, engagement, and collaboration;
2. Law enforcement training, intelligence sharing, and coordination;
3. Innovative charging of cases and vigorous prosecution of offenders;
4. Coordinated delivery of Human Trafficking Task Force services; and
5. Engaged and enlisted policy makers, legislators and community decision makers.

In 2000, Congress passed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act to "combat trafficking in persons, especially into the sex trade, slavery, and involuntary servitude, to reauthorize certain Federal programs to prevent violence against women, and for other purposes." (P.L. 106-386 [H.R. 3244] 28 Oct 2000). This law provides law enforcement officials with the necessary tools to combat trafficking in persons, both domestically and abroad. Seeking to coordinate and complement federal legislation, Assembly Bill 22 (Lieber, 2005) and Senate Bill 180 (Kuehl) were enacted to provide multiple protections at the State level. AB 22 added Section 236.1 to the California Penal Code, which establishes human trafficking for forced labor or services as a felony crime. This law was amended by the Chelsea King Child Predator Prevention Act of 2010 to impose a fine of \$100,000 when the victim is under the age of 18.

Although there are laws to prosecute perpetrators of human trafficking and to assist and protect victims, awareness of the issues surrounding human trafficking is essential for effective enforcement. The District Attorney joins the efforts of other County departments, individuals, businesses, organizations, and governing bodies to promote the observance of the National Month of Human Trafficking Awareness in January of each year to raise awareness of and to actively oppose human trafficking.

Family Justice Center Sonoma County

The Family Justice Center Sonoma County empowers family violence victims to live free from violence and abuse by providing comprehensive services, centered on and around the victim, through a single point of access. The Family Justice Center is an integral partner in the Human Trafficking Task Force and hosts their meetings at the Center. Various on-site collaborative partners offer services to victims as needed. The partnership of the Family Justice Center, community based nonprofit organizations, law enforcement agencies and the District Attorney's office, is a strong model of collaboration in serving victims.

Department of Health Services

The Sonoma County Department of Health Services works closely with the Human Services Department, the District Attorney's Office, the Family Justice Center Sonoma County, the Sheriff's Office, other local law enforcement and public safety agencies, and community partners, such as Verity and the YWCA of Sonoma County, to support victims of human trafficking by providing forensic medical examinations to victims of sexual assault and by participating on the Human Trafficking Task Force. Public Health representation on the Human Trafficking Task Force ensures members receive relevant information and guidance on community public health issues.

The Sexual Assault Response Team/Redwood Children's Center team is a multi-disciplinary team of trained professionals, including medical, legal, law enforcement, and survivor advocacy representatives. The team provides specialized, coordinated services to the people of Sonoma County. Forensic Examiners receive special training in forensic evidence collection and directed medical examinations for both adult and child cases of sexual assault. They provide 24-hour, seven days a week on-call services for all suspected cases of adult and child sexual assault or abuse. Health Services remains a committed partner in looking toward the safety and support of victims of sexual assault and human trafficking in a caring and professional environment through a multi-disciplinary and victim-centered approach.

Department of Human Resources:

Commission on the Status of Women and Commission on Human Rights

The Commission on the Status of Women was one of the original partners in forming a county task force dedicated to aiding victims of human trafficking. The Commission on the Status of Women and Commission on Human Rights have representatives who are active participants on the Sonoma County Human Trafficking Task Force and partner with many agencies and organizations to provide education and outreach to the community and to support our partners that provide direct services. Additionally, since 2014 the youth mentorship programs (Junior Commissions) of each commission have created community service projects designed to bring awareness to human trafficking including presentations at local schools, Public Service Announcement videos and informational brochures to educate their peers and school staff on what human trafficking is, how to spot a victim and what to do to help.

The Commissions continue their commitment to work with the Task Force to educate the community on the human trafficking happening here in Sonoma County and to work with our partners to end this traumatic exploitation of humans.

Human Services Department (HSD)

HSD has led the Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) Steering Committee since it began in 2014 as a subcommittee of the Sonoma County Human Trafficking Task Force. Since 2018, HSD has conducted 329 multi-disciplinary team (MDT) meetings for youth identified as either being trafficked or high-risk for being

commercially exploited. With the support of agencies including Santa Rosa Police Department and other city departments, the Sheriff's Office, Verity, and VOICES, and county departments including Probation and Department of Health Services, the monthly meetings and multi-disciplinary team meetings provide a venue to facilitate the search for appropriate housing and coordination of services that meet the needs of each individual youth. In 2016, legislation was added that focused on children who run away as they are particularly vulnerable to being exploited. The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and the state Child Trafficking Response Team have focused training and discussion on the implementation of Harm Reduction Techniques. Since this shift in practice, HSD has provided harm reduction training to staff and has created a system to coach employees in their work with CSEC youth, using the harm reduction model. In addition, the CSEC Direct Services Committee within Family, Youth, and Children's Services has and continues to offer concrete supports to youth identified as CSEC or at-risk CSEC to meet physical needs and create encouragement and motivation to complete services and implement lifestyle changes.

Federal and State CSEC funding has provided the revenue for staff and community partners to participate in high-level training as well as education for CSEC youth or potentially trafficked children and updates have been made that allow CSEC and/or missing children to be tracked within the county, within the state, and across state lines. HSD provides forensic interviewers, supervision, and administrative support for the Redwood Children's Center, located at the Family Justice Center. Staff at Family, Youth, and Children's Services including the Valley of the Moon Children's Center have been instrumental in the identification of CSEC and coordination of services to assist them.

Probation Department

The Sonoma County Probation Department works collaboratively with other law enforcement agencies to provide active community supervision of clients who have committed acts of violence against vulnerable victims. Maintaining awareness of client conduct in the community deters further victimization and provides the opportunity to observe activities that may suggest further criminal conduct. The Probation Department is committed to reducing violence through the monitoring of clients and staying connected to the community. A large portion of women and adolescent females in the criminal and juvenile justice systems have been victims of violence and/or sexual abuse.

Probation has developed new protocols to address adolescent runaways who are high risk for being commercially exploited. The Department works closely with community-based organizations to provide resources and support to assist these individuals in addressing their trauma, thereby enabling them to live healthier lives in the community. The Department supports the County's efforts to increase awareness of this tragic crime, and to apprehend and prosecute anyone involved in human trafficking. The Probation Department actively engages in monthly Human Trafficking Task Force meetings, participates in Multi-Disciplinary Team meetings to create safety plans for youth at risk for commercial sexual exploitation, and attends monthly CSEC Steering Committee meetings. Probation Officers and Juvenile Correctional Counselors have been trained in how to identify, report, and engage with youth in the Juvenile Justice System who are at-risk for or are survivors of sexual exploitation.

Sheriff's Office

The Sonoma County Sheriff's Office is committed to identifying, vigorously investigating, and assisting in the prosecution of individuals both engaged in Human Trafficking in Sonoma County and/or traveling to or through Sonoma County for the purpose of engaging in Human Trafficking. The Sheriff's Office recognizes the challenges associated with combating this insidious crime, and that some of the most vulnerable people in our

community may be victims of Human Trafficking.

Detectives of the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Unit attend State and Federal level training across the Country, which provide the most current trends and techniques used in investigating Human Trafficking crimes. Within the Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Unit, there are two Detectives assigned who are responsible for maintaining expertise in Human Trafficking crimes and trends. Additionally, the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office participates in the Sonoma County Commission on Human Trafficking Task Force, which provides members a forum for intelligence gathering and networking to combat Human Trafficking more effectively.

The Sonoma County Sheriff's Office Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Unit conducts operations targeting multiple facets of Human Trafficking. Some involve partnering with other law enforcement agencies. Local operations target solicitors loitering to engage in an act of prostitution, as well as attempting to purchase underage victims for sex. Other operations involve human trafficking in the massage parlor business, as well as the online solicitation to purchase underage victims for sex. All sworn deputies in the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office have attended a two-hour Human Trafficking class.

In a continuing effort to better serve the community, the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office, in coordination with several governmental and non-governmental community-based services organizations, proactively seeks to combat Human Trafficking by identifying resources available to the Human Trafficking victims and assists in establishing a framework for providing those services in a safe and confidential environment.

Prior Board Actions:

In prior years, starting in 2008, the Board of Supervisors has issued a Gold Resolution recognizing Human Trafficking Awareness Month.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

N/A

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

Resolution

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:

N/A