



COUNTY OF SONOMA

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

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 2/10/2026

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): District Attorney

Staff Name and Phone Number: Carla Rodriguez, 565-3098, Shane Lewis 565-3150, Tatiana Lopez 565-2822

Vote Requirement: 4/5th

Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:

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

Recommended Action:

Adopt a resolution to amend the District Attorney Department Allocation List extending the 1.0 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) time-limited Victim Witness Advocate II position for the Unserved/Underserved Victim Advocacy and Outreach Program through March 31, 2027, effective February 17, 2026.

Executive Summary:

The District Attorney's Office requests Board approval to extend the Victim Witness Advocate II position for the Unserved/Underserved Victim Advocacy and Outreach Program through March 31, 2027.

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.

The District Attorney applied for and accepted this one-year renewal of funding under the authority granted by the Board of Supervisors on May 13, 2025 (Resolution 25-0242). The grant subaward was executed by the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) Director Designee on December 24, 2025.

Discussion:

The (CalOES) UV program was first awarded in January 2023 with a combination of federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funds, and state funds. Funding for the five-year project 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, with funding for a 1.0 FTE time-limited Victim Witness Advocate II (UV Advocate), currently allocated through March 31, 2026, dedicated to serving victims who are immigrants and collaborating with immigrant-serving organizations. The UV Advocate position was created during year one of the five-year grant program and was first filled in July 2023. The position is designed to strengthen relationships with community-based organizations serving immigrant

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populations to better understand and respond to the unique needs of immigrant victims. Unfortunately, the advocate hired in July 2023 left the position at the end of December 2025. An active recruitment is in progress to fill the position with an anticipated start date of March 3, 2026. Annual salary and benefit cost of the UV Advocate is estimated to be \$157,904 and is fully covered with grant funds. Salary savings due to the vacant position for the first two months of the grant term, estimated to be \$26,317, will be allocated to outreach and client services through program partners Humanidad Education and Therapy Services and Botanical Bus, as well as client supplies and outreach supplies. The grant term ends on December 31, 2026, and is expected to be renewed for a final one-year term in 2027. Due to delays in the renewal process, we have requested to extend the position to March 31, 2027. Funding for the 2027 grant term will be included in the FY2026/2027 State Budget, allowing sufficient time to seek opportunities for alternative funding to retain the position in the event the contract is not renewed.

These funds support outreach to community members who are historically underserved due to a fear of reporting crimes or a lack of understanding of the legal system. According to the most recent census data, immigrants comprise nearly 17% of the County's 485,642 residents. Many of these residents live in Santa Rosa, where the Latino population is concentrated in areas with high rates of narcotics offenses, gang activity, child abuse, and youth violence. Vulnerability is particularly high among the County's estimated 33,800 immigrant women, who experience abuse at nearly three times the national average. Additionally, thousands of low-wage vineyard workers face increased risks of labor violations and physical or sexual assault. Because the District Attorney's office and law enforcement do not inquire about immigration status-and because immigrants report crimes at lower rates-the full scale of this victimization remains difficult to document.

Immigrant victims face unique forms of abuse, especially individuals whose legal status depends on an 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 immigrants are even less likely to report crimes.

The UV advocate is uniquely qualified to support this segment of the County population, and the position is specifically designed to establish trust in communities where individuals may be hesitant to report incidents of crime, even when they have been victimized. The advocate attends community events and participates in outreach with partner agencies, establishing a safe connection for victims who might otherwise not come forward to report crime and assist in the prosecution.

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, provide services to better address the needs of immigrants and encourage reporting of crime.

The UV Advocate is trained to provide intervention and an immediate response to victims who are in crisis.

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Cases may come to the attention of the advocate through reports to local law enforcement agencies that are referred to the District Attorney's Office, or by contacts reaching out on behalf of a victim. 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 utilize a portion of the funds to produce informational materials in multiple languages with information about victims' rights and available services. These materials will be distributed to partner agencies, including community-based organizations and first responders such as law enforcement and medical providers. The role of the advocate is to support victims in court and help them understand the prosecutorial process, assist in navigating resources available in the community and providing referrals, provide assistance with compensation through the California Victim Compensation Board and/or court ordered restitution, stay in contact with victims throughout the prosecutorial process to provide updates, to help victims remain safe by assisting with protective orders or shelter, and provide translation services when needed.

During the first three years of the grant, the UV Advocate has been assigned approximately 1,500 cases, 85% of which involve domestic violence. The current UV caseload consists of approximately 160 open cases in various stages of the prosecutorial process. However, that caseload does not accurately represent the entire body of work. Advocates often continue to work with victims after the conclusion of a case, particularly if there is an appeal or a request by the defendant for post-conviction relief; and they assist victims in cases that are referred to the District Attorney but not filed, as well as cases where a suspect is not known. An average of nine new cases are assigned to the advocate every week.

Strategic Plan:

N/A

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

No

Prior Board Actions:

On May 13, 2025, the Board of supervisors approved a resolution authorizing the District Attorney, or their designee, to act on behalf of Sonoma County in applying for and accepting grant funds, with approval from County Counsel.

On February 25, 2025 the Board of Supervisors approved the acceptance of grant funds from the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services for the renewal of the Unserved/Underserved Victim Advocacy and Outreach Program and approved the extension of the 1.0 FTE time-limited Victim Witness Advocate position.

On March 26, 2024 the Board of Supervisors approved the acceptance of grant funds from the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services for renewal of the Unserved/Underserved Victims Advocacy and Outreach Program and approved the extension of the 1.0 FTE time-limited Victim Witness Advocate position.

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 and approved the 1.0 FTE time-limited Victim Witness Advocate position.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY25-26 Adopted	FY26-27 Projected	FY27-28 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	\$196,906	\$196,906	\$98,453
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	\$196,906	\$196,906	\$98,453
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal	\$196,906	\$196,906	\$98,453
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies			
Total Sources	\$196,906	\$196,906	\$98,453

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

This grant is awarded on a calendar year basis. Funds from the 2025 CalOES award were budgeted between FY2024/2025 and FY2025/2026; The 2026 CalOES award of \$196,906 will be portioned between FY 2025/2026 and FY 2026/2027 budgets. The revenue and appropriations for the funds to be utilized in FY 2026/2027 will be included as part of budget development. There is no impact to the General Fund with this action.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)
Victim Witness Advocate II	\$6,772.70 - \$8,231.95	0	0

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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 is requested to be extended from March 31, 2026 to March 31, 2027, which will allow the position to continue beyond the contract's expiration in order to accommodate common contract renewal delays. Funding for the 2026 grant term will be included in the FY2026/2027 State Budget, allowing sufficient time to seek alternative funding to support the position in the event the contract is not renewed.

Attachments:

Position Resolution
Award Document

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

N/A