



**OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF SOLANO**

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May 28, 2021

The Honorable Donna L. Stashyn
Presiding Judge
Solano County Superior Court
600 Union Avenue
Fairfield, CA 94533

Re: Response to 2020-2021 Civil Grand Jury Report Entitled: Solano County Family Justice Center Revisited

The Honorable Donna L. Stashyn, Presiding Judge of the Solano County Superior Court:

Under Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05, we are responding to the following recommendations contained in the 2020-2021 Civil Grand Jury Report regarding the Solano County Family Justice Center.

Finding 1- The SFJC is not meeting its Mission Statement and is not performing as a one-stop-shop for victims, adding stress to an already stressful situation.

Response to Finding 1 - The District Attorney and Solano Family Justice Center (SFJC) disagree with this finding. The SFJC has always worked to ensure that essential services are rendered such as: domestic violence advocacy, court accompaniment, restraining orders, crisis intervention, safety planning, and basic need assistance. A Family Justice Center is defined in Penal Code section 13750 as a multiagency, multidisciplinary center where public and private agencies assign staff members on a full-time or part-time basis in order to provide services to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, elder or dependent abuse, and human trafficking from one location in order to reduce the number of times a victim has to tell their story, reduce the number of places a victim must go for help, and increase access to services and support for victims and their children. Pursuant to Penal Code section 13750(c), "Staff members at a family justice center **may** be comprised of, but are not limited to, the following: law enforcement personnel, medical personnel, District Attorney, victim witness program personnel, domestic violence shelter service staff, community based rape crisis, domestic violence and human trafficking advocates, social service agency staff members, child welfare agency social workers, county health department staff, city or county welfare and public assistance workers, non-profit agency counseling professionals, civil legal service providers, supervised volunteers from partner agencies, and other professionals providing services."

The Solano Family Justice Center currently has the following personnel on-site:

- **Office of Family Violence Prevention**
 - SFJC Director
 - SFJC Social Workers

- **Law Enforcement Personnel** - District Attorney Investigator on-site as needed
- **Deputy District Attorneys** – on-site as needed
- **Victim Witness Program Personnel** -Victim Witness Advocate
- **Domestic Violence Shelter Service Staff**- SafeQuest Solano (a non-profit organization)
- **Community Based Rape Crisis/DV/Human Trafficking Advocates** – SafeQuest Solano
- **Social Service Agency Staff Members**
 - Health and Social Services Eligibility Worker
 - Family Stabilization Unit Worker
- **Child Welfare Agency Social Workers** – on-site as needed
- **County Public Assistance Worker**
 - Solano Coalition for Better Health (regularly)
- **Supervised Volunteers from Partner Agencies**
- **Ombudsman Services of Contra Costa, Solano, and Alameda County**
- **Catholic Charities**
- **Broken By Violence**
- **SafeQuest Solano**
- **Volunteer and Social Work Internship Program**
- **HICAP-Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program** (on-site part-time for victims of elder abuse)

Recommendation 1 - Aggressively pursue additional on-site partners to provide the comprehensive services needed by domestic violence and sexual assault victims.

Response to Recommendation 1 — The recommendation has been implemented. However, we continue to strengthen our collaboration within the community in an effort to better serve those in need.

Finding 2 - The building currently housing the Solano County Family Justice Center is inadequate and its location is unknown to many residents.

Response to Finding 2- The District Attorney and the Solano Family Justice Center partially disagree with this finding. In 2015, 604 Empire Street became the permanent location of the SFJC. Ideally in the future, we would like to increase capacity, however at this time the SFJC is maximizing all available space to ensure essential services are rendered.

Recommendation 2 – SFJC develop a plan to procure a more appropriate and better located facility to house the SFJC. Increase publicity to identify how services for victims can be accessed.

Response to Recommendation 2 – This recommendation has been implemented. On a regular basis, the Solano Family Justice Center reaches out to members of the community to help raise awareness of services available at the center. Some of those events and outreach include the following:

- **Annual Board of Supervisors Resolutions**
 - Human Trafficking Awareness
 - Sexual Assault Awareness
 - Domestic Violence Awareness
 - Elder Abuse Awareness
 - Child Abuse Awareness
 - National Crimes Victims' Rights

- School Safety Symposium
- Social Media (Facebook)
- Press Releases
- Coffee with DA
- Public Safety Announcements (KUIC)
- SFJC Open House
- SFJC and Courage Center 2 Anniversaries
- Meet and Greets at SFJC
- Collaboration with Soroptimists
- **Outreach Events**
 - Solano County Fair
 - Dixon May Fair
 - Vacaville Fiesta Days
 - Travis Air Force Base Air Show
 - Sexual Assault Presentation
 - Kaiser Violence Prevention
 - Children's Memorial Flag Ceremony
 - National Crime Victims' Rights Week
 - Domestic Violence Vigils (Fairfield & Vallejo)
 - Pin Wheel Ceremony
 - National Night Out
 - Human Trafficking Forum
 - Domestic Violence Forum

Furthermore, the Solano Family Justice Center has conducted presentations to community-based organizations to raise awareness of the services at the center such as:

- Help Me Grow Solano
- Adult Protective Services
- Uplift Family Services
- Women, Infants and Children (WIC)
- Office of Education
- Solano Superior Court-Civil and Family court staff
- Health and Social Services
- Solano Youth Council
- Law enforcement agencies
- Kaiser Family Violence Prevention Taskforce (Vallejo, Vacaville, and Fairfield)

Finding 3 – The SFJC work environment is not consistent with trauma-informed care, affecting the quality of services provided to victims.

Response to Finding 3 – The District Attorney and the Solano Family Justice Center disagree with this finding. We are committed to having the highest quality of care for all the people we serve.

Recommendation 3A – Provide all SFJC staff with additional training in understanding the statutory requirements of an FJC, discrimination issues, and trauma-informed care.

Response to Recommendation 3A - The recommendation has been implemented but additional training will be implemented in the near future. SFJC Director Angel Aguilar is currently working with the California FJC Network to implement a formal training program as required by PC 13751.

Recommendation 3B – The SFJC should clearly define the manager’s role in managing both county employees and employees of on-site partners.

Response to Recommendation 3B - The recommendation has been implemented. The manager’s role is defined in the county’s job specifications, memorandum of understandings, operational agreements, and contracts with on-site partners.

Finding 4 – Public transportation to get to the Solano County Family Justice Center in Fairfield is unnecessarily challenging for those victims outside Fairfield.

Response to Finding 4 - The District Attorney and the Solano Family Justice Center disagree with this finding. The Family Justice Center is centrally located in the county seat of Fairfield. We have increased our services such that we are on-site in Vallejo for those who have challenges travelling to Fairfield. We continue to work with our on-site and off-site partners to ensure that victims are served despite any transportation issues they may encounter. To date no victim has been denied service because of a transportation issue.

Recommendation 4A - SFJC establish and fully staff an office in Vallejo.

Response to Recommendation 4A - This recommendation has partially been implemented. We have staff on-site in Vallejo at Fighting Back Partnership. Ideally, we envision a satellite SFJC office in the city of Vallejo. The SFJC is committed, together with Vallejo Police Department, to help make that happen.

Recommendation 4B - The SFJC make arrangements with ride share companies to provide safe, free, and efficient door-to-door services throughout the county.

Response to Recommendation 4B - This recommendation has been implemented. The SFJC, together with our on-site partners, have continued to make arrangements for anyone who needs transportation.

Findings 5 – Most County law enforcement agencies are aware of services provided by the SFJC but would welcome training by SFJC to make them more aware of what services are provided.

Response to Finding 5 – The District Attorney and the Solano Family Justice Center agree with this finding. We work on a routine basis with all of our law enforcement partners to provide training. However, throughout the pandemic, in-person training sessions were not permitted. This year we will resume in-person training with our law enforcement partners.

Recommendation 5 – SFJC Director develop and implement a training program to better inform county law enforcement agencies of the services provided.

Response to Recommendation 5 - This recommendation has been implemented and we will continue to work with all our law enforcement partners.

Finding 6 – The SFJC is not fiscally neutral, and the non-profit foundation established to help achieve that goal, SAJE, is neither robust nor performing as envisioned in the strategic plan and has no online presence.

Response to Finding 6 – The District Attorney and the Solano Family Justice Center partially agree with this finding. The SFJC is not fiscally neutral and as previously reported - salary, benefits, and operational costs have naturally increased over the years. Any fundraising or in-person events have been negatively affected throughout the pandemic. The SFJC will continue to support SAJE's efforts to assist the center.

Recommendation 6 – SAJE improve its ability to achieve SFJC financial stability.

Response to Recommendation 6 – The Solano County District Attorney's Office has no direct oversight over the Solano Alliance for Justice Empowerment (SAJE), an independent nonprofit organization. However, the Solano County District Attorney's Office and the SFJC will continue to support any and all fundraising efforts of the nonprofit foundation, SAJE.

Finding 7 – The SFJC Operations Manual does not adequately explain how the SFJC will comply with the statutory requirements of Penal Code sections 13750-13753.

Response to Finding 7 – The District Attorney and the Solano Family Justice Center disagree with this finding. The SFJC Operations Manual has been updated to be in compliance with Penal Code Section 13750.

Recommendation 7 – SFJC review and revise the Operations Manual to clearly address statutory requirements including, but not limited to, the establishment of a mandatory training program, designation of a privacy officer, and establishment of a formal client feedback, complaint, and input process.

Response to Recommendation 7 – This recommendation has been implemented.

Finding 8 – The SFJC Operations Manual defines both an Advisory Committee and an Administrative Team, but no meeting frequency is identified for either; no requirements for general staff meetings are included in the Operations Manual.

Response to Finding 8 – The District Attorney and the Solano Family Justice Center agree with this finding.

Recommendation 8A – SFJC hold regularly scheduled meetings of both the Advisory Committee and the Administrative Team to improve communication among staff and management.

Response to Recommendation 8A & 8B – This recommendation has already been implemented. Prior to COVID-19, the SFJC held All Partner Meetings on a regular basis. Such meetings were interrupted due to COVID-19 health guidelines. Beginning in June 2021, the SFJC will resume in-person All Partners Meetings on a regular basis.

Recommendation 8B – SFJC have regularly scheduled full staff meetings.

Finding 9 - Solano County's Health and Social Services Department offers services and has resources similar to those offered by the SFJC.

Response to Finding 9 – The District Attorney and the Family Justice Center disagree with this finding. As stated previously, a Family Justice Center, as defined in PC 13750, is a multidisciplinary Center, where staff works to ensure that essential services are always rendered for victims of crime, which include: domestic violence advocacy, court accompaniment, restraining orders, crisis intervention, and safety planning. These core services are not available at the Department of Health and Social Services.

Recommendation 9 - The Board of Supervisors initiate a study to determine if the transfer of the SFJC from the District Attorney's Office to the Department of Health and Social Services would result in providing more efficient and effective services to victims in Solano County.

Response to Recommendation 9 – This recommendation has not been implemented. To compliment the core services offered at the SFJC, we partnered with the Department H&SS to bring staff on-site for assistance for both housing and public benefits. We are grateful for this partnership in assisting victims of crime. The core services available to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, elder abuse, and human trafficking are all located at the SFJC. Therefore, it would not be practical, efficient, or effective to move the center.

We would like to thank the Solano County Grand Jury for their time and attention to this matter.

We appreciate the Grand Jury's recommendations made to the Solano Family Justice Center.

Dated:

Sincerely,



Angel Aguilar

Director of the Solano Family Justice Center

Dated:



Krishna A. Abrams

District Attorney

KAA:mpm

cc: Grand Jury