

April 4, 2002

REPORT TO THE HONORABLE
MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER – DOCKET ITEM 202, APRIL 9, 2002

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is a significant problem in our community. For years, the City of San Diego has been a national leader in programs designed to successfully achieve the goals of preventing domestic violence incidents, prosecuting domestic violence crimes, and treating domestic violence victims.

The City Attorney, City Manager, and Chief of Police are recommending to you the establishment of a unique program, the first of its kind in the nation, designed to bring together in one place the professionals and volunteers necessary for the efficient and effective pursuit of these common goals. This program is the establishment of the Family Justice Center.

BACKGROUND

Domestic violence is a community issue. An estimated one to three million women are abused by their husbands or boyfriends each year. A substantial number of men are also victims of domestic violence. On average, more than three women are murdered as a result of domestic violence in this country every day. The large majority of domestic violence homicides are perpetrated by men against women. In 1999, nationwide, 1,642 murders were attributed to domestic violence, of which 1,218 victims were women.

Domestic violence is a health issue. About half of all female victims of domestic violence report an injury of some kind, and about 20 percent of them seek medical assistance.

Domestic violence is a workplace issue. Domestic violence does not stay home when its victims go to work. It can follow them, resulting in violence in the workplace. Thirty-seven percent of women who experience domestic violence report such abuse has an impact on their work performance in the form of tardiness, absence, inability to remain employed, and failure to achieve promotions. In addition, the workplace may be disturbed when a victim is harassed by threatening phone calls or stalked.

Domestic violence is a youth issue. Approximately, one in five female high school students reports being physically or sexually abused by a dating partner. Eight percent of high school age girls indicated that a boyfriend has at one time forced the girl to engage in sexual

conduct against her will. Forty percent of girls age 14 to 17 report knowing someone their age who was hit or beaten by a boyfriend.

Domestic violence impacts children. In a national survey of more than 6,000 American families, fifty percent of the men who frequently assaulted their wives also frequently abused their children. For children, the impact of witnessing domestic violence can be devastating. Children may witness acts of domestic violence by being present in the room during the incident of abuse, by hearing the violence from another room, or by seeing their mother's bruises, black eyes, or broken limbs. Some children are traumatized and need intensive therapeutic interventions after witnessing the abuse, while others may require only removal from the situation and support. Clearly, the impact of living in homes where domestic violence is present is detrimental to the emotional, developmental and physical well being of those children. Studies reflect that at least 3.3 million children are exposed to domestic violence each year.

Over the last 15 years, the San Diego community has developed a comprehensive response to domestic violence. This response included the creation, in 1989, of the countywide San Diego Domestic Violence Council. The Council is comprised of more than 200 agencies, and functions through a network of 14 working committees. The Council has developed many protocols including the San Diego Domestic Violence Law Enforcement Protocol, a Medical Facilities Protocol, Treatment Standards and much more.

In addition, specialized domestic violence units have been established in the City and District Attorneys' offices, city and county law enforcement agencies, the County Probation Department and the Superior Court. All these programs have a proven track record. This collaborative regional effort has resulted in strong community partnerships, and significant increases in the number of domestic violence prosecutions, indicating increased awareness and willingness of victims to press charges, but with significant reductions in the number of reported homicides, indicating an increasingly effective deterrent effect. In 1986, there were less than 3,000 domestic violence cases reported in the City but 30 domestic violence related homicides. In 1991 the total reported number of cases rose to 11,739 cases, but the number of homicides declined to 22. In 2001, the totals were 10,666 cases and 10 homicides. Today, San Diego has one of the lowest domestic violence homicide rates in the nation for a large city. As a result, San Diego has been nationally recognized for the dramatic drop in domestic violence related homicides since 1985.

In spite of these efforts, domestic violence continues to be a problem throughout San Diego's communities. Men, women, and children continue to die. Each year law enforcement documents approximately 25,000 domestic violence incidents within the City and County of San Diego. Even more alarming is that many experts estimate that only 25 percent of domestic violence cases are actually reported. Victims often fail to report domestic violence for many reasons, including love, fear and not knowing that help is available.

The current system makes it difficult for victims to seek help, and unintentionally wears them down. Victims are required to travel from location to location to seek services and tell their story over and over again to numerous professionals. No agency is at fault. Indeed, as specialized programs have developed over the last fifteen years, victims have been required to

travel to more locations to receive the specialized, comprehensive services. It is a fact that domestic violence professionals and services are scattered throughout the City and County. As a result, even when victims come forward, they often become frustrated in seeking help.

The current system also makes it easier for sophisticated offenders to slip through the cracks and avoid accountability due to the high volume of cases, lack of resources, and a lack of communication between the various professionals involved in these cases.

There are many different facets to domestic violence – legal, medical, transportation, housing, social services, mental health, rehabilitation, financial assistance, coordination among professionals, and much more. Broad changes and improvements to the current system are necessary. Special attention is needed to develop a comprehensive coordinated community response to address the multitude of issues. The goal is to reduce domestic violence incidents, recidivism and homicides. Ultimately, our vision is for San Diego to be the first large city jurisdiction in America to see domestic violence homicides eliminated.

THE FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER

As mentioned, the City Attorney, City Manager, and Chief of Police are recommending a unique program, the establishment of the Family Justice Center, to pursue the goals outlined above. In addition to City personnel, key partners in this program include corporate and community leaders, nonprofit agencies, state and federal governmental agencies, foundations, and caring individuals.

The Family Justice Center will bring nearly 100 domestic violence professionals under one roof. It will consolidate City-wide efforts and expertise in order to provide more services, more safety and more justice to victims and their children.

The Family Justice Center will be the first facility in the country to house in one location the Police Department's entire Domestic Violence Unit, the City Attorney's Domestic Violence Unit, in-house and community based advocates, other participating government agencies, nonprofit domestic violence and sexual assault professionals, medical professionals, and volunteers. For the first time the criminal justice community will have the opportunity to offer a wide range of services and tap the expertise of many professionals from a single facility. Services will be centralized, and intervention and prevention professionals will work together in the same facility on a day to day basis.

The Family Justice Center will be centrally located in downtown San Diego, near the courthouse and public transportation, at 707 Broadway. It will have 27,000 square feet spread out over three floors and will accommodate approximately 100 domestic violence professionals. Floor plans have been specifically developed to handle the volume of cases, put victims and children at ease, and provide accessible services. The Center will have special waiting rooms for victims and children, medical facilities, and state-of-the-art interview rooms. It will also have multiple large and small conference rooms to allow for community meetings and training.

The Family Justice Center promises to be one of the most significant initiatives to help

domestic violence victims in this region in the past 20 years. Within five years, the Family Justice Center will offer comprehensive medical and legal services, counseling to victims and children, links to Juvenile, Family and Criminal court, as well as access to on-site professionals such as child protective service workers, probation, parole and border patrol officers, advocates, and the Kids in Court program.

The establishment of the Center will also facilitate the launching of new intervention initiatives such as the confiscation of firearms; providing increased supervision of repeat offenders; assisting high risk victims; providing meaningful probation for misdemeanor offenders; apprehending fugitives; and improving investigation techniques.

The professionals on site will work on prevention initiatives such as outreach to pregnant victims, young adults, and under-served victims, and will provide training to victims and other professionals.

The current partners in this program include: the Domestic Violence Unit of the San Diego Police Department; the Domestic Violence Unit of the San Diego City Attorney's Office; the San Diego Probation Department; the Union of Pan Asian Communities; Children's Hospital; the San Diego Domestic Violence Council; the Sexual Assault Response Team; UCSD Department of Pediatrics; the San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program; Navy and Marine Corps; the YWCA; and Travelers Aid. As the Family Justice Center grows, additional governmental and non-profit agencies will be invited to collaborate.

FUNDING

As mentioned above, the Center is proposed to be housed initially at 707 Broadway, with a five year lease including one 5 year option to extend. Initial funding is needed to cover move-in costs, cabling, equipment, furniture, and parking, as well as for the first year of the lease (FY2003). A breakdown of the budget for the move-in and first two years of operation is enclosed as Attachment 1. This budget does not include any new personnel costs, as existing personnel will be moving to the new facility. As can be seen, initial funding in the amount of \$433,500 for move-in and \$744,000 for the first year operations is needed, for a total of \$1,177,500. Expenses for succeeding years escalate as rent increases. With funding secured, the doors of the Family Justice Center will open, and a multi-disciplinary team of professionals will be mobilized to begin implementation of new objectives, goals, strategies and programs to enhance its response to domestic violence. Without this funding, the project will fail.

Funding for the move-in is proposed from a variety of sources. Generously, Council Districts 2, 3, and 8, and the Mayor have offered a total of \$150,000 in CDBG funds to assist with move-in costs. In addition, District 4 has generously committed \$50,000 from its Infrastructure Improvement Fund. The City Attorney has identified a total of \$81,000 in current programs in his budget that he is proposing to transfer to fund the first year of the Center. This transfer sacrifices critical needs for the City Attorney's Office, but represents the importance of this project to the City Attorney and his commitment to make it a reality. In addition, the City

Attorney and City Manager propose to immediately authorize the expenditure of \$147,500 in currently available funds from a critically necessary computer upgrade project for the City Attorney's Office until such time as additional grant funding is obtained for the Center. A federal grant application for a total of \$300,000 per year for 2 years is pending with the U.S. Department of Justice, and we hope to be awarded this grant in July, 2002. Verizon Wireless, our first corporate sponsor, has previously granted to the City \$5,000 to be used for the Center, and is also considering an additional grant of \$25,000 towards the project. If these grants are approved and received, these funds would be used in lieu of the computer upgrade project funding that would be used initially to begin operation of the Center.

To fund the first year of operations (FY2003), the California Endowment has generously provided the City of San Diego with a \$500,000 challenge grant, which means that the California Endowment is matching, dollar for dollar, any allocation by the City or other donation made to the Family Justice Center up to \$500,000. \$400,000 of this grant is available for the first year of operations. The City Attorney has also filed an application for a CDBG/Social Services grant that could provide \$100,000 per year for three years. The CDBG application will be heard by the City Council in the coming weeks. The pending grant application is being processed through the City's new objective grading system. If the City Attorney's grant does not score well, the City Attorney would allocate additional automation funds on a temporary basis until other grant funds can be identified. No action on the CDBG application is required by the Council prior to the formal process being concluded. Finally, the City Attorney has identified an additional \$244,000 from the computer upgrade project that will be available for the first year of operations.

In sum, a total of \$433,500 has been identified that may be allocated immediately for the project for move-in costs. An additional \$744,000 in future available funds has been identified for the first year of operations. This funding will permit the establishment of the Center and its operation for the first year.

For FY2004, the second year of operation, a total of \$750,000 will be needed. Funds will come from the final \$100,000 of the California Endowment grant, \$100,000 from CDBG/Social Services (if approved), an additional \$300,000 from the Department of Justice grant now pending, an estimated \$50,000 from the City Attorney's Domestic Violence Fund, other City funds as may be available, and an aggressive program of grant funding and other fund raising at the local, state, and federal level as well as donations from the community, businesses, and corporations. A strategic fundraising plan for this purpose has been developed with the help of many community leaders. Funds for additional years of operation will be considered in future budget cycles. We are currently utilizing fundraising experts to develop a capital campaign for operating funds and for ultimate purchase or construction of an expanded Justice Center in 5-7 years.

RECOMMENDATION

The City Attorney, City Manager, and Chief of Police recommend that the Family Justice Center be approved and established by the City Council. The proposed project will provide a combination of services and interventions from one location to help victims and offenders break

the cycle of violence and develop healthy relationships.

This collaborative effort will provide more support to victims and children involved in domestic violence through improved case management and a more fluid exchange of information and resources. Bridging existing gaps will prove victims' accessibility to services and resources and make the entire process of reporting a domestic violence incident much less overwhelming for the victims and children involved.

The Family Justice Center will not only help victims, but it will also dramatically improve the quality of police investigations and ultimately increase convictions of domestic violence perpetrators. By increasing the conviction rates, there will be an increase in the number of perpetrators who will complete a mandatory 52-week Domestic Violence Rehabilitation Program. The combination of this extensive counseling for perpetrators in conjunction with the empowerment and education of victims and children will work in a synergistic fashion to reduce the rates of child abuse and domestic violence recidivism in San Diego, a worthy goal and

honorable legacy. We anticipate that the successful launch of the initial site at 707 Broadway will precipitate the long-term vision of a much larger permanent Center in the years to come.

Respectfully submitted,

/ S /

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Attachment 1
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