



SAN DIEGO FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER SNAPSHOT RECOMMENDATIONS

Prepared by Gael B. Strack, Assistant City Attorney on Special Assignment to the San Diego City Attorney's Office





RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations for the SDFJC related to governance, organizational leadership, funding and sustainability, operations and service delivery are based on our independent analysis and input from FJC Staff, Community Partners, Volunteers, and Survivors. Many of the recommendations have already been discussed with the leadership team at the San Diego City Attorney's Office and put into place since the beginning of this process.

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GOVERNANCE

One of the key components of a successful Family Justice Center is an established governance structure. There are multiple options for successful governance structures, including the existence of a Steering Committee or Board of Directors, the presence of an Operations Committee that includes representatives of the key partner agencies and the level of input and participation by all partner agencies in the governance of the Center.

<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1. The SDFJC needs a Champion to provide long-term leadership and support. City Attorney Mara Elliott has become that Champion and the SDFJC's transfer to the City Attorney's Office where it originally started was an excellent move by the Mayor and Council.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. The current city government (Mayor and Council) is publicly supportive of the efforts of the SDFJC. The Center should continue to host quarterly PS&NS meeting briefings, send updates/reports to the Mayor and Council on its progress and accomplishments and invite city council staff to tour the FJC in order to keep the City aware of the success and importance of the SDFJC.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Continue to work with San Diego County District Attorney Summer Stephan and the County to develop a countywide vision and strategic plan for providing coordinated services to victims of domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault, elder abuse and human trafficking in a village/campus model.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5. The SDFJC should revisit developing an Operations Committee made up the key on-site partners to help with the transition of day-to-day operations and to keep everyone engaged, create shared-ownership among the partners, develop integrated services, and a trauma-informed, hope-centered environment.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. The SDFJC should be involved with the statewide network of Centers as a way to stay engaged and up to date with funding, legislative priorities, and other statewide organizations. The Governor just signed a bill that will provide \$10 million in the new state budget for operating and developing Family Justice Centers in California!</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 6. Consider a joint powers of authority to support the development of county-wide regionalization of FJCs.</p>



ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Leadership is a crucial component in the successful operation of a Center. The Snapshot Process looks for a well-respected lead agency with strong buy-in from on-site and off-site community partner agencies and close coordination with a countywide task force or coordinating council. It also looks at the qualifications and expertise of the leadership team at a Center, the presence of a succession plan for all key management positions and appropriate training and supervision by the leadership team for all staff members in a Center. In addition, the process looks at the existence of a strategic plan and the ongoing efforts to implement the strategic plan.



7. The SDFJC needs a **full-time dedicated and collaborative Director** that is solely focused on the SDFJC.



10. The SDFJC leadership team should meet with the leadership from all on-site and off-site partners on a quarterly basis to **maintain ongoing communication and buy-in for the Center**.

8. Collaborative leaders regularly solicit feedback from all community partners on the effectiveness and adequacy of their support services and leadership assistance to partner agencies. **Monthly community partner meetings** should be organized to solicit input and increase buy-in and participation from current and potential new partners.



11. The SDFJC should develop strong relationships with the domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault, elder abuse and human trafficking communities with the goal to **increase on-site and off-site partners**, including prosecution teams from the City Attorney's Office and District Attorney's Office. State law requirements should be followed pursuant to California Penal Code Section 13750.

9. The SDFJC needs sufficient, **well-trained and trauma-informed staff** to run the day to day operations of the SDFJC which includes a minimum of 8 positions and must expand as partners and clients return to the SDFJC. Similar size Centers have 12 (Alameda, CA) to 15 (OKC, OK) FJC staff positions.



12. The SDFJC should maintain a regular presence in the community including regular participation in the **San Diego DV Council meetings**, and other related community events that will improve and increase the community's awareness about the services provided at the SDFJC.

ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP



13. The SDFJC needs an updated strategic plan to fully operationalize the center in preparation for a **city-county plan for a regional Family Justice Center framework**.



18. Review the **Alliance's Guiding Principles** and seek a commitment to each and every principle with on-site staff, volunteers and partner agencies in order to confirm their commitment to providing victim-centered services.



14. The SDFJC needs the support of a well-trained and supervised volunteers by reinstating a **comprehensive 40-hour training program** which includes topics outlined in PC13750.



19. The **vision** and **mission** of the SDFJC should be revisited and agreed upon by all stakeholders.



15. The SDFJC needs to develop a structure, such as a **Blueprint Team or Operations Committee**, to ensure the recommendations from the Strategic Plan and Snapshot are implemented. The Team/Committee should continue to seek input and support from key stakeholders, elected officials, committed and potential community partners, funders, and survivors. Ongoing meetings of all local stakeholders should be prioritized to continually update and revise the strategic plan and promote the ongoing evolution and growth of the Center.



20. Eliminate the current License Agreements and return to the original **Partnership Agreements** to ensure the full integration of partner agencies into service delivery in appropriate roles, provide a clear explanation of what it means to be a collaborative partner, and treat partners as equals in the collaborative.



16. The SDFJC needs to be an **Affiliated Center** and fully engaged with the Alliance in order to maintain the highest best practices standards and implementation of the Alliance's Guiding Principles.



21. The SDFJC needs a comprehensive sustainability/funding plan for a **permanent home for the SDFJC**. The Plan should envision a **Steering Committee** from both the City, County and Community to provide leadership, feedback and input.



17. Review and update **job descriptions** and **qualifications** for all SDFJC staff.



22. Develop a **succession plan** for all key positions.



FUNDING AND SUSTAINABILITY

The Funding and Sustainability category of the FJC Snapshot Process consists of the following subcategories: Grant Administration, Funding, In-Kind Support, and a Foundation (fundraising arm for the SDFJC).

<input type="checkbox"/> 23. The SDFJC needs a full-time grant manager .	<input type="checkbox"/> 26. Revisit and adopt a " Shared Sustained Funding " Policy for the Center.
<input type="checkbox"/> 24. The SDFJC needs a 501c3 fundraising-oriented Board to support the Center beyond the financial commitment from the City and assess the in-kind support the Center receives from its partners and volunteers.	<input type="checkbox"/> 27. Recruit board members who have strong ties to the community and willingness to focus on fundraising and community outreach .
<input type="checkbox"/> 25. Pursue collaborative grants that support partner agency positions as well as the SDFJC as a whole.	<input type="checkbox"/> 28. The SDFJC should receive funding from diverse sources , foundations, state and federal government, individual donations and other private sources.



OPERATIONS AND SERVICE DELIVERY

The Operations category of the FJC Snapshot Process consists of the following subcategories: Facility, Operational Staffing and Structure, Partnership Agreements, Operations Manual, Safety and Security Policies and Procedures, Volunteer and Internship Program, Training, Internal Communication, External Communication, Media Spokesperson, and Communication Materials. The Service Delivery category consists of the: Client Intake System, Statistics, Evaluation, Community Partners, Community Partners Program Development, Expertise, Clinical, Multi-Disciplinary Review Team, FJC Environment, and VOICES.

29. While the SDFJC is conveniently located to transportation and other services such as the YWCA and the Housing Commission, parking has been an on-going struggle for on-site staff, partners, volunteers and especially clients. Historically, the SDFJC has not paid for parking for community partners, their interns and/or volunteers. Due to budgetary constraints, the SDFJC needs to **prioritize parking for clients**. The parking validation process also needs to be easy and stress free which encourages victims and their children to stay as long as necessary to receive services.

32. The SDFJC needs to conduct an office space analysis of existing use of space to create optimal flow of services for clients, increase on-site partnerships, additional meeting space for multi-disciplinary teams and community work. The SDFJC should **reallocate office space to ensure service delivery is maximized**. Full time partners should be allocated full-time space and part-time partners should be allocated shared spaces. No part-time staff/partners should have dedicated offices.

30. The SDFJC is housed in a 20,000 square foot facility that is leased by the City from the City Housing Commission. The facility does not meet the long-term space needs of the Center. A **short-term extension of the current lease** may be necessary depending on the timeline for the County's Village/Campus vision.

33. Revisit the décor and layout of the reception area and hospitality room/kitchen to promote a more **updated, comfortable, trauma-informed and accessible environment**. This should include repainting, displaying signage of on-site community partners and only displaying signs that welcomes clients and visitors to the Center.

31. The SDFJC should secure a long-term facility/location which meets the current and future needs of the Center. The location should be developed in collaboration with the County and emerging **County vision for a Village/Campus**.

34. Ensure **adequate space and accommodations** are made to all areas to welcome people using assisted mobility devices to comfortably move around, those needing service animals and access to language line.

OPERATIONS AND SERVICE DELIVERY

<p><input type="checkbox"/> 35. The staff, community partners and clients overwhelmingly recognized the need to have trained staff and/or volunteers oversee the Children's Room during all office hours and consider after-hours support, including maintaining the room with adequate supplied, toys and books. Many FJCs now have paid staff overseeing the children's room with comprehensive activities and services being provided to children.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 42. Develop an internal communication plan to keep all staff and on-site partners informed about staff/partner hours, daily office staffing, volunteer hours and duties, upcoming events and a welcome protocol for new staff and on-site partners.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 36. The SDFJC should ensure its staffing is always available during operating hours of the Center and even alternate hours to allow for evening services and/or support groups.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 43. Develop an 8-hour orientation and training plan for all new partners, staff and volunteers before working at the Center.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 37. Revisit the names and roles of volunteers. Using the term "advocates" for volunteers can be misleading if they are not confidential pursuant to EC 1037.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 44. Ensure the City regularly updates the Center's website to provide accurate information about the partners, services and activities available to the public.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 38. Recruit sufficient number of well-trained, diverse volunteers and interns that are utilized effectively to meet the needs of the center and stay within their skillset.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 45. Develop a comprehensive mailing list to communicate with community members about the needs, successes and upcoming events at the Center.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 39. Provide appropriate oversight and mentorship to volunteers and interns consistent with the specific guidelines for academic internships.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 46. Ensure the client kitchen is welcoming and adequately staffed with nutritional food and beverages for adult and child survivors all day/every day.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 40. Maintain an organized calendar for volunteers/interns for scheduling purposes and shifts at the Center to ensure adequate coverage for each volunteer role.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 47. Ensure the reception and kitchen area both have adequate brochure holders about on and off-site partners and services which are regularly monitored and maintained.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 41. The SDFJC needs to update the operations manual, safety and security manual and volunteer manual with input from all community partners, staff and key stakeholders as mandated in PC13750.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 48. Add a forensic interview room with adequate recording equipment.</p>

OPERATIONS AND SERVICE DELIVERY

<input type="checkbox"/> 49. The SDFJC needs to revamp the provision of services and the client-intake system with input from community partners and the Alliance.	<input type="checkbox"/> 54. Revisit the current client screening process to ensure compliance with PC 13750. The goal of screening is to screen clients in for services rather than screening them out.
<input type="checkbox"/> 50. Conduct client process mapping with SDFJC staff and on-site partners to evaluate the best way to provide services to clients, to help identify strengths and gaps in services, flow of service delivery and strategies to improve on-site service delivery and a reduction in referrals.	<input type="checkbox"/> 55. Ensure all reception and intake staff/volunteers understand the parameters of their mandated reporting obligations as well as other on-site partners. Intake staff/volunteers should explain this to every client before soliciting any information.
<input type="checkbox"/> 51. Revisit the referral process for on-site and off-site partners. The goal should be to provide clients with immediate services on-site and avoid referrals. The SDFJC should connect clients with on-site services and only (as needed) with warm introductions/linkages to off-site services. A protocol should also be in place for on-call services by off-site partners to be provided at the Center when needed by clients. Off-site partners coming to meet with clients at the Center is the FJC framework model, not large numbers of off-site referrals.	<input type="checkbox"/> 56. Revisit how clients are notified about outstanding criminal warrants. The goal should be to make the client aware of the warrant and resolve the issue as quickly as possible without the client facing additional legal jeopardy.
<input type="checkbox"/> 52. The existing ARJIS-funded intake system or a new system to be implemented must be HIPAA and VAWA compliant while allowing partner agencies to enter and review information when authorized by clients to reduce the amount of times victims have to tell the story or share information.	<input type="checkbox"/> 57. The SDFJC should reinstitute the Clinical Committee to create, implement, and review FJC Client Intake policies and procedures. The Committee should meet regularly and sufficient personnel should be available to provide clinical services on a daily as-needed basis for all clients.
<input type="checkbox"/> 53. Ensure all reception and intake staff/volunteers understand the definition and operation of an informed-consent information sharing process. This is the process to obtain informed consent and authorizes staff, volunteers, and partner agencies on when and how to share client information.	<input type="checkbox"/> 58. The Clinical Committee should re-evaluate the current intake process to ensure forms are streamlined and the process is clearly understood and consistent between FJC staff, partners, volunteers, and clients. The Alliance can provide technical assistance on these matters in-person, by webinar or teleconferencing at no cost to the SDFJC.

OPERATIONS AND SERVICE DELIVERY

<p>59. The SDFJC should ensure that all necessary assessments are completed and clients receive appropriate follow-up advocacy and case management. The Alliance recommends use of the evidence-based Danger Assessment (DA) during intake process. Proper understanding and use of the DA Tool (www.dangerassessment.org) and the creation of a personalized safety plan for each client should be implemented immediately.</p>	<p>64. Community partners and staff members showed interest in being more involved in Camp HOPE America, a mentoring and camping initiative for children impacted by domestic violence. The SDFJC should develop a transition plan to re-institute its involvement Camp HOPE and again take the lead in the management and recruitment process for SDFJC clients. The Alliance can provide on-site support by assigning a Camp HOPE Coordinator. All other local Camp HOPE programs in the country are run by the Center except in San Diego, where the Alliance has been running the program for the SDFJC.</p>
<p>60. Review the recommendations of the in-person focus group members (survivors) to improve the feel and operation of the SDFJC including: Name tags for attendees; covering the double paned mirror in the group room; larger cups of (hot) coffee; bottled or filtered water offered to all; snacks available for all attendees; more focus/support groups and at more times; create a once a week legal group with an opportunity to ask legal questions; provide better communication about the services at the SDFJC; improve customer service to make all clients feel welcome and cared for; and improve the parking validation system.</p>	<p>65. On-site civil legal services are still critically needed for family law, immigration, human trafficking, elder law and children legal services, court representation for restraining orders. Revisit partnering with local law schools and attorneys from the Alliance's Justice Legal Network at no cost to the City. Consider establishing a Legal Services Committee to help oversee the coordination of legal services, implementation of e-filings for temporary restraining orders (eliminated in recent years) and a plan for comprehensive civil legal services.</p>
<p>61. The Alliance has developed resources for the implementation and improvement of the client intake process and can provide assistance immediately.</p>	<p>66. Conduct a training needs assessment for on-site staff, partners and volunteers.</p>
<p>62. Continue to participate in the Monthly High-Risk Team but also implement an informal On-site High-Risk team to address emergencies that may occur on a daily basis with clients at the SDFJC after completing the DA Tool with each client.</p>	<p>67. The SDFJC and the Clinical Committee should revisit all forms and tools being used at SDFJC to ensure only the most necessary information is being gathered and duplicated and the most current tools and forms are being used.</p>
<p>63. The SDFJC needs to develop a wellness program for on-site staff, community-partners and volunteers which includes training on vicarious trauma, wellness activities and rewards and recognition for their hard work.</p>	<p>68. The SDFJC should combine the VOICES Committee and its "Advisory Board of Survivors" to provide advice, advocacy, education to the Center.</p>

OPERATIONS AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Involvement with the Alliance

<p><input type="checkbox"/> 69. The SDFJC should re-institute an Evaluation Committee and regular Focus Groups with clients. The SDFJC should also ensure that a regular process for Client Exit Surveys is implemented.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 71. The SDFJC should continue to identify and annually send a team to the Annual International Family Justice Center Conference (March 19-21, 2019).</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 70. All SDFJC staff and partners should be familiar with and actively accessing Alliance resources, monthly calls, webinars, trainings, Leadership Institutes, and Annual Conferences. To build collaboration, all on-site personnel and volunteers should engage in regular training together whether through the Alliance or with on-site community partners.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 72. The SDFJC should distribute and review the Alliance's Guiding Principles with all new on-site staff, partners, and volunteers to ensure the Center continues to promote promising and best practices related to victim-centered services and community accountability. The Guiding Principles are available from the Alliance and posted at www.familyjusticecenter.org.</p>



CONCLUSION

The SDFJC has a dedicated, compassionate group of core professionals that provide an excellent foundation to build on for the future of the Center. The SDFJC inspired a movement across the country and around the world. It must now rise again to this leadership role. The SDFJC has a dedicated and gifted new Director and an equaling capable Operations Manager. The SDFJC can be the hub and foundation of major changes and ongoing system improvements in the City and County of San Diego in the months and years to come if its vision and mission is embraced by all elected officials, policy makers, and system professionals. Despite its challenges over the last 10 years, the SDFJC continues to do incredible life-saving work and is poised to improve its operation, efficiency, and effectiveness. The Alliance stands ready to assist the leadership team of the SDFJC with immediate technical assistance to address the current challenges facing the Center.

The Alliance Team was honored to work with the City Attorney, her strong Leadership Team, and the SDFJC's community partners in preparing this Report. It is now critical that the Center address the current issues in order to ensure its long-term success and impact in breaking generational cycles of violence and abuse in the City and County of San Diego.

Respectfully Submitted,

Alliance Team —

Gael Strack, Casey Gwinn, Natalia Aguirre and Yesenia Aceves

For more information about the work of Alliance for HOPE International in its Family Justice Center Alliance program, go to: www.familyjusticecenter.org.





SAN DIEGO FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER SNAPSHOT REPORT

Prepared by
Gael B. Strack, Assistant City Attorney
on Special Assignment to the San Diego City Attorney's Office

July 2018



New leadership team for the San Diego Family Justice Center

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INTRODUCTION

In 2008, Alliance for HOPE International (Alliance) developed the Family Justice Center (FJC) Snapshot Process (Snapshot) to assess the overall organizational effectiveness, service delivery efficiency, day-to-day operational consistency, and over-all sustainability of an operating Family Justice Center under a National Technical Assistance grant funded by the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) in the U.S. Department of Justice. The Snapshot is designed to identify strengths of a Center and areas for needed technical assistance, training, and improvement in the following subcategories: **Governance, Leadership, Strategic Plan, Mission and Vision, Political Landscape, Involvement with the Alliance, and FJC Guiding Principles**. Each subcategory is designed to evaluate the Center's overall organizational and leadership efficiency and effectiveness.

The overall process of the Snapshot is not intended to be a comprehensive evaluation or assessment of any of the on-site public or private agency partners which may be located at a Center, but a snapshot of how a Center, overall, is operating at a particular time. To better understand the current day-to-day operations of the San Diego Family Justice Center (SDFJC) in these various domains, the Snapshot was primarily conducted by experienced members of the Alliance Team (who assisted at no cost to the City) in February 2018, but also included observations from December 2017 through June 2018 by Former Assistant City Attorney Gael Strack who was on special assignment from the Alliance to provide support and guidance through the transition of the SDFJC from the San Diego Police Department to City Attorney's Office leadership.

Method:

The process included a series of interviews, observational periods, anonymous partner surveys, analysis of core SDFJC materials and protocols, survivor feedback, discussion and a historical analysis of the SDFJC from 2002 to the present.

- **Interviews** were conducted with on-site staff of the SDFJC and community partners. The SDFJC currently has **11 on-site partners/programs** which are either full-time or part-time.

The partner agencies include:

Child Welfare Services

part-time

Center for Community Solutions

full-time

Center for HOPE and Healing

full-time

Rady Children's Hospital/Chadwick Center

part-time

City Attorney

part-time

District Attorney

part-time

Luna & Associates (Immigration services)

part-time

Military Advocacy

full-time

Palomar Forensic Services

part-time

San Diego Police Department, DV Unit

full-time

San Diego Center for Counseling

full-time

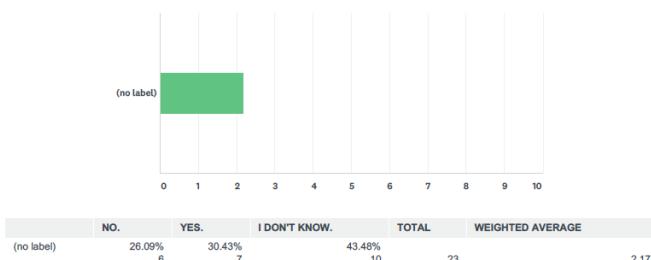
- **Observation** included: Observing staff and volunteers during the intake process, the reception desk operations and interacting with clients in various waiting areas. Observation also included court observation by former Nampa/Boise (ID) FJC Director Rebecca Lovelace at the newly opened San Diego Superior Court, specifically the Court Clinic and asking court personnel questions about the SDFJC.

- **Anonymous Community Surveys:** The Alliance received 33 surveys. Overall, while we found tremendous support for the co-location model and the SDFJC, the community partners believe there is much work to be done to improve the SDFJC in every category from improving the reputation of the SDFJC, creating a shared vision, developing a sense of community among the staff, community partners and volunteers, having a strategic plan, promoting safety, healing and empowerment for victims, providing a warm welcoming environment for victims and their children, valuing existing staff, partners and volunteers, providing survivors and their children a sense of community after the crisis, creating survivor-centered and culturally responsive services, feeling supported by FJC staff, needing qualified staff and training, striving for high standards, significantly improving the intake process, meaningful community partners meeting, starting-over with the volunteer program, making more services available to victims, collaborating more with partners, sharing more information and improving the website.

In reviewing individual comments from community partners, it was clear that they saw an overwhelming need to prioritize and improve the intake process, provide adequate training and supervision to the volunteers, immediately improve customer service to victims and their children, provide adequate childcare, increase legal services and make victims feel welcomed in all areas including addressing their parking needs. They also wanted to be part of the solution and collaborate in making their SDFJC the best it can be for victims and their children.

Q37 Does the Center share basic client demographic information, after obtaining client consent, with partner agencies in order to reduce the number of times a client must share the same information?

Answered: 23 Skipped: 10



Survey results for question regarding sharing of basic client information within agencies in order to reduce the number of times a client must tell their story

Method

- **Review of Materials** included: Any existing strategic plan, operations manual, volunteer manual, vision/mission statement, intake forms, exit surveys, evaluations, statistics, floor plan, partnership agreements or MOUs, partner feedback, confidentiality agreements and other documents used in the operation of the SDFJC. A review of these materials showed that all documents and forms need to be updated. Specific recommendations provided in a separate document.
- **Survivor Feedback and Focus Group:** Survivor feedback was obtained through an in-person focus group, existing surveys, new surveys, meetings with survivors and survivor/volunteers.
 - **Invitations were sent to SDFJC clients** through community partners to attend a focus group at the SDFJC on March 14, 2018 from 4 to 6pm. Alliance staff member Patricia Bauer facilitated the focus group/interview, asking **questions about the service delivery and overall satisfaction** in order to gain an understanding of the survivors' perceptions of the SDFJC. Incoming FJC Director Yvette Lopez-Cooper was in attendance. Three

clients attended the focus group. They spoke very candidly about accessing services at the Center, the reception experience, the intake process, parking and interactions with the staff. Some key comments are shared on [page 6](#).

– The Alliance also reviewed **existing client surveys** on file at the Center which included 16 from 2017 and 7 from 2016. Overall, there were very few surveys and different versions of surveys were used. The surveys from 2016 and 2017 were all positive except for one. Under the questions what could be better, the Client wrote:

“I was nervous that the Center had closed because the lights were off as I waited in the lobby. I was told people were running late. I am glad I stayed but someone else left.”

However, during community partner interviews, partners described many negative interactions between staff and/or volunteers and clients.

Graduation of first class of Volunteers



SURVIVOR FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS

"It's the little things that end up being important to us."

"I think the people at the front desk know why we come here but they don't really understand it with their hearts. **They don't really understand** how scared we are or how hard it is to even come here."

"Kids are often unsupervised in the kids' room. Some are as young as 12-14 months. I have seen them crying in the room and it's heartbreakin."

"You don't want to show up early because they won't validate **parking** but then if you're late they don't let you in."

"The people working at the reception are not very helpful. There will be three or four people working at reception at a time. They're just talking. When you get there, they just say "Fill out the paper, fill out the paper, and then fill out the paper," and you have to get their attention and announce through the glass, "I filled out the paper".

Why does it have to be just a big process?"

"Having the police here makes us feel safer." "They bring a police mentality to the FJC and they know what to do if something bad happens."

- **Discussion** about the SDFJC included attending community partner meetings at the SDFJC, VOICES meetings, the SDPD Advisory Meeting, the SDPD DV Unit meeting, and a meeting with the City Attorney's DV/CA Unit.
- **History Analysis:** The last part of the Snapshot was analyzing the history and evolution of the SDFJC from 2002 to the present to gain a better

understanding of the current leadership structure, existing partners and service delivery in order to make findings and recommendations.

To best understand the findings and recommendations of the Alliance (provided in a separate document), a brief history of the SDFJC is relevant before discussing each of the core components of the Snapshot.

Team photo of the City Attorney Mara Elliott, Leadership Team and CADV Unit "all in" to supporting the San Diego Family Justice Center



BRIEF HISTORY

In September, 1989, the concept for "one place" was first proposed by the San Diego City Attorney's office. The idea was simple: Co-locate professionals in one location to provide services to victims of domestic violence and other types of abuse. A formal presentation was made by then-Deputy City Attorney Casey Gwinn to various heads at the District Attorney's Office. But the idea for a "Domestic Violence Service Center", as it was called then, was an idea whose time had not come.



Former City Attorney John Witt discussing the concept of an Family Justice Center with the San Diego Domestic Violence Task Force in 1989

Despite that discouraging day, by January 1990 the concept moved forward within the City Attorney's office with the co-locating

of community partners within the City Attorney's Office, Child Abuse and Domestic Violence Unit. Each year one new partner was added as space became available. The first partners included the YWCA, the Center for Community Solutions, Children's Hospital, and the District Attorney's Office. Together, they figured out how to work together to provide counseling, advocacy and civil legal services.

By 2000, the San Diego Domestic Violence Task Force voted to make the creation of the San Diego Family Justice Center their number one priority for San Diego. In October 2002, the San Diego Family Justice Center officially opened its doors at 707 Broadway under the leadership of then-City Attorney Casey Gwinn and Police Chief David Bejarano. The SDFJC received a \$500,000 grant from The California Endowment which was matched by the City of San Diego.

Both the City Attorney and the Police Chief assigned their entire Domestic Violence Units in partnership with 20 community-based organizations to the FJC.

The first Child Abuse and Domestic Violence Unit for the City Attorney's Office



**\$500,000
grant to go
toward family
justice center
in San Diego**

UNION-TRIBUNE

San Diego received a \$500,000 challenge grant from the California Endowment on Wednesday to go toward leasing downtown office space for a family justice center to help victims of domestic violence.

City Attorney Casey Gwinn said his goal is to open the center at 707 Broadway in July. He said \$3 million is needed to lease the space for four years.

To get the grant from the endowment, a nonprofit agency that promotes health care, the city must match the money. Mayor Dick Murphy said he and other City Council members would use federal community development block grant money for the match.

The center would give domestic violence victims a place where police, medical, legal and social service help is available.

The plan calls for deputy city attorneys who handle domestic violence cases, police officers assigned to the violence unit, probation officers, forensic medical experts and other social workers to work in the center.

Ultimately, Gwinn said, the goal is to build a bigger family justice center to include services for victims of child abuse, elder abuse and sexual assault.

Brief History

Both the City Attorney and Police Chief assigned staff to assist in the day to day operations, including the running of the Center. Gael Strack served as the first Director and Sgt. Robert Keetch served as the first Operations Coordinator. The SDFJC was located at 707 Broadway from 2002 to 2009. For the first year, three floors (5, 6 & 7) were dedicated to the SDFJC. Due to the rapid growth of the Center (from 87 clients in October, 2002 to 300 per month by January 2003), it was clear more space was needed and by the end of the 2003 an additional floor was dedicated to serve victims of domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse and human trafficking including the addition of a large team from the Chadwick Center for Children and Families from Rady Children's Hospital. By this time, the Center had grown to 25 on-site partners/programs.



Former City Attorney Casey Gwinn and Former Police Chief David Bejarano along with other City, State and Federal leaders at the grand opening of the San Diego Family Justice Center

Initially, the concept of co-location was simply to improve service delivery to victims in the City and County of San Diego. Little did anyone know that the Family Justice Center vision in San Diego would become a national/international Family Justice Center movement. A series of events catapulted the SDFJC into the future: In 2003, Oprah featured the San Diego Model and in 2004 President Bush launched the President's Family Justice Center Initiative inspired by the San Diego Family Justice Center. But mostly it was the fact that the model worked. Victims preferred going to one place to receive as many services as they needed and to be welcomed into a place where professionals also liked working together. Victims in San Diego voted with their feet and was serving 1,200 clients per month by May, 2007. Excitement for county-wide FJCs grew and a regionalization plan was developed in 2003.

In 2004, in an effort to ensure that the SDFJC would survive political and financial changes, the original supporters of the SDFJC, City Manager Lamont Ewell, City Attorney Casey Gwinn, Police Chief David

Bejarano and Fire Chief Jeff Bowman proposed the SDFJC become its own City Department which was unanimously supported by the Mayor, the entire City Council, and all the partners of the SDFJC. The original budget for the SDFJC included funds transferred from the City Attorney's Office for those City Attorney positions operating the SDFJC before 2004.

The SDFJC thrived for many years as its own City Department and ultimately became a permanent fixture within the government structure of the City of San Diego. By 2008, the FJC framework was determined to be a "best practice" by the U.S. Department of Justice, the California Attorney's General's Office, and many others. The SDFJC received many awards from local, state, and national organizations for developing an innovative service delivery model with high victim satisfaction, dynamic collaborative partnerships, and significant evidence of homicide reduction which began with the first co-located model in 1990 (90% drop between 1990 and 2008).

In 2007, Gael Strack left as the director of the SDFJC to help Casey Gwinn launch Alliance for HOPE International (Alliance) and provide leadership and technical assistance to the multiple Centers that had opened across the United States or were now interested in opening a FJC in their community.

Just as a series of events led the SDFJC to become a national model, a series of events also caused the SDFJC to lose its dynamic partnerships and national prominence. Beginning in 2006, the City of San Diego went from a strong City Manager form of government to a strong Mayor form of government. After the departure of City Attorney Casey Gwinn, City Council Member Jim Madaffer, Mayor Dick Murphy, and City Manager Lamont Ewell, the SDFJC lost its champions. The City of San Diego also had to face significant political and financial issues from the recession, pension underfunding, and much more. Unlike the first five years of its operation, the SDFJC was no longer a priority project for most leaders in City government.

Simultaneously, the SDFJC went through its own series of changes. The Director who succeeded Gael Strack damaged the Center by ignoring the original vision, mission, and guiding principles of the Center. He rejected the collaborative and shared leadership model that had developed at the SDFJC

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and caused the partnerships among agencies to thrive. The new Director's different leadership style and views caused many of the on-site partners to leave the Center. His unilateral changes in policies and service delivery (closing the Forensic Medical Unit, shutting down the Children's Room, and eliminating the use of the DA Risk Assessment Tool) caused victims to again vote with their feet. The number of new and returning clients quickly plummeted from 1,200 per month in May 2007 to 100 per month by May 2008. And for the first time in five years, a victim who had received services at the Center was murdered. Community partners voiced their concerns with the Mayor and the Director resigned but the damage was done. More than half the original partner agencies were gone by 2008.

At that time, the San Diego Police Department offered to take over leadership of the SDFJC from the Mayor's Office in order to save the Center and continue to serve victims suffering domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, sexual assault and human trafficking. To facilitate that leadership, the SDFJC's staff and budget were transferred from the Mayor's Office to the San Diego Police Department. The SDFJC City Department became a program of the Police Department. Police Chief Bill Lansdowne assigned then-Captain Guy Swanger as the first Acting Director to assess the operation of the SDFJC and simultaneously requested the Alliance to assist him in rebuilding the Center. Capt. Swanger identified Lt. Lori Luhnow to be the first full-time Director under the Police Department's leadership.

For the next few years, the SDFJC began to slowly rebuild itself under leadership of first Lt. Luhnow and then Lt. Bernie Colon. Both of these directors were strong believers in strategic



Lt. Colon joins the SDFJC team in 2011

planning, collaborative leadership and assessment processes. During their leadership, the Alliance facilitated strategic planning with community partners, conducted a Snapshot of the Center and helped with fundraising efforts, grant writing and provided civil legal services when the Center for Community Services lost a federal grant in 2009. The Police Department began to re-engage partners, work closely with the Alliance, participate in Leadership Summits, and served as a Regional Training Center for other FJCs as the Alliance launched a statewide Family Justice Center Initiative in California. In 2010, the Police Department's support culminated in a new home for the SDFJC at 11th and Broadway, increased community awareness and support, and ultimately an increase in partners and clients.

But just as the City of San Diego continued to experience its own challenges, so did the SDFJC. The SDFJC began to experience budget cuts and turnover of excellent leaders and well-trained staff. Community partnership agreements were replaced with "license agreements" which upset many of the partners and left them feeling like tenants as opposed to having shared ownership in the development and success of the SDFJC. The cost of parking caused limits on how long victims could receive services and many clients were rushed out of the Center to help the City save money on parking costs. Ultimately 8 Lieutenants/directors were assigned to the lead the SDFJC within a 10-year period. SDFJC staffing dropped from 7 employees to 4 in one fiscal year. Staff turnover at the reception area of the SDFJC was a revolving door with a minimum of 15 employees assigned to these critical duties just in the last 3 years. While victims began to return to the Center, it never reached its full potential.



Strategic Planning at the San Diego Family Justice Center in 2009

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Other events during the Center's history also impacted its effectiveness and health. In 2009, the City Attorney's CA/DV Unit left the SDFJC, leaving one floor of the Center completely vacant. A subsequent report from the San Diego County Grand Jury in 2011 commended the San Diego Police Department for its leadership of the SDFJC, identifying it as "one bulwark against domestic violence" and a "remarkable example of the help available when community resources are coordinated and focused" but acknowledged that when the City Attorney and other partners left in 2009, it severely reduced its effectiveness. Although the City of San Diego's DV homicide rate was steadily declining through 2008, things changed in 2009 when the DV homicide rate more than doubled to 8 murders. It has since fluctuated with 7 in 2010; 7 in 2011; 4 in 2012, 4 in 2013, 5 in 2014, 6 in 2015, and 7 in 2017.

In 2009 and 2010, the Alliance assisted SDPD in evaluating the challenges and facilitated creation of a strategic plan for the SDFJC's future. The Alliance's report documented the decline and highlighted key focus areas: Need for more partners; need for a 501c3 foundation to help with funding; a plan for the future location of the SDFJC, rebuilding of the client-intake system; re-establishing an integrated approach to service delivery (teamwork) versus the siloed approach of remaining partners; increased community awareness and outreach; and an active commitment to best practices. In 2010, Mayor Jerry Sanders announced his desire to end the lease for the SDFJC at 707 Broadway. The SDFJC then moved to Smart Corner, reducing its space from 40,000 sf to 20,000 sf. The cost savings were significant but the loss of space was dramatic. The current lease at Smart Corner now ends in 2020.



Grand opening of the new San Diego Family Justice Center in 2010

The following Lieutenants served as Directors at the SDFJC from 2008 to the Present:

In late 2008, Retired Sgt. Robert Keetch returned as a provisional employee to serve as acting director and provide transition until Capt. Guy Swanger was assigned the task to assess the Center, make recommendations and identify its first official director. Lt. Lori Luhnow took the lead in 2009 on a new strategic plan, a Snapshot for SDFJC, identifying adequate staffing levels and a new location for the Center. In 2011, Lt. Bernie Colon was instrumental in implementing the recommendations from Strategic Planning, the Snapshot, community engagement and serving as a Regional Center for other FJCs. In 2012-14, Lt. Charles Lara changed partnership agreements to license agreements and brought in Legal Services through the San Diego Family Justice Center Foundation and requested their support for fundraising. Lt. Misty Cedrun served as the longest as the Director of the SDFJC from 2014 through 2017. She was able to bring back the Forensic Medical Unit, legal services from the Center for Community Services, a focus on non-fatal strangulation cases, and provide exams for both domestic violence and sexual assault victims. She also identified the need for more County support and opened lines of communication with the County for future collaboration.

In October 2016, the San Diego Police Department conducted an SDFJC demographics study of 1,328 new clients visiting the Center in 2015: 90% female clients; 7% male clients and 3% unidentified; 50% Hispanic, 29% Caucasian; 4% African American; 3.5% Asian; 2.25% Filipino; .5% Chinese; and 8% other. The primary purpose of the initial visit was: 43% to seek restraining orders; 43% to seek adult counseling; 34% to access legal services; 28% to meet with Dress for Success; 10.41% seeking general family resources; 9% seeking services as Military members or their dependents; 6.5% to meet with Police; 1.5% to meet with the District Attorney (no services staff present); and 0.58% to meet with the City Attorney (no services staff present). As to income: 53% below \$10,000; 21.25% between \$10,000-25,000; 14.4% between \$25,000-50,000; 11% between \$50,000-100,000. Persons with a disability: 9.91%. Children: unknown/not recorded. In another study, the SDFJC determined that approximately 33% of the clients seeking services at the SDFJC were County residents versus City residents.

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In 2017, the SDFJC lost two more partners, the Foundation Legal Center and Dress for Success both ceased operations at the Center. The Foundation Legal Center had previously pledged its support to Lt. Charles Lara to assist the Center with fundraising and civil legal services. Unable to maintain that commitment, the Legal Center closed.



City Attorney Mara Elliott thanks Sylvia McKinney for years of dedicated service to the SDFJC through Dress for Success program

Thanks to a friendly tour of SDFJC that was provided by then Lt. Misty Cedrun to City Attorney Elect Mara Elliott, the course of SDFJC's future abruptly changed. Mara Elliott fell in love with the SDFJC and pledged her long-term support for the Center.

By December 2017, then-Police Chief Shelly Zimmerman and newly elected City Attorney Mara Elliott agreed to work together to transition the SDFJC to the City Attorney's Office. City Attorney Mara Elliott enlisted the support of the Alliance to help with a Snapshot Report and a new Strategic Planning process and also hired Former Assistant City Attorney Gael Strack, the founding Director of the SDFJC, to assist with the transition and work with the District Attorney's Office to explore county-wide regionalization.



Police Chief Zimmerman and City Attorney Mara Elliott announce new governance structure for the San Diego Family Justice Center

From December 2017 to June 2018, Gael Strack has worked with City Attorney Staff and Alliance staff to observe SDFJC operations, interview existing SDFJC staff and on-site partners, assist with the hiring a new director, provide input on budget for the SDFJC and adequate staffing, conduct an informal assessment of office space, reviewed operations manual and other documents.

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In January 2018, City Attorney Mara Elliott and District Attorney Summer Stephan hosted a community forum with county officials to discuss the regionalization of the Family Justice Center framework county-wide and a new central location for the SDFJC as a joint city-county effort.

In April 2018, Yvette Lopez-Cooper, was appointed as the new director of the SDFJC, Deputy City Attorney Jonathan Fraenkel was assigned to the SDFJC and Deputy City Attorney Diane Doherty was assigned to work with the SDPD full-time.

In May 2018, Casey Gwinn, Gael Strack and the Alliance facilitated a one-day strategic planning session for the SDFJC with approximately 100 community leaders who were in attendance. The Alliance has produced a Strategic Plan to assist the new leadership team of the SDFJC as they move forward.

In addition to the recommendations produced in the Strategic Plan and the Snapshot Report, conducted over the last six months, the Alliance submits findings and recommendations on page 13 covering four main categories: **Governance and Organizational Leadership, Funding and Sustainability, Operations, and Service Delivery.**

Assistant City Attorney John Hemmerling and Head Deputy City Attorney Nicole Crosby working hard to find a new director. John pledges "to make the SDFJC the best place on earth."



Alliance Team pledges to support City Attorney Mara Elliott in developing a new vision for the San Diego Family Justice Center



EXECUTIVE FINDINGS RELATED TO STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The **City of San Diego** has made a long-term commitment to providing services to victims of domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault, elder abuse and human trafficking through the SDFJC, the Police Department, and the City Attorney's Office.
- **Multiple community partners** have made a long-term commitment to providing excellent services at the SDFJC and are committed to working together to provide coordinated, trauma-informed, and holistic services.
- **Committed, dedicated and passionate staff and volunteers** support the vision and mission of the SDFJC.
- **The first strategic plan for the SDFJC** envisioned comprehensive wrap around services, integrated legal systems, shared sustained funding, an effective leadership team, an expanded regionalized FJC framework, integrated information-sharing systems, ongoing quality improvement processes, village/campus designed facilities, inclusive policies and practices and integrated clinical/forensic/medical health services.
- The SDFJC operated the best when it had **visible and unwavering champions**, strong Mayor and City Council support, the full commitment of the City Attorney's Office and the Police Department, a major presence from both the City Attorney's Office and District Attorney's Office, and robust and comprehensive services provided through community and county partnerships.
- The SDFJC achieved **integrated and comprehensive services** when the Director was collaborative and inclusive, there was sufficient and stable staffing, adequate and secure funding, an active, living strategic plan in place, a 501c3 Foundation for financial support, operations manual and policies were current, there was on-going training and support for all staff and on-site partners, trauma-informed staff, and clients who felt welcomed and supported by a strong volunteer program and a unified VOICES (Survivor Advocacy) Committee.
- **Despite everyone's efforts** to restore and improve the SDFJC, the challenges the SDFJC has faced with fluctuating leadership, reduced budgets, inadequate/poorly trained staff, poorly trained and supervised volunteers, and no fundraising Foundation to support them, it **has not been able to reach its full potential**.
- **The SDFJC does not have a strong presence in the community.** It's become the best kept secret in San Diego with little or no public engagement or awareness.
- **The SDFJC is not operating at full strength** given the limited on-site partners, with many of them serving only in a part-time capacity.
- The **community partners feel isolated** and have not been meaningfully engaged with the operation or success of the Center or in providing integrated, coordinated services.
- There is **no comprehensive training program** for volunteers.
- The client-intake system which was meant to provide immediate and coordinated services to in crisis victims experiencing trauma through highly-qualified professionals is now an **in-house referral system** and victims are served by untrained but well-intentioned students and/or unsupervised volunteers.
- There is a need to ensure everyone working at the SDFJC is trained in providing **trauma-informed, hope-centered customer services** to clients.
- The time has come for a **new governance structure** and a **bigger vision** for the city and county of San Diego.
- **The SDFJC now has qualified leadership** and committed community partners to address the identified weaknesses and challenges within the next **12 to 18 months**.

