



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 2023-0255, **Version:** 1

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**To:** Sonoma County Board of Supervisors  
**Department or Agency Name(s):** District Attorney's Office  
**Staff Name and Phone Number:** Marsha Lucien 565-8257  
**Vote Requirement:** Majority  
**Supervisory District(s):** Countywide

### **Recommended Action:**

Adopt a Gold Resolution Proclaiming March 2023 to be Family Justice Center Month in Sonoma County

### **Executive Summary:**

On behalf of the public and private agencies working together to improve services to victims through preventing and responding to domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, human trafficking, stalking, and elder abuse, the District Attorney's Office, with the support of our community-based partners, seek a proclamation naming March 2023 as Family Justice Center Month in Sonoma County.

The Family Justice Center Sonoma County (FJCSC) serves as a single point of access for survivors of domestic and sexual violence, where multiple agencies collaborate to provide comprehensive, continuous, and seamless care, without the survivor having to share their story multiple times and in multiple locations.

The Family Justice Center Model has received national recognition for its impact on survivor safety and healing. This proclamation, inspired by the California State Assembly Resolutions of 2020 and 2021 declaring March 5th a statewide Family Justice Center Day, is intended to bring local recognition and expanded community awareness of this valuable and lifesaving Sonoma County resource.

### **Discussion:**

This proclamation would declare March 2023 as Family Justice Center Month in Sonoma County and would recognize the lifesaving and hope-giving work of the Family Justice Center and its partners as they work to ensure that adult and child survivors of trauma can access all services through a single point of access. In a 2008 feasibility study of Sonoma County conducted by the Glen Price Group, it was determined that victims of family violence in Sonoma County may need to visit over 23 different locations within the county to access critical support and legal services. The development of the Family Justice Center Sonoma County resulted in the provision of a continuum of services under one roof so that survivors can access a complex array of resources in one location. Easy and accessible services reduce the trauma and challenges of negotiating multiple systems and barriers to gain safety and security.

Through a collaborative community response, the FJCSC provides free and confidential wrap-around services 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, holistic healing services, and specialized advocates for elder abuse, domestic violence, and sexual assault. The FJCSC also hosts Camp HOPE, a camping

and mentoring program for children and teens impacted by domestic violence.

The Family Justice Center framework has been recognized by U.S. Vice President and former U.S. Senator Kamala Harris and was selected by the Department of Justice as a best practice model for domestic violence intervention and prevention services. Additionally, since the first Family Justice Center Initiative was created by President George W. Bush in 2003, the model has continued to receive presidential endorsements, including the Obama and Trump Administrations, as an innovative approach to victim services.

The FJCSC has a strong history of collaboration, and its six founding partners, the District Attorney's Office, 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 District Attorney's Office, the FJCSC's partnership has expanded over the past decade to include the Santa Rosa Police Department, Sonoma County Sheriff's Department, Inter-tribal Council of California, Ruthless Kindness, and Redwood Children's Center, which provides forensic interviews for children and youth who are victims of or witnesses to violence. The FJCSC's work would not be possible without the partnerships with the County's sexual assault provider, domestic violence and human trafficking agencies, prosecutors' offices, law enforcement agencies, and other professionals and community-based organizations.

Since opening its doors in 2011, the FJCSC has served over 17,000 victims of family and community violence, including over 1,700 distinct victims in 2022 alone. The FJCSC has developed and published an Empowerment Toolkit initiated by the survivor advocacy group, VOICES. Additionally, the FJCSC continues to provide growth and healing opportunities for survivors through various holistic services like yoga, art therapy, massage therapy, and reiki, helping survivors overcome their trauma, reclaim their futures, and restore hope.

The FJCSC 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 violence. Camp HOPE was awarded the 2022 Outstanding Youth initiative of the year. The vision for Camp HOPE is to break the generational cycle of family violence by offering healing and hope to children who have witnessed family violence. The Camp HOPE America Program is a strengths and character-based summer camp and mentoring model with a six-day, sleep-away camp, and year-round mentorship activities. While the research on exposure to domestic violence continues to emerge, existing evidence suggests children affected by trauma are at risk for increased anxiety and depression, social isolation, increased physical and psychological aggression, and a propensity to perpetuate the cycle of domestic violence. The higher the exposure to childhood trauma, the higher the rates of illness, disease, and criminality in adults. It is the belief of the national program that by investing in our youth using the evidence-based hope theory integrated into Camp HOPE activities and curriculum, we can significantly decrease the instances of domestic violence, strangulation, and sexual assault in one generation. Through this work, safer communities can be created, prison populations can be lowered, and the cycle of violence can be stopped.

For the past seven years, FJCSC has been working to develop a better understanding of polyvictimization in its client population. Polyvictimization is the cumulative impact of trauma that results from experiencing multiple types of victimization and other adverse events throughout one's lifetime, often at the hands of multiple perpetrators. Polyvictims are one of the most vulnerable populations served by the FJCSC and are up to 700% more likely to be victimized in the next year than those facing chronic victimization.

In 2016, the FJCSC was one of six Family Justice Centers in the nation awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime to develop and implement a Polyvictimization Assessment Tool that was designed to identify polyvictim clients, learn more about their traumatic experiences, improve services, and reduce risk of re-victimization. This demonstration initiative is the first and only existing research of its kind, informing the victim services and trauma field through its findings and data. It was determined that 91% of the FJCSC's clients are polyvictims, with clients reporting an average of 11 victimizations within the past year of their life. The Assessment Tool has delivered extremely promising results and prompted the FJCSC to adopt a whole person framework for clients, understanding that the victimization that has brought them through the door for service is complicated by the many other victimizations and adverse experiences they have experienced in their life.

The Family Justice Center framework of having a single point of service access provides increased victim safety, autonomy, empowerment, and reduced fear and anxiety among victims and their children. It allows for less victim recantation and minimization of their experiences, all while making service provision more efficient and collaborative. All of this taken together has led to higher rates of offender prosecution and increased reporting of crime, which, ultimately increases public safety for the County as whole.

This requested local observance is intended to spread awareness about this valued community resource and recognize the lifesaving and hope-giving work of the Family Justice Center Sonoma County. Our community must be aware of the realities of interpersonal and family violence and the very real way in which victims and survivors continue to need support to escape and recover from the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual trauma associated with their victimization. While great strides have been made in our County's response to these crimes, there is still a long way to go. Increased awareness of these victimizations and the availability of the FJCSC and its services remains a critical function of the fight.

The FJCSC will be offering several survivor-centered, restorative healing events throughout the month such as yoga, meditation, and art therapy. FJCSC partner, Ruthless Kindness, will be providing a no-cost veterinary clinic to survivors served by the FJCSC on March 9th. The FJCSC is also launching a financial literacy program for domestic violence survivors on March 14th. In addition, the FJCSC will be hosting a variety of educational workshops, social media awareness campaigns and an FJC community partner pledge to raise awareness and engagement around the FJC model and its services

**Prior Board Actions:**

N/A

**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 Impacts

<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):**

No Staffing Impacts

**Attachments:**

Resolution

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

N/A