



Brooke Jenkins  
District Attorney

June 2, 2023

The Honorable Connie Chan  
Board of Supervisors  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Chair Chan,

Since taking office, one of my top priorities has been to strengthen the Victim Services Division (VSD), which serves as the main point of contact for crime victims and their families. VSD offers access to resources so that victims and their loved ones can navigate legal proceedings and the healing process. This work consists of increasing and streamlining communication between the assistant district attorneys and the victim advocates in order to develop a healthy, transparent, and collaborative working relationship. It is of the utmost importance that survivors feel supported and comfortable to voice their lived experience and know that my office will serve as their champion.

I share your concerns that far too many marginalized communities in San Francisco are not receiving the necessary investments or resources needed to recover from violent events. The Victim Services Division in my office treats crime victims with the compassion and dignity they deserve, while providing space, both public and private, to share their experiences. A key element of the Victim Services Division is to begin the healing process by offering equitable access to services and programs regardless of their race, gender-identity, immigration status, or socio-economic status. I appreciate the questions you have asked of my office as this is an incredibly important conversation and below are my responses.

**1. What is the number of victims your agency served in 2021, 2022, and to date in 2023?**

Year	Count of Victims Served
2021	8,851
2022	9,028
2023 (January 1, 2023 – May 15, 2023)	4,537
<b>Three-Year Total</b>	<b>22,416</b>

**2. What is the demographic breakdown of those victims?**

Race/Ethnicity	2021	2022	2023*
American Indian/Alaska Native	4	5	4
Asian/Asian American	1,399	1,409	616
Black/African American	1,677	1,691	773
Latino or Hispanic	2,110	2,228	1,156
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	11	10	3
Other/Unknown	1,207	1,387	856
White	2,443	2,298	1,129
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,851</b>	<b>9,028</b>	<b>4,537</b>

\* January 1 – May 15, 2023



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Age Group	2021	2022	2023*
12	217	195	47
13-17	198	164	74
18-24	809	708	330
25-59	5,536	5,584	2,760
Age 60 and Older	1,278	1,347	664
Other/Unknown	827	1,058	692
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,851</b>	<b>9,028</b>	<b>4,537</b>

\* January 1 – May 15, 2023

3. ***What services have been provided to the victims your agency has served?***

The District Attorney's Victim Services Division is the connection between victims and law enforcement offices, criminal justice agencies, and local community partners. Victim Advocates serve as critical liaisons offering case updates, support during court hearings and testimony, and provide information about victims' rights. A key element of all our Victim Advocates' work includes knowledge-of and access-to other community-based services and resources that so that referrals can be made if additional legal and/or medical support is necessary. VSD also offers interpreter services to help with assessment and intervention processes in order to gain insight into a victim's perspectives, wishes, feelings and lived experience. This service is critical as interpreters reduce communication barriers for victims so that access to criminal advocacy, crisis interventions, and notifications of criminal justice events can be obtained. Additionally, the Victim Services Division provides civil legal assistance in obtaining protection or restraining orders, as well as support with restitution efforts. All VSD's work is done regardless of whether a suspect has been identified or not, or if criminal charges have been filed. Our Victim Advocates pride themselves on confidentiality and doing the work regardless of criminal exposure, age, immigration status, or background. Additionally, soon after taking over the office, I created the Vulnerable Victims Unit that oversees prosecutions of crimes perpetrated against vulnerable victims, and houses prosecutions of hate crimes, cases of violence against the elderly and elder financial abuse. This new unit is dedicated to protecting and supporting vulnerable communities throughout San Francisco and is composed of experienced attorneys charged with conducting sensitive and complex investigations and prosecutions.

4. ***List your agency's protocol to ensure victim privacy.***

The initial conversation between all Victim Advocates and victims includes a comprehensive explanation of the limits of confidentiality in compliance with *Brady* law. Victim Advocates utilize a Release of Information form signed by the victim to ensure there is privacy and consent when speaking to or involving others. This includes communications with other governmental agencies to support the victim. Our Victim Advocates are trained to use encrypted computers when entering cases and work in private spaces to avoid confidential information from being shared without the victim or the victim's representative's approval. The SFDA's Office is a secure location and has the option to meet with victims either in private rooms and/or in community-based spaces based on the victim's preference.



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5. ***What is your agency's protocol to prevent misgendering and deadnaming transgender victims?***

Promoting the correct use of pronouns, titles, and names can result in protecting public safety for all people, whereas misgendering and deadnaming can lead to distrust and fear of the legal system. The San Francisco District Attorney's Office has a policy addressing gender neutral and gender inclusive pronoun use for people encountering the criminal legal system. In order to mitigate any harms and to promote a culture of respect and safety, the San Francisco District Attorney's Office implements this policy officewide. All Victim Advocates review police reports, talk with assistant district attorneys assigned to the case, and go over demographic information, which includes gender preferences. Advocates are prepared to inquire about cultural needs during the initial intake. If advocates notice any reporting referencing a different name/gender, advocates are trained and prepared to inquire and discuss with the victim. Additionally, when reviewing a case, SFDA's Intake Division and/or charging ADA will document any available information regarding any witness/victim's person's correct gender pronouns in the SFDA file. If a witness or victim's gender pronouns change during the course of a case, the assigned ADA will correct the pronouns in the SFDA file. If a witness or victim/survivor uses a first name other than their legal name that name will be documented and used by all staff.

6. ***What is your agency's protocol to provide victim services with cultural and language competency?***

All victims are asked for their language of preference upon the initial contact with the Victim Services Division. We are fortunate to have victim advocates within the Victim Services Division who speak different languages for the purposes of working closely with a particular victim or their loved ones. VSD has access to a Specialist Advocate who provides translation when appropriate and uses the Language Line Services (video and/or phone) supported by SFDA to provide translation services when needed. All Victim Service documents, and orientation educational sheets, are provided in various languages including Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Arabic, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Thai, and Russian.

7. ***Status update on the implementation of the JUSTIS integrated data and technology program.***

In September 2022, after upwards of a decade of using the DAMION case management system, the SFDA transitioned to eProsecutor, to update the office's case management capabilities and improve our ability to track and analyze data relevant to criminal and victim cases. EProsecutor has data feeding in from both JUSTIS and the court management system. This has meant significant changes with regard to the data the Victim Services Division has access to with regards to their caseload. When using DAMION, staff received a very limited summary of victim demographic information and services provided. Whereas with eProsecutor, staff now receive much more detailed reporting and can link victim case information to criminal case information to better understand the relationship that a victim's case has to the type of crime they experienced. This analysis also includes defendant demographics and case outcomes.

8. ***Status update on the implementation of the Office of Victim and Witness Rights.***

On June 7, 2022, the voters of San Francisco passed Proposition D – *Office of Victim and Witness Rights; Legal Services for Domestic Violence Victims* (Prop D). The Voter Information Pamphlet and Sample Ballot booklet produced by the Department of Elections for the June 7, 2022, consolidated statewide direct primary election did not reference the Office of the District Attorney in connection to Prop D, nor did the ballot title. The initiative was placed on the ballot through the legislative process



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and would therefore refer you to either Supervisor Catherine Stefani's Office of the Office of the Mayor.

**9. *In the event of a specific group, such as the homeless community or Asian community, becoming targets of violent crimes, what is the protocol for public notification?***

The Victim Services Division is committed to ensuring the rights of all victims are protected, while offering support and information at all stages of the criminal justice process. This work is conducted citywide and is inclusive of all our communities regardless of their race, immigration status, age, sexuality, and background. Our staff monitors phone lines and the [victimservices@sfgov.org](mailto:victimservices@sfgov.org) inbox 24/7 in order to provide victims and their families information related to service providers, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, medical personnel, and government agencies on an as needed basis. VSD has created informational sheets and workshops educating bystanders on how to support citizens who may be present during a hate crime. We actively train for mass casualty events, partnering with a various, diverse communities to ensure their inclusion in our response should a mass casualty event target specific communities' culture/religion. Additionally, our office remains in contact with media outlets and community organizations across San Francisco to provide updates on available resources for victims, high profile events, and educational opportunities hosted within certain neighborhoods.

The advocates in the Victim Services Division prioritize the victims' needs above all else and do so with a tireless work ethic and a compassion-first approach. Our office experienced a 14.9 percent increase in the number of victims receiving at least one service from VSD between the years of 2018 (7,856) to 2022 (9,028). The current workload for each Victim Advocate is currently 500 cases to 1 victim advocate, creating a significant challenge when attempting to ensure that all victims receive the same attention.

We truly appreciate the partnership with the community-based organizations that also provide support, advice, and guidance on criminal events, and believe that further investments to allow for greater case management by CBOs would be a valuable commitment. Additionally, a central element of healing for crime victims is restitution. Jurisdictions throughout the Bay Area and California are currently experiencing impediments to implement and operate restitution programs, whereas having a Restitution Specialist would be greatly beneficial to tracking data related to amounts stipulated, paid, unpaid, and unclaimed.

The Victim Services Division strives to make the criminal legal system humane and accessible by assisting victims and their families in the aftermath of a crime, during criminal prosecution, and after a verdict has been reached. Even if justice is served in the courtroom, it does not always immediately change the way victims feel in their day-to-day lives afterwards. I am proud of the Victim Services Division and look forward to partnering with you on any opportunities to expand our work through targeted investments to support communities in need.

Sincerely,

Brooke Jenkins  
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