



COUNTY OF SONOMA

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

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 3/18/2025

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
Department or Agency Name(s): District Attorney's Office
Staff Name and Phone Number: Marsha Lucien 565-8257
Vote Requirement: Majority
Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Recommended Action:

Adopt a Gold Resolution Proclaiming March 2025 to be Family Justice Center Month in Sonoma County

Executive Summary:

On behalf of the public (including the Board of Supervisors) and private agencies working together to improve services to victims through preventing and responding to domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, human trafficking, stalking, and elder abuse, the District Attorney's Office, with the support of our community-based partners, seek a proclamation naming March 2025 as the 3rd Annual Family Justice Center Month in Sonoma County.

The Family Justice Center Sonoma County (FJCSC) serves as a single point of access for survivors of domestic and sexual violence, regardless of their migratory status or primary language, where multiple agencies collaborate to provide comprehensive, continuous, and seamless care, without the survivor having to share their story multiple times and in multiple locations.

The FJC Model has received national recognition for its impact on survivor safety and healing. This proclamation, inspired by the California State Assembly Resolutions of 2020/21 and 2021/22 declaring March 5th a statewide Family Justice Center Day, is intended to bring local recognition and expanded community awareness of this valuable and lifesaving Sonoma County resource.

Since opening its doors in 2011, the FJCSC has served over 20,000 victims of family and community violence, including over 1,800 unduplicated victims in 2023 alone. Of all the victims served by the FJCSC, 33% report that their native language is one other than English.

This requested local observance is intended to spread awareness about this valued community resource and recognize the lifesaving and hope-giving work of the Family Justice Center Sonoma County. Our community must be aware of the realities of interpersonal and family violence and the very real way in which victims and survivors continue to need support to escape and recover from the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual trauma associated with their victimization.

Discussion:

This proclamation declares March 2025 as Family Justice Center Month in Sonoma County and would recognize the lifesaving and hope-giving work of the Family Justice Center and its partners as they work to ensure that adult and child survivors of trauma can access all services through a single point of access. In a

2008 feasibility study of Sonoma County conducted by the Glen Price Group, it was determined that victims of family violence in Sonoma County may need to visit over 23 different locations within the county to access critical support and legal services. The development of the Family Justice Center Sonoma County resulted in the provision of a continuum of services under one roof so that survivors can access a complex array of resources in one location. Easy and accessible services reduce the trauma and challenges of negotiating multiple systems and barriers to gain safety and security.

Through a collaborative community response, the FJCSC provides free and confidential wrap-around services to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, human trafficking, stalking, and elder abuse. Services include crisis counseling, therapy, restraining orders, immigration services, navigation, short-term case management, support and educational groups, holistic healing services, and specialized advocates for elder abuse, domestic violence, and sexual assault. The FJCSC also hosts Camp HOPE, a camping and mentoring program for children and teens impacted by domestic violence.

The Family Justice Center framework has been recognized by former U.S. Vice President and U.S. Senator Kamala Harris and was selected by the Department of Justice as a best practice model for domestic violence intervention and prevention services. Additionally, since the first Family Justice Center Initiative was created by President George W. Bush in 2003, the model has continued to receive presidential endorsements, including the Obama and Trump Administrations, as an innovative approach to victim services.

The FJCSC has a strong history of collaboration, and its six founding partners, the YWCA Sonoma County, Verity, Council on Aging, Catholic Charities, the District Attorney's Office, and Legal Aid of Sonoma County continue to be central to the Center's work. Under the leadership of the District Attorney's Office, the FJCSC's partnership has expanded over the past decade to include the Santa Rosa Police Department, Sonoma County Sheriff's Department, Inter-tribal Council of California, Ruthless Kindness, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner - Sexual Assault Response Team (SANE-SART), Housing & Economic Rights Advocates (H.E.R.A.), Victims Empowerment Support Team (VEST), Corazòn Healdsburg, Sonoma County Human Services Department (HSD), Sonoma County Family Law Facilitator, and Redwood Children's Center, which provides forensic interviews for children and youth who are victims of or witnesses to violence. The FJCSC's work would not be possible without these essential partnerships.

Since opening its doors in 2011, the FJCSC has served over 20,000 victims of family and community violence, including over 1,800 unduplicated victims in 2023 alone. In addition to crisis-based services, the FJCSC continues to provide growth and healing opportunities for survivors of domestic violence and other crimes through various holistic services like yoga, art therapy, massage therapy, and reiki, helping survivors overcome their trauma, reclaim their futures, and restore hope.

The FJCSC also offers services to youth through Camp HOPE, the first evidence-based camping and mentoring program in the country focused on children impacted by violence and the recipient of the 2022 Outstanding Youth initiative of the year. The vision for Camp HOPE is to break the generational cycle of family violence by offering healing and hope to children who have witnessed family violence.

By investing in our youth using the evidence-based hope theory integrated into Camp HOPE activities and curriculum, we can significantly decrease the instances of domestic violence, strangulation, and sexual assault in one generation. Through this work, safer communities can be created, prison populations can be lowered,

and the cycle of violence can be stopped.

Law enforcement agencies and nonprofit partners across Sonoma County currently conduct various assessments to determine the potential risk for victims of domestic violence, however there was a need for more robust protocols for consistently conducting these assessments to identify high risk cases, sharing information with relevant partner agencies, providing ongoing monitoring and management if identified cases, referring victims to appropriate services, and holding high-risk offenders accountable. The Family Justice Center is addressing this issue with their new Domestic Violence High Risk Multidisciplinary Team (DVHRT). The FJC DVHRT is a collaboration with the Sonoma County Sheriff, Santa Rosa Police, Sonoma County District Attorney, VEST, and other stakeholders to identify those survivors most at risk of being murdered by their abusive partner and providing wrap around case management services and team communication to ensure the safety of the survivor through the process of fleeing their abuser. It is not an exaggeration to say that our country, state, and county are experiencing a mental health crisis. Need for mental health services continue to rise as availability and affordability of those services decline. To provide quicker access to trauma-informed mental health services for survivors of trauma, the FJCSC has partnered with SANE-SART to become a satellite site for the North Bay Trauma Recovery Center. This partnership allows survivors of crime to participate in 16 free sessions of one-on-one counseling with a certified and trained practitioner. In 2024, this program provided over 120 FJC clients with a start on the path to long-term recovery from their trauma.

The Family Justice Center framework of single point of service access, provides increased victim safety, autonomy, and empowerment, reduced fear and anxiety among victims and their children, and decreased victim recantation and minimization of their experiences, all while making service provision more efficient and collaborative. This has led to higher rates of offender prosecution and increased reporting of crime, increasing public safety for the County as whole.

This requested local observance is intended to spread awareness about this valued community resource and recognize the lifesaving and hope-giving work of the Family Justice Center Sonoma County. Our community must be aware of the realities of interpersonal and family violence and the very real way in which victims and survivors continue to need support to escape and recover from the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual trauma associated with their victimization. While great strides have been made in our county's response to these crimes, there is still a long way to go. Increased awareness of these victimizations and the availability of the FJCSC and its services remains a critical function of the fight.

As a part of Family Justice Center Month, the FJCSC will host several tours of the Center in an effort to raise awareness of the services available in Sonoma County and provide familiarity with the location itself. A no-cost mobile veterinary clinic will be offered by Ruthless Kindness to survivors served by the FJCSC on March 6th. In addition, the FJCSC will launch a social media awareness campaign throughout the month to raise awareness of and engagement with the FJC model and its services. In an effort to increase public safety and awareness, the FJCSC has created resources to inform survivors of factors that increase their level of risk within domestic violence situations, including a short informational video premiering on our website in March. Additionally, during FJC Month, FJCSC will launch a website dedicated to information about guns and California gun relinquishment laws in the context of domestic violence.

Prior Board Actions:

The Board of Supervisors approved the Gold Resolution Proclaiming the Month of March 2023 and 2024 to be

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Family Justice Center Month in Sonoma County.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

No Fiscal Impacts

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

No Staffing Impacts

Attachments:

Resolution

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

N/A