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REPORT TO THE HONORABLE  
MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

SAN DIEGO FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER UPDATE

**INTRODUCTION**

The San Diego Family Justice Center opened on October 10, 2002, with unanimous support from the Mayor, City Council, City Attorney, City Manager, Police Chief, Fire Chief, and over forty community organizations. The Family Justice Center and its camping operation, known as Camp Hope, have already become the most significant and comprehensive public safety initiative in the history of San Diego, combining law enforcement, prosecution, intervention, and prevention services under one roof to address family violence.

The San Diego Family Justice Center has become a model for the nation with the creation of the federal government's National Family Justice Center Initiative in the fall of 2003. Currently, the United States Department of Justice is conducting a competitive selection process to choose twelve communities to serve as sites for the first Family Justice Centers in the country to be modeled after the San Diego Family Justice Center. Over 170 communities in the nation are competing to be one of the first twelve sites to develop Family Justice Centers modeled after San Diego's Family Justice Center. In addition, the County of San Diego has begun a regional planning process designed to create specialized Centers around the County within the next five years. The vision is a network of Centers throughout the County with the largest Center in downtown San Diego, sponsored by the City of San Diego.

Since being featured on the Oprah Winfrey Show in January 2003, and receiving national and international media interest, the Family Justice Center has hosted site visitors from forty-five states and twenty-two countries. We are currently developing sister city relationships with the Canadian cities of Edmonton, Calgary, and Toronto, with the Gold Coast of Australia, and London, England. Each of our sister cities has planning processes underway to develop a Family Justice Center modeled after the San Diego Family Justice Center.

Camp Hope, as well, has garnered attention from across the country as the first dedicated camping facility of its kind in America for victims of child abuse and family violence. The planning for Camp Hope is currently in the project design phase and initial environmental review has begun at Lake Sutherland, the site for the main facility for Camp Hope. The City's Water Department, under Larry Gardner's leadership, has played a crucial role in working cooperatively with the Family Justice Center to help make Camp Hope a reality. Last summer, the first seventy-five children camped at Lake Sutherland in tepees and other temporary structures. You can view pictures of the first summer operation at [www.sdcamphope.org](http://www.sdcamphope.org). Executive Director Tiffanie Mills hired a part-time staff, recruited many volunteers, and together, they touched the lives of many hurting and at-risk youth who came to camp from domestic violence shelters and transitional housing facilities for domestic violence victims and their children.

The Family Justice Center also benefited greatly from the support of a new Foundation, the San Diego Family Justice Center Foundation, created to support Camp Hope, the day-to-day operation of the Family Justice Center, and the long-term capital needs of the Family Justice Center vision. The Foundation is led by Executive Director Sharon Smith and a diverse Board of community leaders.

More importantly, in the last eighteen months, the day-to-day operation of the San Diego Family Justice Center has served over 8,000 victims of family violence and their children at its downtown location at 707 Broadway. Volunteers and staff have received over 30,000 phone calls on the Center's toll free information line (866-933-HOPE). Presently, over 120 family violence professionals, including the Police Department's Domestic Violence Unit, the City Attorney's Domestic Violence Unit, and over twenty non-profit agencies, come together every day to provide services to clients from across the City. The results have been stunning. Since the Family Justice Center opened its doors, domestic violence homicides have continued their twenty year decline. In 2002, there were nine domestic violence homicides in the City. In 2003, there were seven domestic violence homicides. And in the last six months, there has been one domestic violence homicide in the City. Since its opening in October 2002, no one seeking services at the Family Justice Center has been a victim of homicide or suicide.

Tremendous credit for the success of the Family Justice Center belongs to Assistant City Attorney Gael Strack, Police Lt. Jim Barker, and Police Sgt. Robert Keetch who work collaboratively to oversee the daily operation of the Family Justice Center and the partnerships with over twenty on-site and twenty off-site community organizations that form the Family Justice Center collaborative. The Center also enjoys the services of a full-time, unpaid Volunteer Coordinator, Carolyn Wilson, who plays a critical role in providing volunteers to support every aspect of the Center's operation. Over fifty volunteers, including Chaplain Assistants, currently provide help to the professional staff of the Center on a daily basis.

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS**

Over the last eighteen months, the Police Department, the City Attorney's Office, and many other public and private agencies have been participating in a strategic planning process related to the future of the San Diego Family Justice Center. Strategic Plans have emerged for the next year, three years, and five years. The major issues being addressed in the strategic planning process relate to expanding critically needed services for adult clients at the current Center site, developing immediately needed services for children in homes with family violence, and creating a permanent home for the Family Justice Center in downtown San Diego.

As you are aware, the original strategic plan for the Family Justice Center envisioned two phases to the development process of the Center. Phase I, currently in operation, is focused on services for adult victims of domestic violence. Phase II, currently in the planning stages, envisions providing comprehensive services to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, and elder abuse. However, over the last eighteen months of operation the need for children's services has become paramount. Currently, the Center is seeing approximately 150 children per month, arriving with their mothers. Based on current research, approximately fifty percent of these children are also victims of actual physical or sexual abuse. The present Center has no services for these children. The pressing need for children's services at the Family Justice Center has become a paramount concern for all agencies currently working with the Center. The recent death of a 15-year-old girl, our first domestic violence fatality in San Diego in 2004, highlights the critical importance of providing services at the Center to address teen relationship violence as well as child witnessing of domestic violence and physical child abuse. Police Chief Bill Lansdowne has assigned a specialized officer to the Family Justice Center, Juvenile Division Officer Ben Jolly, to focus on the critical needs of teen victims of relationship violence. In addition, the Police Department has begun developing protocols to cross-train and cross-assign child abuse detectives to work collaboratively with the domestic violence detectives currently assigned at the Family Justice Center.

Most significantly, over the last three months, the Family Justice Center staff has been working with Children's Hospital, the Police Department, Childhelp USA, and the Real Estate Assets Department to develop a plan to provide immediately needed services for children at the Family Justice Center. During this planning process, an additional floor became available at 707 Broadway. The Shidler Group, current owners of 707 Broadway, have offered the City the space at a rental rate even lower than the rate currently being paid on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> floors of the building. This offer has allowed our planning team at the Family Justice Center to focus on a plan for adding additional space to the current Center. This matter will be coming before Council within the next 30 days, including additional lease amendments discussed below.

## **PROPOSED LEASE AMENDMENT**

The current proposal is to lease an additional 12,000 square feet of space on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of 707 Broadway to allow for the addition of other community partner organizations at the

Family Justice Center and to develop a Children's Advocacy Program, sponsored by Childhelp USA at the Center. The new Children's Advocacy Program will be a collaboration between Childhelp USA, the Family Justice Center, and the Chadwick Center at Children's Hospital. Childhelp USA has pledged \$5,000 per month for five years to offset the cost of the additional space. The City Attorney is also seeking additional grant funds to assist the City in funding the expanded space. The Real Estate Assets Department has been planning for the last two years for the additional needs of the Family Justice Center and funds are available in the Manager's FY2005 Proposed Budget to provide for the approximately \$180,000 per year necessary for the additional space. Childhelp USA has already begun their fundraising efforts to assist with the anticipated costs. In addition, Childhelp USA and Children's Hospital Chadwick Center will be providing staffing for the new Children's Advocacy Program at no cost to the City.

We have also begun a focused planning effort related to the Phase II vision for the Family Justice Center. Deputy Mayor Toni Atkins and Councilmember Jim Madaffer have assisted us in developing a Working Group to begin evaluating the potential use of the current downtown library building upon the completion of the new Main library in 2007-2008. Councilmember Michael Zucchet has assigned a staff member to this preliminary planning process as well. Representatives from the Police Department, the City Attorney's Office, the Centre City Development Corporation, the Commission on Arts and Culture, and the East Village Association will also be participating in this Working Group. City Manager Lamont Ewell will be chairing the Working Group with the goal of producing a possible plan for Council consideration in the fall of 2004.

The current lease for the Family Justice Center space at 707 Broadway expires in 2007. In order to provide adequate time for planning and potential renovation of the library building for community service center, arts and culture community, and Family Justice Center purposes, we will be seeking to extend the current term of the presently leased space to a five-year term beginning in 2004. This will allow adequate time to renovate the library building after the new library is completed and library operations move from the E Street site. This lease amendment is included in the action coming forward to Council. We anticipate broad community support for both the lease amendment and the larger planning process.

The Police Chief, the City Attorney, and the City Manager are recommending approval of the upcoming lease amendments in order to allow us to:

1. Provide for the needs of the Family Justice Center until a permanent site can be obtained for operation of the Center;
2. Meet the immediate critical needs of children coming to the Family Justice Center; and
3. Continue moving forward with the vision for the Justice Center as we set a standard for the nation and the western world in breaking the cycle of family violence.

Thank you in advance for your on-going support for the San Diego Family Justice Center. The Family Justice Center promises to impact the lives of thousands of hurting families

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in the years to come. The city, the county, the state, and the nation will benefit from your support for this vision. You each are playing a critical leadership role in helping us stop the violence and abuse that can damage and destroy the lives of so many in our community.

Respectfully submitted,

CASEY GWINN  
City Attorney

WILLIAM LANSDOWNE  
Chief of Police

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