



# COUNTY OF SONOMA

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

## SUMMARY REPORT

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**Agenda Date:** 6/6/2023

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**To:** Board of Supervisors

**Department or Agency Name(s):** Human Services, District Attorney, Sheriff's Office

**Staff Name and Phone Number:** Paul Dunaway 565-3673, Laura Rania, 565-4031, Carla Rodriguez 565-2311, Heidi Keith 565-2812

**Vote Requirement:** Majority

**Supervisorial District(s):** Countywide

### **Recommended Action:**

Adopt a Gold Resolution proclaiming June 2023 as Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month In Sonoma County. (Countywide)

### **Executive Summary:**

Adopt a Gold Resolution proclaiming June 2023 as Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month In Sonoma County. (Countywide)

### **Discussion:**

Addressing the growing issue of elder and dependent adult abuse in Sonoma County requires a collective approach between county departments in partnership with community agencies. No single agency can provide all the care and services needed to adequately address and ameliorate elder and dependent abuse in our community. Older adults aged 60+ account for 27% of Sonoma County's total population, a number that is projected to increase to 33% by 2030. Adult Protective Services (APS) projects that reports could grow by 14% to about 6,400 reports per year by 2026. The urgency and complexity are also growing as social workers and public health nurses assist victims of abuse who have also been impacted by the county's collective trauma from fires, public safety power shutoffs, limited access to affordable housing, and the COVID-19 pandemic that disproportionately harmed older and other at-risk adults.

To address the growing population of older adults and their increasingly complex needs, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) has increased support for Sonoma County's APS and extended the Home Safe Program that assists clients who are at imminent risk of homelessness or who are homeless due to elder or dependent adult abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or financial exploitation. The Home Safe Program works to enhance health, safety, and housing supports for individuals receiving services through APS.

Throughout the month of June, each of the nine senior centers in the county will display a purple flag for each incident of elder abuse reported in 2022 in their respective communities. Additionally, Elder and Adult Abuse Awareness events and resources are shared on the Elder Justice Initiative Website:

<https://senioradvocacyservices.org/elderjustice/>

The following are agencies and services dedicated to raising awareness and responding to elder and dependent adult abuse and neglect within Sonoma County:

### **Elder Justice Initiative**

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Sonoma County's Elder Justice Initiative funded by the Human Services Department (HSD) Adult & Aging Division through a Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant received from the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES), continues to strengthen the safety net of community-based services and supports through increased education and awareness to help prevent elder and dependent adult abuse. This effort is led by the Senior Advocacy Services Elder Justice Coordinator and strengthened through the Elder Justice Coalition comprised of representatives from APS, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman, the District Attorney's Office, the Sheriff's Office, and other law enforcement partners and community volunteers collaborating to bring a more comprehensive response to individual victims. In 2022, the focus of the Elder Justice Coordinator was to provide easy-to-use resources for community partners and providers that serve elders in crisis situations.

**Adult Protective Services**

Abuse investigation for elder and dependent adults living in the community is the responsibility of APS. In calendar year 2022 APS received 6,029 reports of suspected elder and dependent abuse via its 24-hour hotline (707-565-5940 or 800-667-0404) and via its secure web form:

[<<https://sonoma.leapsportal.net/Intake/NewPublicIntakeReport.aspx>>](https://sonoma.leapsportal.net/Intake/NewPublicIntakeReport.aspx). APS provides mandated reporter training and collaborates with community partners to provide outreach to older adults throughout the year. In 2022, APS staff reached about 300 individuals through their virtual mandated reporter trainings and outreach efforts.

**Long-Term Care Ombudsman**

Senior Advocacy Services Ombudsman Program responded to 949 reports of elder abuse and neglect in licensed facilities in Sonoma County in calendar year 2022. Additionally, the staff and volunteer Ombudsman provided more than 16,439 information and referral consultations to long-term care residents, facility staff, and the community. Senior Advocacy Services also conducted elder abuse outreach and education to the community through 32 seminars about abuse and prevention, reaching 1,022 community members.

**District Attorney's Office**

The Sonoma County District Attorney's (DA) Office works closely with APS, law enforcement and other community organizations to ensure that elder abuse investigations and prosecutions are prioritized and that elder crime victims are treated with dignity. The DA's Office has appointed a chief deputy district attorney, two full-time deputy district attorneys, a district attorney investigator and two elder advocates to the DA's Elder Protection Unit.

Members of the Elder Protection Unit participate on the Financial Abuse Specialist Team and the Elder & Dependent Adult Multidisciplinary Team meetings. The DA's Office also participates in Sonoma County's Elder Justice Coalition Speakers Group, by speaking to elder members of the community, elder advocates, and other public service organizations to educate them about the risks of fraud, undue influence, physical and social isolation, assault, and neglect. When elders or dependent adults in this community are targeted by criminals, the DA's Office and law enforcement partners aggressively pursue justice for them in the criminal courts. The goals of prosecution include holding the offender accountable, obtaining protective orders to help keep elder victims safe, and ensuring court-ordered restitution. Our advocates accompany and support victims in court, as well as during in office interviews, or even home-visits, that our attorneys and investigators might need to conduct in order to prepare victims for court. Our staff also help elder victims secure counseling and other services, all in a safe, trauma-informed environment.

The DA has worked closely with HSD to provide legal services aimed at maintaining elder safety and has hired an elder advocate who is located at the Family Justice Center to help guide elder victims to critical community resources, regardless of the outcome of criminal investigations. As a result of these and other collaborative efforts, more elders in Sonoma County are receiving the security, services and support they need to lead safe, healthy, and fulfilling lives.

**Sheriff's Office**

The Sheriff's Office takes elder abuse very seriously and has signed a commitment to the Sonoma County Elder Justice Coalition to help improve justice for elders, and to participate in collaborative efforts to ensure older and dependent adults are safe and supported. The Sheriff's Office aggressively investigates allegations of elder abuse and works with the DA's Office to bring those guilty of preying on the elderly to justice.

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**Prior Board Actions:**

Gold Resolutions adopted proclaiming Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month in Sonoma County:

June 13, 2022

June 8, 2021

June 11, 2018

June 6, 2017

June 16, 2016

June 9, 2015

June 10, 2014

**FISCAL SUMMARY**

**Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

No fiscal impact.

**Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):**

None

**Attachments:**

Resolution

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

None