



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 2022-0980, **Version:** 1

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**To:** Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

**Department or Agency Name(s):** District Attorney's Office, Probation Department, Sheriff's Office, Health Services, Human Resources - Commission on the Status of Women, Human Services

**Staff Name and Phone Number:** Anne Masterson 565-3772 and Tatiana Lopez 565-2822

**Vote Requirement:** Majority

**Supervisory District(s):** Countywide

### **Recommended Action:**

Adopt a Gold Resolution proclaiming October 2022 to be Domestic Violence Awareness Month in Sonoma County (Countywide)

### **Executive Summary:**

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The District Attorney's Office has come together with community partners to elevate the level of awareness surrounding this important issue.

### **Discussion:**

**Background:** On behalf of the many public and private agencies working together to improve services, and to prevent and respond to domestic violence, six departments - the District Attorney's Office, the Sheriff's Office, Health Services, Human Services, Human Resources - Commission on the Status of Women, and the Probation Department - have come together, with the support of our community-based partners, to seek a resolution proclaiming October 2022 as Domestic Violence Awareness Month in Sonoma County.

Communities around the nation come together during October to mourn those who have died as a result of domestic violence, to celebrate those who have survived domestic violence, and to honor and connect with those who work tirelessly to put an end to domestic violence. For over two decades, purple ribbons have served as visual gestures of support for victims of domestic violence. No one can pinpoint the history of the purple ribbon, but it symbolizes survival, courage, honor, and dedication to ending domestic violence. It is also used to raise awareness in communities about the crime of domestic violence and has been recognized by state legislatures.

### ***SONOMA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE***

The District Attorney has made domestic violence a top priority of her office. Senior attorneys are assigned to the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Unit and review every domestic violence case that is referred to her office. The senior attorneys prosecute all felony domestic violence cases in the county, and mentor more junior attorneys who handle all misdemeanor domestic violence cases. The cases are handled according to the vertical prosecution concept, which means the same prosecutor, specially trained in the subject matter, handles each case from filing determination through trial or plea and sentencing. These prosecutors work closely on their cases with the assigned D.A. investigator, victim advocate, and law enforcement agency detectives. Victim advocates and victim restitution specialists provide victims a variety of services related to victims' participation in the criminal justice system and to assist in recovering from crimes' devastating

impacts. Such services include court accompaniment, explaining the criminal justice process and crime victim rights, and providing assistance obtaining compensation and restitution to receive reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses related to the victimization. The District Attorney's Office employs several bilingual Spanish speaking advocates to ensure victims can communicate their needs, and understand their rights and options, in their own words. The District Attorney's Office is committed to working with our law enforcement, county, and community partners to hold family violence offenders accountable and to help victims heal.

Through a collaborative community response, The Family Justice Center Sonoma County (FJCSC) provides free wrap-around services through a single point of access to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, human trafficking, stalking, and elder abuse. Services include crisis counseling, therapy, restraining orders, immigration services, homeless services, navigation, case management, support and educational groups, Camp HOPE, and specialized advocates for elder abuse, domestic violence, and sexual assault.

The FJCSC has a strong history of collaboration, and its six founding partners, the YWCA Sonoma County, Verity, Council on Aging, Catholic Charities, and Legal Aid of Sonoma County continue to be central to the Center's work. Under the leadership of the DA's Office, the FJCSC's partnership has expanded over the past decade including the Santa Rosa Police Department, the Sonoma County Sheriff's Department, and the Redwood Children's Center, which provides a forensic interview center for children and youth who are victims of or witnesses to violence.

Since opening its doors in 2011, the Family Justice Center Sonoma County (FJCSC) has served over 15,000 victims of family and community violence, including over 2000 victims in 2021 alone. The FJC has also continued to offer services to youth through Camp Hope, which is the first evidence-based camping and mentoring program in the country focused on children impacted by domestic violence. The FJCSC has also developed and published a Domestic Violence Empowerment tool kit spearheaded by our Survivor group VOICES. Additionally, the FJCSC continues to provide immigration support for survivors of domestic violence and other crimes and various holistic services like yoga, art therapy, massage therapy, and reiki, helping survivors overcome their trauma, reclaim their futures, and restore hope.

### ***SONOMA COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT***

The Sonoma County Probation Department has operated a specialized Domestic Violence unit since 1995. The goals of the Domestic Violence unit are to help break the cycle of family violence, assist those already affected by family violence with the healing process, and to safeguard victims and children.

On average, the Domestic Violence unit supervises approximately 420 offenders. These offenders are convicted of both misdemeanor and felony offenses. The law mandates completion of a 52-week batterers' intervention program as a condition of any grant of probation related to an act of Domestic Violence. Offenders are referred to one of four Domestic Violence intervention programs in Sonoma County, which are certified annually by the Probation Department. Offenders are required to work in group therapy on identifying triggers to violence, alternatives to violence, and communication skills. Most offenders tell their Probation Officers that they have learned a great deal from participation in these programs. Many offenders and victims have relayed that attendance has literally, "changed our lives for the better."

Using validated risk and need assessment tools, the seven Probation Officers of the Domestic Violence unit develop individualized case plans that attempt to address the core factors that brought an offender into the criminal justice system. This past fiscal year Probation staff were trained to apply the Ontario Domestic Assault

Risk Assessment (ODARA); a specialized assessment tool used to identify DV offenders requiring more intensive supervision and interventions, with a goal of increasing victim safety. These Officers also act to hold offenders accountable for non-compliance with the imposed conditions of probation and established case plans. Accountability and advancement of case plan goals are achieved through meetings with offenders in an office setting, compliance checks in their homes and other community settings, and referral to appropriate service providers.

Probation Officers work closely with the victims of Domestic Violence. Victims are contacted upon an offender's initial placement on a grant of probation so that the probation supervision and future court processes can be explained to them. Ongoing contact with victims is maintained so their concerns, need for restitution, and emerging issues can be addressed as part of the supervision case plan.

### ***SONOMA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE***

During the 2021 calendar year, the Sheriff's Office, including Windsor Police Department and Sonoma Police Department, investigated 509 cases of domestic violence involving physical violence (intimate partner abuse and domestic battery). Additionally, the Sheriff's Office investigated domestic violence cases that were comprised of terrorist threats, stalking, false imprisonment, violation of domestic violence restraining orders, and assault with a deadly weapon. The total number of domestic violence calls Sheriff's Patrol responded to in 2021 was 2,573, compared to 2,965 in 2020. Thus far in 2022 we have investigated 319 domestic violence cases and responded to 1,593 calls for service. Through a partnership with the Family Justice Center Sonoma County, victims of domestic violence are referred to centrally located advocacy services helping to achieve our goal of ending family violence in the County. The Sonoma County Sheriff's Office takes the issue of domestic violence very seriously and continues to collaborate with our criminal justice partners to combat family violence.

### ***SONOMA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES***

The Department of Health Services (DHS) recognizes that domestic violence is a public health issue. The physical and emotional effects of domestic violence directly impact the health and well-being of victims and their families, with the negative effects being felt long past the original injuries. Health Services remains a committed partner in working for the safety, support, and restoration of victims of domestic and family violence.

During home visits, our public health nurses, social workers, and community health workers actively screen for domestic violence and educate individuals on how to access community resources for support. Our Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health staff provide education to community health care providers to ensure that all women are screened for intimate partner violence. Staff members also participate in the Teen Health Advocacy Coalition, which works with community partners to prevent teen dating violence and sexual assault. Our Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) provides 24-hour, seven days a week on-call forensic examination services for adult and child victims of sexual assault or abuse and works collaboratively with the Human Services Department, the District Attorney's Office, local law enforcement and community partners, such as Sutter Hospital, YWCA Sonoma County and Verity. DHS also helps support outreach efforts for the Family Justice Center Sonoma County, so that all victims of family violence are aware of the comprehensive services available to them.

## **SONOMA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES**

### ***Commission on the Status of Women***

The Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women continues to bring awareness to the impact of violence, in particular against women and children, on the entire community. We advocate for community-wide activities and agencies that work to educate and eradicate Domestic Violence and provide services to victims in need. The effects of Domestic Violence can lead far beyond physical harm to psychological and financial trauma, homelessness, and perpetuation of abuse. The Commission is resolute in raising awareness on this issue by joining global movements and continues to collaborate with and support community partners such as the Santa Rosa Violence Prevention Partnership, Verity - Sonoma County's Rape Crisis Center, and Sonoma County YWCA.

In addition, our Junior Commission's Intimate Partner Violence legacy project strives to raise awareness around the signs of dating violence and what a healthy dating relationship looks like at high schools throughout the Sonoma County.

## **SONOMA COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

The Human Services Department (HSD) is committed to protecting vulnerable children and adults from all forms of abuse and violence, and to promoting maximum independence and well-being for individuals and families. Child welfare social workers, Adult Protective Services social workers, employment counselors, and eligibility workers all assess clients for experiences of domestic violence and refer to services as appropriate. If needed, social workers assist adult clients in obtaining protective orders. Children and youth reporting domestic violence at home may be removed for their own safety by child welfare social workers. HSD is also the lead agency for the Redwood Children's Center where a specialized and multi-disciplinary team interviews child and adult victims of sexual abuse or assault, preventing the need for separate and multiple interviews.

## **FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION COUNCIL (FVPC) AND SUBCOMMITTEES**

The Family Violence Prevention Council (FVPC) consists of over thirty members representing an array of agencies, departments, and organizations in Sonoma County. The FVPC's mission is to develop, promote, and enhance creative prevention and effective intervention initiatives to reduce the amount of family violence in Sonoma County. The FVPC provides an ongoing forum for collaboration among victim service providers, batterers' treatment providers, the courts, criminal justice partners, and civil legal services. The Council is co-chaired by the Sonoma County Superior Court and the District Attorney. The Council supports training, educational and outreach opportunities to raise awareness in the field and in the public on the importance of breaking the cycle of violence. The Council and its subcommittees, reviews, discusses, and updates law enforcement protocols and policies and court and legal practices, as necessary, to ensure consistency in response to incidents of family violence throughout our County.

## **YWCA SONOMA COUNTY**

**"Ending domestic violence in Sonoma County through education, awareness and empowerment."**

YWCA's vital and singular role in our community has never been more evident. Established in 1975, YWCA's 24/7 Crisis Hotline, the only one in Sonoma County, is still the most direct path to support for local families in need. Calls to our 24/7 DV Crisis Hotline in 2020 were on par with 2019 - however in 2021 we tracked an alarming increase of 46% of calls to our hotline. Equally of note is the increased complexity and acuity of the

situations callers are sharing with our team. Safety planning and strategies to ensure relief are at the forefront of every call we receive. During Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October, we invite the community to support us at our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual “Y I Run” Fun Run/Walk at Spring Lake on Saturday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>. Learn more at [ywcasc.org](http://ywcasc.org).

**Prior Board Actions:**

Since 1982, the Board of Supervisors has proclaimed October to be Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The District Attorney’s Office has joined with the Probation Department, the Sheriff’s Office, Health Services, Human Services and Human Resources’ Commission on the Status of Women, with support from our community-based partners in requesting this proclamation. All partners join in the request for recognition of Sonoma County’s efforts to prevent and respond to domestic violence.

**FISCAL SUMMARY**

<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>FY 22-23 Adopted</b>	<b>FY 23-24 Projected</b>	<b>FY 24-25 Projected</b>
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			
<b>Total Expenditures</b>			
<b>Funding Sources</b>			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
<b>Total Sources</b>			

**Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

No fiscal impact.

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

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

N/A

**Attachments:**

Resolution

**Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:**

N/A