

COUNTY OF SONOMA AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY REPORT			Clerk of the Board Use Only Meeting Date Held Until ___/___/___ ___/___/___	
			Agenda Item No: Agenda Item No: _____ _____	
Department: District Attorney, Sheriff's Department, Health Services, Human Resources – Commission on the Status of Women, and Human Services Department			() 4/5 Vote Required	
Contact: Terry Menshek	Phone: (707) 565-3098	Board Date: 10/6/09	Deadline for Board Action:	
Agenda Short Title: Domestic Violence Awareness Month				
Requested Board Action: Resolution proclaiming October 2009 to be Domestic Violence Awareness Month in Sonoma County				
CURRENT FISCAL YEAR FINANCIAL IMPACT				
<u>Expenditures</u>			<u>Add'l Funds Requiring Board Approval</u>	
Estimated Cost	\$		Contingencies	\$
			(Fund Name:)	
Amount Budgeted	\$		Unanticipated Revenue	\$
			(Source:)	
Other Avail Approp (Explain below)	\$	_____	Other Transfer(s)	\$
			(Source:)	_____
Additional Requested:	\$		Add'l Funds Requested:	\$
Explanation (if required):				
Prior Board Action(s): Since 1982, the Board of Supervisors has proclaimed October to be Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The District Attorney's Office has joined with the Sheriff's Office, Health Services, Human Services, and Human Resources Commission on the Status of Women in requesting this proclamation. All partners join in the request for recognition of Sonoma County's efforts to prevent and respond to domestic violence.				
Alternatives – Results of Non-Approval: Sonoma County would not join other counties, cities and the State of California in recognizing the seriousness of domestic violence and the importance of local prevention and intervention agencies such as the YWCA Domestic Violence Services and the Sheriff's Department Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Unit, Department of Health Services Sexual Assault Response Team, Human Services -- Adult and Aging Division, and Family Youth and Children's Services, Division and the District Attorney's Office.				

Background:

On behalf of the many public and private agencies working together to improve services, and to prevent and respond to domestic violence, five departments – The District Attorney’s Office, Sheriff’s Office, Health Services, Human Services and Human Resources -- Commission on the Status of Women have come together to seek a resolution proclaiming October 2009 as *Domestic Violence Awareness Month* in Sonoma County.

Communities around the nation come together during October to mourn those who have died as a result of domestic violence, to celebrate those who have survived domestic violence, and to honor and connect those who work tirelessly to put an end to domestic violence. For over two decades, purple ribbons have served as visual gestures of support for victims of domestic violence. No one is able to pinpoint the history of the purple ribbon, but it symbolizes survival, courage, honor and dedication to ending domestic violence. It is also used to raise awareness in communities about the crime of domestic violence, and has been recognized by state legislatures.

Sonoma County District Attorney’s Office

The District Attorney Domestic Violence Program promotes the development and implementation of effective, victim-centered law enforcement, prosecution, and court strategies to address domestic violence. The establishment of the Special Victims Unit, which encompasses domestic violence as well as sexual assault, statutory rape and elder abuse, has been crucial to our efforts. The vertical prosecution concept (the same prosecutor, specifically qualified in domestic violence issues, is assigned to the case from beginning to end) employed by this unit allows for close contact with victims to support them and alleviate their fears of involvement in the criminal justice system. A full complement of prosecutors, domestic violence counselors and an investigator has enhanced the vertical prosecution of these cases.

Vertical prosecution results in a higher rate of conviction and better services to the victim. Through this program the District Attorney:

- ✓ Expanded and created specialized units of prosecutors and investigators targeting violent crimes against women, including sexual assault, stalking and domestic violence. In FY 08-09 2,525 requests for complaints were forwarded to the District Attorney, with 1,108 defendants being charged;
- ✓ Is developing, enlarging and strengthening programs and assisting prosecutors in addressing the needs and circumstances of older and disabled women, including recognizing and investigating, who are victims of domestic violence and sexual assault;
- ✓ Is prosecuting instances of such violence or assault and targeting outreach and support, counseling and other victim services to these older and disabled individuals.
- ✓ Is treating victims with compassion and dignity, which, combined with ensuring that perpetrators of crime are processed through the criminal justice system, helps put the victim on a road to recovery.

Attachments: Resolution

On File With Clerk:

CLERK OF THE BOARD USE ONLY

Board Action (If other than “Requested”)

Vote:

Background, continued:

Sonoma County Sheriff's Office

In the calendar year 2008, the Sheriff's Office investigated a total of 645 cases of domestic violence that involved physical violence (spousal abuse and domestic battery). This number of 645, compared to the 611 cases investigated in 2007, increased approximately 5%. For comparison purposes over an eleven year period (2008 compared with 1997), we saw a 26% decrease in the number of domestic violence cases involving physical violence. These numbers include only those cases that were investigated by the Sheriff's Office (645 cases in 2008 versus 863 cases in 1997).

Additionally, in 2008, the Sheriff's Office investigated 233 domestic violence cases that included terrorist threats, stalking, false imprisonment, violation of domestic violence restraining orders and assault with a deadly weapon.

During the year 2008, there were a total of 1,088 reports involving Domestic Related Incidents ("DRI"). A DRI is a dispute not involving physical violence. This was a slight decrease from the 1,131 DRI cases reported in 2007. Through a partnership with the YWCA, DRIs are assigned to a YWCA domestic violence advocate, as a preventative step, to help work toward our goal of ending domestic violence in our County.

The Sheriff's Office and YWCA have utilized an educational outreach program that has a focus on prevention through education. Domestic Violence experts from the YWCA are providing public training throughout the county. Domestic violence affects all genders, ages, races, cultures, and socio-economic backgrounds. The outreach program has completed numerous presentations to a wide variety of groups throughout the county, including high school students, health care professionals, and military personnel. The Sonoma County Sheriff's Office takes the issue of domestic violence very seriously and therefore domestic violence is given our utmost priority.

Sonoma County Department of Health Services

The Department of Health Services' Sexual Assault Response Team works collaboratively with the Criminal Justice System, Human Services Department and community advocacy partners, such as the YWCA and United Against Sexual Assault (UASA), medical providers, and other organizations that are committed to delivering and enhancing services to address domestic and family violence prevention and intervention.

Health Services' Public Health Division, Clinical Services has a team of Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners assigned to both the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) and the Redwood Children's Center (RCC) teams. Both the SART and the RCC medical teams provide 24-hour, seven-day-a-week on-call services for all adult and child victims of sexual assault or abuse; the SART/RCC team conduct a limited medical examination for the specific purpose of assessing, documenting and collecting forensic evidence.

During Fiscal Year 2008/2009, 52 adult and 44 child examinations were completed by the SART/RCC team. Of these:

- 40% of adult exams presented with injuries to the body;
- 29% of adult exams presented with injuries to the genitals;
- 41% of child exams presented with positive findings;
- The assailant was known to the victim in approximately 52% of the adult sexual assaults;
- Drug and/or alcohol use was a factor in 44% of adult cases; and
- Domestic Violence was indicated in 27% of adult cases.

Background, continued:

In recognition of the Federal Violence Against Women Act and the Sexual Assault Survivor's Bill of Rights, Health Services remains a committed partner in looking toward the Safety, Support and Restoration to victims of domestic and family violence in a safe, caring and professional environment.

Sonoma County Family Violence Prevention Council (FVPC) and Subcommittees

In 1996, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors accepted the final report of the Community Task Force on Violence Against Women, sponsored by the Commission on the Status of Women. The Task Force's successor, the Sonoma County Domestic Violence Action Committee (DVAC), was formed to address domestic violence in our community.

In 2005 the community recognized that the Domestic Violence Action Committee should redefine its purposes and goals and develop a new structure to respond to family violence effectively. DVAC was renamed Family Violence Prevention Council (FVPC). FVPC consists of 32 members representing an array of agencies, departments, and organizations in Sonoma County that deal with family violence. Sonoma County Superior Court Judge James Bertoli and District Attorney Stephan Passalacqua are co-chairs of the Council. The YWCA, Sheriff's Office, Human Services and Health Services all participate in this valuable service for the community.

The FVPC's past and current projects/initiatives include the following:

- Supporting an annual training program for law enforcement, professional and service providers hosted and sponsored by member agencies. The annual programs have been a huge success.
- Developing educational and outreach events designed to increase our community's awareness of the importance of breaking the cycle of violence. Plans for this year's education and outreach event are underway.
- Reviewing law enforcement protocols and policies of all law enforcement agencies is being conducted in an effort to ensure consistency in responses to incidents of family violence throughout our County.
- Coordinating data and statistics related to incidents of family violence in an effort to accurately capture the needs for enhanced services and programs and support submissions for grants to support meeting those needs.
- Ongoing collaboration to assist victims of family violence and their children: All of the partners in this resolution are engaged with a broad coalition of community partners in an effort to create a Family Justice Center to best serve victims of family violence in our community.

During the month of October, many public and private agencies will participate in educational forums and events recognizing victims of domestic violence and the need to respond as a community to this epidemic. In particular, the YWCA Sonoma County has planned the following activities:

- **"Purple Flags"** -- The YWCA will once again display purple flags in front of the Sheriff's Department and the Police Departments of the Cities of Petaluma, Rohnert Park, Santa Rosa, Sebastopol and Sonoma during the month of October to call attention to the number of incidents of abuse that have been reported to law enforcement throughout Sonoma County during the past year. This year there will be over 2,000 flags on display.

Background, continued:

- **“Clothesline Project”** -- A Special Display of the YWCA’s Clothesline Project, a powerful display of t-shirts created by survivors of domestic violence will be on view in Sonoma at the Plaza on Friday, October 16th and in Healdsburg at the Plaza on Saturday, October 17th.
- **“Healthy Body, Healthy Relationships”** -- A Walk Against Domestic Violence held at Spring Lake on Saturday, October 24th.at 9:00 a.m. to Noon at the Violetti Road entrance.

Requested Board Action:

Resolution proclaiming October, 2009 to be Domestic Violence Awareness Month in Sonoma County.