



Legislation Text

File #: 2024-0451, **Version:** 1

To: Board of Supervisors

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

Staff Name and Phone Number: Paul Dunaway (707) 565-3673, Laura Rania (707) 565-4031, Carla Rodriguez (707) 565-2311, Connie Newton (707) 565-8884

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Recommended Action:

Adopt a Gold Resolution proclaiming June 2024 as Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month in Sonoma County.

Executive Summary:

The Sonoma County Human Services Department requests that the Board of Supervisors designate June 2024 as Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month in Sonoma County.

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 mitigate elder and dependent adult 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) reports of suspected elder and dependent adult abuse have gone from 5,174 in 2018 to 6,560 in 2023, representing a 27% increase in reports. The urgency and complexity is 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.

Sonoma County's Elder Justice Initiative was created to strengthen the safety net of community-based services and supports through increased education and awareness to help prevent elder and dependent adult abuse. The following agencies work collaboratively to prevent and address abuse in our community:

Adult Protective Services

APS is responsible for investigating reports of abuse for elder and dependent adults living in the community. APS receives reports of suspected abuse via its 24-hour hotline (707-565-5940 or 800-667-0404) and secure web form at <https://sonoma.leapsportal.net/Intake/NewPublicIntakeReport.aspx>. APS provides mandated reporter training and collaborates with community partners to provide outreach and education to older adults. In 2023, APS provided 7 mandated reporter trainings.

Long-Term Care Ombudsman

The Senior Advocacy Services Ombudsman Program responded to 925 reports of elder abuse and neglect in licensed facilities in Sonoma County in 2023. The staff and volunteer Ombudsman provide information and referral consultations to long-term care residents, facility staff, and the community.

District Attorney's Office

The Sonoma County District Attorney's (DA's) 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 assigned a chief deputy district attorney, two full-time deputy district attorneys, a district attorney investigator, and an elder advocate 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 participated 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 our 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 pursuing court-ordered restitution. Attorneys and investigators conduct home visits to prepare victims for court, and elder advocates accompany and support victims through the court process. The DA's office also helps elder victims secure counseling and other services 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, 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.

Prior Board Actions:

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

June 6, 2023

June 13, 2022

June 8, 2021

June 11, 2018

June 6, 2017

June 16, 2016

June 9, 2015

June 10, 2014

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 23-24 Adopted	FY 24-25 Projected	FY 25-26 Projected
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	0	0	0

Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources	0	0	0

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

None

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

None

Attachments:

Resolution

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

None