



## LEGISLATIVE MEETING TALKING POINTS

1. **Team Leader convenes the meeting and makes introductions.**
2. **Team Leader asks the Legislator/Legislative staffer to introduce themselves.** If meeting with a legislator, thank them for their support for victims of domestic and interpersonal violence, especially during this difficult budget year. Ask the member/staff person if they are familiar with your FJC and the CA Family Justice Network.

3. **One person from the team provides the overview:**

*We are here for the CA Family Justice Network Advocacy Day, joined by Family Justice Centers from across California. With our unique and effective wrap-around model, we serve more than 70,000 victims of violence a year, including about 20,000 children.*

*Today, we want to speak with you about important budget and legislative priorities that will impact the victims of domestic and interpersonal violence that we serve, as well as their families.*

4. **One team member provides thank you for past support:**

*Our local FJC is located \_\_\_\_\_ and provides \_\_\_\_\_ services in your district. We serve about \_\_\_\_\_ people each year, and unfortunately, our numbers are growing as violence continues to rise in our communities.*

*We want to start by THANKING YOU for the past state funding we have received through the California FJC Program administered by the Office of Emergency Services. This has been critical to our ability to stay open and serve victims of interpersonal violence during the COVID crisis and recent rise in violence in our community and across the state. Examples of the impact include:\_\_\_\_\_.*

*Our unique victim-centered model has transformed violence crisis response for victims and children across the state. FJCs are now considered a best practice model, and more FJCs are wanted in counties that don't yet have them.*

5. **Participants hear from the legislator about their priorities and questions.**
6. **Team member introduces the VOCA funding issue and asks for support to fill in the gap.**
  - We are thankful that Senate and Assembly leadership have written \$103 Million in backfill funding into their budget proposal and we urge them to make this a key priority in final negotiations with the Governor.
  - Federal funding for a wide range of crime victim services through a funding source known as the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) has been declining for several years.
  - **For FY24, California will receive the lowest amount since 2014, a 43% reduction from last year.**
  - As a result of these cuts, the Office of Emergency Services (OES) is planning across-the-board grant reductions of **44.7%** for crime victim services starting in July. It will also reduce by half the number of grant awards issued for each competitive grant as it comes to its next competitive cycle.
  - These grants fund:
    - Domestic violence emergency shelters, crisis hotlines, transitional housing, and housing first programs.
    - Rape crisis centers and sexual assault response teams.
    - DA office victim witness programs.
    - Outreach and services to survivors from traditionally unserved/underserved communities.
    - Child advocacy centers, serving child abuse victims.
    - Legal services for victims -- and the number of grants was cut in half at the start of the year because of these funding reductions.
    - And so much more. Pretty much any crime victim service you can think of, VOCA supports.
  - **Describe what VOCA funds at your organization and what the cuts will mean for survivors.**
    - Tip: connect the dots to survivors. in addition to naming that you will need to lay off staff or reduce services, explain what that means for survivors. Will there be fewer shelter beds for survivors and kids fleeing in crisis? Will an advocate still be able to meet a survivor for a sexual assault forensic exam? Will you be unable to provide legal services, leaving survivors without an attorney to help them with complex restraining orders, custody, and other legal proceedings? Will you increase wait times for services, meaning survivors' healing will be delayed and potentially retraumatized?
  - ***These are vital, life-saving services, and the state must act to prevent these cuts. We are here today to talk about three components to an immediate and long-term solution for filling the gap in federal VOCA funding and prioritizing the continuity and stability of crime victim services.***

## **Budget Request: Support the \$103 Million funding for Crime Victim Services.**

- This is the immediate solution to address urgent funding needs. We urge leadership to make this a key priority in budget negotiations with the Governor.
- A budget request letter led by Assemblymember Eloise Gómez Reyes with a bipartisan coalition of signatories, including nearly 200 organizations, has been submitted.
- **Without funding in the budget THIS YEAR, we will experience devastating cuts, causing survivors to lose access to the services they rely on. Survivors' lives are at risk if the state does not intervene.**

## **AB 1956 (Reyes): Crime Victim Services Stabilization Act.**

- This bill addresses immediate funding needs, requiring the state to provide funds if the federal contribution to victims' services programs declines 10%+ from one year to the next.
- There is a bipartisan group of 16 Assembly co-authors and a lengthy list of support spanning a wide range of interest areas.
- **The bill is currently in Assembly Appropriations.**
- We kindly ask that you/your boss support this bill.
- We expect it will take time for these convictions and fees to generate revenue.

## **AB 2432 (Gabriel): Crime Victim Services Funding.**

- This bill is a long-term solution to create reliable, ongoing funding with the establishment of a permanent funding source for victims' services programs, provided with revenues from criminal fees assessed against corporations convicted of crimes.
- Passed the Assembly with a vote of 72-0 and ordered to the Senate on May 23, 2024, read for the first time in the Senate on May 24, 2024. The bill was sent to Rules for assignment.
- Currently, the California Chamber of Commerce opposes the bill, and the VOCA Alliance is are working with them to understand their concerns and address them.
- We expect it will take time for these convictions and fees to generate revenue.

*If the Assemblymember is a coauthor or voted for the bill, thank them for their support!*

## 7. Team member highlights bills to ensure justice for victims.

### **SB 989 (Ashby): Suspicious Deaths: Investigations for Domestic Violence Victims.**

Sponsored by the CA Alliance for Hope and supported by CFJN, our VOICES Survivor Advocacy Network, the CA District Attorneys Association, the CA Professional Firefighter's Association and many others.

- This bill addresses the issue of “hidden homicides” among victims of domestic abuse often staged as accidents or suicides.
- It would add any death with a history of domestic violence as a suspicious death case and expand the rights to request an autopsy to family members. The bill also gives family members the right to request another law enforcement agency to review a death investigation officially deemed a suicide or an accident if there is a documented history of domestic violence.
- While the bill is not known officially as “Joanna’s Law”, CFJN and the bill's supporters refer to it that way in honor of Joanna Lewis, who died in 2011 in a case too quickly ruled a suicide without adequate investigation or an autopsy.

### **SB 1000 (Ashby): Connected Devices: Device Protection Requests.**

- We often work with witness victims of domestic violence being harassed and stalked through technology, which is used inappropriately to track and abuse them. This bill aims to address that issue by requiring service providers to take responsibility and action with certain remedies. For example, deny a person [abuser] access to a connected device commencing no later than two days after a device protection request is submitted to the account manager.

## 8. Team member highlights bills to strengthen child protections.

### **AB 3072 (Petrie-Norris): Child protections.**

- This bill strengthens child protections when a parent’s illegal access to firearms and ammunition is a potential immediate risk of harm to children in contentious child custody cases. It requires family court judges to consider alternatives when children are in immediate danger.
- The bill also requires judges to consider a parent’s access to illegal firearms and ammunition when determining if there is a showing of immediate harm to the child.

## AB 2924 (Petrie-Norris): End child marriage.

- This bill would repeal the authorization for a person under 18 to be issued a marriage license or to establish a domestic partnership, thereby prohibiting such a person from being issued a marriage license or from establishing a domestic partnership.
- The bill closes dangerous loopholes in the law that are allowing children in California to be married. The United States considers marriage under the age of 18 to be a human rights abuse, yet children in California are still victims of forced child marriage.
- It is estimated that more than 8,700 children were married in 2021. California's marriage age is 18, but laws on the books allow a parent to "consent" to the marriage of their child at any age with judicial approval, and the court may enter a child of any age into marriage if the child does not have a parent capable of "consenting" to the marriage. Additionally, a child-marriage license is a valid defense to statutory rape charges, granting sexual predators an incentive to force a child to wed.

## 9. Thank You and Wrap Up.

- Thank the legislator or staff member for their time.
- Reiterate any follow-up items.
- If you didn't ask as you went along, ask now for their commitment to support:
  - **\$200 million in ongoing funding for crime victim services, including domestic and sexual violence services, to stabilize victim services in California.**
  - **AB 1956 (Reyes):** Crime Victim Services Stabilization Action.
  - **AB 2432 (Gabriel):** Crime Victim Services Funding.