



SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 10/7/2025

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): District Attorney's Office, Probation Department, Sheriff's Office, Health Services, Human Services, Human Resources - Commission on the Status of Women & Employee Assistance Program/Workplace Violence Prevention, County Administrator's Office

Staff Name and Phone Number: Carla Rodriguez 565-3098; Andrew Lukas 565-3885; Tatiana Lopez 565-2822

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisory District(s): Countywide

Recommended Action:

Adopt a Gold Resolution proclaiming October 2025 to be Domestic Violence Awareness Month in Sonoma County

Executive Summary:

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The District Attorney's Office has come together with County agencies and community partners to elevate the level of awareness surrounding this important issue.

Discussion:

Background: On behalf of the many public and private agencies working together to improve services, and to prevent and respond to domestic violence, seven departments - the District Attorney's Office, County Administrator's Office, Sheriff's Office, Health Services, Human Services, Human Resources - Commission on the Status of Women, and the Probation Department - have come together, with the support of our community-based partners, to seek a resolution proclaiming October 2025 as Domestic Violence Awareness Month in Sonoma County.

Communities around the nation come together during October to mourn those who have died as a result of domestic violence, to celebrate those who have survived domestic violence, and to honor and connect with those who work tirelessly to put an end to domestic violence. For over two decades, purple ribbons have served as visual gestures of support for victims of domestic violence. No one can pinpoint the history of the purple ribbon, but it symbolizes survival, courage, honor, and dedication to ending domestic violence. It is also used to raise awareness in communities about the crime of domestic violence and has been recognized by state legislatures.

SONOMA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

The District Attorney has made domestic violence a top priority of her office. Senior attorneys are assigned to the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Unit and review every domestic violence case that is referred to her office. The senior attorneys prosecute all felony domestic violence cases in the county, and mentor junior attorneys who handle misdemeanor domestic violence cases. The cases are handled according to the vertical prosecution concept, which means the same prosecutor, specially trained in the subject matter, handles each case from filing determination through trial or plea and sentencing. These prosecutors work closely on their

cases with the assigned D.A. investigator, victim advocate, and law enforcement agency detectives. Victim advocates and victim restitution specialists provide victims a variety of services related to victims' participation in the criminal justice system and assist victims in recovering from crimes' devastating impacts. Such services include court accompaniment, explaining the criminal justice process and crime victim rights, helping victims obtain compensation and restitution, and helping victims receive reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses related to victimization. The District Attorney's Office employs several bilingual Spanish speaking advocates to ensure victims can communicate their needs, and understand their rights and options, in their own words. The District Attorney's Office is committed to working with our law enforcement, county, and community partners to hold family violence offenders accountable and to help victims heal.

Through a collaborative community response, the Family Justice Center Sonoma County (FJCSC) provides free wrap-around services through a single point of access to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, human trafficking, stalking, and elder abuse. Services include crisis counseling, safety planning, therapy, the preparation of restraining orders, immigration services, navigation of community resources, case management, animal advocacy, support and educational groups, Camp HOPE, and specialized advocates for elder abuse, domestic violence, and sexual assault. The FJCSC employs two bilingual Navigators who guide victims of violence through the complicated web of resources and systems, simplifying an often arduous process for survivors as they rebuild their lives. The unique framework of private and public partnership of the FJCSC exists to promote public health and public safety for Sonoma County residents.

The FJCSC has a strong history of collaboration, and its founding partners, the YWCA Sonoma County, Verity, Council on Aging, Catholic Charities, and Legal Aid of Sonoma County, continue to be central to the Center's work. Under the leadership of the DA's Office, the FJCSC's partnerships have expanded over the past decade to include the Santa Rosa Police Department, the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office, and the Redwood Children's Center, which provides a forensic interview center for children and youth who are victims of or witnesses to violence. The FJCSC is also a satellite site for the North Bay Trauma Recovery Center, which provides expedited access to free bilingual specialized trauma therapy to survivors of crime.

Since opening its doors in 2011, the FJCSC has served nearly 20,000 victims of family and community violence. This network of over twenty providers collaboratively work each day to offer lifesaving services to Sonoma County community members experiencing abuse. The FJCSC seeks to break the cycle of generational violence by offering services to children and youth exposed to domestic violence through Camp HOPE, the first evidence-based camping and mentoring program in the country of its type.

Since October 2024, the FJCSC has been at the helm of the Domestic Violence High-Risk Multidisciplinary Team, whose express goal is to reduce domestic violence homicides in Sonoma County. Over 120 high-risk domestic violence cases have been reviewed as a team. Of these cases, 90% of the victims believed their abuser would kill them, over 85% had been strangled at least once by their partner, and 65% of the abusive partners had access to firearms. None of these victims have died, and many of them have been connected to long-term case management and advocacy as they navigate the complex systems while seeking safety and

stability for themselves and their children.

This initiative provides rapid identification of victims at the highest risk of lethality, intensive case management, increased access to supportive services, and greater collaboration between criminal justice and social service providers. The team is comprised of representatives from the District Attorney's Office, the Family Justice Center Sonoma County, Victim's Empowerment Support Team (VEST), Probation, Santa Rosa Police Department, and the Sonoma County Sheriff's Department.

SONOMA COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT

The Sonoma County Probation Department has operated a specialized Domestic Violence unit since 1995. The goals of the unit are to help break the cycle of family violence, assist those victims already impacted by violence, and to safeguard victims and children. This is done through client rehabilitation and accountability by utilizing practices known to be effective, collaborating with outside agencies to connect clients with needed services, and partnering with law enforcement agencies. On average, the Domestic Violence unit supervises approximately 365 clients. These clients are convicted of both misdemeanor and felony offenses. The law mandates the completion of a 52-week batterers' intervention program as a condition of any grant of probation related to an act of Domestic Violence. Clients are referred to one of four Domestic Violence intervention programs in Sonoma County, which are certified annually by the Probation Department. Clients are required to work in group therapy on identifying triggers to violence, alternatives to violence, and communication skills. Most Clients report that the programming offered is life changing. Using validated risk and need assessment tools, the seven Probation Officers of the Domestic Violence unit develop individualized case plans that attempt to address the core factors that brought an individual into the criminal justice system. The Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment (ODARA) is a specialized assessment tool used to identify DV offenders requiring more intensive supervision and interventions, with a goal of increasing victim safety. These Domestic Violence Probation Officers also act to hold our clients accountable for non-compliance with the imposed conditions of probation and established case plans. Accountability and advancement of case plan goals are achieved through meetings with clients in an office setting, compliance checks in their homes and other community settings, and referrals to appropriate service providers. Probation Officers work closely with the victims of Domestic Violence. Victims are contacted upon an offender's initial placement on a grant of probation so that the probation supervision and future court processes can be explained to them. Ongoing contact with victims is maintained so their concerns, need for restitution, and emerging issues can be addressed as part of the supervision case plan.

SONOMA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

During the 2024 calendar year, the Sheriff's Office, including the Windsor Police Department and the Sonoma Police Department, investigated approximately 1,223 cases of domestic violence. These cases involved physical violence (intimate partner abuse and domestic battery), terrorist threats, stalking, false imprisonment, violation of domestic violence restraining orders, and assault with a deadly weapon. Sheriff's Office Patrol deputies responded to approximately 1,778 domestic violence related calls for service in 2024, compared to

2,285 in 2023. Thus far in 2025, the Sheriff's Office has investigated 796 domestic violence cases and responded to 1,137 domestic violence related calls for service.

Through a partnership with the Family Justice Center Sonoma County, victims of domestic violence are referred to centrally located advocacy services helping to achieve our goal of ending family violence in the County. The Sonoma County Sheriff's Office takes the issue of domestic violence very seriously and continues to collaborate with criminal justice partners to combat family violence.

SONOMA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

The Department of Health Services (DHS) recognizes that domestic violence is a public health issue. The physical and emotional effects of domestic violence directly impact the health and well-being of victims and their families, with the negative effects being felt long past the original injuries. Health Services remains a committed partner in working for the safety, support, and restoration of victims of domestic and family violence.

During home visits, our public health nurses, social workers, and community health workers actively screen for domestic violence and educate individuals on how to access community resources for support. Our Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health staff provide education to community health care providers to ensure that all women are screened for intimate partner violence. Staff members also participate in the Teen Health Advocacy Coalition, which works with community partners to prevent teen dating violence and sexual assault. Our contracted Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) provides 24-hour, seven days a week on-call forensic examination services for adult and child victims of sexual assault or abuse and works collaboratively with the Human Services Department, the District Attorney's Office, local law enforcement and community partners, such as Sutter Hospital, YWCA Sonoma County and Verity. DHS also helps support outreach efforts for the Family Justice Center Sonoma County, so that all victims of family violence are aware of the comprehensive services available to them.

SONOMA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Commission on the Status of Women

A central focus of the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women is the broad impact of violence against women and children on the entire community. The effects of domestic violence extend far beyond physical harm to psychological and financial trauma, homelessness, and multigenerational abuse. We advocate for community-based organizations and community wide campaigns that work towards eradicating domestic violence, protecting victims, and providing services to victims in need. The Commission is resolute in raising awareness about this issue by participating in national domestic and family violence initiatives and continues to collaborate with and support community partners such as the Santa Rosa Violence Prevention Partnership, Verity - Sonoma County's Rape Crisis Center, and Sonoma County YWCA.

In addition, our Junior Commission's Intimate Partner Violence legacy project strives to raise awareness

around the signs of dating violence and what a healthy dating relationship looks like at high schools throughout the Sonoma County.

Employee Assistance Program/Workplace Violence Prevention

The County's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider, [Optum <https://sonomacounty.gov/employee-assistance-program>](https://sonomacounty.gov/employee-assistance-program), provides information, guidance and support to County departments/agencies, its employees, retirees, and their family who are impacted by domestic violence which include:

- ☐ Six (6) face-to-face, text, phone, or virtual visits with a counselor per situation
- Critical Incident support and counseling
- Group trainings and educational sessions
- Legal and Financial Services
- Work/Life Services
- Online Resources, Training and Tools

Additionally, the Workplace Violence Prevention Unit supports County departments/agencies and employees to identify potential threats of violence, including the possibility of domestic violence in the workplace. Threats can be reported to any manager or supervisor, or anonymously, and will be investigated thoroughly. All employees are trained annually on reporting and encouraged to speak up immediately if they observe concerning behaviors.

SONOMA COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

The Human Services Department (HSD) provides programs that support the safety, well-being, and self-determination of the children, families and communities we serve. All HSD safety net programs serve participants that have experienced violence and trauma in their lives, including domestic violence. Participants are supported by our staff, in close collaboration with our County and community partners, to connect them with the resources they need to heal and recover. Child Protective Services and Adult Protective Services work to protect and support vulnerable children, older adults and adults with disabilities who are experiencing abuse and neglect. HSD is the lead agency for the Redwood Children's Center, located at the Family Justice Center, where a specialized multi-disciplinary team interviews child and dependent adult victims of sexual abuse or assault in a welcoming and compassionate environment where they only have to tell their story once to get all of the help they need.

YWCA SONOMA COUNTY

"Our vision is for every family in Sonoma County to live healthy, productive lives & be safe in their own homes."

All of us have been impacted by the devastating news of a marked increase in domestic violence incidents and

deaths of local Sonoma County residents for this calendar year. Sadly, thus far in 2025 there have been six incidents of domestic violence which included the loss of life of 15 individuals. This is in comparison to one or two circumstances of this kind in previous years. Nationally and locally, domestic violence-related homicide and suicide rates are on the rise. For YWCA Sonoma County, we remain steadfast and committed to our vital and singular role providing Sonoma County's ONLY 24/7 Domestic Violence Crisis Hotline, answered from within the walls of the County's ONLY confidential Safe House shelter, a refuge for families fleeing violence in the place where we should all feel the safest: inside our own homes. Our DV Crisis Hotline is still the most direct path to support for families in need at any hour of the day or night.

Safety planning and advocacy strategies to ensure relief are at the forefront of every call we receive. YWCA's vital role in our community has never been more evident. Further expanding our reach, YWCA operates multiple childcare centers county-wide and Counseling Support Services where healing begins with a conversation. Only with the support of an informed community will YWCA end the cycle of violence for local families. Therefore, members of our community are encouraged to participate in YWCA's scheduled Domestic Violence Awareness Month events to raise much needed funding in support of our programming. Log on to ywcasc.org to register and for more details.

Prior Board Actions:

Since 1982, the Board of Supervisors has proclaimed October to be Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The District Attorney's Office has joined with the Probation Department, Sheriff's Office, Health Services, Human Services and Human Resources' Commission on the Status of Women, with support from our community-based partners in requesting this proclamation. All partners join in the request for recognition of Sonoma County's efforts to prevent and respond to domestic violence.

FISCAL SUMMARY**Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

No fiscal impact.

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

Resolution

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

N/A