



Legislation Text

File #: 2022-0367, **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 565-3673, Gary Fontenot 565-5931, Carla Rodriguez 565-2311, Heidi Keith 565-2812

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisory District(s): Countywide

Recommended Action:

Adopt a Gold Resolution of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Sonoma, designating June 2022 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 2022 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 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 has increased support for Sonoma County's Adult Protective Services and extended the APS Home Safe Program that assists clients who are at imminent risk of homelessness 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 2021 in their respective communities. The resolution will be presented at the June 15th Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council Meeting by District Attorney Jill Ravitch. Elder and Adult Abuse Awareness events and resources are shared on the Elder Justice Initiative Website:

[<https://senioradvocacyservices.org/elderjustice/>](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

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, 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 Adult Protective Services, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman, the District Attorney's Office, the Sheriff's Office, law enforcement partners and community volunteers collaborating to bring a more comprehensive response to individual victims.

In 2021, the focus of the Elder Justice Coordinator was to provide easy-to-use resources for law enforcement and fire personnel responding to calls involving an older or dependent adult who required more assistance. Over 700 reference cards were distributed to law enforcement partners (Attachment 3). Fire personnel received a two-hour presentation on "Recognizing Signs of Elder Abuse" and first responders received information about the County's Information & Assistance (707) 565-INFO (4636) hotline, which is a valuable resource for challenging calls. This hotline is staffed by HSD social workers specializing in adult and aging issues and is available to all county residents:

<https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/health-and-human-services/human-services/divisions-and-services/adult-and-aging/area-agency-on-aging/707-565-info>

Adult Protective Services

Abuse investigation for elder and dependent adults living in the community is the responsibility of Adult Protective Services. In calendar year 2021, APS received 5,578 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>. APS provides mandated reporter training and collaborates with community partners to provide outreach to older adults throughout the year. In 2021, APS staff reached 500 individuals through their virtual mandated reporter trainings and outreach efforts.

Long-Term Care Ombudsman

Senior Advocacy Services Ombudsman Program responded to 1,342 reports of elder abuse and neglect in licensed facilities in Sonoma County in calendar year 2021. Additionally, the staff and volunteer Ombudsman provided more than 13,455 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 eleven community education seminars.

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 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 (FAST) and the Elder & Dependent Adult Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) meetings. The DA's Office also participates in Sonoma

County's Elder Justice Coalition Speakers Group, speaking with elder groups and public service organizations on a regular basis to educate older adults about the risks of fraud, undue influence, physical and social isolation, assault and neglect. When crimes are committed against an elder, the DA's Office and law enforcement partners aggressively pursue justice in the courts, including protective orders to help keep elder victims safe, court-ordered restitution, counseling and other services.

The DA has worked closely with HSD to provide legal services aimed at maintaining elder safety, and has hired an elder advocate who works out of the Family Justice Center to help guide elder victims to critical community resources. As a result of these and other successful 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:

06.08.2021 June 2021 designated Elder & Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month
06.11.2018 June 2018 designated Elder & Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month
06.06.2017 June 2017 designated Elder & Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month
06.16.2016 June 2016 designated Elder & Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month
06.09.2015 June 2015 designated Elder & Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month
06.10.2014 June 2014 designated Elder & Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month

FISCAL SUMMARY

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

None.

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

None.

Attachments:

Attachment 1 Resolution

Attachment 2 Elder Justice Reference Card

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

None.