

# Alameda County Family Justice Center



*A collaborative of law enforcement, government, and non-profit agencies ensuring the safety and healing of abuse victims through comprehensive, coordinated, accessible services.*



June 18, 2008

Honorable Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

On behalf of the thousands of victims we serve each year and our many diverse community-based victim service provider partners, I respectfully ask for your support of AB2231 (Hayashi).

As Executive Director of the Alameda County Family Justice Center (ACFJC), I am honored to present to you a brief Annual Report addressing the key outcomes achieved by the ACFJC. In just three years, the ACFJC has helped achieve outstanding outcomes for victims of family violence through a trailblazing collaboration of diverse city, county and community agencies. It has succeeded in doing so through a highly efficient use of public and private funding.

The ACFJC is a place where victims have choices and those choices are respected. For this very important reason, the ACFJC works collaboratively with all its partners to ensure their financial sustainability, including providing direct funding to those who are expert service providers.

We are proud of our efforts to reduce violence and loss of life and human potential as a result of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, sexual exploitation, and elder abuse.

We are even prouder of our lasting community impact, and for these reasons, respectfully request your support for AB 2231, legislation that is critical to our ability to continue to develop this innovative model.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nadia".

Nadia Davis-Lockyer, Esq.  
Executive Director

Encl.

**1 The Alameda County Family Justice Center**

In response to disproportionately high levels of family violence in Alameda County, and a fragmented system that required victims to travel to multiple locations seeking legal, health, and emotional support, leaders from across county, community, and city organizations came together to open the Alameda County Family Justice Center (ACFJC) in August of 2005. The creation of the ACFJC built upon the strong collaborative relationships and systems already in place and came about after an intensive strategic planning process. It was led by a collective vision of a *“future where there is zero tolerance for domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault and exploitation, and elder abuse.”*<sup>1</sup>

In three short years, the ACFJC has grown into a highly effective and comprehensive service delivery program that is already achieving remarkable results in terms of improved services to victims, improved offender accountability, and increased operational efficiency (see Table 1). Today, the ACFJC provides comprehensive victim services in one location, houses 21 diverse service providers under one roof, and is connected to another 37 offsite partners through a streamlined referral system.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the ACFJC has emerged as a leader in the Family Justice Center movement nationwide, and is routinely sought out by agencies from across the country seeking information on best practices in Family Justice program implementation.

Table 1. Key ACFJC Outcomes to Date	
⌘	Shifting the service delivery system from agency-focused to victim-centered; providing over <b>20,000 coordinated client services</b> since opening.
⌘	<b>20% reduction in domestic violence case dismissals.</b>
⌘	Improved inter-agency collaboration, contributing to a dramatic <b>reduction in domestic violence homicide</b> (from 31 in 2001 to 3 in 2007).
⌘	Significant <b>increase in public support</b> for family violence services including over \$2 million secured in new public and private financial contributions.
⌘	Development of an <b>innovative sustainability model</b> through co-location of multiple agencies, resulting in the <b>leveraging</b> of over \$10 million annually, and direct financial support to domestic violence service providers through ACFJC programs.
⌘	New pioneering program models under development include improved <b>outcome tracking, mandatory reporting, and case management</b> systems.
⌘	Supported by the Office on Violence Against Women, the ACFJC is developing systems to <b>link law enforcement and service providers countywide</b> to ACFJC resources.
⌘	The ACFJC has engaged in significant <b>local, statewide and national outreach</b> , providing facilitated tours to over 100 community groups and technical support for the development of FJCs in Solano, Sonoma, and elsewhere.

<sup>1</sup> Strategic Implementation Plan, Alameda County Family Justice Center, August 2005.

<sup>2</sup> See Attachment I for a full list of ACFJC Partners.

## 2 Family Justice Center Outcomes and Best Practices

---

In 2005, Congress recognized the importance of the Family Justice Center (FJC) 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.

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.<sup>3</sup>

### 2.1 ACFJC Improved Offender Prosecution Outcomes

FJCs increase offender accountability in several ways. The co-location of police and prosecutors facilitates the exchange of critical case information on a regular basis, increases collaboration during the investigative process and on filed cases, and increases opportunities for cross-training between criminal justice system providers and agencies serving specific populations. In addition, ensuring the safety of a victim and reducing the victim’s dependence on the batterer through the provision of easily accessible, coordinated services has been shown to increase victim willingness to assist in holding the batterer accountable.

The ACFJC reports significant improvements in offender prosecution through: 1) Increased reporting of domestic violence cases, indicating increased victim awareness of the scope of services available and increased victim confidence in the system, gained through co-location of advocates, services, and law enforcement/prosecution; 2) Improvements in the fundamental quality and depth of law enforcement investigations, which law enforcement and prosecution representatives directly attribute to their co-location and the communication, collaboration, and training it enables; and 3) Improvements in prosecution outcomes including increases in felony filings, felony convictions, misdemeanor convictions, and reductions in case dismissals following filing.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Casey Gwinn and Gael Strack, *Hope for Hurting Families: Creating Family Justice Centers Across America*, Volcano Press, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> All data cited courtesy of the County of Alameda District Attorney.

Several indicators tracked by the Alameda County District Attorney’s office provide evidence of the impact of the Family Justice Center in improving offender prosecution outcomes. First, there has been a significant drop in the number of rejected cases. Table 2 illustrates the percentage of police reports rejected for prosecution by the District Attorney’s office for victim-related reasons.<sup>5</sup> The overall drop in rejections from 2006 to the present was 20%; and the drop was slightly greater in North County where the FJC is physically located.

<b>Table 2. Alameda County Family Violence Cases Rejected for Victim-Related Reasons</b>			
	<b>Year</b>		
	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008<sup>6</sup></b>
<b>Felony</b>	51%	44%	43%
<b>Misdemeanor</b>	55%	39%	34%
<b>Total</b>	55%	40%	35%

In addition, there has been a notable decrease in the number of case dismissals following initial filing. This is significant in that high dismissal rates not only undermine victim confidence in the system, but case dismissals also significantly impact morale, both for criminal justice personnel as well as for survivors. In the case of the victim, research shows that the lower the level of confidence victims have, the less likely they will proceed with or cooperate fully in prosecution, which further increases the possibility of a case dismissal. In addition, the research base also indicates that convictions reduce the likelihood of domestic violence recidivism.<sup>7</sup>

Table 3 provides an overview of the number of Alameda County domestic violence cases dismissed following the initial case filing.

<b>Table 3: Alameda County Domestic Violence Case Dismissals 2006-2007</b>			
	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>% Change</b>
<b>Dismissed Cases</b>	782	588	- 24.81%

<sup>5</sup> These victim-related reasons for case rejection include: Victim declines to prosecute; victim not credible; victim requests no prosecution; victim unavailable; or victim uncooperative.

<sup>6</sup> Extrapolated in June 2008 based on 157 days of data.

<sup>7</sup> Lois A. Ventura and Gabrielle Davis, “Court Case Conviction and Recidivism,” Violence Against Women, Vol. 11, No. 2, 255-277 (2005).

The reduction in the number of dismissals also results in a significant return on investment (ROI). Using a conservative estimate of \$4,875 as the expense incurred in each dismissed case,<sup>8</sup> the reduction in dismissals experienced by Alameda County resulted in an ROI of \$945,750 in 2007.

There is also a steady increase in the percentage of cases from north county that are being charged as felonies: 13% in 2005, 19% in 2006, and 23% for 2007, further indicating a significant improvement in quality and depth of law enforcement investigations.

## **2.2 Decrease in Domestic Violence Homicide**

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. This also coincides with a notable increase in calls to law enforcement and services provided through shelters, indicators that victims are increasingly seeking help before the situation escalates to homicide.<sup>9</sup>

Domestic violence homicide creates an incalculable human toll, and also entails significant economic expense for counties and cities within the state of California. Although the financial costs of domestic violence homicide are difficult to calculate, a national study conservatively estimated that each case entails a public economic expense of \$600,000.<sup>10</sup> Other California studies have estimated this cost at over \$2.5 million per case.<sup>11</sup>

## **2.3 Improved Services to Victims:**

Prior to the creation of the Alameda County Family Justice Center, victims of family violence made their way through a fragmented system of services spread out across multiple locations, having to recall the painful incidents repeatedly, struggling to access the supports they needed, and often left unaware of the full range of choices and services available to them. With the creation of the ACFJC, victims now have a one-stop comprehensive center that puts the victims' needs first, educates them as to the full range of their rights and choices, and empowers them to make their own decisions. Before the creation of the ACFJC, victims were often presented with conflicting professional points of view regarding what course of action was in their best interest, and

---

<sup>8</sup> This would include law enforcement investigation and arrest, jail, and district attorney case preparation expenses.

<sup>9</sup> "A Profile of Family Violence in Alameda County: A Call for Action," Maternal, Paternal, Child, and Adolescent Health Section, Alameda County Public Health Department, 2007.

<sup>10</sup> "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.

<sup>11</sup> County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Administration, Office of Violence Prevention.

were then left to sort through the system on their own. Now victims can choose to meet with an advocate, learn the full scope of choices available to them, and make their own decisions regarding how or whether to press charges or seek prosecution of their abuser. By providing comprehensive victim services, educating and empowering victims to make their own informed choices, and by respecting those choices, the ACFJC makes victims' needs and rights the highest priority. Through client surveys victims consistently indicate a high level of satisfaction with ACFJC services.

#### **2.4 Increased Public Support & Leveraged Funding Drives Ongoing Innovation**

The Family Justice Center sustainability model arises from a simple but powerful system of co-location. Existing personnel of criminal justice agencies, other relevant government departments, and non-profit organizations come together at a single location paid for by the existing revenue streams of their parent organizations. This enables public/tax resources to be leveraged with private funds and vice versa. Every dollar's worth of an individual partner's services delivered at the ACFJC is maximized through efficient coordination and collaboration with other partners. A victim's short and long-term needs are assessed and addressed by multiple identified agencies, providing a range of professional services in a single location.

Prior to the opening of the Alameda County Family Justice Center, its planners hypothesized that by providing greater visibility to family violence issues and by using its leveraging ability, an increased investment in family violence services in the county would result. Since the opening of the FJC, Alameda has experienced a significant increase in public support for this purpose in the form of increased federal, state, foundation, and individual donor support. Over \$2 million 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 annually.

As a result of the new funding secured, the ACFJC has further committed to ensuring the sustainability of its community-based domestic violence service providers, including entering subcontracts for grant implementation and program delivery with several of key partners (Family Violence Law Center (FVLC), Safe Alternatives to Violent Environments (SAVE), and Building Futures with Women & Children (BFWC), among others.)

The revenues resulting from the fees on certificated copies of vital records authorized by AB 2010 have played a vital role in leveraging this increased support in that they fund the ACFJC's coordination costs, vital operational expenses that are typically not covered by other funding sources.

#### 2.4.1 Increased Program Capacity & Innovative Service Delivery:

The ACFJC and its partners are utilizing these new investments to drive new innovation in and expansion of service delivery, both geographically and programmatically. Key initiatives underway include:

- ⌘ Expanding critical services countywide through placement of advocates in police departments so they can work side-by-side with law enforcement, creation of a mobile response team, and installation of video relay technology in community-based organizations --- all utilizing a \$990,000 grant from the United States Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women;
- ⌘ Implementing a new client “navigator” system, facilitating the continuity of client care and improving their ability to access the full range of services needed;
- ⌘ Implementing new outcomes tracking software specifically designed for the levels of confidentiality necessary and collaboration present in the ACFJC, supported by a grant from Blue Shield;
- ⌘ Also supported by Blue Shield, and in partnership with the National Family Justice Center Alliance, the ACFJC is planning a series of summit meetings with shelter providers to plan for the further expansion of collaborative activities;
- ⌘ Developing and piloting new systems, enabling the state of California’s mandatory reporting system to reach its full potential by linking the reporting of domestic violence in hospital emergency rooms to referral of needed services provided by Family Justice Center partners, in partnership with local emergency rooms and supported by a grant from Verizon.

#### 2.5 Outreach and Technical Support

The successful implementation of the ACFJC has resulted in significant demand for outreach and technical support. The ACFJC has responded enthusiastically to these requests by hosting regularly facilitated tours, providing in-depth technical support for other counties in the region, and making frequent presentations at state and national conferences and meetings. Highlights of this work include:

- ⌘ Providing over 100 tours to district attorneys, county and city teams planning their own FJCs;
- ⌘ Making the ACFJC strategic plan available through its website;

- ⌘ Providing in-depth technical support to the counties of Solano and Sonoma which have both executed detailed feasibility studies for the establishment of an FJC and are now poised to begin intensive strategic planning processes; and
- ⌘ ACFJC leaders and partners have presented their experience at numerous conferences and meetings.

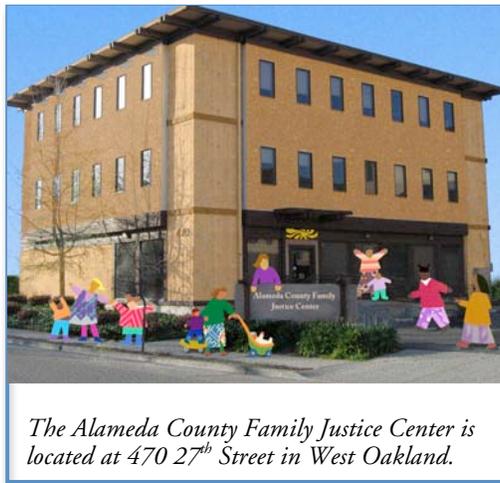
The outcomes and key lessons learned from the ACFJC's first years of operation are providing rich material for concerned organizations around the state and country interested improving their responses to deep-seated family violence issues present in their communities

---

**3 Attachments:**

---

**3.1 Attachment I: Alameda County Family Justice Center Partners**



## Attachment I: The Alameda County Family Justice Center

---

### Key FJC Partners

- Alameda County District Attorney's Office
- Family Violence Law Center (FVLC)
- Oakland Police Department
- Alameda County Probation Department
- Alameda County Public Health Department / Purple Ribbon
- Alameda County Public Health Children's Immunizations & STD Clinic
- Bay Area Women Against Rape (BAWAR)
- Bay Area Legal Aid
- Building Futures with Women and Children (BFWC)
- CALICO Center
- Children's Hospital & Research Center at Oakland / D.O.V.E.S. Project
- DeafHope
- International Institute of the Bay Area
- Youth Justice Initiative (YJI)
- Alameda County District Attorney Victim-Witness Assistance Advocacy & VOC Claims Division
- State of California Victims of Crime & Government Claims (VOC)
- M.I.S.S.E.Y & Sacey SPA Program (Safe Place Alternative)
- Jewish Family & Children Services of the East Bay
- Alameda County Sheriff's Department
- Safe Passages
- The Link to Children (TLC)

### Offsite Key Partners (partial list)

- Law Center for Families
  - Women Lawyers of Alameda County (WLAC)
  - Alameda County Association of Chiefs of Police, Sheriff, and District Attorney
  - Alameda County Domestic Violence Collaborative
  - Alameda County Medical Center, Emergency Room
  - Alameda County Social Services Agency
  - Narika
  - Boalt Hall School of Law
  - Centro Legal de la Raza
  - City of Oakland, Department of Human Services (DHS)
  - Davis Street Family Resource Center
  - Department of Child Support Services (DCSS)
  - Elder Abuse Prevention
  - Kaiser Permanente
  - Legal Language Access Project
  - National Latina Health Organization
  - STREAMS Chaplaincy Program
  - Oakland Private Industry Council (Oakland PIC)
  - Women First
  - A Safe Place Shelter Services
  - Safe Alternatives to Violent Environments (S.A.V.E)
  - Tri-Valley Haven
  - Emergency Shelter Program
-