



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

DATE ISSUED: October 16, 2006 REPORT NO. 06-150
ATTENTION: Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee
Docket of October 18, 2006
SUBJECT: An Update on the San Diego Family Justice Center Department

REFERENCE:

SUMMARY

This report is informational only. No action required.

BACKGROUND

The San Diego Family Justice Center opened its doors 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. Supporters included the County's entire Congressional delegation and state legislative delegation. The San Diego Family Justice Center (Family Justice Center) was launched as a public safety initiative of the City of San Diego under the leadership of the City Attorney's Office and the San Diego Police Department in order to address the issue of family violence.

Prior to the Family Justice Center, families had to seek help on their own and travel all over the city to get the needed services – sometimes as many as 32 different locations. The Family Justice Center makes the legal and recovery process less overwhelming to victims and their children. Victims of family violence, including domestic violence and elder abuse, in the City of San Diego can now come to one location to talk to an advocate, get a restraining order, plan for their safety, talk to a police officer, meet with a prosecutor, receive medical assistance, counsel with a non-denominational chaplain, get help with transportation, and obtain nutrition or pregnancy services counseling. Victims are also able to obtain clothing, food, and counseling for their children and forensic documentation of their injuries once they arrive at the Family Justice Center.

The Family Justice Center unites the following agencies/programs under one roof to provide comprehensive, wrap-around services to victims of family violence: Adult Protective Services; Cal Western Law School – Legal Internship Program; Camp Hope; Center for Community Solutions - TRO Clinic; Children's Hospital – Chadwick Center; Crime Victim's Fund; Military Liaison; President's Family Justice Center Initiative – Technical Assistance Program; San Diego City Attorney's Office – Domestic Violence and Special Victims Unit; San Diego Deaf Mental

Health Services; San Diego District Attorney's Office – Family Protection Division; San Diego District Attorney's Office – Victim Witness Assistance Program; San Diego Domestic Violence Council; San Diego Family Justice Center Department; San Diego Family Justice Center Foundation; San Diego Fire Department - Chaplain's Program; San Diego Police Department – Domestic Violence Unit and Elder Abuse Investigations Unit; San Diego Probation Department; San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program; San Diego Youth and Community Services – B-SAFFE Human Trafficking Project; Sharp Grossmont Healthcare – Forensic Medical Unit; Teen Court; Travelers Aid; and, the Volunteer Program. The Family Justice Center is located at 707 Broadway and occupies four floors of leased space.

President's Family Justice Center Initiative:

In October 2003, President Bush created the President's Family Justice Center Initiative (President's Initiative) designed to develop 15 federally funded Family Justice Centers across the country modeled after the San Diego Family Justice Center. To oversee the Technical Assistance Team for the President's Initiative, the San Diego Family Justice Center Foundation (Foundation) received a \$1.4 million grant to assist the 15 federal sites. Since the inception of the President's Initiative, eleven of the 15 demonstration sites have opened their doors. The rest of the sites are slated to open by the end of the year.

Beyond the President's Initiative, national and international momentum has been growing. In June 2004, the San Diego Family Justice Center in partnership with the Foundation created the International Family Justice Center Alliance, an informal sister city relationship, with other communities around the world moving toward the creation of Family Justice Centers modeled after the San Diego Family Justice Center. Currently, there are three international Family Justice Centers in operation in Croydon, England; Waterloo, Canada; and, Monterey, Mexico. Separate and apart from the President's Initiative, Family Justice Centers modeled after the San Diego Family Justice Center are opening or have opened in: Tacoma, Washington; Peoria, Illinois; Riverside, California; Anaheim, California; Chattanooga, Tennessee; Boise, Idaho; Clackamas County, Oregon; and, other communities across the country.

Governance:

The loosely structured collaboration under the auspices of the City Attorney's Office and the San Diego Police Department had succeeded in creating the Family Justice Center but a clear governance structure was crucial to its long-term success. In October 2004, a city ordinance was proposed to establish a new department – the San Diego Family Justice Center Department – to support and advance the mission, goals, management, and future challenges. On November 29, 2004, the Mayor and City Council unanimously adopted Ordinance No. 0-19339 thereby creating the Family Justice Center as a City Department. The Ordinance became final on December 29, 2004. The Council subsequently approved the allocation of five positions to staff the operations of the Family Justice Center, including a Director, Manager of Client Services, Grants Analyst, an Executive Secretary, and Clerical Assistant. In addition, a police sergeant continues to be on special assignment by the San Diego Police Department to work at the FJC as the Operations Manager. The Family Justice Center is also supported by federal and state grants, as well as funds raised by the San Diego Family Justice Center Foundation.

Family Justice Center's Budget:

Prior to becoming a City Department, the Family Justice Center was funded through the City Attorney's budget. Subsequently and for the first six month's of operation from December 2004 through June 2005, the Family Justice Center Department was supported by grant funds from the Office of the Violence Against Women. Beginning FY06, the Department budget was incorporated into the General Fund at \$556,964 for personnel and non-personnel expenses. Beginning FY07, the Department budget increased to \$671,422 for personnel and non-personnel expenses, not including rent and/or parking costs.

Budget Dollars at Work:

The early results of this innovative approach to prevention and intervention have been stunning. Victims are developing natural peer support systems by coming to a centralized service center. Detectives and prosecutors are developing closer working relationships, resulting in higher conviction rates of criminal offenders and a 5% reduction in domestic violence incident reports. Since its inception, the domestic violence homicide rate in the City of San Diego has declined, continuing a nearly 20-year decline as a result of consistent collaborative community efforts:

- In 1985, the City of San Diego suffered 30 domestic violence homicides
- By 1992, there were 18 domestic violence homicides
- In 2002, City of San Diego had nine domestic violence homicides
- In 2003, seven domestic violence homicides
- In 2004, six domestic violence homicides
- In 2005, five domestic violence homicides.
- In 2006, as of October 9, 2006, three domestic violence homicides have been reported.

From October 2003 through July 2006, the Family Justice Center, working in close collaboration with 25 on-site community partners, has served over 23,000 women, children, and men; answered over 134,000 phone calls; and, welcomed over 17,000 site visitors. Victims who have utilized the services located at the Family Justice Center have consistently given the Family Justice Center high marks and heart-warming hand-written notes.

Since 2002, the Family Justice Center has been awarded over \$2,625,000 in grants. The Foundation has contributed an additional \$310,000 to the Family Justice Center. In-kind donations such as volunteer hours, furniture, individual and corporation donations exceed \$1,000,000 to date bringing the total of outside funding to approximately \$4 million.

Steering Committee:

The Ordinance also created a Steering Committee that serves in an advisory capacity to assist the City Manager and City Council with long range strategic planning and making recommendations pertaining to programs, priorities, and the annual budget for the Family Justice Center.

The Steering Committee was convened on February 18, 2005. In attendance were Police Chief William Lansdowne, Fire Chief Jeff Bowman, District Attorney Bonnie Dumanis, Family Justice Center Director Gael B. Strack, City Attorney Representative Rupert Linley, Representative Dan

Coffer from Councilmember Jim Madaffer's Office. Councilmember Jim Madaffer was appointed the Chair. The Committee discussed the Family Justice Center's staffing needs, budget, and task of identifying a long-term governance structure for the Family Justice Center.

In 2005, the Steering Committee and a working group reviewed two alternate governance approaches, other than being a City Department, that were listed in the City Manager's November Report: 1) a public benefit corporation administered through a community-based governance board, or 2) a Joint Powers Authority between the City of San Diego and the County of San Diego. After much thought and discussion, the Steering Committee approved the working group's recommendation to maintain the Family Justice Center's governance structure as a City Department, eliminate the option of a public benefit corporation structure, and annually revisit the need for a Joint Powers Authority. The Steering Committee was provided with an update of the Family Justice Center's major accomplishments, the Family Justice Center Foundation, and Camp Hope. In addition, the 2004 Charrette Report from the Family Justice Center and Arts & Culture Center was provided, which identifies the downtown main Library as a potential site for the future permanent home of the Family Justice Center.

In July 2006, the Steering Committee along with the Strategic Planning Team of the Family Justice Center reconvened. Approximately 100 stakeholders were in attendance to revisit the Family Justice Center's strategic plan and challenges. In attendance were Police Chief William Landsdowne, Fire Chief Tracy Jarman, Special Deputy District Attorney Casey Gwinn, Assistant City Attorney Margaret Jacobo, Councilmembers Jim Madaffer and Brian Maienschien, and Family Justice Center Director Gael B. Strack. Councilmember Brian Maeinschien was appointed the Chair. Presentations from on-site community partners and survivors were made. Members of the Steering Committee pledged to assist the Family Justice Center address its three main challenges: security, space, and staffing needs.

Camp Hope:

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 permanent buildings at Camp Hope is currently in the project design phase and initial environmental review has begun at Lake Sutherland, a City-owned reservoir, the site for the main Camp Hope facility. The City's Water Department is playing a crucial role in working cooperatively with the Family Justice Center to help make Camp Hope a reality. In the first four years, over 400 children have been able to experience Camp Hope. Children participating in Camp Hope have come from the Family Justice Center, domestic violence shelters, child abuse treatment facilities, and transitional housing facilities for domestic violence victims and their children. With a generous grant from the Waitt Family Foundation, Camp Hope children will also be receiving long-term support and mentoring. Funds for the operation of Camp Hope for the last two summers have been raised by the San Diego Family Justice Center Foundation through private donations from individuals and corporations.

San Diego Family Justice Center Foundation:

The Family Justice Center has benefited greatly from the support of the San Diego Family Justice Center Foundation. The Foundation, a private non-profit 501c(3) corporation, was created to fund the day-to-day operation of Camp Hope, the long-term capital needs of Camp

Hope, to support the Family Justice Center operations, and to ultimately assist with the long-term capital needs of the Family Justice Center. The Foundation is led by a diverse Board of community leaders. The Foundation has become a critical community partner in the Family Justice Center and currently maintains office space on the 7th Floor of the Center at 707 Broadway and provides rent to the City for space used by the President's Family Justice Center Initiative Team. The Foundation has raised over \$4 million for the operation and development of Camp Hope and approximately \$310,000 for the Family Justice Center. It has also raised significant funds for public awareness and launched the Trevor Hoffman Poster Campaign.

The Family Justice Center Volunteer Program:

The San Diego Family Justice Center also has been enriched by the Volunteer Program launched in January 2003 by the San Diego Police Department. The Volunteer Program supports every aspect of the Center's operation. Over sixty volunteers, including Chaplain Assistants, provide daily help to the professional staff of the Center. They are a dynamic group of 100 committed and caring individuals who have collectively donated 44,585 hours (as of July 2006). Using the 2002 national average hourly wage of \$16.54, the City of San Diego has received \$737,435.90 worth of volunteer services. Volunteers are crucial to sustaining the operations of the Family Justice Center and Camp Hope in the years to come.

Forensic Medical Unit:

The Family Justice Center also joined forces with Sharp Grossmont Hospital to launch the Forensic Medical Unit in 2003. The Forensic Medical Unit provides forensic medical documents of domestic violence and elder abuse injuries, as well as limited medical services to victims and their children. In emergency departments around the country, victims of domestic violence who present with injuries rarely are offered resources to cope with their living situation. Hospitals are often poorly-equipped to deal with the complexities of domestic violence in their patient populations. By co-locating the Forensic Medical Unit within the Family Justice Center, the Forensic Medical Unit is providing early detection of internal injuries, mental, and psychiatric symptoms, and lethality assessments and referrals for medical care. Improved documentation of injuries assists the criminal justice system to provide victims of violence with timely services. By establishing a comprehensive forensic medical response, the health and safety of victims are improved and the medical documentation can increase the number of felony and misdemeanor convictions.

Conclusion:

Within four short years of operation, the Family Justice Center has achieved tremendous success and grown rapidly. It has gone from handling 87 walk-in victims and answering 650 phone calls per month to handling over 1,000 walk-in victims and over 4,000 phone calls per month – with no additional staff being added. It has been hailed as a model by President Bush, the Attorney General of the United States, the California Attorney General, and many local, state, and federal elected officials. It has received national awards from the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the National League of Cities, and a variety of other national organizations. Delegations from every state in America and over 50 countries have sent representatives from their communities to visit the Family Justice Center.

Today the Family Justice Center (including Camp Hope) has become a significant and comprehensive public safety and social services initiative addressing domestic violence in San Diego where law enforcement, prosecution, intervention, and prevention services are now available under one roof to address all aspects of family violence incidents.

Respectfully submitted,

Gael B. Strack
Director, Family Justice Center

Approved: Jill Olen
Deputy Chief Operating Officer
Public Safety/Homeland Security

STRACK/GBS

[Attachment\(s\): 1. Powerpoint for October PS&NS meeting](#)