

**HERMAN GOLDSTEIN AWARD****SAN DIEGO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER****SUMMARY**

The San Diego Police Department (SDPD), the San Diego City Attorney's Office, and the Domestic Violence Council have created the Domestic Violence Family Justice Center (FJC) - a center where nearly 100 domestic violence professionals are together under one roof to improve our response to domestic violence. The goal of the Family Justice Center is to prioritize victim safety by providing centralized services, advocacy and justice. It promises to be one of the most significant programs created for domestic violence victims in this region in the past 20 years.

The FJC is the first in the country to house the entire Police Department Domestic Violence Unit (38 officers and personnel) as well as the entire Prosecutorial Domestic Violence Unit (31 attorney's and personnel), other government agencies, nonprofit domestic violence and sexual assault organizations, medical professionals and volunteers. The FJC will address the approximately 11,000 annual new cases of domestic violence received by SDPD. The FJC will provide case management to existing high risk cases, share information and resources, fill gaps in services, and make the process less overwhelming and more supportive to victims and children.

The FJC is centrally located in downtown San Diego, near the courthouse and public transportation. The site was designed specifically to handle domestic violence cases, improve accessibility of services to victims and children, improve investigations, obtain more convictions, and enhance community collaboration. It has special waiting rooms for victims and children, medical facilities, and state-of-the-art interview rooms.

San Diego has earned its national reputation as a leader in the aggressive arrest and prosecution of domestic violence offenders and in community collaboration through the Domestic Violence Council. Great strides have been made, but much more could be done. Our vision was to create a Family Justice Center - where families would come first.

The central theme of our project is to avail victims to services within law enforcement and the community, while ensuring thorough attention toward case preparation and prosecution. By combining the offices of the SDPD Domestic Violence Unit and the City Attorney's Domestic Violence Unit, we hope to develop and apply multi-disciplinary problem solving techniques directed toward early intervention and enforcement strategies in addressing domestic violence.

## SCANNING

San Diego has had a significant impact in the prevention and reduction of domestic violence through a comprehensive community response started in 1986. This response has included the creation, in 1989, of the countywide Domestic Violence Council. The Council has helped to create specialized domestic violence standards and protocols. This collaborative regional effort has resulted in strong community partnerships and significant reductions in domestic violence homicides. In 1986, SDPD investigated less than 5,000 domestic violence cases and 30 domestic violence homicides; in 1991, the department investigated 11,739 cases and 22 homicides; in 2001, 10,666 cases and 11 homicides were investigated with victims that included two children and one unborn child. Nevertheless, women continue to die in domestic violence relationships in San Diego.

The victims and offenders of the annual 11,000 domestic violence cases received by SDPD, include women of color, victims in same-sex relationships, victims with disabilities, immigrant victims and the elderly.

Specialized units have been developed by police and prosecutors in the region, Probation, Child Protective Services and the Superior Court. The region has established domestic violence and sexual assault response teams. Nonprofit agencies dedicated to providing services for victims of domestic violence offer legal services, emergency shelters, transitional housing, counseling for victims and children, treatment programs for offenders, and a countywide hotline. Advocates are accessible in government and non-profit agencies.

Although we have more services today than 16 years ago, they are fragmented and scattered. Because of public awareness, more victims are willing to report to the police and seek self-help through non-profit agencies. When more victims seek help, there is a growing need for seamless services; for professionals to share information and resources; for better investigation techniques and equipment; for more efficient case management; and for offender assessment and supervision. The previous system made it hard for all of the intervention professionals to work together; required victims to travel to multiple locations during the intervention process; required victims to repeat their story over and over again to separate agencies; and facilitated the sophisticated offender's ability to slip through the cracks and avoid accountability.

The FJC was envisioned to provide a combination of services and interventions in one location to help victims and offenders break the cycle of violence and develop healthy relationships. The strategies implemented at the FJC will: make it easier for victims and children to seek help; reduce the amount of times s/he will have to tell the story; increase access to case and court information; improve the accessibility of professionals, services and resources to victims; and enhance victim safety. The synergy of bringing all service providers to one location has dramatically improved the coordination and cross-training within the multi-disciplinary approach to serving victims and their children.

Representatives from the SDPD Domestic Violence Unit chaired months of group discussions with investigators and City Attorney representatives regarding the development of the FJC. Interviews were also conducted with practitioners of existing programs throughout the United States. During this review, group forums were

conducted to determine the pros and cons, should the FJC come to fruition. A central theme emerged- the Center must function in unison to provide the most appropriate and results-oriented service to domestic violence victims and families. The San Diego Police Department and the City Attorney's Office have an established partnership toward breaking the cycle of domestic violence in the City of San Diego. Collaborative efforts, by both agencies and advocacy groups, would further years of cooperation and commitment toward common goals. Our goal was to establish the Family Justice Center.

## ANALYSIS

Each year in San Diego, approximately 4,000 of the 11,000 reported domestic violence cases are referred to the City Attorney's Office for misdemeanor prosecution and approximately 400 cases are referred to the District Attorney's Office for prosecution. The cases that are not submitted for prosecution represent domestic violence incidents or cases where there is probable cause to arrest but insufficient evidence to prosecute. When no intervention occurs, the violence continues and the risk to the victim and their family escalates.

Over the years, both the SDPD and the City's Attorney's Office have implemented a strong effort to increase the effectiveness and response of our programs to the needs and concerns of the victims by integrating the services and cooperation of related agencies. The City Attorney's Office has been recognized nationally for its innovative approach to prosecuting misdemeanor domestic violence cases. Their approach includes eight core objectives:

- > Aggressive prosecution
- > Early intervention at the misdemeanor level in order to prevent the escalation of offenders' behavior to felony-level conduct
- > Enhance victim safety
- > Create a multi-disciplinary, inter-agency response to domestic violence
- > Increase community awareness and understanding for the dynamics of domestic violence
- > Prosecute cases with or without the victim's participation; and
- > Offenders must complete a one-year domestic violence recovery program

The SDPD's Domestic Violence Unit is one of the largest police department domestic violence units in the nation. The proper response by law enforcement to incidents of domestic violence is perhaps the most critical issue when consideration is given to the success of a program dedicated to addressing this issue of violence. In most instances the police officer is the first person on the scene responding to an incident, and ultimately the actions taken at this stage will set the course for the remainder of the community intervention. The constant increase in the need for police services, matched against the trend of shrinking officer presence on the street, indirectly leads to the decrease in attention afforded to the victim or the case preparation.

The idea of a One Stop Help Center while relatively new nationally, is not a new concept to San Diego. Since 1989, San Diego has been planning and preparing for such a Center. In the last three years, community forums, focus groups, and strategic planning meetings have been held. A feasibility study was conducted by SDPD exploring the benefits and the pitfalls for housing intervention professionals under one roof. Other sites in a variety of cities throughout the nation were visited. Additionally, extensive interviews were conducted with personnel working in established Centers. The Police Department, City Attorney's Office and advocacy groups developed a model right for San Diego, which includes best practices, local partners, proven strategies, innovative programs and an ideal site.

The best way for San Diego to promote victim safety and offender accountability was to locate all specially trained domestic violence personnel under one roof. The Police Department and City Attorney's Office are the only entities vested with the authority to bring all the necessary services and diverse domestic violence professionals

together. After the downtown site was identified, the FJC was able to mobilize a multi-disciplinary team of professionals to begin the implementation of new objectives, goals, strategies and programs to enhance its response to domestic violence.



## RESPONSE

Due to the severe nature of the emotional trauma that is often associated with domestic violence abuse, police officers must be capable of supplying the victim with a sense of safety and compassion, while at the same time managing to elicit the victims' cooperation for the evidence collection aspect of the incident. Thus, the question that needed to be answered was: How do we ensure that each incident of domestic violence is handled as thoroughly and professionally as possible?

Law enforcement alone cannot break the cycle of violence, nor breach the wall of fear, shame and silence that often accompany it. Even the clearest policy and the best intentions will not result in the prosecution of every batterer or the liberation of every victim, much less change long-term attitudes and behaviors.

The keys to stopping domestic violence in the long term are coordinated partnerships, standardized protocols, and sustained education and awareness strategies among law enforcement, health, social services, victims, offenders, youth, families and the public. San Diego recognized the importance of alternatives to traditional law enforcement in approaching this problem, and developed the FJC that would provide services at the front end so that victims do not fall through the cracks. The goal of the Center was to increase the effectiveness and responsiveness of law enforcement, the judicial system and advocacy groups, while reducing crimes of domestic violence.

The 27,000 square foot Family Justice Center is located away from the police department, but close to the courthouse and public transportation. Floor plans were specifically designed to handle the volume of cases, put victims and children at ease, and provide accessible legal, medical and counseling services. Local, State and Federal

agencies supported the funding of a local, comprehensive center for victims. In San Diego, the FJC arose from a community driven effort supported by grass roots victim advocacy agencies, health organizations, criminal justice agencies and elected political officials.

The SDPD'S Domestic Violence Unit and the City Attorney's Domestic Violence Unit are responsible for carrying out the proposed project on a day-to-day basis. The Units worked closely with the Center for Community Solutions (CCS) to establish a Core Planning Group. The Core Planning Group is responsible for developing a comprehensive strategic plan for managing the projects, partners and smart growth of the FJC, as well as developing an operations manual. Below is a list of the Core Planning Group governmental members with a brief description:

**The San Diego Probation Department** currently supervises all domestic violence criminal offenders. They house one probation officer and aide to handle cases in Domestic Violence Court from the FJC. They assist in the management and closer scrutiny of high risk and repeat offenders.

**Aging and Independent Services/Adult Protective Services** serves as the coordinating body for all services to seniors and dependent adults. They consult and train on dependent and elder abuse and late life domestic violence.

The following are the nonprofit, nongovernmental members of the Core Planning Group:

The CCS has a legal clinic, Rape Crisis Center, Project Safehouse, Clinical Services and Training and Development. CCS provides full time legal services on site.

**Union of Pan Asian Communities** represents over twenty-seven different cultures, languages, and dialects; serves over 50,000 people annually, providing victim assistance, translation and interpreter services.

**Children's Hospital** is a nationally recognized service provider to victims of child abuse and neglect. Children's Hospital focuses on the FJC's Kids In Court Program to assist children and non-offending parents in understanding and coping emotionally with court procedures.

**San Diego Volunteer Lawyers Program** staffs restraining order clinics for victims seeking legal protection. They provide immigration legal services on site.

**SART/DART** is a county-wide victim services program that provides on-site forensic nurse services for domestic violence and sexual assault victims.

**The Domestic Violence Council** is the countywide coordinating body for all agencies and individuals who work in the field of family violence.

**California Teratogen Information Services (CTIS)/University of California, San Diego, Department of Pediatrics** provides education and services to pregnant domestic violence victims to prevent miscarriages and birth defects. UCSD sought a grant to provide part-time, on-site bilingual/bicultural counseling services.

**Rancho Coastal Humane Society** assists in identifying and referring animal abuse cases and placing family pets when a shelter is needed.

YWCA provides shelter and support services to battered women and their children.

Cross referrals would be made to the YWCA as determined, with the FJC's case management system and teams to customize the appropriate services.

San Diego is committed to this project for the long haul. It is understood that there is no guarantee of continuation funding and we are taking steps to assure the continuation of the project through the strong support of the Mayor and City Council. The Mayor has endorsed the Family Justice Center and acknowledged the long-term responsibility of the City to assist in funding the project.

We are aggressively seeking grant funding on several tiers. At the local level, we are applying for Community Development Block Grant funds (CDBG); and at the federal level, we applied for grants with the Office on Violence Against Women. We also sought foundation funding and were awarded a \$500,000 grant from the California Endowment; \$60,000 from the California Wellness Foundation.

The second tier is from City General Funds. The Family Justice Center will seek to cover future operational expenses from the City's general fund budget. The City Council has historically been very supportive of domestic violence efforts and continues to be supportive. This support was evidenced by the Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee's unanimous recommendation to commit more than \$300,000 of CDBG funds to the Justice Center over the course of the next three years.

Donations were also sought from the community. A strategic fundraising plan was developed, and a series of strategic meetings with key community leaders and Center partners were held to develop concrete long-term funding strategies. To date, nearly \$199,000 has been pledged, and a special account has been established for FJC donations.

### Funding Sources

Organization	Amount
Community Development Block Grant	\$376,000
Office on Violence Against Women	\$300,000
California Endowment	\$500,000
Verizon Wireless	\$30,000
Waite Foundation	\$12,000
California Wellness Foundation	\$60,000
Public Donations	\$199,000

The SDPD and the City Attorney's Office realized broad changes and improvements to the systems were necessary. Special attention was needed to develop a comprehensive coordinated community response to address the multitude of issues. Our goal is to reduce domestic violence incidents, recidivism and homicides and ultimately be the first large city jurisdiction in America to see domestic violence homicides eliminated.

To further these efforts, on October 10, 2002, the Family Justice Center held its grand opening. The FJC is centrally located in downtown San Diego, occupies three floors and has approximately 27,000 square feet of space. The FJC also has multiple large and small conference rooms to allow for community meetings and training.

## ASSESSMENT

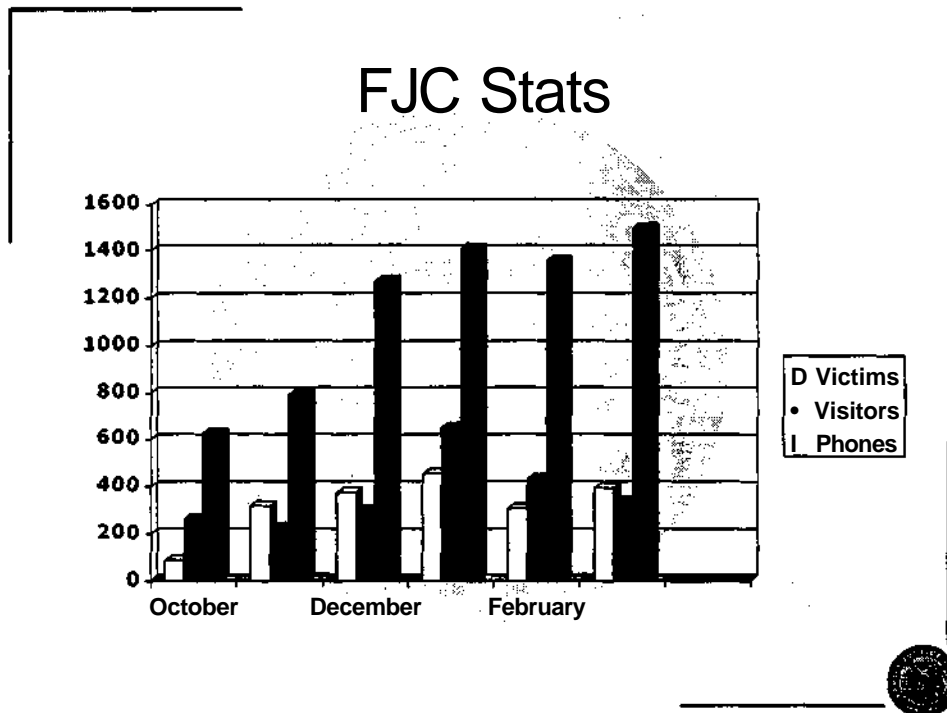
To measure the effectiveness of the FJC, data will be compiled and evaluated on an annual basis. Baseline data collected for 2001 includes the number of: 911 calls for service, arrests, dual arrests, violations of protective orders, filed criminal cases, dismissals, convictions, recidivism and homicide rates in domestic violence cases. A new tracking program has been designed to capture this information and improve communication between the courts, probation and treatment providers. The tracking program will help to ensure victim safety and offender accountability. To ensure that the evaluation process is objective and includes an analysis of the procedures, technology and services, an independent consultant will be hired to review the data.

Victim surveys will be administered to track the number of victims served, the number of services utilized, as well as the rate and quality of victim satisfaction with the services provided. The number of victims seeking services who could not be served and the reasons why they did not receive services will also be tracked. Victim surveys will be reviewed regularly and shared with all partners in order to continuously improve services.

A survey instrument will be used by all agency partners to assess the collaboration of all professionals prior to and after co-location at the FJC. Partners will identify barriers to reaching overall goals, needs and gaps, and rate effectiveness of systems.

A Community Advisory panel will review the independent evaluation, victim satisfaction, and partner surveys and make recommendations regarding the FJC's leadership, partners' roles, strategic plan, goals, and policies.

Prior to the opening of the FJC, the SDPD Domestic Violence Unit operated out of San Diego Police Headquarters building. During any one-month period of time, the Unit would receive approximately five (5) walk-in requests for available services. An initial four-month survey (October 10, 2002 through the end of March 2003) has already shown the effectiveness of the Family Justice Center.



- > Approximately 5,500 phone calls were received to its central number
- > Services were provided to 1,500 walk-in victims
- > Twenty-four (24) service, advocacy, and justice agencies from throughout San Diego County are housed at the Center
- > The Center welcomed over 1,800 site visitors including international visitors from Albania, Australia, Ghana, Japan, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Brussels, Costa Rica, Venezuela and Romania

- > The first volunteer academy was launched, graduating 31 volunteers who are now assisting victims and staff on site. Two additional academies have been held, graduating 18 additional volunteers. More than 500 volunteer hours have been donated to the Center by these volunteers
- > A two-day strategic planning workshop was held resulting in a five-year plan
- > A toll free information line and a Family Justice Center web site were established (15,500 hits recorded to website)
- > The Family Justice Center was awarded a \$20,000 a year/three year grant from the California Wellness Foundation and \$42,000 in other contributions were received
- > The Family Justice Center was featured on the Oprah Winfrey Show (2 days)
- > During the October 2002 Annual Symposium on Domestic Violence in Washington D.C., United States Attorney General John Ashcroft praised the Family Justice Center as a model for the country

#### **Family Justice Center Intake Statistics**

	<b>Oct '02</b>	<b>Nov '02</b>	<b>Dec '02</b>	<b>Jan '03</b>	<b>Feb '03</b>	<b>Mar '03</b>
Calls to FJC	625	789	1271	1401	1360	1496
Walk-in Victims	87	320	374	456	307	393
Site Visitors	259	226	298	648	434	337
Reports by SDPD Field Officers	812	763	893	908	821	717
Cases Referred to City Attorney	354	324	365	327	302	266
Advocate Calls Rec'd	541	1026	822	905	943	
CCS TRO'S Issued	29	39	42	49		
Military Calls Rec'd	34	63	101	136		



Perhaps more telling than any of these statistics is the reduction in the number of domestic violence homicides in the City of San Diego since the opening of the Family Justice Center.

**Domestic Violence Related Homicides**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Homicides</b>
1998	5
1999	7
2000	6
2001	11
2002*	10
<b>October 10, 2002-March 31, 2003</b>	<b>1</b>

\* January thru October 9, 2002

## REFERENCE LIST

San Diego Police Department - Crime Analysis Unit

### ACENGY AND OFFICER INFORMATION

The Family Justice Center has been a work in progress since 1989. The San Diego Police Department and the City Attorney's Office established a partnership to work together to break the cycle of domestic violence in the City of San Diego. It has been through the hard work and collaborative efforts, by both agencies and advocacy groups that the Family Justice Center-Where families' come first-has become a reality.

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