

Project Narrative

Problem Statement

1. Describe the geographical service area and the demographics of the victim population, and address unique characteristics of the victim population.

Sonoma County, located on the north coast of California, is the largest and northernmost of the nine San Francisco Bay Area counties. Sonoma County comprises 1,788 square miles of land and water, including acres of vineyards and more than 50 regional parks. Sonoma County is considered a rural/urban county with a significant number of unincorporated and geographically isolated areas. Although most of the population is clustered within the incorporated cities along the Highway 101 Corridor, a large percentage of the population lives scattered throughout the county. Fueled by job growth and attractive quality of life, the population of Sonoma County has steadily increased over the last 10 years to approximately 540,000 today. Sonoma County's largest city and county seat is Santa Rosa, with a 2016 population of 175,155 persons. Medical and social services are concentrated in the largest cities: Santa Rosa and Petaluma.

To provide a one-stop site offering access to multiple services, the Family Justice Center Sonoma County (FJCSC) was established under the purview of the Sonoma County District Attorney's Office in 2011 by a broad coalition of community members, victim advocates, law enforcement agencies, and prosecutors to respond to the serious incidence of SA/DV, elder abuse, dating violence, and stalking in Sonoma County. The FJCSC has already significantly improved access for victims in Sonoma County, and the Cal OES grant provides an exciting opportunity to strengthen and scale this impact to those with the greatest barriers to access in Sonoma County.

The target population for this initiative is geographically isolated victims of SA/DV in the northern, western and eastern regions of Sonoma County. These communities are characterized by high levels of poverty and a lack of access to a variety of public and supportive services.

SA/DV affects victims at all levels of society and in all kinds of communities, but victims in these target areas face additional challenges that result from living in mostly isolated close-knit communities. Fear of stigma, shame, community gossip and a lack of perpetrator accountability can often deter victims from seeking help. A lack of privacy due to the high likelihood that police, health professionals and domestic and family violence workers know both the victim and perpetrator can inhibit victims' willingness to access services in their local community.

2. Describe the gaps that exist for serving victims of crime within the service area and how the needs for services were identified.

A major goal of the FJCSC partnership has been the development of services to specific remote outlying areas of our county. The availability of Cal OES funding offers a tremendous opportunity to accelerate progress towards this goal.

While data on gaps in legal services for these underserved areas of our county is limited, Legal Aid regularly sends a staff person to La Luz, a major service provider in the Sonoma Valley, to meet with clients who cannot come to Santa Rosa. Their services are so much in demand that La Luz recently contracted with Legal Aid to double their hours. Legal Aid recently initiated a countywide mobile elder law program, and attorney appointments were booked out months in advance after just three months of operation.

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Santa Rosa (CCDSR) is currently Sonoma County's largest provider of emergency immigration assistance for victims of violent crime, including immigrant victims of SA/DV. CCDSR delivers emergency legal and regulatory protections, via

the U-Visa program and provides access to support services to protect victims and their dependents. Despite this leadership role, demand for U-Visa services for SA/DV victims far outweighs current CCDSR staff capacity and funding. Immigration Case Managers are able to serve only 20% of those eligible, and the current U-Visa waiting list has over 50 clients. This limited capacity to deliver services has impeded the agency from engaging in aggressive outreach to SA/DV immigrant victims in the underserved target areas identified in this grant application. As a result, many immigrants in the target communities fall prey to unscrupulous financial and legal providers who offer substandard or even fraudulent service and counsel.

3. Identify what victim-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally inclusive service needs exist in the service area.

The FJCSC and the key project partners have extensive experience in delivering trauma-informed culturally sensitive services to victims of SA/DV. The proposed services, including crisis intervention, counseling, criminal justice support and advocacy, will all be provided using this approach. The key to using this approach to effectively serve victims in geographically isolated regions of Sonoma County lies in three primary strategies to be carried out by the partners: 1) All mobile staff supported by grant funds will receive training in trauma-informed culturally competent service delivery; 2) Local organizations in the target communities, which often provide initial services to SA/DV victims, will receive information and training in implementing a trauma-informed culturally sensitive approach to victim services; and 3) Options for remote participation by victims in education and counseling such as free video conferencing will be explored.

4. Describe the need to expand collaborative efforts with service providers in the service area and how those efforts will enhance victim services.

The Family Justice Center movement is based on the principle that agencies across the spectrum of law enforcement, victim services, and social services work together to serve victims of crime and prosecute their offenders. Since its beginnings, the FJCSC has evolved through a careful process of establishing an infrastructure to support collaboration with a range of on-site and off-site partners. Close cooperation with the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors and the District Attorney's Office have helped strengthen the reach of the services that FJCSC provides. We are excited by the opportunity that Cal OES funding provides to further expand access to FJCSC partner services to SA/DV victims in the most underserved areas of our county.

5. Identify training needs for core service providers and volunteers.

Cultural sensitivity training is already part of the staff orientation provided by each of the project partners, and is also included in ongoing staff training. Cal OES funding will be used to further strengthen these trainings, and in particular, to incorporate information regarding the specific characteristics of the populations the project will address. As an example, the isolation of some of the target communities creates fear and suspicion of outsiders, and a lack of trust of formal institutions. This may be particularly true for communities with a high proportion of undocumented immigrants, who also face language barriers in connecting with institutions of the dominant society. As a result, victims are frequently less willing to report SA/DV and access services they desperately need.

The population of each of the areas included in the project has unique characteristics that require different strategies. The region of Guerneville/West County includes a disproportionate number of homeless individuals and veterans, and also is challenged by high levels of drug abuse. The Sonoma Valley/East County region includes large numbers of undocumented immigrants and people with limited fluency in English. While all target areas have high levels of

poverty, the Cloverdale/North County area is characterized by areas with some of the lowest median incomes in the county. Training of staff will provide them with information on the unique needs of these populations and how to most effectively serve them. Part of cultural sensitivity training for staff and volunteers serving these communities will include strategies for building trust and developing alliances in order increase the willingness of victims to come forward and to access services. In addition to cultural sensitivity training, project partners include cultural competency as a criterion in the staff selection process, so that those delivering the services also understand the lived experience of clients.

b. Plan**1) Describe the improvements to victim services that will be implemented through the Program.**

The primary improvement to victim services that will be experienced as a result of this program improvement will be the enhanced delivery of services to the geographically isolated areas of Sonoma County. Presently clients from the outlying areas are frequently unable to access services due to lack of transportation. By providing services in the community where these victims live we expect to see an increase in client numbers served.

2) Describe how the gaps in victim services will be addressed.

The primary gap in victim services is service delivery to the outlying and geographically isolated areas of Sonoma County. This application is designed to address this specific problem. Presently services are concentrated in Santa Rosa, creating a need for victims of SA/DV to frequently travel long distances. This application will assist in alleviating this problem, placing DV/SA advocates and attorneys in the communities where they live.

3) Describe a timeline for implementation of Program activities.

Implementation of program activity will begin immediately upon notice of funding. We anticipate the hiring of outreach staff will take place during the months of January and February, with services to begin during the month of March.

We will secure locations for service delivery in the isolated regions of Sonoma County during the first two months of funding availability. Staff hiring will occur simultaneously, during the months of January and February. We anticipate that program activities will kick-off during March 2019.

4) Describe the plan for collaborating with service providers.

The Family Justice Center movement is based on the principle that agencies across the spectrum of law enforcement, victim services, and social services work together to serve victims of crime and prosecute their offenders. Since its beginnings, the FJCSC has evolved through a careful process of establishing an infrastructure to support collaboration with a range of on-site and off-site partners. Close cooperation with the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors and the District Attorney's Office have helped strengthen the reach of the services that FJCSC provides. We are excited by the opportunity that Cal OES funding provides to further expand access to FJCSC partner service to SA//DV victims in the most underserved areas of our County.

5) Describe the plan for training core service providers and volunteers.

Training for core service providers and volunteers takes place at their 'home' partner organization. Domestic violence advocates receive 40 hours of DV training provided by the YWCA. Sexual assault advocates receive 40 hours of sexual assault training provided by Verity.

6) Describe how services will be sustained after the Program ends.

It is our intention to utilize the grant period as a pilot of this project approach, gathering data and developing resources for ongoing funding. The Family Justice Center Sonoma County Foundation exists for just such a purpose. We will keep them apprised of project progress, generate their enthusiasm for the project and include them in the funding solution.

c. Capabilities**1) Describe the services currently provided within the service area to victims and how services are accessed.**

Presently services are offered in the areas of domestic violence, sexual assault, elder abuse and child abuse. Services are accessed on a drop-in basis at the FJCSC.

2) Describe the organization's expertise in implementing victim service programs effectively.

The strength of the FJCSC lies in its network of collaborative, co-located partners. The FJCSC has received state and national recognition as a model program for services to victims of family violence and is a member of the California Family Justice Initiative (CFJI) and is an affiliated member of the National Family Justice Center Alliance (NFJCA). These memberships enable the FJCSC to keep current on the most recent developments in best practices for co-located SA/DV services. Since opening in August 2011, the FJCSC has served over 10,000 victims of family violence. Wes Winter, Executive Director of the FJCSC, will serve as the project director, and will bring his significant expertise in providing administrative and fiscal oversight for multi-partner service initiatives.

Verity (formerly United Against Sexual Assault) has served victims of rape and sexual violence in Sonoma County for 44 years. Verity includes a paid staff of 24 and more than 60

volunteers, and is a founding partner of the FJCSC. Verity co-locates 3.5 FTE SA advocate positions at the FJCSC, and operates the only 24/7 rape crisis line in the county.

The YWCA Sonoma County established one of the first fifteen sanctuaries for survivors of domestic violence in the United States, and is recognized today as a model facility for best practices by the Office on Violence Against Women and the California Health and Human Services Agency. The YWCA co-locates SA/DV victim advocates at the FJCSC, who provide advocacy and supportive services to DV victims. It also provides the FJCSC lead advocate/navigator who coordinates comprehensive services for victims, including access to physical and behavioral health services.

For SA/DV victims who are immigrants, project partner CCDSR brings over 25 years of immigration service experience, and the depth of knowledge, reputation, and community ties needed to scale immigration services to mobile sites to the three target areas. CCDSR is a Board of Immigration Appeals recognized office, and is the largest nonprofit provider of immigration legal assistance in the State north of the Golden Gate Bridge.

Legal Aid of Sonoma County has provided legal services, including SA//DV services, for over 50 years. A founding partner of the FJCSC in 2011, it has provided mobile SA/DV legal services in remote county areas since 2008. All services are offered in English and Spanish.

3) Describe the organization's experience in administering grant funding effectively.

The Sonoma County District Attorney's Office will be the lead administering agency on behalf of the County of Sonoma, and the community-based organizations will be the collaborative partners in this project. This office has a proven record of working with CBOs and collectively understand the requirements for maintaining fiscal and program integrity.

The office has extensive experience administering federal and state grant programs. Renate Amantite, Administrative Services Officer II, MBA, is the financial manager providing fiscal and administrative oversight to more than nine different grant programs, comprised of over three million dollars. Additionally she administers and manages the department's budget and supports its employees while overseeing all administrative staff. She works closely with the Accounting Unit, an accounting technician and a senior account clerk, who have a total of over twenty years in accounting with 23 years working in this office.

Wes Winter, Executive Director of the Family Justice Center Sonoma County currently manages and reports on two federal grants. He has administered grants previously and has extensive experience working with and managing non-profit agencies.

The District Attorney's Office has actively been pursuing grant funding since 2002 to help fund much needed services and programming for our growing population. The County of Sonoma and the Office of the District Attorney have policies and procedures in place for all stages of grant processing.

4) Describe the organization's experience collaborating with victim service providers in the community.

The FJCSC was formed in 2011 through a collaboration of victim service organizations and continues to operate as such to this very day. There are 11 on-site organizations, both nonprofit and governmental, providing services and an additional 21 partners located throughout the community. The idea of collaboration lies at the very heart of the FJCSC and is its primary strength.