



Legislation Text

File #: 2020-0962, **Version:** 1

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
Department or Agency Name(s): District Attorney
Staff Name and Phone Number: Renate Amantite 565-3150
Vote Requirement: Majority
Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:

District Attorney Victim/Witness Assistance Program

Recommended Action:

Adopt a resolution to authorize the District Attorney to sign a contract with the California Office of Emergency Services to continue participation in the Victim/Witness Assistance Program and accept \$810,601 in grant funding for the term October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021.

Executive Summary:

Board approval and authorization is requested to allow the District Attorney to continue participation in the Victim/Witness Assistance Program funded by the California Office of Emergency Services, for \$810,601 for the 2020-21 Federal fiscal year (FFY). These funds are designated to pay for the salary and benefits of 6.0 full-time equivalent Victim Witness Advocate II positions, annual Victim Services Training, and the yearly fee required to provide advocates the ability to communicate with victims via text message from the District Attorney case management system.

Discussion:

The purpose of this grant is to ensure advocacy is provided to all adult and juvenile crime victims going through the criminal justice system and to do so as soon as possible after a crime has occurred; to reach out and offer services to victims even if the decision is made to not pursue prosecution; to collaborate with law enforcement, community based organizations, and other victim service organizations to provide a comprehensive response to meeting the needs of crime victims in Sonoma County; and to provide community outreach and training to law enforcement, community based organizations, and the community at large on the services available to crime victims through the Sonoma County District Attorney's Victim Services Division.

The District Attorney's Office has participated in the Victim Witness Assistance Program annually since 1986, and receives an award amount based on available combined State and Federal pass-through funds. The Victim Witness Assistance grant helps the County of Sonoma meet the victim and witness service mandates under California Penal Code Section §13835 and allows the County of Sonoma to provide comprehensive and optional services to crime victims and witnesses for all types of crimes, whether or not a suspect has been identified.

As a result of an ever changing environment, Victim Services Division has evolved to ensure victims' needs are met. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, victim advocates, restitution specialists, and support staff have been

equipped to telework and continue providing support and guidance in an already stressful time a victim might be facing. Over the next year, the District Attorney's Office will be updating technology to be ready to work remotely as needed in the future. Victim advocates continue to accompany victims to court but have made changes to also provide support virtually. During this grant cycle, the Victim Services Division will explore new innovative ways to participate in community outreach events and to reach victims via social media. The changes implemented due to COVID-19 have also been effective during times of local emergency where offices may not be open but services are still available virtually and victims do not experience a delay in receiving the support they need. By accepting this grant for FFY 2020/21, the Victim Services Division is able to maintain consistency in its staff and continue to make services available to victims in our community.

Victims often suffer emotional, mental and/or material losses. As a society it is imperative we help mend and restore these citizens to help prevent further harm to them, their families and their communities. The Victim Advocates funded by this grant provide important victim advocacy, helping victims understand and navigate the judicial system and help them make their voices heard throughout the prosecutorial process. They assist with Victim Impact Statements at the end of court proceedings which is one of greatest tools in helping victims heal. Victim Advocates also work closely with the Family Justice Center of Sonoma County (FJC) to better serve victims of family violence, providing referrals to agencies who can help with housing and financial needs, counseling and medical services, legal assistance, translation and immigration services, and more. Together with FJC partners, including YWCA; Verity; Council on Aging; Legal Aid; Catholic Charities; Sonoma County Sheriff; Santa Rosa Police Department; Sonoma County Human Services- Redwood Children's Center; Family, Youth, and Children Services; Adult Protective Services; and Sonoma County Health Services, Victim Advocates ensure that victims obtain the supportive services they need.

Prior Board Actions:

The Board of Supervisors has granted approval to accept the Victim/Witness Assistance Program funds since 1986.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 20-21 Adopted	FY21-22 Projected	FY 22-23 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	\$810,601	\$828,269	\$848,976
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	\$810,601	\$828,269	\$848,976
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF		\$17,668	\$38,375
State/Federal	\$810,601	\$810,601	\$810,601
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources	\$810,601	\$828,269	\$848,976

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

The current District Attorney budget includes salary and benefit appropriations and grant revenue so no additional budget action is required. Funding for this program is expected to remain consistent for the foreseeable future. Without any increase in grant funding, additional General Fund contribution may be required to cover increases in salary and benefits.

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

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

No staffing impacts.

Attachments:

Program Resolution

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

Grant Award Document