



Legislation Text

File #: 2023-0143, **Version:** 1

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
Department or Agency Name(s): District Attorney
Staff Name and Phone Number: Shane Lewis 565-3150
Vote Requirement: 4/5th
Supervisory District(s): Countywide

Title:

California Governor's Office of Emergency Services Unserved/Underserved Victim Advocacy and Outreach Program

Recommended Action:

- A) Execute a contract with the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services for the Unserved/Underserved Victim Advocacy and Outreach Program.
- B) Adopt a resolution authorizing the District Attorney or their designee to execute a contract with the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services to accept the award in the amount of \$196,906 for the term January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023.
- C) Adopt a resolution adding 1.0 FTE time-limited Victim Witness Advocate position to the department allocation table through March 31, 2024, to support this program. Extending the position beyond the grant term will allow for continuity in the program in the event that grant renewal notification is delayed as it has been in the past.
- D) Adopt a resolution authorizing adjustment to the Fiscal Year 2022/2023 Adopted Budget necessary to appropriate these grant funds totaling \$71,423. (4/5 vote)

(4/5th Vote Required)

Executive Summary:

Board approval and authorization is requested to allow the District Attorney or their designee to sign a contract to participate in the Unserved/Underserved Victim Advocacy and Outreach Program funded by the State of California, Office of Emergency Services for \$196,906 from January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023.

The objective of the Unserved/Underserved Victim Advocacy and Outreach Program is to provide culturally appropriate direct services to victims of crime who are immigrants, increase outreach and education to immigrant communities, raise awareness of available services, and strengthen understanding of the criminal justice system.

Discussion:

Immigrants represent 17% of the County's 485,887 residents, including an estimated 38,500 who are undocumented. A significant number of the County's immigrants live in Santa Rosa, where the Latino population is concentrated in regions that experience high crime rates for youth violent crime, narcotics crime, gang crime, and child abuse and neglect. The almost 42,500 immigrant women are at particular risk of

victimization since immigrant women experience abuse at rates almost three times the national average. Immigrants in low-wage jobs, such as the 11,000 vineyard workers, are at risk of labor violations and physical and sexual abuse. It is difficult to document the full extent of victimization because the District Attorney staff and law enforcement do not ask about immigration status and immigrants report crimes at lower rates.

Eighty-five percent of the County's immigrants speak a language other than English at home and 55.5% speak English less than "very well". Eighteen percent of the foreign-born population lives below 150% of the poverty level, compared to nine percent countywide. The most common countries of origin include Mexico, the Philippines, and China. Community partners also report a significant Mixtec (indigenous migrants from Mexico) population who speak indigenous languages and are often isolated from other Latino populations.

Immigrant victims face unique forms of abuse, especially individuals who are undocumented or whose legal status depends on the abuser. Victims may be isolated, prevented from learning English or speaking with friends and family in their home country. Cultural stigma around victimization in some communities means that immigrants may be less likely to seek help. Some immigrants are not familiar with the laws and their rights in the United States, lack an understanding of the justice-seeking process, and mistrust the justice system. A fear of deportation means undocumented immigrants are even less likely to report crimes.

The Sonoma County Immigration Initiative launched in 2017, identified service needs based on input from immigrant communities, which included the need for specialized educational materials and outreach efforts, and better coordinated services. Through the Unserved/Underserved Victim Advocacy and Outreach Program (UV), the Victim Services Division (VSD) of the District Attorney's Office will develop and strengthen relationships with immigrant-serving agencies and build connections between these agencies and other service providers. VSD will share information about new services available through the UV program with all partners and teams, and promote coordinated efforts to conduct outreach, improve access, and provide services to better address the needs of immigrants.

This grant will allow VSD to increase its capacity to provide trauma-informed, culturally appropriate services for immigrants that meet their holistic needs. VSD will hire a 1.0 FTE Victim Witness Advocate (UV Advocate) dedicated to serving victims who are immigrants and collaborating with immigrant-serving organizations. The UV Advocate will strengthen relationships with community-based organizations that serve immigrant populations to better understand and respond to the unique needs of immigrant victims.

Established by the County Board of Supervisors in 2020, the Office of Equity develops and delivers equity focused training curriculum for County departments and supports equity-centered planning. The UV Advocate will coordinate with the Office of Equity to seek and analyze relevant data and develop specific strategies and interventions to ensure culturally responsive services.

The UV Advocate will be trained to provide time-limited therapeutic intervention to stabilize victims who are in crisis. The Advocate will assist with referrals for immediate needs to relevant support, and will link victims to ongoing, comprehensive care as well as to resources within the legal system for criminal prosecution and victim restitution. Victims of domestic violence or sexual assault will be referred the YWCA and Verity for additional crisis intervention services. Counseling partner Humanidad Therapy & Education Services has provided culturally sensitive bilingual therapy services in Sonoma County for 10 years. VSD will refer victims to Humanidad for culturally sensitive individual counseling. The provision of culturally competent mental health

services will be critical for serving immigrant victims because culture affects whether and how people seek help, how they cope with symptoms, the presence and quality of social supports, and how they impart meaning to their symptoms.

Providing education about the criminal justice process and support services to the many underserved populations that make up the immigrant community is vital to ensuring access and halting the cycle of violence. VSD will increase outreach and education to immigrant communities to build trust, raise awareness of available services, and increase understanding of the criminal justice system. A critical first step to providing culturally-sensitive services is to build trusting relationships. VSD will consult with the Office of Equity and immigrant-serving organizations, including Petaluma Health Center, Alliance Medical Center, Latino Service Providers, California Human Development, and Catholic Charities to develop a plan to conduct outreach that uses trusted messengers to reach a population that is understandably wary of public institutions.

VSD will also produce informational materials in multiple languages with information about victims' rights and available services. VSD will distribute these materials to partner agencies, including community-based organizations and first responders such as law enforcement and medical providers.

Strategic Plan:

N/A

Prior Board Actions:

N/A

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 22-23 Adopted	FY23-24 Projected	FY 24-25 Projected
Budgeted Expenses		\$125,483	
Additional Appropriation Requested	\$71,423		
Total Expenditures	\$71,423	\$125,483	
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal	\$71,423	\$125,483	
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources	\$71,423	\$125,483	

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

The CalOES funds of \$196,906 will be portioned between FY 2022/2023 and FY 2023/2024 budget. The revenue and appropriations for FY 2023/24 will be included as part of budget development. No local match is required.

Staffing Impacts:

Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)
Victim Witness Advocate II	\$5,139.53-\$6,247.45	1	0

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

The addition of a 1.0 FTE Victim Witness Advocate time-limited position will be fully funded by the UV Program. This Advocate will be dedicated to serving victims who are immigrants, collaborating with immigrant-serving organizations, making referrals as necessary and appropriate, and outreach and education to immigrant communities.

The end date of the grant-funded Victim Witness Advocate will be March 31, 2024, which will allow the position to continue beyond the contract's expiration in order to accommodate common contract renewal delays. In the event that the contract is not renewed beyond December 31, 2023, the non-grant funded position costs from January 2024 through March 2024 would be paid with salary savings by the department.

Attachments:

Resolution A - Grant Acceptance
Resolution B - Position Allocation
Resolution C - Budget Adjustment
CalOES Grant Award Document

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

N/A