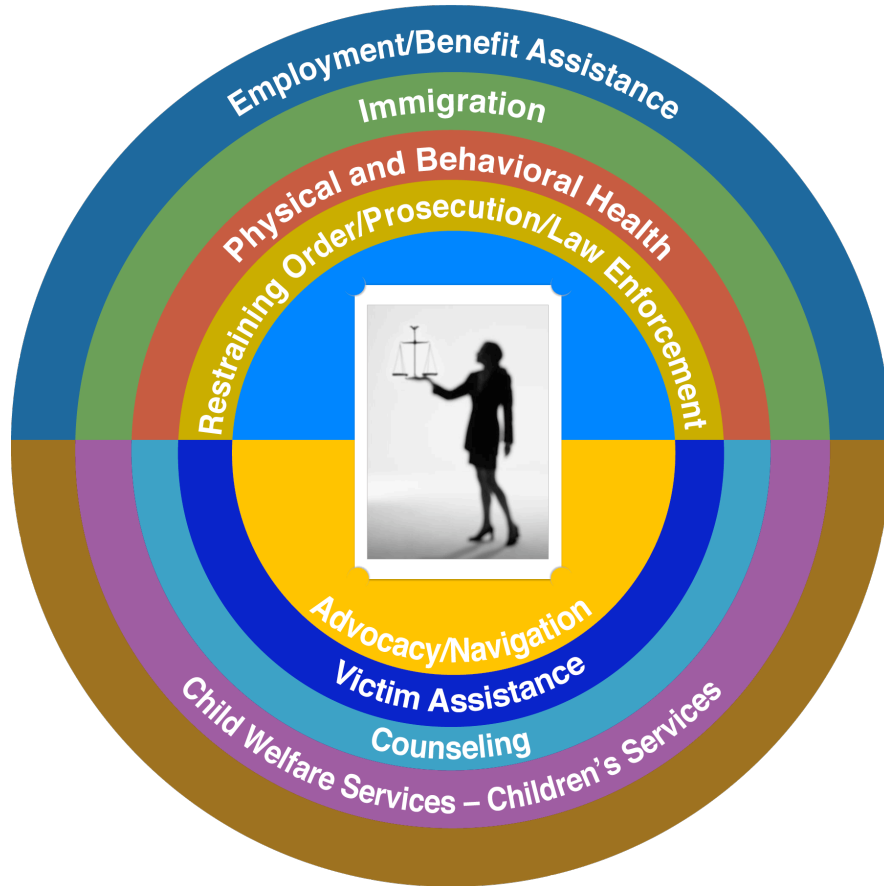

County of Sonoma Family Justice Center

Feasibility Study



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What now? --- Laura's Story

"What now?"

Laura¹ asked herself this question after her live-in boyfriend, Mike, had struck her in the eye. She then avoided the house they shared with a male roommate for several days as she struggled to decide her next step. With no other place to live nor a job to support herself, Laura regretfully returned home, trying to make things work for the best.

Upon her return, Mike worked himself into a jealous rage over her absence. He punched her head, slammed her against a door, then pushed her to the floor and began strangling her as she tried to telephone for help. Their roommate saw what was happening and, instead of intervening, turned around and went back to his room. After weathering further blows, Laura was able to escape the house. Following his arrest, Mike continued to harass and bully Laura from jail by orchestrating her arrest for a felony theft, getting their roommate to destroy evidence of Mike's attack, and trying to scare Laura out of testifying in the case.

Jobless, Laura moved out of the apartment but had no place to live; she bounced around from friend to friend. Mike had broken her cell phone during the attack, making it very difficult for the District Attorney's office to communicate with her as the case progressed.

Transportation was also very difficult. Laura came into the District Attorney's office on at least ten occasions, either to seek help of some kind or to make herself available for interviews. She had great difficulty handling her paperwork and could not always get over to the correct office to turn it in. Laura was clearly a candidate for and expressed interest in counseling, although a referral to an accessible service was not available.

With a Family Justice Center, Laura's story could have been very different. Although Laura eventually persevered, seeing the case through the court system resulting in a 6-year sentence for Mike, no one should have to go through the same experience that she did. Laura needed access to a system that was not yet available to her; one that could provide her with a coordinated array of services, guide her through the legal system, and help her chart a pathway to a new, safer life.

A Family Justice Center (FJC) provides rapid assistance, addressing victims' multiple needs through a single location. An FJC could have rapidly assisted Laura – helping her access health centers in her area, as well as on-site counseling, providing referrals to job training, and assistance with multiple immediate needs including housing, a phone, legal aid and a temporary restraining order.

A Family Justice Center is where someone like Laura can go the moment trouble is imminent and ask *"What now?"* In response, she will receive rapid, accessible assistance, reducing suffering and preventing unnecessary city, county, and judicial system costs.

¹ Laura's story and others presented in this document are based on actual cases prosecuted by the County of Sonoma District Attorney's office or served by the Department of Human Services. The facts of the case have been used with permission; names have been invented.

1 Preface: A Family Justice Center for Sonoma County – Key Outcomes and Framework

Government and non-profit partners are investigating the feasibility of establishing a Family Justice Center in Sonoma County in order to realize the following primary outcomes:

- ⌘ Increased victim safety and increased family violence² reporting;
- ⌘ Reduced number of family violence homicides and significant injury cases;
- ⌘ Increased numbers of successful prosecutions;
- ⌘ Reduced number of case dismissals;
- ⌘ Reduced recidivism in family violence cases;
- ⌘ Increased public awareness of family violence;
- ⌘ Increased access to and utilization of family violence services; and
- ⌘ Increased funding amounts and sources for family violence services.

The Family Justice Center seeks to generate these outcomes through a strategic collaboration between law enforcement, prosecution, government, and non-profit service providers that would involve:

- ⌘ Providing easily accessible, comprehensive services to victims of family violence;
- ⌘ Coordination and co-location of services including law enforcement, prosecution, victim advocacy, shelter/safety needs, restraining orders, legal assistance, counseling and support services, and possibly others, such as medical, job training, life skills, and childcare;
- ⌘ Comprehensive, culturally competent, and multi-lingual community outreach;
- ⌘ Coordinated education, intervention and prevention initiatives that would increase public awareness of the danger signs of family violence and of the services available;
- ⌘ Sharing best practices between partners through open communication and shared training; and
- ⌘ Enabling operational cost reductions for service providers through efficiencies of scale.

The development of a Family Justice Center (FJC) aligns with the County of Sonoma Strategic Plan goal of “enhancing the capacity of County programs and community systems to more effectively meet the changing needs of individuals, families, and communities in Sonoma County.” The FJC also helps the county meet one of this goal’s objectives: “County programs and services better serve Latino, seniors, and low-income populations.”³ It utilizes the underlying strategy of “maintaining and strengthening the criminal justice continuum to more effectively address public safety issues at the lowest risk levels for all members of the community.”⁴

² The term “family violence” refers in this document to domestic violence, sexual assault, and child and elder abuse. Stakeholders involved in this study have included organizations active in all of these areas. Much of the data analyzed relates primarily to work with victims of domestic violence but applies in most cases to all of the areas covered by the term *family violence*.

³ The FJC better serves seniors by utilizing its comprehensive service methodology to prevent and serve victims of elder abuse. While family violence strikes all socio-economic groups, it is statistically more prevalent within low-income populations. Although among the general population about 22% of women have experienced domestic violence in their adult lives, this figure doubles when applied to women on welfare (National Center for Children in Poverty). National studies have produced incomplete results regarding the prevalence of domestic violence in Latino populations. The second “Family Violence Survey” found higher levels of partner abuse among Latinos than among whites. A survey conducted by the Immigrant Women’s Task Force of the Northern California Coalition for Immigrant Rights revealed that 34% of immigrant Latinas surveyed had experienced domestic violence either in their country of origin, in the U.S., or in both (CIRRS). A study conducted among migrant farm worker women found that 25%-35% of patients at migrant health centers reported having experienced domestic violence within the previous 12 months (Empowering Survivors of Abuse, 1998). Several factors, including lack of bilingual/bicultural staff, have led to an under-utilization of shelters and other domestic violence services by Latinas/os affected by domestic violence (In the Public Interest, 1998). One study of undocumented immigrants found that for 64% of Latinas, a primary barrier to seeking help from social service agencies is the fear of deportation (Yale Law Journal).

⁴ County of Sonoma Strategic Plan, December 11, 2007.

2 Executive Summary

2.1 Primary Study Objective and Recommendation

The primary objective of this feasibility study was to assist stakeholders in the County of Sonoma in answering the question, *“Should the County and its partners engage in a strategic planning process to establish a Family Justice Center?”*

On the basis of the surveys and interviews conducted, the data analyzed, and multiple conversations with diverse stakeholders, we believe that county, city, and community partners should initiate a strategic planning process with a focus on concrete implementation, incorporating the following key elements:

- ⌘ Planning should directly focus on initiatives that would most likely lead to improved victim safety and the ability to prosecute perpetrators of violence;
- ⌘ The Family Justice Center should serve all victims of family violence, including those who choose not to press charges through the criminal justice system;
- ⌘ Partners should further prioritize the establishment of clear metrics and utilization of standardized data collection systems, implemented county-wide;
- ⌘ FJC operations should not result in an increased cost to County general funds. At current projections, this means stakeholders must identify a minimum of \$337,000 in additional resources to support the FJC on an annual basis;⁵
- ⌘ A facility must be secured which can be rendered suitable for use as a Family Justice Center within resources that are currently available or with funds that can be raised from private sources. One-time capital costs to prepare a Family Justice Center are estimated at \$680,000,⁶ which could be significantly reduced through donated facilities and equipment;
- ⌘ The Family Justice Center has the potential to significantly improve victim safety as well as offender accountability outcomes;
- ⌘ In addition to important community benefits, both types of outcomes (victim safety and offender accountability) could provide substantial returns on investment (ROI).
Currently, due largely to difficulties obtaining required victim testimony, 56% of domestic violence cases filed in the County of Sonoma are eventually dismissed. This is consistent with dismissal rates in other Bay Area counties that lack family justice centers.

⁵ Targeted grant funding for the development of the Family Justice Center, such as the Office on Violence Against Women’s “Grants to Encourage Arrest Orders” program, have the potential to secure between \$400,000 to \$750,000 annually.

⁶ This figure does not include potential costs for lease termination for agencies co-locating at the Family Justice Center or departments affected by lease termination.

- Conservative projections suggest that the impact of a Family Justice Center in reducing case dismissals would significantly enhance the impact of the investment currently being made in arrest and prosecution of perpetrators of domestic violence.⁷ Family Justice Centers in Alameda County and New York City have reported a decrease in domestic violence homicide in the periods since they opened FJCs;⁸
- ⌘ An important focus of the strategic planning process should be the creation of a timeline and detailed plan for securing large foundation, state, and federal grants in support of the capital and operational needs of the Family Justice Center. Lobbying efforts for new legislation like AB 2010⁹ that includes Sonoma should continue in order to generate a sustainable funding mechanism for the FJC; and
 - ⌘ The Sonoma County Family Justice Center should, over time, also coordinate with and serve satellite programs located within existing organizations, such as community health clinics, in order to create a countywide network of coordinated service delivery for victims, and a system for efficient offender prosecution.

Background

The United States Department of Justice, through its Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), has identified the Family Justice Center model as a best practice in the field of domestic violence intervention and prevention services. This study provides an assessment of the potential for a Family Justice Center in Sonoma County to improve outcomes for survivors of family violence while increasing accountability for offenders. The Family Justice Center (FJC) model, now established in more than 30 communities nationwide, involves the creation of a coordinated, single-point-of-access center offering comprehensive services for victims of family violence. FJCs seek improvements in victim safety and recovery, increased success in offender prosecutions, and reductions in family violence injuries and homicide. Additional potential outcomes include increased service efficiency through the provision of collaborative services, and increased community support for services being offered to victims and their children.

This feasibility study, conducted by the Glen Price Group, included surveys and interviews with key stakeholders in the field of family violence within Sonoma County, as well as an analysis of

⁷ Based upon achievement of reductions in case dismissals similar to those realized by the Alameda County Family Justice Center.

⁸ In addition to clear reduction in human suffering, prevention of a single domestic violence homicide may prevent the county from spending between \$600,000 – \$1.5 million dollars. See Section 2.1.1 and accompanying footnotes.

⁹ AB 2010 authorizes the Counties of Alameda and Solano to generate funds for domestic violence prevention and coordination activities, such as an FJC, through vital certificate copying fees. Assemblymember Mary Hayashi has offered to carry similar legislation for the County of Sonoma in the next session of the legislature.

available domestic violence data. The emergent picture indicates that family violence has a tremendous impact on the county, in both human suffering and economic costs. In 2005 alone, law enforcement agencies throughout Sonoma County received a total of 2,048 calls for assistance and made a total of 697 domestic violence felony arrests.¹⁰ In the same year, the District Attorney's Office filed a total of 1,365 domestic violence cases (felony and misdemeanor). While encouraging efforts have been made to develop integrated services for victims of family violence, the current system continues to focus largely on agency and jurisdiction needs rather than those of victims. For example, in order to access critical family violence support and legal services, a victim currently may need to visit over 23 different physical locations.

Strong Support

Stakeholder interviews showed that substantial support exists among law enforcement, criminal justice agencies, non-profit organizations and the faith community for the establishment of a Family Justice Center within Sonoma County in order to better address the challenges of family violence. A significant majority of those interviewed and surveyed also indicated a willingness to participate in a strategic planning process to develop a Sonoma County Family Justice Center, and a willingness to co-locate personnel if such a Center were created.¹¹ In July 2008, the District Attorney, the Sheriff, the Department Heads for Health and Human Services, and the Executive Directors of YWCA Sonoma County and United Against Sexual Assault met to consider an earlier version of this feasibility study. The joint talking points resulting from that meeting include strong support for moving into a process of strategic planning and fund development for a Family Justice Center.¹²

Challenges

This feasibility study process also identified a number of important challenges. A sense of territoriality exists among government jurisdictions, agencies, and departments and will need to be addressed in the strategic planning process in order to enable these groups to collaborate effectively. Organizations will need to 1) agree upon common protocols for family violence data collection; and 2) develop the capacity to track and assess program outcomes. The size of Sonoma County precludes the establishment of a single center to serve the entire county, and the initial FJC should eventually become the hub of a network of linked satellites and resources.

¹⁰ Unless otherwise noted, all data regarding prevalence of family violence and criminal justice system responses appear courtesy of the State of California Department of Justice, <http://ag.ca.gov/>.

¹¹ See Attachment 1: "Resource Inventory."

¹² See Attachment 4: "Key Stakeholder Talking Points"

With regard to financial impact, co-location of a range of organizations within an FJC would result in significant leveraging of resources. Several entities would be able to provide administrative and program leadership for the Center, while other participating agencies and departments would provide in-kind support for the Center's operations. The new costs that would be incurred by the Center fall primarily into the areas of facilities, operations management staff, and data collection and analysis. Should Sonoma have the opportunity to pass legislation similar to AB 2010, revenues would be approximately \$90,000 per year, and would offset a portion of these costs.¹³ It is estimated that an additional \$337,000 per year would need to be raised in order to cover Center operating costs. Facility rental represents 61% of annual operations costs; thus the procurement of a suitable space through a contribution or donation would greatly enhance the initial economic viability of the Family Justice Center. Regardless, the scale of the Center would present new funding opportunities, enabling it to actively pursue federal, state, and foundation funding that might not otherwise be available to the county.¹⁴

The establishment of an FJC can provide substantial benefits but these can be achieved only with the support of key stakeholders and a careful planning process. The key conclusion of the study is the recommendation that a broad group of stakeholders representing city, county, and community-based organizations should take part in a strategic planning process, with the goal of developing an implementation plan for the launch of the new Sonoma County Family Justice Center. Key components of the planning process should include:

- ⌘ Establishing improved data collection methods and analysis in the area of family violence;
- ⌘ Creating a fund development strategy with the goal of making the Center expense-neutral as soon as possible; and
- ⌘ Identifying clear outcome targets to facilitate the evaluation of the Center's impact.

¹³ This is the amount being generated by the County of Solano on an annual basis through AB 2010.

¹⁴ See Attachment 2: "Potential Revenue Sources."

Key Findings

- ⌘ Surveys and interviews conducted indicate significant general support for the establishment of a Family Justice Center by county law enforcement, criminal justice, and non-profit agencies, as well as representatives within the faith community.
- ⌘ The vast majority of interview and survey respondents who were contacted indicated a willingness to participate in a strategic planning process for a Sonoma County Family Justice Center; the key stakeholders needed to comprise the nucleus of a Family Justice Center also indicated a strong willingness to co-locate, noting, in most cases, that their actual ability to do so would be predicated upon the final design of the FJC and their financial capacity to do so.¹⁵
- ⌘ The co-location of personnel will create a strong foundation for Family Justice Center sustainability and will result in significant leveraged resources.
- ⌘ The mapping of services to be accessed by victims of domestic violence indicates that they currently may need to travel to 23 different locations; domestic violence advocates are located within four different agencies.
- ⌘ A Family Justice Center has the potential to yield significant outcomes in the County of Sonoma with a special focus on increased safety for victims, increased numbers of successful prosecutions, increased support for family violence services, and reduced family violence injury and homicide.
- ⌘ Throughout the county, there is a lack of commonly agreed-upon protocols for family violence data collection and a lack of capacity to systematically track problem areas as well as outcomes achieved.
- ⌘ The geographic size of Sonoma County precludes the establishment of a traditional single Family Justice Center capable of serving the entire county.
- ⌘ Current projections indicate a need to identify an additional \$337,000 in annual revenues to operate the Sonoma County Family Justice Center.
- ⌘ The future viability of the Sonoma County Family Justice Center will depend on the identification of a suitable site that can be adapted for use as an FJC within available resources. The site should have the requisite size to serve as an FJC and eventually to become a support center for a network of satellites, including linkages to the Redwood Children's Center.

¹⁵ See Table 2, Resource Inventory (Attachment 1).

Summary of Recommendations

- ⌘ County, city, and community partners should obtain the resources to support and subsequently initiate a strategic planning process, which would include development of a work plan for the launch and first 18 months of implementation for the new Sonoma County Family Justice Center.
- ⌘ Strategic planning should specifically incorporate improved data collection and analysis, as well as the establishment of outcome measurements for the new center.
- ⌘ Key outcomes to be sought by the center should include: increased victim safety; increased successful prosecutions; and reduced family violence injury and homicide.
- ⌘ The strategic implementation planning process should identify specific targets for these outcomes.
- ⌘ Strategic implementation planning should also incorporate fund and resource development planning in order to develop funding commitments for the necessary start-up and operations costs of the Family Justice Center.
- ⌘ A site in Santa Rosa in close proximity to the courts and public transportation should be identified for housing the Sonoma County Family Justice Center, eventually becoming the hub for a network of Family Justice Center satellites, possibly located at community clinics, the Redwood Children's Center, and/or other locations.
- ⌘ Initial partners/services co-locating at the center should include, at a minimum: prosecution, law enforcement, restraining orders, advocates, and other key services when feasible; if a phasing approach is adopted, significant advances could be made through a co-location of prosecution, law enforcement, restraining orders, and all current advocates in one location, with the advocate role expanding to include case management.
- ⌘ The governance of the Family Justice Center will evolve as it grows and develops. In the first phase of Sonoma County Family Justice Center operations, fiscal and lead agency services should be provided by the Sonoma County District Attorney's office in conjunction with a management committee of key stakeholders (government and community). A separate 501c3 fundraising arm should also be established with the specific focus of raising funds for the Family Justice Center.¹⁶

¹⁶ Specific attention should be paid during the strategic planning process to ensure that the FJC does not compete for funding with partnering service providers, government and non-profit agencies.

3 Background

In Sonoma County, a group of stakeholders that includes county departments, cities, law enforcement, and community-based organizations seeks to analyze whether the formation of a Family Justice Center (FJC) will improve outcomes for victims of family violence in the County of Sonoma. To execute this analysis, the YWCA Sonoma County, acting on behalf of the stakeholder group, contracted with the Glen Price Group (GPG)¹⁷ to conduct a feasibility study regarding the potential for opening a Family Justice Center in Sonoma County. This work enables the County of Sonoma and its partners to analyze the business and program case for developing a Family Justice Center and determine whether to proceed with a strategic planning process that would have, as its ultimate product, the establishment of an FJC (see Figure 1).

FJC Development Phase	Key Questions - Topics
Feasibility Study	What is the Business and Program Case for a Family Justice Center? Should the County of Sonoma commit to strategic planning for a Family Justice Center?
Strategic Planning	Vision and Mission. Key Goals, Objectives, and Indicators of Success. Launch pathway and first year implementation plan. What are the roles and responsibilities of each partner?
Launch and Implementation	How do we continually improve services to victims and families? How do we continue to develop the strength of our partnerships and support base? How do we sustain the new service model?
<i>Figure 1</i>	

¹⁷ The Glen Price Group (GPG) provides strategic planning, organizational effectiveness, and fund development services to local government and non-profit organizations and has assisted the County of Sonoma with a grant-writing program since 2003. GPG has worked with the Alameda County Family Justice Center from its inception to the present and is currently working with the County of Solano and the City of Seattle to plan Family Justice Centers. See: <http://glenpricegroup.com/>

3.1 The County of Sonoma Feasibility Study – Deliverables

The key deliverables of this feasibility study include the following:

1. Provide a written resource inventory of potential partner contributions based on an analysis of key data and interviews with stakeholders;
2. Produce a written analysis of the potential of the FJC model for providing improved outcomes for victims of family violence and identify which local factors should be considered in the design of the services and programs which will be offered at the FJC;
3. Provide a preliminary budget for the operation of an FJC with identification of existing and potential funding opportunities;
4. Develop a strategic planning process and timeline designed to facilitate the participation and ownership of potential partners in the creation of the FJC; and
5. Develop and provide a set of recommendations for future action.

A “Resource Inventory,” summarizing the results of in-person, phone, and online surveys with key stakeholders was previously submitted (see Attachment 1).

3.2 The Family Justice Center Model

The Family Justice Center approach, originally developed in San Diego, has been tested nationally and shows great promise in helping local communities maximize the use of existing resources through improved collaboration and partnership. To date, approximately 30 Family Justice Centers have been launched in urban, suburban, and rural locations around the country. While the programs at each Family Justice Center vary considerably as each responds to local conditions, assets, and challenges, they all function as comprehensive support centers for victims of family violence and their children, where multi-disciplinary teams of professionals are housed under one roof. This model is being achieved primarily through the co-location of existing personnel. All Family Justice Centers seek to improve the services being offered to victims, and to reduce the number of locations a victim must visit as well as the number of visits they must make to tell their story and receive the help they need.¹⁸

In October 2003, the United States Department of Justice, through the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), launched the President’s Family Justice Center Initiative (PFJCI). The PFJCI initially supported the development of 15 Family Justice Centers in urban, rural, suburban, and tribal communities across the United States. While these FJCs utilize vastly different resources

¹⁸ While the term “one-stop” has often been used to characterize a Family Justice Center, we believe that this term raises unrealistic expectations in that a number of FJC partners will offer services offsite. We have begun using the term “gateway” to characterize the FJC as a single-point-of-entry for service delivery.

and confront diverse conditions, they were asked to align with several required and suggested core principles (see Table 1).

Table 1
President's Family Justice Center Initiative– Core Principles
Required Co-Location of Law Enforcement
Required Co-Location of Local Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Programs
Required Co-Location of Prosecutor
Partnerships with Probation, Community-Based Organizations & Military (if applicable)
Comprehensive Legal Services
Central Intake System and On-Site Info Sharing Which Protects Victim Confidentiality
On-Site Advocacy for Victims (& counseling as requested); Advocates Available to Provide Personal Safety Planning
Strongly Encouraged: On-Site Interfaith Chaplaincy Program
Provide Culturally & Linguistically Competent Services
Limited On-Site Forensic Medical Services
On-Site Childcare
Assistance with Transportation in an Emergency and on an As Needed Basis
Volunteer Component which Includes DV Training
Site Location Is Identified
Facility Safety Plan Which Protects Victims & Staff

3.3 Family Justice Center Outcomes and Best Practices

In 2005, Congress recognized the importance of the Family Justice Center model and included FJCs as a “purpose area” in Title I of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA 2005). Several VAWA grant programs, including the “Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies and Enforcement of Protection Orders Program,” provide support for the development and operation of Family Justice Centers. The United States Department of Justice, through its Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), has identified the Family Justice Center model as a best practice in the field of domestic violence intervention and prevention services.

3.3.1 FJC Outcomes

According to the OVW, documented and published FJC outcomes include: reduced homicides; increased victim safety; increased autonomy and empowerment for victims; improved offender prosecution outcomes; reduced fear and anxiety for victims and their children; reduced recantation and minimization by victims when wrapped in services and support; increased efficiency among service providers through the provision of collaborative services to victims; and dramatically increased community support for the provision of services to victims and their children.¹⁹

¹⁹ Casey Gwinn and Gael Strack, *Hope for Hurting Families: Creating Family Justice Centers Across America*, Volcano Press, 2006.

FJCs increase batterer accountability in several ways. The co-location of police and prosecutors facilitates the exchange of critical case information and increases collaboration on filed cases. In addition, providing coordinated services that reduce the victim's dependence on the batterer has been shown to increase victim willingness to assist in holding the batterer accountable.

⌘ **New York City** opened its first Family Justice Center in downtown Brooklyn in 2005. It has served over 11,000 clients to date and averages 1,000 client visits per month.

Building on the success of their first FJC, New York opened its second Family Justice Center in July 2008, serving the borough of Queens. The city's Family Justice Center Initiative is part of its overall effort to reduce domestic violence and provide comprehensive services to victims. New York City reports that as a result of its focus on the domestic violence issue, family related crimes have declined by 21% and intimate partner homicides have declined by 51% citywide over the last six years.²⁰

⌘ **San Antonio FJC** reports that prior to their July 2006 opening, the average length of time to arrest a misdemeanor domestic violence fugitive was 9 months between the date of incident and the date of arrest. Today, the average time lapse is 6 weeks. Prior to the 2006 Center opening of the FJC, 33% of applications for protective orders resulted in final orders. Today, 51% result in final orders. The San Antonio FJC attributes these improvements to the fact that victims get their basic needs met more quickly, often in a single visit, and they are, therefore, more willing to follow through with legal action.

⌘ **Alameda County FJC** reports significant improvements in offender accountability through: 1) Increased reporting of domestic violence cases, indicating increased victim confidence in the system, gained in part through co-location of advocates, services, and law enforcement/prosecution; 2) Improvements in the quality of law enforcement investigations, which law enforcement and prosecution representatives directly attribute to their co-location; and 3) Improvements in prosecution outcomes including increases in felony filings, felony convictions, misdemeanor convictions, and reductions in case dismissals following filing.²¹

Several indicators tracked by the Alameda County District Attorney's office provide evidence for the impact of the Family Justice Center. Table 2 illustrates the percentage of

²⁰ City of New York, Office of the Mayor, "Mayor Bloomberg, Queens District Attorney Brown and Domestic Violence Commissioner Jimenez Celebrate the Opening of New York City's Second Family Justice Center," press release, July 15, 2008.

²¹ All data cited in this section appear courtesy of the County of Alameda District Attorney. We wish to express special thanks to Chief Assistant District Attorney Nancy O'Malley and her team for providing ready access to the authors to a wealth of data only part of which is presented here.

police reports rejected for prosecution by the District Attorney’s office for victim-related reasons.²² The overall drop in rejections from 2006 to present was 20%.

Table 2: Alameda County Cases Rejected for Victim-Related Reasons			
	Year		
	2006	2007	2008²³
Felony	51%	44%	43%
Misdemeanor	55%	39%	34%
Total	55%	40%	35%

The ongoing trend of a decrease in refused police reports has been particularly significant in felony cases: 51 uncooperative victims of a felony were identified in 2007; year-to-date for 2008 there have only been 7.

Table 3 provides an overview of the decrease in the numbers of cases dismissed following filing.

Table 3: Alameda County Domestic Violence Dismissals 2006-2007	
Year	Number of Dismissed Cases
2006	782
2007	588
% Decrease	25%

There is also a steady increase in the percent of cases that are being charged as felonies from north county, where the FJC is physically located: 13% in 2005, to 19% in 2006, and 23% in 2007.

Alameda County has also experienced a dramatic drop in domestic violence homicide from 30 in 2001 to 8 in 2006, a decrease concurrent with the opening and the first 18 months of FJC operations, and with the establishment of effective Domestic Violence (DVRT) and Sexual Assault (SART) Response Teams. Early data suggests that there were three domestic violence homicides in 2007.

²² These victim-related reasons for case rejection include: Victim declines to prosecute, victim not credible, victim requests no prosecution, victim unavailable, and victim uncooperative.

²³ Extrapolated based on 157 days of data.

Increase in Financial Support

Since the opening of the FJC, Alameda County has also experienced a significant increase in public support for family violence services in the form of increased federal, state, corporate, foundation, and individual donor support. Over \$2 million dollars in new financial support for family violence services has been secured, leveraging the considerable new in-kind contributions made by FJC partners estimated at over \$10 million dollars annually.²⁴

3.3.2 Family Justice Center Best Practices

During the President's Family Justice Center Initiative, and in subsequent evaluations, focus groups, client feedback surveys, and national Promising Practices Conferences, the following ten FJC best practices were identified:²⁵

- 1. Co-located, Multi-disciplinary Services for Victims of Family Violence and Their Children Increase Safety and Support.** In the Family Justice Center model, partners to be co-located include: law enforcement officers; prosecutors; probation officers; military advocates (if applicable); community-based victim advocates; civil attorneys; medical professionals; and staff members from diverse community-based organizations. Including other partners, such as a Chaplain's Program, is strongly encouraged in order to meet the expressed needs of clients experiencing trauma from family violence.
- 2. Pro-arrest/Mandatory Arrest Policies in Family Justice Center Communities Increase Accountability for Offenders.** Each Family Justice Center community has law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies that emphasize the importance of arrest, prosecution, and long-term accountability for family violence offenders.
- 3. Policies Incidental to Arrest/Enforcement Reduce Re-victimization of Victims.** Each Family Justice Center community should have a demonstrated history of addressing common problems in communities, such as dual and mutual arrest. No jurisdiction has policies that require a victim to pay costs for obtaining a restraining order if the victim is financially unable to afford such costs.
- 4. Victim Safety/Advocacy Must Be the Highest Priority in the Family Justice Center Service Delivery Model.** Each Family Justice Center site has readily identifiable

²⁴ See Attachment V for a report submitted by the Alameda County Family Justice Center to the California State Senate Judiciary Committee detailing their outcomes achieved to date.

²⁵ The President's Family Justice Center Initiative Best Practices, Office on Violence Against Women, United States Department of Justice, 2007.

- processes as well as the staff needed to assess and provide for victim safety during the intervention process. All Family Justice Center sites have policies in place to ensure, to every possible extent, security for staff and clients at the planned Family Justice Center. Site security and victim safety policies and procedures must be considered during FJC design.
- 5. Victim Confidentiality Must Be a Priority.** All Family Justice Center sites have policies and procedures that provide for victim confidentiality to the extent required by law. No private, non-profit victim advocacy or shelter organization should be required to compromise their own victim safety and confidentiality procedures in order to collaborate with a Family Justice Center. Relevant victim information should be shared among agencies working in partnership to protect the client, but only after informed consent procedures are implemented.
 - 6. Offenders Must Be Prohibited From Accessing On-site Services at Centers.** No criminal defendants should be provided services at a Family Justice Center. Family Justice Center sites are oriented towards victims and their children. Off-site services for offenders should be central to any community's response to domestic violence; but they should not be available on-site at a Family Justice Center. Domestic violence victims with a previous history of violence or with a current incident in which the victim is the alleged perpetrator are assessed on a case-by-case basis for eligibility for services at a Family Justice Center site. Procedures also must be created to ensure availability of off-site services for victims in the event that a current or prior criminal conviction prevents them from receiving services at a Family Justice Center site.
 - 7. Community History of Domestic Violence Specialization Increases the Success of Collaboration in the Family Justice Center Model.** Every Family Justice Center community should have a history of specialization of services in their community. Specialization generally refers to specially trained advocates, police officers, prosecutors, judges, court support personnel, medical professionals, and other professionals with similar domestic violence expertise. In the absence of such a history, Family Justice Center planning should include provision of intensive training for all proposed partners and staff, with an emphasis on victim safety and victim advocacy, and on partner collaboration in the co-located services model.
 - 8. Strong Support from Local Elected Officials and Other Local and State Government Policymakers Increases the Effectiveness and Sustainability of Family Justice Centers.**

All new FJC communities should demonstrate strong local support from those in positions of authority within the community in order to enhance their capacity to build strong, sustainable financial bases.

- 9. Strategic Planning Is Critical to Short-term and Long-term Success in the Family Justice Center Service Delivery Model.** Each Family Justice Center site should implement a strategic planning process to ensure the development of the program, the sustainability of the program, and to identify local funding options for future operations. A history of local funding is strong evidence of possible future support. Local revenues used to fund specialized intervention professionals demonstrate the commitment of local elected officials and policymakers to support domestic violence intervention and prevention work.
- 10. Strong/Diverse Community Support Increases Resources for Victims and Their Children.** All Family Justice Center sites need strong, diverse community support. Strategic planning efforts that include developing and maintaining support from local and state government, business, labor, diverse community-based social service organizations, and faith-based organizations increase the resources available to victims and their children at a Family Justice Center and thereby increase safety and support.

On her own...Thalía's Story

Thalía was a young woman who had secured a good job with benefits in a nearby town. She had come to Santa Rosa with several friends to celebrate her birthday when she stopped at a convenience store for several items while her friends went across the street for fast food.

A man approached her in his car and asked for directions. She declined and he asked for her number and opened his door to give her a pen and paper. He then grabbed her arm, pulled her into the car, and drove off ignoring her startled protests. As he pulled out of the parking lot, he stuck a knife under her neck and told her to stop struggling or he would kill her. He drove Thalía to a secluded side street where he raped and sodomized her.

Suddenly, Thalía came to the realization that the man was never going to let her go alive. She began to fight back and they struggled over the knife. She finally climbed over the front seat and desperately grabbed her jacket to cover her naked body as she ran off into the dark. Thalía eventually collapsed in front of an apartment door, sobbing, and pounding on the door for help. The door opened and closed. Horrified, she screamed all the louder. The door opened again and this time the woman looked down to see a young lady huddled under her jacket sobbing uncontrollably. She called 911 and the police and ambulance whisked her off to the hospital but Thalía was too traumatized to undergo a sexual assault exam.

Thalía went back to work trying to forget the horrendous ordeal of that night. Weeks later, the police came to Thalía's home saying they wanted to show her pictures of a possible suspect. When she looked at the pictures proffered by the police officer, she had a visceral reaction. It was hard for her to believe that they had found the man.

At the preliminary hearing, Thalía took the stand and provided powerful testimony. She then left the court, which was the last time the prosecutor ever saw her. She returned to work but couldn't function and lost her job. She lost her apartment. Her car was repossessed and Thalía began to use drugs; she had criminal charges filed against her. Communication was difficult, as her cell phone was often not functioning and she had no transportation. During the jury trial, Thalía's preliminary hearing testimony was read to the jurors. The man was convicted but Thalía never heard the verdict.

A Family Justice Center would have provided a caring environment and would have at least minimized the number of challenges Thalía faced alone following the sexual assault. At the FJC, Thalía would have been made to feel safe as soon as she walked in the door by professionals providing immediate crisis intervention, survivor support, and victim advocacy. She might have chosen to stay and have the SART exam, which would have provided valuable evidence, instead of choosing to flee with her friends. She might have taken advantage of rape counseling and been able to cope at her job. Or she might have taken advantage of job counseling to find a work environment that would better suit her needs during this crisis. She might have had a better understanding of how the investigation was proceeding by working with her advocate rather than having the trauma resurrected when the police found a suspect. She might have taken advantage of financial counseling and avoided the loss of her apartment and her car. She might have learned to better handle her emotions without self-medicating with illegal drugs. Had Thalía been supported by the various agencies co-located at the FJC, she might have testified at trial and felt some glimmer of self empowerment instead of seeing her life spiral downward.

4 The FJC Model and Improved Outcomes for Victims of Domestic Violence in Sonoma County

This feasibility study sought to ascertain whether or not a Family Justice Center would yield significant outcomes with a satisfactory return on investment for key stakeholders through a preliminary analysis of the extent of family violence in the county, the current service delivery system, and specific outcomes that could potentially be delivered by an FJC in the County of Sonoma.

4.1 Extent of Family Violence in the County of Sonoma and Law Enforcement Response

The severity of family violence in the County of Sonoma is well known. A traumatic event in 1996 – the murder of Maria Teresa Macias by her estranged husband, and his subsequent suicide – raised great concern among citizens, community organizations, and law enforcement agencies.

The case of Teresa Macias, and a dramatic increase in domestic violence incidents in Sonoma County beginning in the mid-1990s, prompted a strong mobilization of county and community resources including the Community Task Force on Violence Against Women. Following the review of the final report of the Community Task Force by the Board of Supervisors in the summer of 1996, the Board created the Sonoma County Domestic Violence Action Committee (DVAC) and charged the coalition of former Task Force members with furthering the implementation of numerous recommendations to improve resources and services for survivors of violence and holding offenders accountable for their crimes. Since that time, the coalition of criminal justice agencies, victim advocates, service organizations, and community leaders have made clear progress in implementing the programs necessary to ensure both victim safety and offender accountability, including forming the Family Violence Prevention Council in 2006. A highly successful and well-recognized Domestic Violence Court has also been in operation for ten years.

4.1.1 Domestic Violence Injuries and Related Homicide

The severity of family violence issues in Sonoma County was made clear during the course of this feasibility study by several high profile sexual assault and domestic violence cases that resulted in significant injury to the victims.²⁶ For example, a traumatic domestic violence homicide occurred in May of 2008 that resulted in the death of a mother of two children, ages 2 and 4. Since 2002, the County of Sonoma has averaged a minimum of one domestic violence homicide per year.²⁷

Despite the many years of community efforts aiming to improve services for victims of family violence, stakeholders interviewed and surveyed for this feasibility study feel that service delivery is

²⁶ “Man held in violent attack on girlfriend,” Press Democrat, January 31, 2008.

²⁷ Safe State: Preventing Crime and Violence in California, California Attorney General’s Crime and Violence Prevention Center, <http://safestate.org/>

still significantly hampered by the geographic dispersion of services and providers. As a large county comprised of a mix of urban, suburban, and very rural regions, including high, isolating mountain ranges and more than 67 miles of rugged coastline, the scattering of services makes it extremely difficult for many domestic violence victims to quickly and efficiently access the scope of domestic violence assistance they need. This dispersion of services often results in victims remaining in prolonged jeopardy, increasing the risk of repeat incidents of assault.

Injury and homicide represent an incalculable human toll, and also incur significant economic expense for the County of Sonoma and the cities within its jurisdiction. Although the financial costs of domestic violence homicide are difficult to calculate, a national study conservatively estimated that each case costs a county an average of \$600,000.²⁸ Other California studies have estimated county and state costs to exceed \$2.5 million per case.²⁹

4.1.2 Calls for Assistance

Available data paints a picture of an issue with significant ramifications throughout the county. As illustrated by Table 4, County of Sonoma domestic violence calls for assistance (a statistic that local law enforcement is required to report to the state Attorney General) have been rising in the county at the same time that they have been decreasing statewide.³⁰ The volume of calls indicates that domestic violence is a significant and growing issue for the county and city law enforcement departments.³¹

Table 4: Calls for Domestic Violence Related Assistance ³²					
	2003	2004	2005	2006	Net Change
Sonoma	1,781	2,045	2,048	2,118	+19%
Statewide	194,288	186,439	181,362	176,299	-9%

4.1.3 Arrests, Filings, and Dismissal Rates

In 2005, law enforcement agencies in the county made a total of 697 domestic violence felony arrests under penal code section 273.5. (This figure does not include arrests under penal code section 243(e)). Between 1999 and 2005, felony domestic violence arrests represented an average of 13.6% of all felony arrests in the county.³³ Table 5 illustrates the trend in county versus statewide arrests under penal code section 273.5.

²⁸ “The Economic Toll of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States;” Max, Wendy, et al; 2004. See also “Costs of Intimate Partner Violence,” Center for Disease Prevention and Control, 2003.

²⁹ County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Administration, Office of Violence Prevention.

³⁰ Safe State, Ibid.

³¹ No conclusions are drawn from the decrease in calls between 1999-2005 or the increase in 2005-2006. Improvements in victim confidence in the law enforcement system may actually lead to increased calls for assistance.

³² Safe State, Ibid

³³ Safe State, Ibid.

Table 5: Felony Domestic Violence Arrests (Spousal Abuse - Penal Code 273.5)³⁴								
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Net Change
Sonoma	645	695	743	712	532	718	697	+8%
Statewide	52,128	51,225	52,392	50,479	48,854	46,353	45,083	-14%

Domestic Violence cases also represent the single largest source of cases booked in the County Jail, comprising 74% of all misdemeanor cases and 54% of felony person crime cases booked between July 1, 2005 and June 30, 2006.³⁵

Table 6 provides an overview of the number of filings by the District Attorney’s office between 2004 and 2007.

Table 6: Domestic Violence Cases Filed and Dismissals³⁶						
Year	Total cases filed (felony and misdemeanor)	% Increase/ % decrease in cases filed over previous year	Cases dismissed for victim not appearing	% cases dismissed for victim not appearing	Total # of cases dismissed	Total % of cases dismissed
2004	1,227	-1%	86	7%	594	48%
2005	1,365	+11%	116	8%	550	40%
2006	1,171	-14%	219	19%	672	57%
2007	829	-29%	238	29%	468	56%

The significant increase in the number of dismissals for “victim not appearing” (approximately 29% of filings in 2007), and the decrease in the overall number of filings were, to a large degree, outcomes of “the Crawford case,” a 2004 Supreme Court decision which significantly impacted domestic violence prosecutions. The Crawford ruling changed the way prosecutors “may get evidence admitted into court to assist in the prosecution of criminal defendants.” The net result of Crawford has been that in sexual assault and domestic violence cases where a victim refuses to testify against the perpetrator, it is unlikely that her statements made out of court about the incident will be admissible evidence against the defendant/ batterer. Because it is not uncommon for a victim of sexual assault or domestic violence to be the only witness to the assault, it is more difficult to prosecute these cases if the victims are not available to testify and the defense counsel did not have an opportunity to cross-examine them.

³⁴ Safe State, Ibid.

³⁵ David Bennett Consulting, “Sonoma County, California Corrections Master Plan,” December 6, 2007, Draft, Chapter One, page 25.

³⁶ Data courtesy of the County of Sonoma District Attorney’s office.

In 2006, Sonoma County engaged David Bennett Consulting to conduct a broad assessment of the local criminal justice system. As a key finding in the study noted, “*The felony filing rate in Sonoma County is 49%. Most of the cases that end with a ‘no complaint’ are domestic violence cases. High rates of ‘no complaint’ can undermine victim confidence in the system. (A filing indicates the intention of the District Attorney to proceed with prosecution. A ‘no complaint’ is issued when the DA does not have sufficient evidence of cause to proceed with prosecution.)*”³⁷

High dismissal rates not only undermine victim confidence in the system, but case dismissals also significantly impact the morale of criminal justice personnel as well as survivors. The lower the level of confidence victims have in the system, the less likely they will cooperate fully in prosecution, thereby further increasing the possibility of dismissals. In addition, the research base also indicates that convictions reduce the likelihood of domestic violence recidivism.³⁸

4.1.4 Economic Impact of Family Violence on County of Sonoma Departments and Partner Agencies

Nationally, domestic violence each year results in an estimated 2 million injuries to women, 580,000 injuries to men, and 1,500 deaths. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate the direct physical and mental health costs of domestic violence at more than \$4 billion annually, and that total jumps to \$5.8 billion when lost productivity is factored in. The Kaiser Foundation Health Plan estimates that it spends \$200 million annually to identify and treat the results of domestic violence.³⁹

In the course of conducting this feasibility study, stakeholders worked to identify the overall costs currently being incurred to provide services to victims and their families and to prosecute and incarcerate offenders. The data collected points to significant direct service costs being incurred by the courts and county departments, especially the Sheriff, District Attorney, Human Services, and Health Services Departments. Community-based organizations including the YWCA Sonoma County, United Against Sexual Assault, Family Service Agency, and the California Parenting Institute also make significant expenditures in order to effectively serve victims of family violence.

4.1.5 Opportunities to Improve Data Collection

All parties consulted in this feasibility study recognize the significant human suffering and economic costs caused by family violence in the County of Sonoma and, while acknowledging that

³⁷ David Bennett Consulting, *Ibid*, page 3.

³⁸ Lois A. Ventura and Gabrielle Davis, “Court Case Conviction and Recidivism,” *Violence Against Women*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 255-277 (2005).

³⁹ “The cost of abuse: domestic violence hits the bottom line,” *San Francisco Business Times*, August 31, 2007.

great strides have been made, they also acknowledge the inadequacy of current data collection and reporting systems in providing complete and in-depth reports on the extent of the problem. Regardless of the decision to pursue implementation of a Family Justice Center, one key outcome to be sought by the county, city, and community-based entities working in this field should be the development of an accurate, ongoing picture of the nature and scope of family violence in the County of Sonoma inclusive of domestic violence, sexual assault, child and elder abuse.

4.2 Current Service Delivery System

The County of Sonoma has made real improvements in outcomes for victims both at the county level and through creative initiatives undertaken by cities and community-based organizations. Seen as a whole, however, the system remains disjointed, and is often perceived as both confusing and cumbersome by the victims of domestic violence seeking critical assistance. It is decidedly “agency-centric”; victims confront a sometimes bewildering array of service providers that are not linked coherently or in a victim-friendly manner.

4.2.1 Current System Strengths

During the course of 58 interviews and surveys conducted for this feasibility study, respondents often cited several of the county’s innovative programs and collaborative activities, including the Redwood Children’s Center, SART, the Domestic Violence Court, and the re-launch of the Family Violence Prevention Council. The current co-locations, which involve YWCA advocates and the Sheriff’s Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (DVSA) unit, as well as the YWCA and United Against Sexual Assault (UASA) co-locating with the Santa Rosa Police Department (SRPD), provide strong evidence of the capacity of these organizations to collaborate effectively in highly creative ways.

4.2.2 Current System Challenges

The overriding picture that emerges in looking at the County of Sonoma’s efforts to effectively serve victims of family violence is one of a system that is agency- and jurisdiction-focused as opposed to victim-centered. With extensive input from respondents, a preliminary map of the organizations and county departments which must be navigated by victims of domestic violence was developed (see Figure 2).⁴⁰ To receive basic services and collaborate in criminal prosecution, a victim may need to visit over 23 different locations and discuss her or his case repeatedly. Aside from the limited services available through the advocates working with the SRPD and Sheriff, there is no identified referral path or coherent system of collaboration being utilized currently by partners. (See

⁴⁰ We would especially like to thank Jacque Reid of YWCA Sonoma County for insights into the journeys of domestic violence victims.

Section 3.3 of the Resource Inventory, provided as Attachment 1, for a more detailed discussion of strengths and challenges identified by interview and survey participants.)

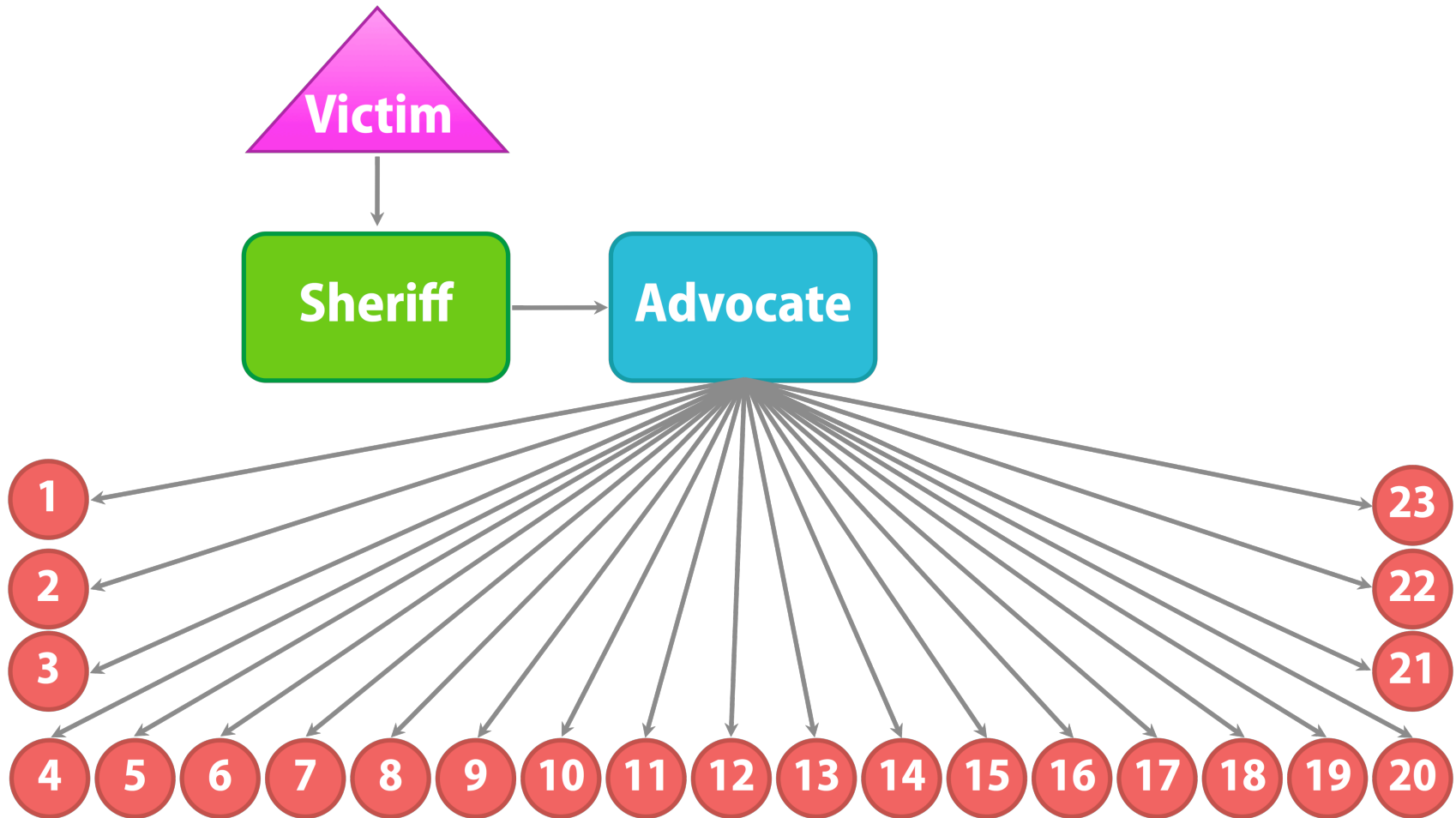


Figure 2: Domestic Violence Victims Currently Referred to Multiple and Dispersed Locations.

As illustrated by Figure 3, victims of domestic violence and their families are currently referred to up to 23 different locations for critical services.

Domestic Violence Victim Pathway (Partial List)

Note: This chart was compiled based on interviews with county, city, and community-based organizations active in law enforcement/prosecution and/or providing services to victims of domestic violence. It is not meant to be exhaustive in terms of the number of and types of referrals provided. It represents the field of domestic violence only, and within domestic violence, those victims reporting a crime to law enforcement. The chart should also not be construed as illustrating a systematic or sequential referral pathway.

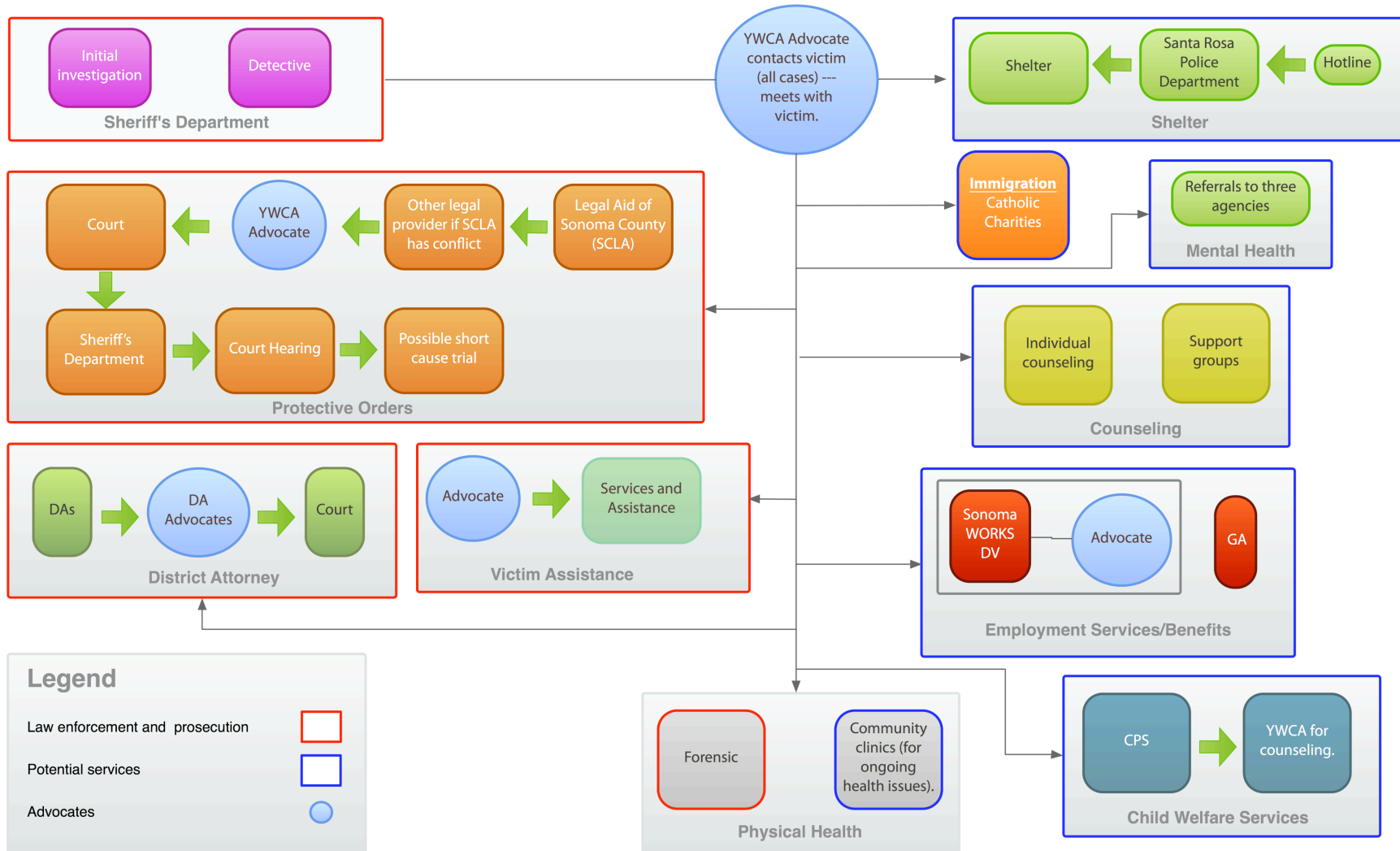


Figure 3: Current System: Potential Victim Pathway

Healing a Decade of Abuse...The Story of Anna and Her Children

Anna's parents died when she was a teen in Mexico. Very quickly, she met and married her husband who brought her to the United States. She was already pregnant with their daughter. Anna's husband controlled her activities and kept her isolated in the home; he took her shoes to work with him so she could not leave the house. He left the car with little to no gas so that she only had enough to take the children to school. He did the grocery shopping and other household errands or accompanied Anna so that she was never in public alone.

Anna was subjected to domestic violence for over a decade. She was hit, punched, slapped, isolated, and humiliated – both in front of her two children and in public.

When her daughter was 11 and her son was 8, Anna was required urgent surgery. During her hospitalization, her husband sexually abused their daughter and, when Anna returned home, her daughter told her what had happened. This was the last straw for Anna. Anna was undocumented, had no family or friends, and spoke only Spanish. But she mustered the courage to talk to the secretary at her children's school who immediately helped her call CPS; CPS quickly responded to the school and contacted the police, who arrived promptly. Anna was certain that she was ready to leave her husband and she requested assistance. The police escorted Anna to her home to pick up a few belongings and they arrested her husband.

Anna and her children stayed at a hotel and then at the YWCA shelter as long as they could. Human Services provided Anna and her children with individual and family therapy, parenting education, and assistance with obtaining a visa. They connected Anna to a successful Spanish speaking child welfare client who helped Anna connect with the local Latino community. Anna found a job and housing. She secured medical coverage for herself and her children. During this time, Anna's husband was released from jail. He burned all of Anna's belongings in a bonfire in front of the house. He looked for Anna. He left threatening messages on her cell phone. But Anna remained strong. She obtained a long-term restraining order and was granted sole custody of her children.

In collaboration with their community partners, the Human Services Department of the County of Sonoma served Anna and her children for six months. The family is now living free of the horrible abuse they had endured for over ten years. With the visibility and community presence of a Family Justice Center, Anna might have reached out *before* the sexual abuse of her child occurred, accessing a comprehensive system of support, and likely preventing years of immense suffering, and reducing treatment and service costs.

4.3 Other Local Factors

Currently, the County of Sonoma has several resources that could be utilized more effectively to improve outcomes for victims of family violence. The county's network of community clinics provides a strong base on which to build integrated services for victims of family violence. Presently, 12 community clinics provide a variety of health services at locations throughout Sonoma County, including those areas with high rates of family violence. Interview and survey respondents also frequently cited the county's Redwood Children's Center as an excellent resource.

One issue raised frequently in interviews and by survey respondents was the geographic size of Sonoma County and the real and perceived split in access to resources on a geographical basis within the county. Other key location issues raised by respondents included the need for strategic placement of the FJC; the need for transportation services to and from the FJC; and the need to be creative in developing alternative solutions to serving the large size of the county.

In the view of most respondents who expressed specific site opinions, Santa Rosa is the recommended FJC location for a variety of reasons (county seat, proximity to the courts, etc.). Respondents overwhelmingly believed that the public transportation system must be enhanced to effectively serve the needs of clients traveling to and from an FJC. Some suggested that the FJC operate its own shuttle service to directly take clients to and from the Center. Establishing a mobile response team that is linked back to the services at the FJC was also mentioned as a possibility.

Other alternatives voiced included linking the existing network of community clinics to the resources available at the FJC. Another suggestion involved creating smaller sized FJCs to serve more of the county. Using secure video relay to link the separate satellite sites was also proposed. Suggested satellite sites included the Redwood Children's Center and the network of community clinics.

4.4 Framework for Improved Outcomes

In 2005, the President's Family Justice Center Initiative commissioned Abt Associates, a nationally recognized consulting group, to analyze the potential for specifying and measuring Family Justice Center outcomes.⁴¹ Utilizing the foundation developed by Abt, in conjunction with the data analyzed in relation to family violence issues and the current system response in Sonoma County, we propose the following outcomes framework (see Table 7) as the foundation for the future design of family violence programs in the county. Should a strategic planning process for the Sonoma County Family Justice Center move forward, a key task should be setting **specific targets** for those outcomes deemed to be of highest priority.

⁴¹ "Evaluability Assessment of the President's Family Justice Center Initiative," Abt Associates, 2005.

Outcome	Measures	Data Sources
Victim Safety		
Increased victim safety, increased DV reporting	Number of police calls for domestic violence assistance in target areas	Police call logs before and after FJC
	Number of police calls for domestic violence assistance involving injury (ER visit, paramedic)	Police call logs before and after FJC
	Number of repeat police calls for domestic violence assistance to same location	Police call logs before and after FJC
Reduce number of domestic violence homicide and significant injury cases	Number of domestic violence crimes involving significant injury and homicide	State Attorney General/Law Enforcement logs
Offender Accountability		
Increase numbers of successful prosecutions	Numbers and percent of convictions/pleas in domestic violence cases before and after FJC	DA data and records
Reduce number of case dismissals	Numbers and percent of dismissals in domestic violence cases before and after FJC	DA data and records
Strength of Service Delivery System		
Increase public awareness of domestic violence	Knowledge about/attitudes toward domestic violence	Random digit dialing community survey
	Knowledge about/attitudes toward domestic violence services, including FJC	Random digit dialing community survey
Increase access to and utilization of domestic violence services	Number of victims receiving domestic violence, advocacy and legal services from FJC and each partner	Partner Management Information Systems before and after FJC
	Number of domestic violence services available in the County of Sonoma before and after FJC	Interviews with service providers, volunteer clients
	Percentage of victims accessing multiple victim services	Client focus groups, anonymous on-site surveys
Increase funding amounts and sources for family violence services	Amount of funding received and number of sources	Budgets of FJC partners
Table 7		

4.5 Forecasting Outcomes and Return on Investment

Until an implementation plan is developed, forecasting specific outcomes and their relation to a return on investment is difficult. Assuming, however, that a Family Justice Center serving Sonoma County utilizes the methodology graphically depicted by Figure 4 (where services are co-located and wrapped around victim needs), *and* that the co-location of law enforcement, prosecution, and advocates is the central core of any plan developed, potential returns and benefits can be identified in general terms, using the experience of existing family justice centers as benchmarks.

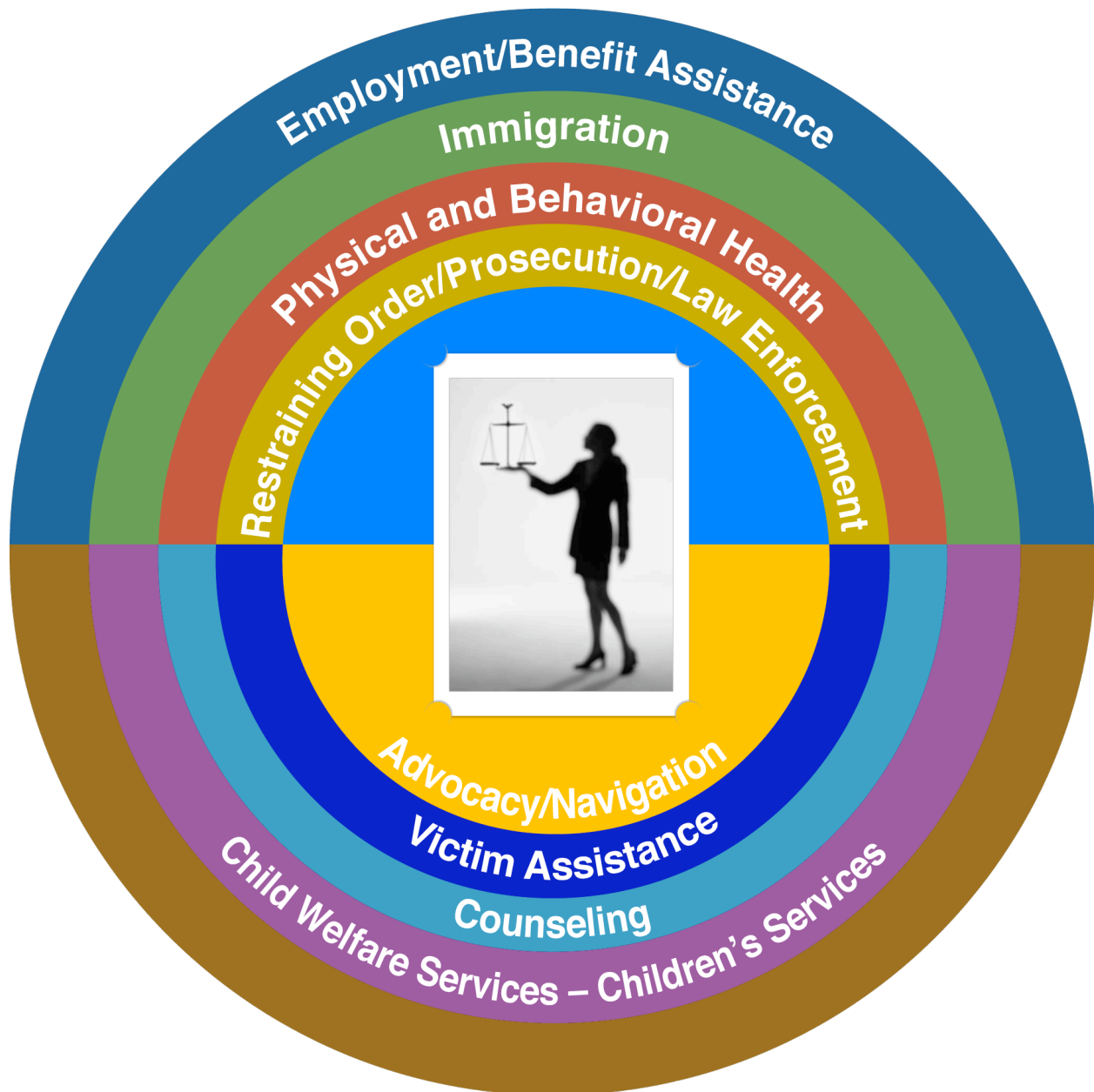


Figure 4

4.5.1 Reduction in Dismissals --- “Same Justice Sooner”

Several Family Justice Centers throughout the country have experienced a reduction in the number of case dismissals. This is particularly significant in light of the fact that most existing FJCs were initiated in a post-Crawford environment where, as described above, it has become more likely for cases to be dismissed when a victim chooses not to testify. In Sonoma County, the number of cases filed has decreased as prosecutors tighten their criteria regarding which cases to prosecute in light of the Crawford requirements; at the same time, the number of dismissals **due to the victim’s failure to testify** has risen from 7% in 2004 (the last year pre-Crawford), to 29% in 2007. Total dismissals in 2007 were 56%. In addition to the human costs and decreased confidence in the law enforcement system, each dismissal represents an economic investment by the county.

County of Sonoma departments, especially the District Attorney and the Sheriff, invest significant resources in investigating, prosecuting, and incarcerating perpetrators of family violence. While these costs must be expended regardless of the eventual case outcome, the fewer the number of dismissals, the greater the return on the investment made in this work.

In Alameda County, **total dismissals** in domestic violence cases have been reduced significantly since the FJC opened, which the District Attorney and Oakland Police Department directly attribute to improved quality of investigations achieved through their co-location at the Family Justice Center and the increased levels of support being received by victims.

Given the significant investment that is currently being made in arrest and prosecution, increased efficiency in prosecution (as indicated in part by decreased dismissal rates) **greatly heightens the impact of the county investment that is already being made**. As illustrated by Table 3, total dismissals have decreased 25% in Alameda County since the FJC opened. Should the County of Sonoma FJC achieve this level of success, it would greatly maximize the county’s investment in cases that are currently being dismissed.

Additional potential return on investment accomplished by rapid, successful prosecution efforts could be studied utilizing figures on reductions in recidivism, both in terms of repeat house visits and arrests of the same individual by law enforcement. The ability to hold offenders accountable more quickly achieves the “same justice sooner,” while presenting the opportunity to reduce operations costs at every level of the justice system. The David Bennett Study noted, “*The Family Justice Center will also allow all of the agencies involved with domestic violence including law enforcement to be better able to coordinate services and more effectively adjudicate cases.*”⁴²

⁴² Sonoma County Corrections Master Plan, Ibid, Chapter 5, page 12.

5 Financial Impact and Sustainability

For the purpose of feasibility analysis, preliminary financial projections have been made in order to allow County of Sonoma decision makers to weigh the potential outcomes of the Sonoma County Family Justice Center versus the costs. The projections are divided into two categories – operating and capital – and are rooted in the following assumptions:

Operating Cost Projection Assumptions

- ⌘ Current Victim Assistance operations (VA), and the Sheriff's DVSA unit (including YWCA advocates) will be moved to the Sonoma County Family Justice Center (Center);⁴³
- ⌘ The VA administrative and program team will provide administrative and program leadership for the Center and will be augmented by additional staff, specifically a new Sonoma County Family Justice Center Operations Manager and an Operations Support positions;
- ⌘ Current support for VA from all sources will remain stable;
- ⌘ Funds currently dedicated to lease payments for the VA and Sheriff's DVSA will be used to offset either the Center's lease payments or other operational costs;
- ⌘ Organizations providing advocacy and other services at the Center will be provided with space at no cost;
- ⌘ All organizations co-locating personnel at the Center will provide in-kind services for the Center's operations including, for appropriate agencies, assisting with client intake on a rotating basis; and
- ⌘ The costs associated with tracking ongoing outcomes and the level of service provided will be borne by the Center; all organizations co-locating at the Center and those working with the Center on an off-site referral basis will be required to participate in the Center's data tracking and monitoring system, which will be designed to provide necessary levels of client confidentiality.

⁴³ Per email communications with Mike Wagner, County of Sonoma Real Estate Division Manager, no costs would likely be incurred for opting out of the current Victim Assistance and DVSA leases. Because Victim Assistance currently shares a lease with Jail Services, there may be costs incurred by Jail Services in the event that Victim Assistance moves to the Family Justice Center as Jail Services will not be co-locating there (See Section 3.3.2, Family Justice Center Best Practices - No. 6: Offenders Must Be Prohibited From Accessing On-site Services at Centers). Per a spreadsheet provided by Mike Wagner, one-time costs for Jail Services to find new leased space range from \$120,000 to \$240,000.

Capital Cost Projection Assumptions

- ⌘ Capital improvements to the facility will be limited to those necessary for security and those needed to create program, training, and administrative spaces;⁴⁴
- ⌘ A minimum space of 5,700 ft² would be necessary to co-locate Victim Assistance and the Sheriff's DVSA unit;
- ⌘ Capital improvements will include creating the necessary communications and Internet infrastructure to establish confidential data and video communications systems.

Revenue and Sustainability Assumptions

- ⌘ The Center will engage in an aggressive fund development program targeting both private and public sources for funding to cover operating and capital costs not covered by current funding streams;⁴⁵
- ⌘ In executing these fund development efforts, the Center will not compete for funding with partner organizations but will instead seek to develop those sources of funding that would respond more favorably to the larger scale, county-wide proposals generated by the Center (e.g., large state and federal grants, major statewide and national foundations, etc.); and
- ⌘ Organizations co-locating staff at the Center will be responsible for all salary, benefits, and any other personnel costs associated with their staff person(s), which will help provide ongoing program sustainability while demonstrating to potential funders the significant level of resource leveraging already underway.

Based on the assumptions above, the following operational and capital cost projections are presented for analysis purposes only. The spreadsheets provided as Attachment 3 present additional detail in relation to these projections.

⁴⁴ Once a site has been identified, these will need to be further developed.

⁴⁵ See Attachment 2 for a summary of GPG's initial research regarding potential state, federal, and foundation funding sources for the Sonoma County Family Justice Center.

5.1 Sonoma County Family Justice Center: Operational Cost Projections

Table 8 Operations Cost Projection Summary	
Operations Revenue	\$115,506
Operations Expense	\$451,950
New revenue to be identified	\$336,444

5.2 Sonoma County Family Justice Center: Capital Cost Projections⁴⁶

Table 9 Capital Cost Projection Summary	
Capital Revenue	\$0
Capital Expense	\$680,000
Additional Capital Investment Needed	\$680,000

5.3 Potential Phasing Options

Given the significant investment required to fully develop the Family Justice Center, it may be wise to consider phasing in the development of key components/co-location of all partners over time as experience is gained and the performance of the FJC is evaluated. Table 10 provides a summary of potential “phasing in” options.

⁴⁶ In the absence of a specific site, these projections are illustrative only.

Options/Phases	Staffing (Above Co- Located Staffing)	Partner Co- location/Space	Space Needs – Square Footage Estimates
Phase I: Building a Comprehensive Gateway	Lead Advocate/ Navigator Receptionist	Sheriff DVSA	8,500-12,000
		YWCA Advocates	
		UASA Advocates	
		Victim Assistance	
		District Attorneys	
		District Attorney Advocates	
		Sonoma County Legal Aid	
		Counseling Space	
		Other Service Space	
Phase II: Providing Comprehensive Services	All of the above plus Director	Physical Health	12,000 – 15,000
		Immigration	
		Mental Health	
		GA	
		SRPD	
Phase III: Creating a Countywide Network (Satellites)	Designated contact at each satellite	Establish links to RCHC community clinics	Secure and confidential space at satellites

Table 10

6 Strategic Planning Design and Timeline

Experience to date with Family Justice Centers around the country consistently shows that they are most successful when they approach **strategic planning** and **fund development** as an **integrated effort**. The potential for successful fund development is immeasurably strengthened by a close link to a well-articulated and powerful strategic plan. In like manner, strategic planning activities become reality-based and alive for participants through a clear understanding of potential resources, and various opportunities for program growth and development presented therein. We believe that this interconnectedness is particularly important for establishing the Sonoma County Family Justice Center, an effort that will involve the contribution of extensive in-kind resources from participating partners.

Given that the Sonoma County Family Justice Center benefits from the extensive experience of its partners to date, we are calling this a “Strategic Implementation Planning Process,” to emphasize the need to move forward with **action planning** while, at the same time, continuing to refine the Center’s overall purpose, vision, and mission, while building partner and stakeholder buy-in and ownership in the plan and in the proposed FJC. At the same time, a vigorous fund development effort needs to be developed and implemented as an integral piece of the overall strategic implementation plan.

Two principal objectives are proposed for the four-month planning process:

- 1) Complete a **Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP)** for the first 18 months of the Center’s operations; and
- 2) Develop a **sustainability model** for the Family Justice Center that would integrate legislative work, foundation, and other potential institutional funding sources and a **sustainability work plan** for the ongoing work required to create a strong financial base for the FJC.

Implementation of the Strategic Implementation Planning (SIP) process should include attention to the following:

- ⌘ Design and delivery of a participatory planning process;
- ⌘ Organization and facilitation of public forums and/or focus groups that elicit stakeholder and client views and input to be used during the planning process;
- ⌘ Ongoing work aimed at strengthening and maintaining successful collaboration among key collaborating agencies and organizations;

- ⌘ Utilization of easily accessible, user-friendly planning tools;
- ⌘ Development of communications tools providing partners with ongoing access to a website of SIP and related resource materials designed to streamline communication, coordination, and collaboration between key stakeholders; and
- ⌘ Developing a clearly articulated process for mutually monitoring, assessing and evaluating work progress, outcomes, and results/impact for organizational learning and reporting.

6.1.1 Commitment to Strategic Planning

Representatives from key county departments and community-based organizations including the Sheriff, District Attorney, Health Services, and Human Services, YWCA and United Against Sexual Assault met to review the primary draft conclusions of the feasibility study. A key joint talking point developed as a result of this discussion was a common commitment to engage in a strategic planning process with a primary focus on increasing the capacity to sustainably generate resources for Family Justice Center implementation and operations.⁴⁷ 97% of those organizations participating in the survey work conducted for this feasibility study also indicated that they would be willing to participate in a strategic planning process.

6.1.2 Resources Required for Strategic Planning

As proposed, the strategic planning process would require 3.5 days from all participants. An “Engine Group,” or steering committee, would also meet a minimum of five times to guide the process. As needed, work groups specializing in specific topics would be formed, requiring additional time from subject matter experts from different participating agencies. Other Family Justice Centers have found strong benefits in contracting with professional facilitators experienced in bringing together multi-stakeholder groups to design, conduct, and document this strategic planning work. Several excellent consulting firms in the state have demonstrated expertise with the facilitation of Family Justice Center planning processes. Their costs for coordinating and facilitating the process outlined by Table 11 would likely range from \$25,000 - \$50,000. Given the financial resources required for strategic planning, a key next step should be the development and submission of funding proposals, likely to private foundations, that would generate the financial support needed for a successful strategic planning process.

⁴⁷ See Attachment 4: “Key Stakeholder Talking Points”

Table 11: County of Sonoma Family Justice Center Strategic Planning Timeline and Framework			
Month	Key Topics	Participants	Engine Group
Month 1 (One Day)	Vision Mission Key Goals Work Group Formation	Policymakers All Stakeholders External Supporters National Family Justice Center Alliance	Identify and Contact Stakeholders Review Planning Products
Month 2 (One Day)	Objectives Indicators of Success	Work Groups	Participate in and Lead Work Groups Review Planning Products
Month 3 (One Day)	Activities and Operations Planning	Work Groups	Participate in and Lead Work Groups Review Planning Products
Month 4 (Half Day)	Community Review Launch Plan	Policymakers All Stakeholders External Supporters National Family Justice Center Alliance	Identify and Contact Stakeholders Review Planning Products
Partner Roles and Responsibilities Team Building			
Potential work groups: Program service planning, monitoring and evaluation, sustainability, site planning, and others TBD.			

7 Attachments

Attachment 1: Resource Inventory (On File)

Attachment 2: Potential Revenue Sources (On File)

Attachment 3: Operational and Capital Expense Worksheets (On File)

Attachment 4: Key Stakeholder Talking Points (On File)

**Attachment 5: Alameda County Family Justice Center Report to the California State Senate
Judiciary Committee (On File)**