

Domestic Violence Taskforce Meeting Notes
November 3, 2025
11am-12pm
Teams Meeting

Attendees:

- Alameda Police Department
- Elaine Ma – Alameda County Deputy District Attorney
- Building Futures
- Alameda Family Services
- Alameda Fire Department
- Housing and Human Services

TASKFORCE MISSION AND BACKGROUND (SSHRB Member)

The purpose of the Domestic Violence Taskforce is to connect the providers of victims' services programs in Alameda and to disseminate information about DV occurrences. This year, the mayor has been extremely concerned about the incident that occurred in Alameda a year ago and wants the public to be aware of possible warnings signs at work or at home about potential batterers. She wants people to be aware of the resources available to victims, and wants to promote healthy relationships among youth.

Videographer from Building Futures is working with Sarah Henry on a script(s) to produce videos by the end of the year at the mayor's request. Target audience is teens. YAC is going to be advising and helping create content. Hoping to get it done before the holidays. No update on 2nd video. Helen is going to follow-up and get next steps.

DATA UPDATES (Sergeant Stofle)

October: 19 total DV reports

July - Sep: 47 total DV reports

		Victims	Suspects
Gender	Male	13	34
	Female	34	13
Age	15–17	0	0
	18–24	6	5
	25–34	13	14

	35-44	16	17
	45-54	5	6
	55-74	7	3
	75+	0	0
Housing Status	Housed	47	45
	Unhoused	0	0
	Unknown	0	2
Race	White	13	8
	Black	15	17
	Asian	5	8
	Hispanic	8	9
	Other	6	4
	Unknown	0	1

Robby is collaborating with Sarah Rose Sarancriss (sp?) of the City of Oakland to better address and prevent DV homicides.

SPECIAL GUEST: DAs OFFICE

Deputy District Attorney Elaine Ma:

The DA only handles the felony cases, misdemeanors go to the City Attorney's office. Any felony is charged through their unit specifically. The more serious cases will stay in their vertical unit, which means Elaine appears at every meeting/hearing through to the trial and verdict by jury if it's taken to trial. Her caseload is 15-20 cases, with 5 currently being homicides. None of her current cases are from Alameda.

Alameda County has always had a DV unit. They stopped taking homicide cases. There wasn't a lot of consistency in the type of DV cases they were taking, seemed more about timing than anything.

Currently in the county, there's a lot more than 8 DV homicides pending. The goal of her unit now is to make it so the cases that need serious attention (and homicides) will stay within her unit.

Q: Do you partner with social service providers?

We sit in the Family Justice Center. In terms of the attorney's roles, once in a while they'll reach out to the Family Violence Law Center when a victim might need help with custody issues or divorce. She'll refer cases to them (right across the hallway). She'll also reach out if they have a victim who is unhoused because of the abuse to find immediate housing. The FJC has its own team of advocates and caseworkers that will reach out to victims regardless of whether charges are filed in their case.

They do offer various services through a number of providers, but it's nothing she as an attorney handles. Everything is referred out to these two main bodies that have their own case workers and resources. Attorneys have to toe the line of not appearing that they're offering services in exchange for testimony. If there's a need for a specific victim to get services, she'll call and try to get them to reach out and make contact.

Q: The City of Alameda has a prosecution unit and a new victim services initiative. Do you work together?

No, we don't. Our team will only reach out if we have a case to review and are not charging a felony, they might pass it off to see if they want to charge a misdemeanor. It's a gap that needs to be addressed. She hasn't found the separation between misdemeanors and felonies to be effective. The City has a prosecution team that is really small, handling a large caseload (all misdemeanors in the city). So no working relationship.

DV advocates have a tricky role. They counsel their advocates to not talk to their clients about the specifics of their case. They don't want them to have to feel like they have to investigate or have to report something or become a witness. They want to preserve client privacy as well.

When the city passed the measure to handle misdemeanor, DA's office was not involved.

Q: is there any court diversion program for batterers? If so, where are they sent?

Yes, DV qualifies for court diversion (sexual assault does not). Even people who attempt murders can qualify for diversion. The defense will file a petition and ask the judge sitting in diversion court if they'll accept the perpetrator. They just have to have a doctor diagnose them with a mental illness (most commonly PTSD) and describe how their diagnosis was related to why they committed DV. Elaine's team has no influence over those decisions. She's had extremely violent cases go to diversion. She doesn't know how effective diversion is, but she has observed a lot of recidivism for DV perps. DV is rooted in learned behavior in childhood, and is therefore harder to change through diversion. Court diversion focuses primarily on medicinal treatments, which do not seem to help substantially with those inclined to commit violence against partners.

Q: Are you aware of any groups that are working with batterers?

A popular group is called Men of Valor. People might go DV classes through Salvation Army. Usually it's court-imposed as part of probation.

Q: If an abuser is saying they have PTSD, does diversion expect them to be address that?

The goal of diversion is to be seen by a medical healthcare provider, not necessarily a therapist. She thinks it's meant to really address substance abuse, so it's hard when people claim mental health issues. That's why she sees a lot of turnaround. There's not a medication or rehab program that can treat PTSD. Intensive therapy and counseling are not the kind of progress that the diversion court is looking for.

Q: What would you say would be an effective prevention or rehabilitation strategy?

Rehabilitation has to start with the person wanting to seek the right help. Therapy will only work in that situation either. In terms of prevention, her opinion is to educate kids at a very early age to recognize the signs of it. Recognize the pattern. How to get themselves out of that cycle before they become victims of it or perpetuate it. People from a very young age have it normalized for them inside their house. They don't know otherwise until there are outside forces telling them.

Q: when we were talking about the video, which will specifically be raising awareness about warning signs. Are there specific warning signs that you all can think of to make sure that we include in the video?

If you see something, say something. But she doesn't want to put kids in the situation of getting their parents arrested. Creating a safe place to admit that is happening at home, and having service providers help them process it. Are there therapists on school sites?

Q: Yes, we have health and wellness centers where they can go and seek support.

One of the first things Elaine's team do is try to get child witnesses of DV into therapy.

Question on AFS's video prompted the following feedback:

- Within the Black community there's a big emphasis on what happens at home stays at home. DV is underreported. When it is reported, there's a fear of law enforcement coming in and harming the partner. Is that something you are planning on doing in that video?

- Utilize the kids to do the messaging. It's cross-cultural in terms of a lack of reporting. But it's cultural in making communities feeling safe to report. Using different skits, using different kids with different cultural background. Kids teaching kids.
- Video will be 2-3 minutes that could be put on TikTok. Or a story that connect to a Reel. There will be a diverse group on the video, including LGBTQIA+ community and different cultural backgrounds.
- The best way to connect with a target community is to have people from that community give the message.
- Should be specific and clear so young people do not misunderstand the red flags
- Emphasize that it's a pattern of behavior and not a one-off.