2024 Annual Report

San Diego County District Attorney





Index

1 District Attorney's Message
2 Overview of the District Attorney's Office
4 New Programs and Initiatives
8 High Profile Prosecutions
16 Supporting Victims and Restoring Lives
21 Facts and Figures
27 Staff and Budget
28 Specialized Units and Divisions

Message from Summer Stephan

San Diego County District Attorney

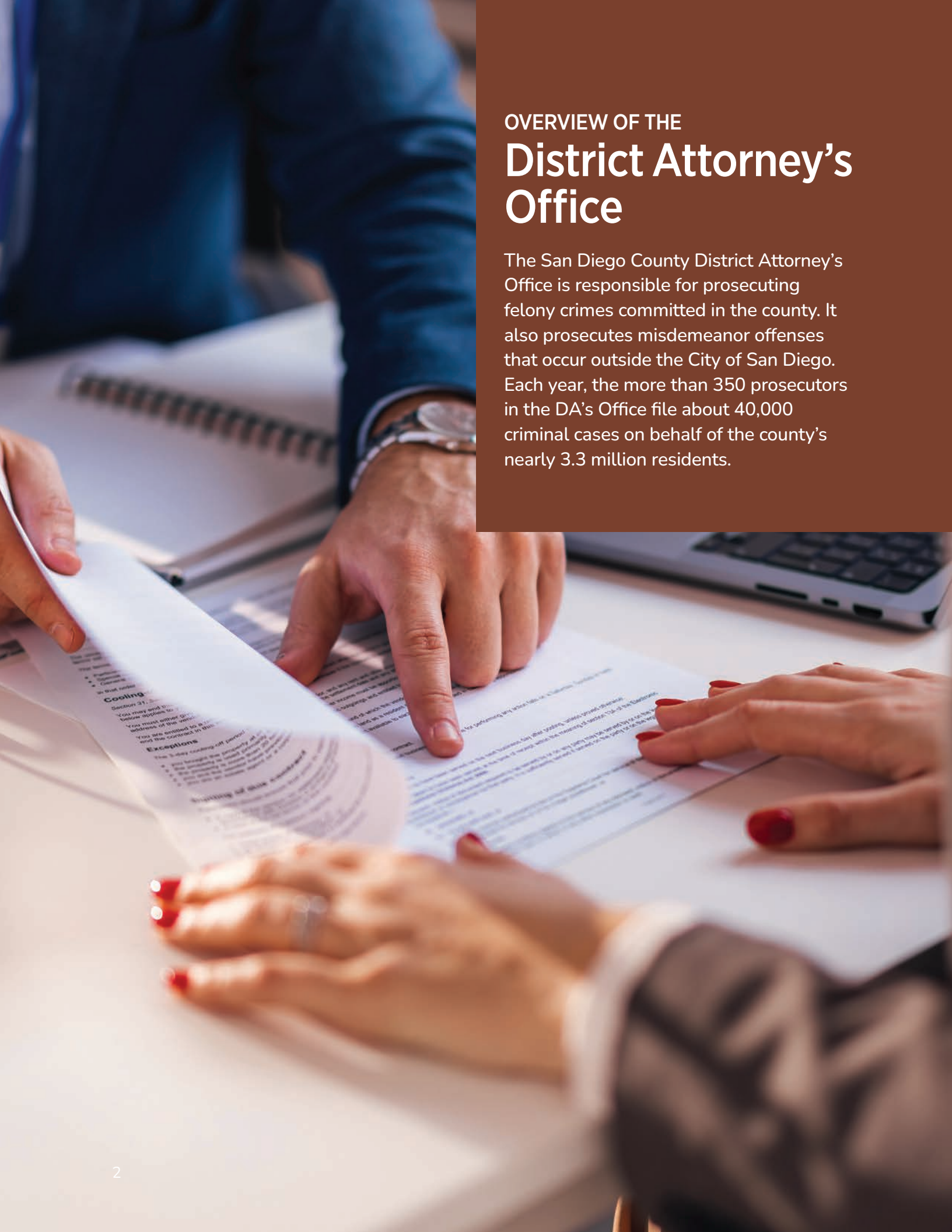


As District Attorney for San Diego County, I am proud to lead and work alongside a dedicated team of 1,000 employees, who serve more than 3.3 million people with integrity and passion. Our team is dedicated to fighting for justice on behalf of crime victims and is responsible for prosecuting all felony crimes that occur in the county; and all misdemeanor crimes that occur outside the San Diego city limits. We work with all nine police departments in the county and the Sheriff's Office to make sure those who harm others and terrorize neighborhoods are held accountable under the law.

It's our honor to represent all 18 cities and the many unincorporated communities that make up San Diego County. We are fiercely committed to the right of every child, adult and senior to live with safety and dignity. We know from having daily experiences of looking into the eyes of victims whose lives have been ripped apart by crime, that nothing thrives without safety. It is an essential human right that must be safeguarded. This relentless commitment to every person in our region in partnership with law enforcement and the communities we serve, continues to keep us one of the safest urban counties in our nation. This past year, we obtained justice for victims of domestic violence, human trafficking, hate crimes, organized retail theft, fentanyl poisoning, environmental and consumer fraud, elder fraud, sexual predators and many more. We also fought for justice for families who lost loved ones to senseless violence and murder.

- We brought organized criminals, cartels and gangs to justice reducing fentanyl deaths for teens and adults.
- We served thousands of vulnerable victims and their children in our North County Family Justice Center, removing them from a path to homelessness and despair.
- We are working to implement Proposition 36 to stop rampant theft and deter drug dealers in our community.
- We successfully prosecuted murderers and rapists including cold cases that we never forgot about.
- We diverted hundreds of children away from the school to prison pipeline through our Juvenile Diversion Initiative by addressing the root causes of the youth's criminal conduct and assuring balanced accountability.
- We grew and supported a first-of-its-kind Elder Justice Task Force that is working around the clock to protect seniors from fraud that destroys their hard-earned retirement.
- We kept our schools safe by meticulously implementing our unique school threats protocol with all 42 school districts that is laser focused on preventing school shootings.

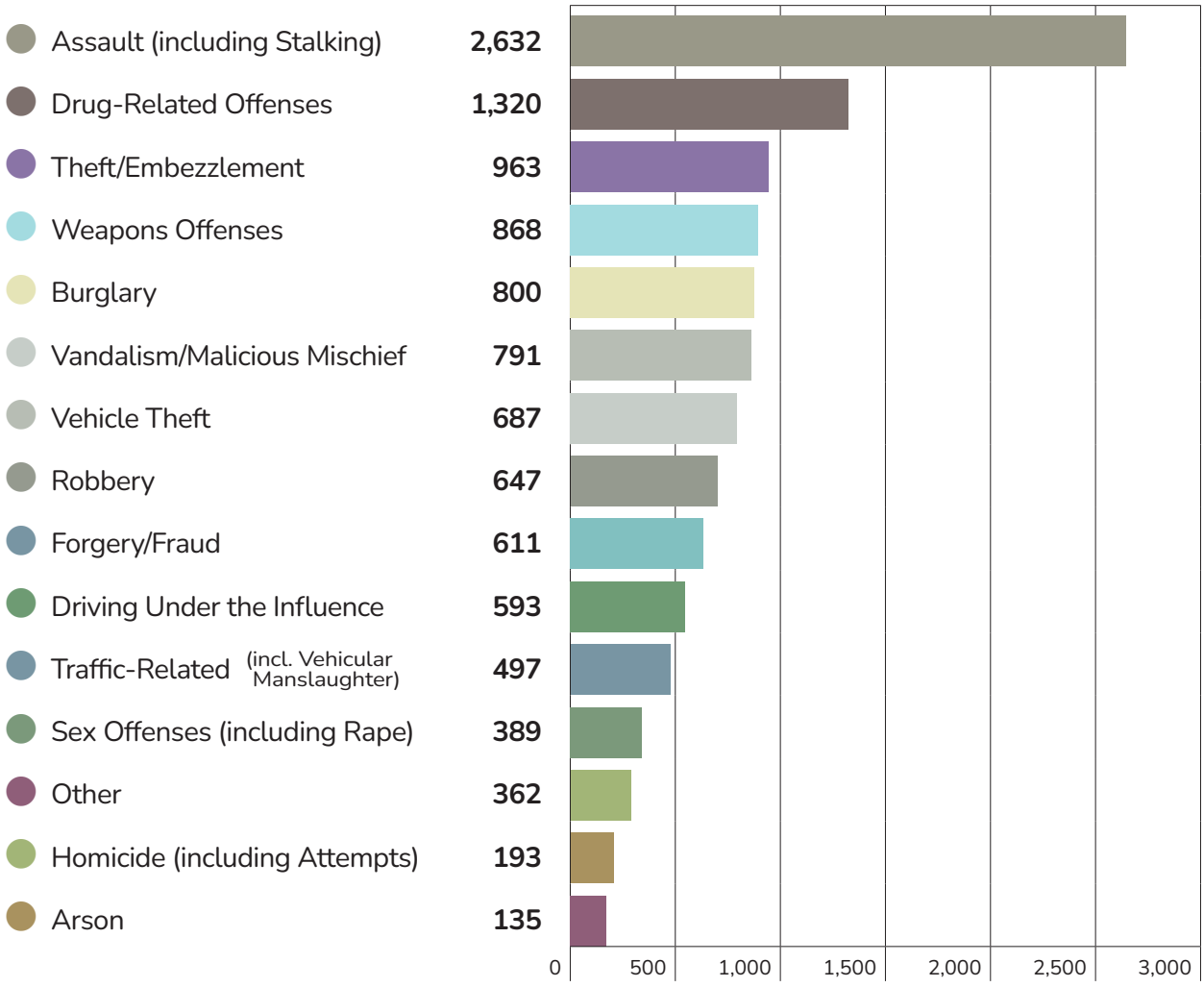
In this 2024 annual report you will read about the many initiatives upon which our team embarked on behalf of victims of crime and about community-based programs that embrace public health, public safety and crime prevention. I want to thank my team for dedicating their lives to the pursuit of justice for the most vulnerable, despite the impact the trauma has on them of bearing witness to horrific forms of abuse committed on our victims. Because of this, we are doing more to address the wellbeing of our team so that they can continue to serve with excellence.



OVERVIEW OF THE
District Attorney's Office

The San Diego County District Attorney's Office is responsible for prosecuting felony crimes committed in the county. It also prosecutes misdemeanor offenses that occur outside the City of San Diego. Each year, the more than 350 prosecutors in the DA's Office file about 40,000 criminal cases on behalf of the county's nearly 3.3 million residents.

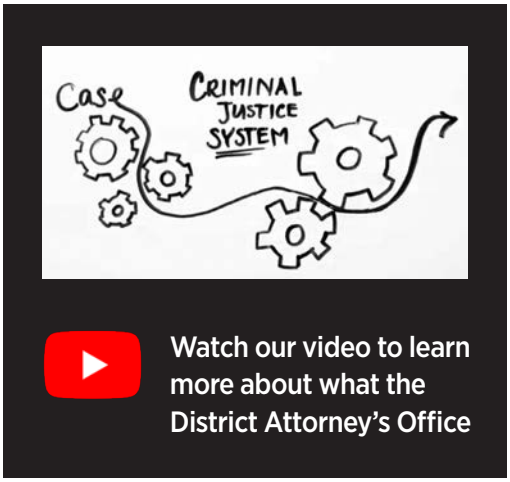
2024 FELONY PROSECUTIONS BY TYPE OF CRIME



What Does the District Attorney Do?

The Mission of the District Attorney's Office is to pursue equal and fair justice for all and to build safe neighborhoods in partnership with the communities we serve, by ethically prosecuting those who commit crime, protecting victims and preventing future harm.

More than 1,000 DA employees work across 22 divisions, branch offices, and One Safe Place: The North County Family Justice Center, each carrying out specialized work on behalf of the people of San Diego County. One great way to understand what the District Attorney's Office does is by watching this video.



New Programs And Initiatives

Each year, the District Attorney's Office implements new initiatives and looks for ways we can advance our mission. Here are some of the new programs rolled out in 2024 that support safe and healthy neighborhoods.



East County Drug Court SCOPE Pilot Program

This Drug Court program in our East County branch, is a co-occurring track for justice-involved individuals who are suffering from substance use disorder and a severe mental health illness, who normally would not qualify for Drug Court or Behavioral Health Court. This population is prone to being overlooked and are often involved with the criminal justice system because their needs go unaddressed. In July 2024, in collaboration with our East County Drug Court partners, the District Attorney's office led the development of this program to focus on the intersection of mental health, substance abuse, and homelessness. The pilot program leverages existing resources and treatment providers to fill a void in our justice system, which lacked the structured court supervision and evidence-based individualized treatment and supervision that has been successful in our Collaborative Courts. The SCOPE pilot program has a population of 10 individuals and has formed a partnership with the Regional Center, which empowers individuals with developmental disabilities.



International Partnership in Support of Victims

In 2024, the District Attorney's Office formed a historic partnership between the Attorney General of the Mexican State of Baja California, the State of Baja California Justice Center for Women and the DA's One Safe Place: The North County Family Justice Center. The partnership allows victims of domestic violence and other crimes on either side of the U.S.-Mexican border to access vital services in either place to ensure they can get to a safe and healing place no matter where they live or work. Through the partnership, victims are no longer forced to cross the border, sometimes waiting hours, to get to services. Instead, the union ensures culturally sensitive referrals to victims where they are most comfortable. This agreement makes One Safe Place the first of nearly 200 Family Justice Centers worldwide to have an international partnership.

MTS Wildcatting Public Awareness Campaign

The District Attorney's Office joined the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System, elected officials, law enforcement and government agencies to launch an educational campaign to combat wildcatting at MTS transit centers at the San Ysidro Land Port of Entry and Otay Mesa Land Port of Entry.

Wildcatters are unregulated and unpermitted ride-sharing services who can be aggressive with their tactics to secure rides. Oftentimes, wildcatters harass taxicab drivers, vandalize public property and do not undergo safety screenings. Accepting rides from un-permitted drivers who operate illegally and are not vetted can put people at risk of becoming the victim of crimes like recruitment for human trafficking, fraud and overcharging.





Without proper oversight, unregulated transportation services may not carry enough insurance to protect passengers in case of an accident. Wildcatters do not undergo criminal background checks, do not receive safety training, and do not perform vehicle safety inspections. This lack of oversight can result in unsafe rides, price gouging and limited protection for riders in the case of an accident. The campaign included increased signage around transit centers, including billboards and digital messages.



Prop 36 Becomes Law

In 2024, voters overwhelmingly approved Proposition 36, which addresses three key public safety issues plaguing our communities:

- Repeat retail theft affecting small and large businesses and impacting the safety of their employees and their customers.
- Fentanyl and methamphetamine dealers who are poisoning individuals across the county and fueling crime.
- Untreated drug addiction and related behavioral health issues causing overdose deaths that disproportionately impact a substantial portion of persons who are homeless.

The new law provides stricter consequences for repeat theft offenders, thieves who commit smash and grab retail crimes, and organized theft rings. The new law also requires convicted dealers of fentanyl and hard drugs to receive a warning that the next time they sell illegal drugs and someone dies, they will be held responsible for a victim's death. The law provides additional consequences for illegal drug dealers who cause great bodily injury or death. Importantly, the new law incentivizes lifesaving treatment for defendants suffering from addiction by mandating treatment as an alternative to incarceration, addressing the root cause of many crimes.

San Diego County School-Based Interventions for Substance Use & Overdose Prevention

The DA's Office announced the release of a new report outlining recommendations for drug prevention education and anti-overdose efforts in schools. Nearly two dozen schools across San Diego County are already adopting and implementing recommendations from the working group that produced the report, which includes five drug abuse prevention and three drug overdose prevention programs. School-based Interventions for Substance Use and Overdose Prevention lays a foundation for programs in a school setting that can deter or delay the onset of substance use, slow or stop the progression of use and development of substance use disorders and minimize the adverse impact of substance use on students, their families and community, and the economy.



In October 2024, the San Diego District Attorney's Office, in partnership with the San Diego County Office of Education, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the San Diego Imperial Valley High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Program, and the California National Guard Counterdrug Task Force, released the report. A working group, made up of representatives from each of the identified agencies, consulted with experts in prevention science and curriculum analysis with the goal of identifying curricula proven to prevent or delay the onset of substance use and that are most likely to result in fewer unintentional drug deaths. A copy of the report can be found here: suopt.org/educational-toolkits



Lens of Justice

THROUGH SIGNIFICANT CASES

By the time a criminal case resolves, so many employees of the District Attorney's Office have a hand in achieving justice. Prosecutors, investigators, paralegals, victim advocates, support staff, an IT team and even court dogs. Some of the distinguished cases are included here.

PEOPLE V. CHRISTOPHER SCHMITTEL

Drunk and High Teen Driver Kills Two Friends

After consuming alcohol, marijuana, Xanax, and what he believed to be psychedelic mushrooms, 19-year-old Christopher Schmittel drove 100 to 130 mph throughout Riverside, Orange, and San Diego counties. He lost control of his vehicle and crashed onto Torrey Pines State Beach, killing two 19-year-old passengers and injuring two others. He was convicted of two counts of murder and sentenced to 30 years-to-life in prison.

PEOPLE V. BRIAN LIGHTFOOT AND JEREMY WHITE

Defendants Prosecuted for Antifa Riot



Eleven defendants affiliated with Antifa traveled from the Los Angeles area to combine forces with Antifa affiliates in San Diego as part of a conspiracy to riot and counter-protest a scheduled political demonstration in Pacific Beach in January 2021. The defendants and many other unknown co-conspirators arrived in Pacific Beach dressed in black clothing, and armed with weapons and protective gear, before participating in violent and unprovoked attacks on their opponents. Antifa is known to use force, fear, and violence to further their own interests and to suppress the interests of others. All 11 defendants pleaded guilty or were found guilty by a jury of conspiracy to riot and all defendants were sentenced to custody as a result of their participation.

PEOPLE V. ALI ABULABAN

Wife and New Love Interest Murdered

A jury convicted Ali Abulaban of murdering his wife Ana Abulaban and her new love interest Rayburn Barron. Abulaban spied on his wife during their separation and when he heard she was with Barron inside their apartment via audio from an iPad in the home, he drove to the complex with a gun, entered the apartment, and immediately shot and killed them. Abulaban was found guilty of two counts of first-degree murder, special circumstance allegations of multiple murders, and allegations for discharging a firearm causing death. He was sentenced to two consecutive terms of life without the possibility of parole, plus 50 years-to-life in prison for the firearm allegations.

PEOPLE V. DANIEL GARCIA

Dangerous Felon with Guns and Drugs

Police found Daniel Garcia in possession of more than 15 pounds of methamphetamine, one kilogram of fentanyl, 4,000 fentanyl pills, several firearms and ammunition, and more than $200,000 in cash. Garcia had a prior conviction for drug dealing and firearm possession and had a strike prior for residential burglary. He pleaded guilty and will be sentenced to 13 years in prison.



GRANTS PASS AMICUS BRIEFS

U.S. Supreme Court Weighs in on Camping Ban

In *City of Grants Pass v. Johnson*, the District Attorney's Appellate Division authored amicus briefs on behalf of the District Attorney to provide insight to the United States Supreme Court of the impact their decision about public camping ordinances would have on San Diego. As we advised the U.S. Supreme Court, we were particularly concerned that San Diego County ranks among the highest in the nation to be at risk for wildfires and is also at the epicenter of the fentanyl crisis given our proximity to the U.S.-Mexico border and being identified as the largest entry point of illicit fentanyl. Prohibiting public camping ordinances would increase those dangers as it may prohibit certain methods of addressing fire safety, substance abuse, and homelessness. The U.S. Supreme Court cited our amicus brief, and ultimately its decision permitting those ordinances enables law enforcement to enforce critical arson, fire-safety, and controlled substance laws. As a result, the District Attorney can continue to use critical tools to combat the homelessness crisis such as the Community Justice Initiative, peer support, smartphone applications for services, acute crisis response teams, crisis and de-escalation training, and education.

PEOPLE V. PATRICK FERNCASE

Murderer Kills Victims by Stomping Them to Death

A jury convicted Patrick Ferncase of two counts of first-degree murder for killing Aureo Duque-Rayo, 68 and Derek Baker, 56. Duque-Rayo was working at a shopping center in Carlsbad, when in broad daylight, the defendant charged at Duque-Rayo and knocked him to the ground. Ferncase then stomped the victim's his head more than 30 times while Duque-Rayo laid motionless on the pavement and with numerous witnesses pleading for Ferncase to stop. Three months later while Duque-Rayo was still in a coma and Ferncase was in a jail cell on attempted murder charges, Ferncase stomped on the head of his cellmate Derek Baker. Both Duque-Rayo and Baker were on life support and eventually died from their injuries. Ferncase was sentenced to life without the possibility of parole.

PEOPLE V. AVONTE HARTSFIELD

Arsonist Collected Insurance Proceeds and Donations

Avonte Hartsfield operated a food truck business named "Rollin Roots" and developed a presence on social media by participating in community events and outreach. In October 2021, the truck was destroyed in a deliberately set fire. Hartsfield filed insurance claims resulting payouts totaling over $236,000. Hartsfield also raised $100,000 on GoFundMe claiming to be the victim of the arson because of his race and sexual orientation. Surveillance cameras, however, captured Hartsfield in disguise at the truck on the night of the fire. Prior to the event, Hartsfield ran Internet searches related to fire starting. Hartsfield was convicted at trial of arson, grand theft, and insurance fraud. He was sentenced to five years and four months in prison.



PEOPLE V. JAZZ BRADLEY

Rapist Attacks Multiple Victims

Jazz Bradley, a convicted rapist who was on parole for the 2014 forcible rape of a 14-year-old girl, went on a sexual assault spree involving three separate female victims in February 2023. During the course of one month, Bradley forcibly raped a 26-year-old woman, a 16-year-old girl, and statutorily raped another 16-year-old girl. He was convicted by a jury and was sentenced to life without the possibility of parole, plus 55 years-to-life, plus five years and eight months in prison.

OPERATION SUNRISE

Undercover Officers Infiltrated Crime Rings

The San Diego Regional Auto Theft Task Force completed a yearlong multi-agency undercover investigation, recovering 172 stolen vehicles worth $3.3 million. Through an undercover storefront in East County, officers purchased stolen vehicles, narcotics, firearms, and ammunition from suspects. In addition to the recovered stolen vehicles, officers purchased 14 firearms and 300 grams of narcotics. Fifty defendants were indicted and convicted, each receiving sentences ranging from eight years in prison to probation.

MAURICE LITTLEJOHN

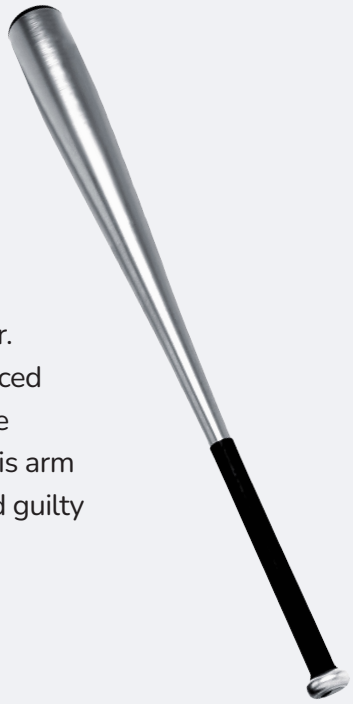
Man Tries to Sexually Assault Neighbor

Maurice Littlejohn attempted to sexually assault his adult neighbor, then pulled a knife on police when they responded and he resisted arrest. During the investigation, law enforcement learned that Littlejohn had also molested his fiancée's 15-year-old daughter. A jury convicted him of all crimes. In a separate case, Littlejohn was convicted by a jury of attempted murder. For both cases, he was sentenced to 34 years-to-life in prison.

PEOPLE V. JULIAN KURKO

East County Man Swings Bat at Police Officer's Head

El Cajon Police responded to a call of someone swinging a bat around and threatening people at an East County Walmart. The defendant, Julian Kurko, had stolen an aluminum baseball bat and was threatening to kill a Walmart employee if they tried to stop him. As Kurko left the store, he was confronted by an El Cajon Police officer. The officer told Kurko to drop the bat. Kurko wound up the bat, advanced on the officer, and swung as hard as he could at the officer's head. The officer was able to step into the arc of the swing and blocked it with his arm ultimately taking the defendant to the ground. The defendant pleaded guilty to attempted murder and was sentenced to 21 years in prison.



PEOPLE V. DARIUS WATTS

Driver High on Fentanyl Strikes and Kills Pedestrian

An East County defendant, who admitted to taking fentanyl before getting behind the wheel, drove onto a sidewalk, crashed through a sign and a signal post and struck a pedestrian, killing her. Darius Watts drove to the next block, dragging the signal post with him as witnesses yelled at him to stop. Once he stopped and was located, he still had the traffic light on his car He pleaded guilty to the charges and admitted fleeing the scene. He was sentenced to nine years in prison.



PEOPLE V. ANDREA CARDENAS AND JESUS CARDENAS

Chula Vista City Councilmember Steps Down After Fraud Investigation

Chula Vista City Councilmember Andrea Cardenas and her brother Jesus Cardenas, a former chief of staff to San Diego City Councilmember Stephen Whitburn, were convicted of two felony counts of grand theft for Paycheck Protection Program loan fraud and unemployment benefits fraud. The siblings applied for a $176,227 paycheck protection loan meant to keep employees of their political consulting firm on payroll during the pandemic. The employees they claimed, however, worked for a marijuana dispensary and the loan funds were used to pay the Cardenas' personal expenses. The siblings also claimed over $25,000 each in unemployment benefits while their political consulting firm was in full operation. They were both convicted and ordered to pay back the total amount they fraudulently obtained.

PEOPLE V. ESTEVAN CORONA

A Killer Could Not Hide from Evidence

In March 2020, defendant Estevan Corona failed to stop at a red light and struck 21-year-old Brescia Ayon as she crossed the intersection on her way to work. Ayon was thrown 60 feet from the impact and died at the scene. Corona immediately fled the scene and took extensive steps to cover up his involvement in the crime. The investigation, which took more than a year, was thorough and involved numerous cell phone search warrants. Ultimately, Corona could not hide from the phone evidence and the paper trail tying him to the suspect vehicle. Four years after the crime was committed, a jury found Corona guilty of vehicular manslaughter with gross negligence and hit and run with death. He was sentenced to the maximum sentence of 11 years in state prison.



PEOPLE V. RICARDO GONGORA

Theft of a Car Resulted in Murder

Navy sailor Edward Foster was working his second job delivering Amazon packages in June 2023, when the 18-year-old defendant, Ricardo Gongora, got into Foster's car with a female passenger and drove off. Foster jumped on the hood of his car, trying to stop the vehicle theft. But Gongora continued driving for at least two miles, swerving to throw Foster from the car. Foster screamed for help and called 911, telling dispatchers to track his car, stating that he "was going to be killed." The defendant crashed near the San Diego-Coronado Bridge, causing Foster to be thrown from the hood, striking his head. Foster died at the scene. Gongora pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and was sentenced to 15-years-to-life in prison.

Domestic Violence Stabbing Case Ends with 50-Year Sentence

Last May, defendant Arturo Ulloa was sentenced to 50 years-to-life in prison for brutally attacking his girlfriend, strangling her and stabbing her repeatedly. Ulloa stabbed the victim more than 20 times using five different knives. Her children, ages 4 and 7, witnessed the attack and ran to a neighbor for help. After stabbing his girlfriend, the defendant fled and attempted to carjack a separate victim. During a jury trial, Ulloa was found guilty of premeditated attempted murder, aggravated mayhem, attempted carjacking, and child endangerment.

Man Sentenced for Killing In-Laws

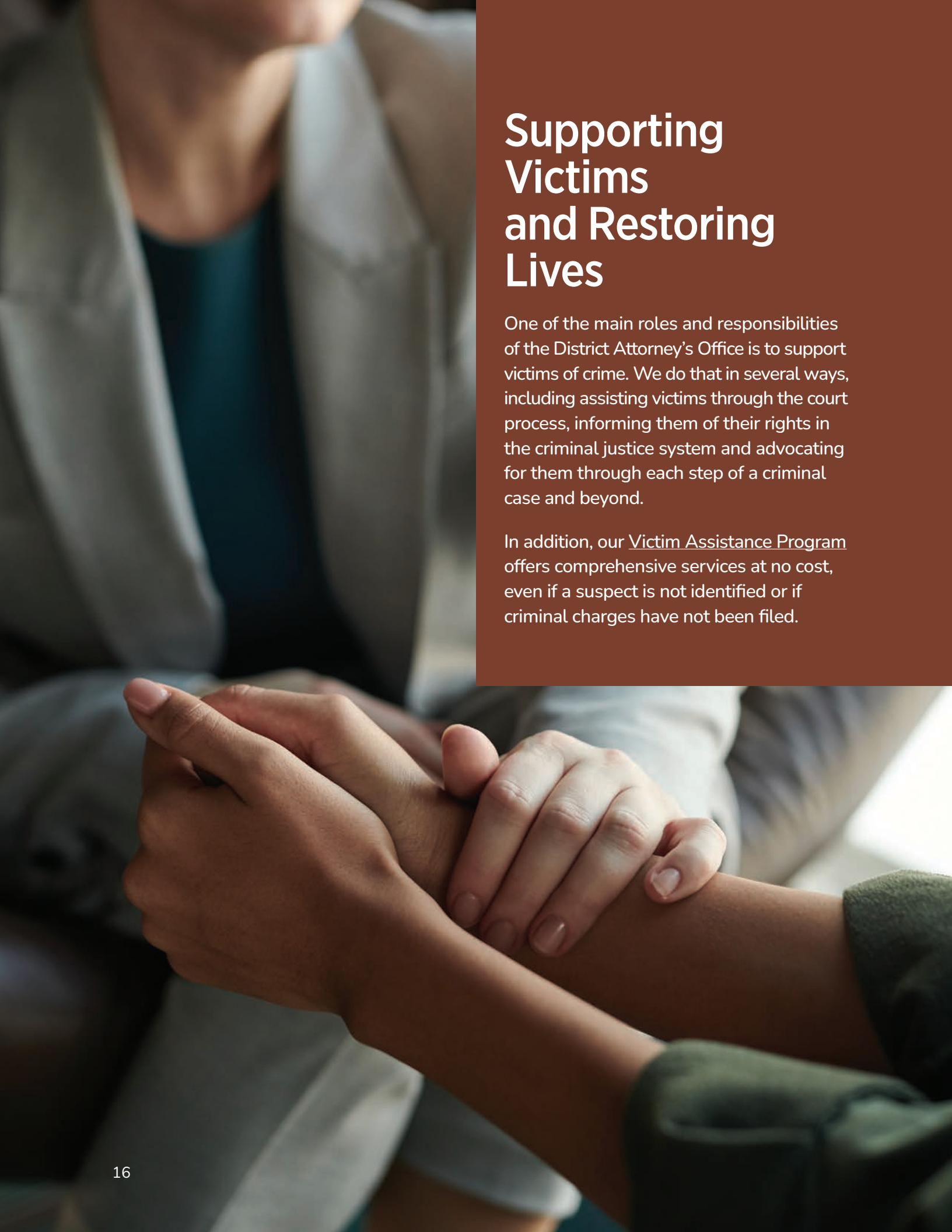


A man who was convicted by a jury of killing his father and brother-in-law in Valley Center was sentenced in May 2024 to two terms of life without the possibility of parole plus 50 years in state prison. A jury found Christian Bobila guilty of two counts of first-degree murder, including firearm enhancements for discharging a gun causing death and the special circumstance of multiple murders. The murders occurred over a long-simmering family schism that developed after the defendant married his wife without his father-in-law's blessing. After a long drive from the Bay Area to Valley Center, the defendant – armed with a semi-automatic pistol – carried out his plan to kill.

Cold Case Arrest and Prosecution

A man who committed a triple homicide that went cold for 24 years was sentenced in July 2024 to three life terms in prison without the possibility of parole, plus 75 years-to-life. Sergio Contreras shot and killed three people, including a 22-month-old baby, on Labor Day in 2000. He opened fire into an apartment after one of the residents failed to pay for a small amount of illegal drugs. Contreras shot 27-year-old Michael Plummer more than a dozen times. He also shot 18-year-old Adah Pearson in the heart as she lay sleeping on the couch. Another shot went through the wall and hit 22-month-old Julio Rangel, Jr. in the head as he lay asleep on a bed in the next room. All three victims died from their wounds. Contreras fled and case went cold for several years.

Contreras was initially a suspect in the crime, but it wasn't until 2007, after additional witnesses came forward, that murder charges were filed. On March 22, 2023, Contreras was successfully extradited from Mexico where he had been serving time for an unrelated robbery and murder.



Supporting Victims and Restoring Lives

One of the main roles and responsibilities of the District Attorney's Office is to support victims of crime. We do that in several ways, including assisting victims through the court process, informing them of their rights in the criminal justice system and advocating for them through each step of a criminal case and beyond.

In addition, our Victim Assistance Program offers comprehensive services at no cost, even if a suspect is not identified or if criminal charges have not been filed.

The Victim Services Division

The Victim Services Division assists victims with their recovery from the effects of crime and provides services, which include crisis intervention, referrals to community resources, court support, and Victim Compensation Board assistance.

In 2024 the Victim Assistance Program

Assisted **10,667** crime victims

Provided **556** crisis interventions

Made **10,152** referrals to community resources

Provided **6,510** case status updates

Made **2,839** court accompaniments

Provided **$28,211** in emergency assistance for immediate needs, such as medical, housing, relocation, food, and personal items

The Joint Powers Claims Unit

Determines eligibility to the Victim Compensation Board and pays eligible crime-related expenses.

Processed **819** claims from victims of violent crime

Processed **2,342** bills from victims and service providers

Issued more than **$1.3 million** in payments to crime victims from the California Victim Compensation Board.

The Criminal Restitution Compact Unit:

Ensures that defendants are ordered to pay back restitution on cases where the Victim Compensation Board has paid benefits.

Facilitated the completion of **1,869** restitution orders

Secured **$1.3 million** in restitution from defendants payable to the Victim Compensation Board



- Victim Advocates continue to provide outreach and education by participating in numerous community events. They also provide trainings and presentations to local police academies, law enforcement agencies, and community agencies. Ollie, the North County Facility Dog, provided support for 376 crime victims during interviews and court hearings.

- The Division held its annual Holiday Drive for crime victims and their families. Through staff coordination, eight families (12 adults and 28 children) were provided with household goods, toys, clothing, and gift cards.

- The Victim Services Division also maintains a Crisis Response Team whose members have received specialized training and are available to respond to provide services and support to victims and survivors after a mass violence incident occurs.



One Safe Place: The North County Family Justice Center

ONESAFEPLACE
THE NORTH COUNTY FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER

WELCOMING SAFE SPACE FOR EVERYONE

One Safe Place gives trauma survivors in North County a safe place to receive acute crisis care, advocacy, counseling, legal services, childcare, connections to shelter and housing, and social service benefits – all under one roof. There are 108 partner agencies working collaboratively to provide hope, healing and justice for the community.



In 2024, One Safe Place:

Served **2,342** individuals

Conducted intakes with **1,234** primary victims

Coordinated **3,237** return visits for services with staff and partners

Held **4,993** case management sessions

Distributed **4,747** pounds of food

Provided **10,906** items of clothing, hygiene, blankets and baby supplies

Provided **1,559** legal services and attorney consultations including assistance with restraining order applications

Conducted **1,563** therapy sessions

Helped **212** people search for emergency shelter and other housing

Welcomed **1,508** children including 796 visits to our child waiting area

Responded to **5,919** phone calls received on our main reception line

Hosted community events for the elderly, pets, staff wellness, teen dating abuse prevention, fentanyl awareness, labor trafficking, literacy, and more

Significant 'HOPE MOMENTS' at One Safe Place included:

- After suffering a domestic violence incident on New Year's Day and countless times prior, a courageous mom came to One Safe Place for help with her infant daughter and her young autistic son. They stepped in feeling hopeless and left feeling grateful for the wrap around services and support. The One Safe Place Care team connected the woman to shelter support for safe temporary housing and provided the family with clothing, baby items, formula and toiletries. Another partner provided holiday gifts for the children after being told they had not received anything from Santa.

- An elderly gentleman who had recently been the victim of a brutal attack was assisted at One Safe Place with compassionate care, connections to resources and help navigating his case. One Safe Place partners also connected him to housing, therapy and gift cards to cover his food expenses to help him get back on his feet.

- A mother and her children who were escaping an abuser, received assistance having the abuser removed from the rental lease and had their locks changed. The mother received a forensic examination and the children received a forensic interview. The mother was also assisted with filing a restraining order and was referred to our Traumatic Brain Injury clinic. With our team support, she left filled with gratitude.

- A young victim of human trafficking and domestic violence arrived at One Safe Place seeking services. She spent a day on site working closely with our team, who assisted with safety planning, clothing, food, toiletries and temporary safe shelter. She also received transportation to the shelter to begin her healing journey.

DA Care Center

The CARE Center is a satellite office of the District Attorney's Office located in National City that provides crime prevention and intervention services for the community. In 2024, the center served more than 7,586 groups, providers, individuals and families. Of these, 296 were assessed for their needs, resulting in 402 referrals to community-based organizations and direct connections to food and clothing services held at the center.

In addition to needs assessments, the CARE Center offers a free, clean, and safe meeting space for the community. In 2024, we received more than 506 room reservation requests. Through our event programming, the CARE Center served over 6,000 people via initiatives such as Homeless Pop-Up Resource Fairs, DocuReady Fairs, Elder Fairs, employment support, and events for reentry populations.









Facts and Figures

Measuring outcomes of the work of the District Attorney's Office and providing data to the public is an important part of embracing transparency and building trust with the community we serve.

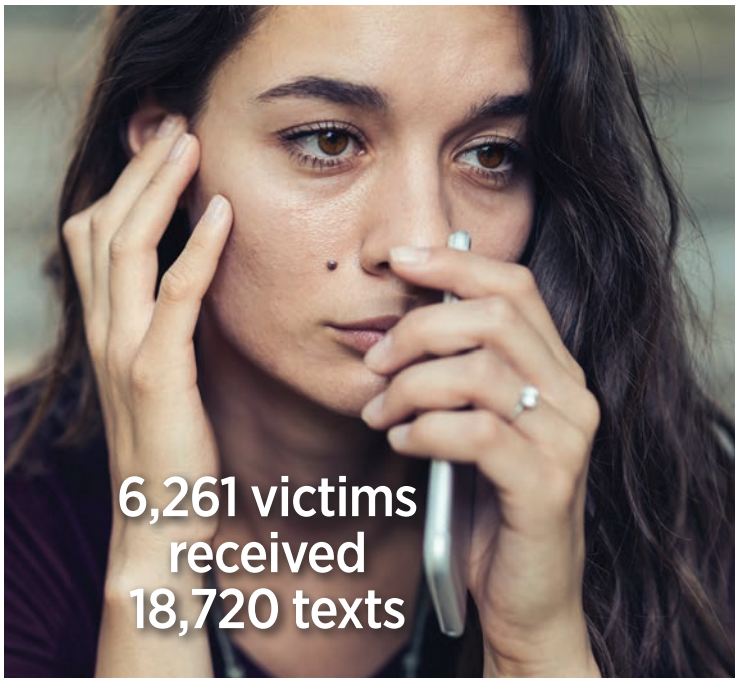




Elder Justice Taskforce

In 2024, San Diego seniors continued to fall victim to elder financial scams perpetrated by transnational criminal organizations, with victims losing a shocking $100 million a year. The San Diego Elder Justice Task Force (EJTF), which launched in 2021, brings together partners including the San Diego County District Attorney's Office, the FBI, U.S. Attorney's Office, Adult Protective Services, The San Diego Law Enforcement Coordination Center, along with local law enforcement agencies including San Diego Police and Sheriff, Oceanside Police Department, and others. The EJTF is focused on disrupting the financial networks facilitating these scams for overseas networks by investigating and prosecuting the couriers and money launderers operating here in the United States. In addition, the EJTF is working to recover and return funds lost by elder victims wherever possible, keeping data on the amount of fraud impacting the County of San Diego and educating the community about the greatest current threats. San Diego's Elder Justice Task Force is the only initiative of its kind in the nation.

Using Technology to Protect Victims of Domestic Violence



The DA's Family Protection Division initiated a texting program in 2021 to provide victims of domestic violence with immediate updates on the status of their cases. Since the program launched, 17,664 victims of crime were kept informed of their case using text messages and in total, 60,065 texts have been sent. In 2024 alone, 6,261 victims of crime were kept abreast of their case using text messages, and 18,720 texts were sent. The system sends automated text messages to a victim's cell phone with case updates, links to domestic violence resources and other pertinent information, including the status of the case review, the name and contact number of the assigned prosecutor and victim advocate, whether charges are being filed or not, and other case status updates. The program started as a pilot in the North County branch and is now in effect in all branches countywide for any case involving intimate partner violence and the program has a robust approval rating from those contacted.

De-Escalation Training

The District Attorney's Office continued its collaboration with police agencies in San Diego County in 2024, providing curriculum for de-escalation training for peace officers. The DA's Office is committed to engaging in the development and implementation of effective, evidence-based crisis intervention and de-escalation programming by providing access to tools in support of law enforcement officers, dispatchers, first responders, and others who may encounter people in crisis. The goal is a reduced need for the use of deadly force, improved officer safety, and reduced likelihood of injury to the person in crisis and the public.

Training by the numbers





116
Non-sworn law enforcement



In total, **3,382** individuals completed the DA-led training

Veterans Treatment Court

Veterans Treatment Court provides an opportunity for veterans to earn redemption through a nationally recognized criminal diversion program that takes participants with criminal convictions and places them on a separate, specialized track of treatment and rehabilitation rather than incarceration. Most participants are in the program for 18 to 24 months. If all treatment, supervision, and community service commitments are met, their case can be dismissed and sealed. In 2024 there were 19 new participants and 17 individuals who successfully graduated from the program, had their criminal cases dismissed and their rights restored.



Providing Safe Shelter for Victims of Crime

Victims of domestic violence and other trauma no longer have to spend hours or days trying to find safe shelter thanks to the SoCal Safe Shelter Collaborative, which locates available space within minutes. The program leverages technology to more quickly connect survivors with available space that matches the victim's needs, so that abuse victims can quickly move from dangerous situations and begin receiving support services.



Current Active Partners: 51 organizations participating

51 total participating

14 Sheltering agencies with 300 beds

37 Referral only organizations



822 Requests for shelter

56% of the requests resulted in at least one "possible" match and opening for available shelter*



49% survivors seeking safe shelter had one or more children with them, totaling 816 children

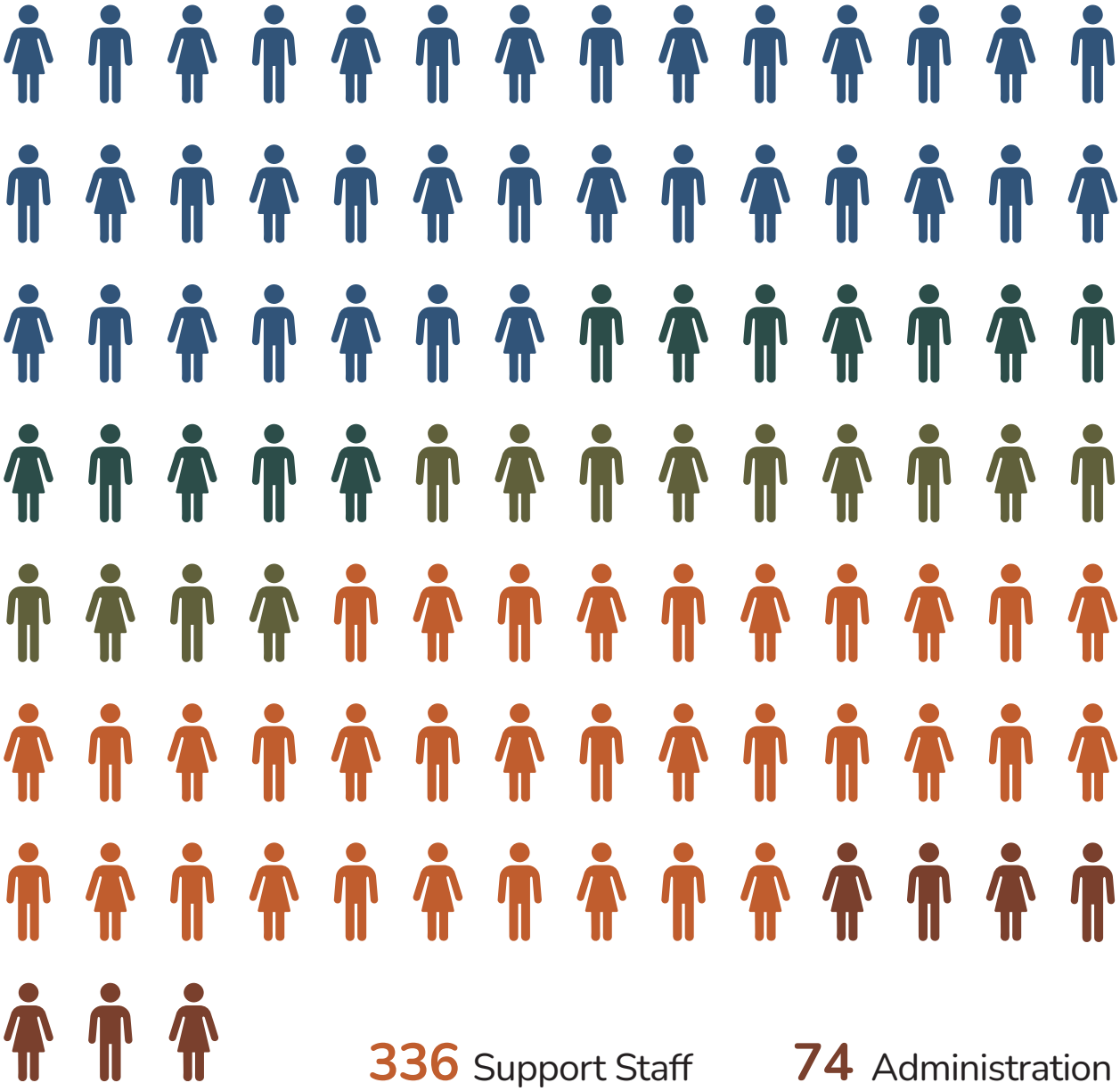


*Even when all shelters respond that there are no openings, the survivor has saved critical time calling shelters that do not have an opening and/or match for their shelter needs. They can begin looking for other shelter options or request an emergency hotel stay.

Office of the District Attorney

1,026 PERMANENT STAFF

351 Prosecutors **128** Investigators **137** Paralegals



336 Support Staff **74** Administration

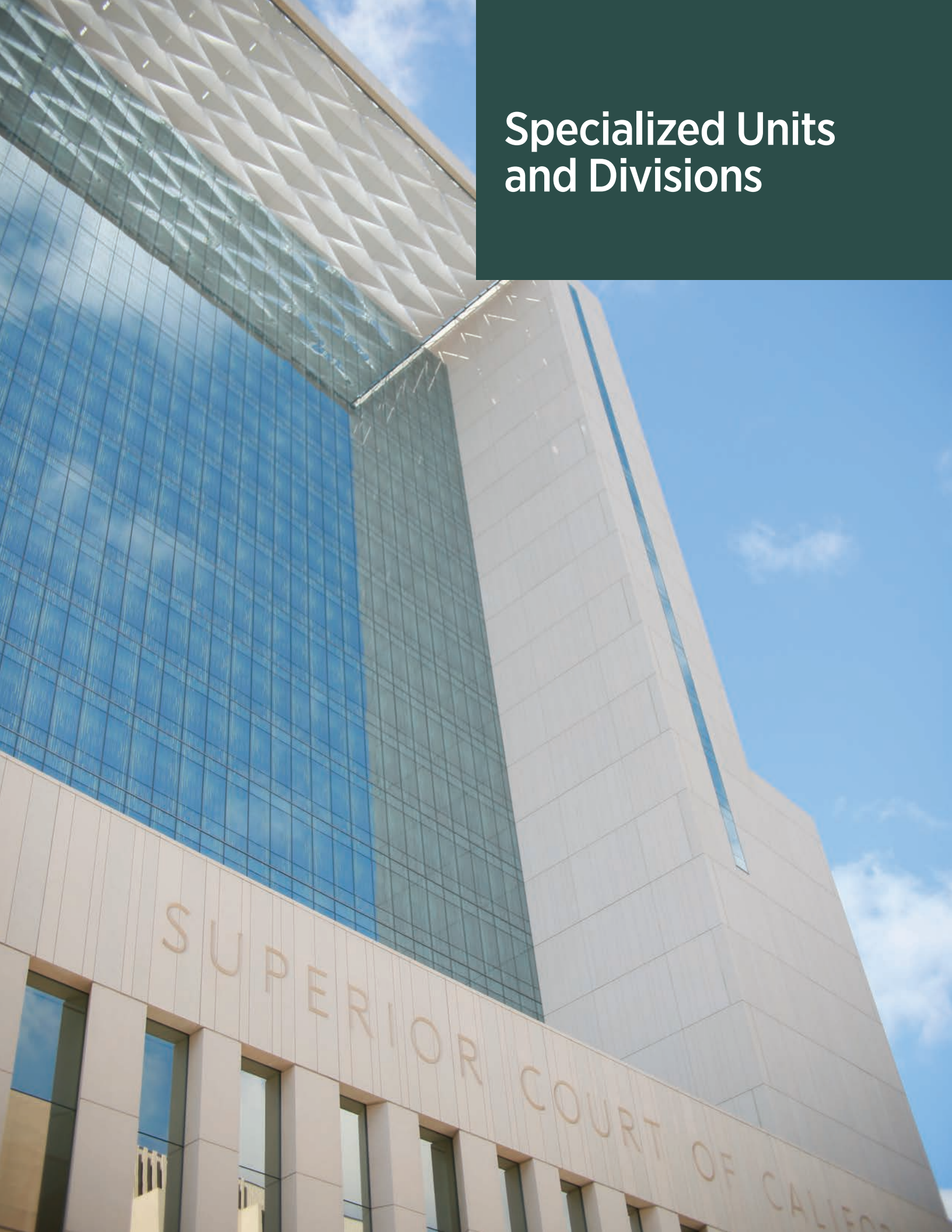
Our Budget

REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES

FISCAL YEAR 2024 TO 2025	Expenditures
Salaries/Benefits	$232,533,000
Supplies/Services	45,777,000
To Other Agencies	2,212,000
Assets	531,000
Public Assistance Fraud Reimbursement	(325,000)
Other Expenditures	55,000
Total Budgeted Expenditures	**$280,783,000**

FISCAL YEAR 2024 TO 2025	Revenues
Proposition 172	$84,260,000
General Revenues	149,717,000
Federal Funds	4,431,000
State Funds	27,856,000
Other Funds	14,519,000
Total Budgeted Revenues	**$280,783,000**

Specialized Units and Divisions



Appellate and Training Division

The Appellate and Training Division serves as the legal research arm of the District Attorney's Office, managing special projects, navigating complex legal issues, and conducting the analysis and implementation of new laws. The division handles writs and appeals in the Superior Court, courts of appeal, and California Supreme Court. The scope of litigation this division addresses ranges from capital cases to misdemeanors. The division also handles public and interagency record requests, as well as subpoenas for District Attorney's Office employees or records. The Training Unit within the Appellate Division provides quality legal training for office staff, while the Ethics Coordinator advises and supports deputy district attorneys regarding their significant ethical responsibilities in prosecuting cases.

In 2024, the Appellate and Training Division addressed novel issues in the evolving areas of law affecting racial justice, mental health, bail, and compassionate release. We handled complex litigation at every state court level including in the Superior Court, Appellate Court, and California Supreme Court. We continued to engage in complex litigation in capital matters and other post-conviction habeas issues. And we continue to assist the public and outside agencies with public records requests.



Branch Offices

Crime happens in all corners of the county, which is why the District Attorney's Office is embedded in every area of the community, including North County, South County, East County, a Juvenile Division east of Linda Vista, the CARE Community Center in National City, One Safe Place: The North County Family Justice Center in San Marcos, and its downtown office at the Hall of Justice. Deputy District Attorneys, investigators, paralegals, victim advocates and a host of support staff carry out the mission of the office in each location.

Bureau of Investigation

The Bureau of Investigation is the law enforcement arm of the San Diego County District Attorney's Office. In 2024, the Bureau was comprised of 128 District Attorney Investigators and 39 professional support staff, including Paralegals, Investigative Specialists, Trial Support Specialists, Crime & Intelligence Analysts, and Process Servers. The Bureau has earned the reputation of having some of the most experienced and highly trained investigators among its ranks, who have been recruited from law enforcement agencies across California.



The Bureau provides a wide range of skilled investigative services to support the District Attorney's prosecutorial and crime prevention mission, including victim and witness protection in serious gang and narcotics cases so witnesses can safely testify. The Bureau is also responsible for original investigations across specialized domains such as public corruption, insurance fraud, economic crimes, organized retail crime, series related robbery and burglary, parental child abduction, and cold case homicide. The Bureau prepared more than 1,300 trial exhibits for court through its Trial Support Services Unit, completed more than 2,600 fingerprint comparisons and recovered 16 children who were abducted by a parent.

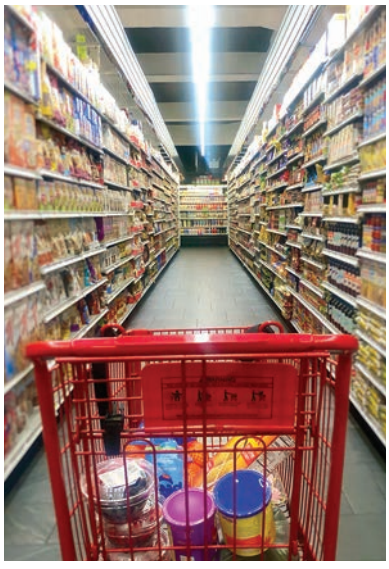
Case Issuing and Extraditions Division



This division is the front line of all cases when they arrive in the District Attorney's Office. In 2024, our issuing staff processed 6,786 cases and 7,504 suspects. The division consists of three units: Case Issuing, Extraditions, and the Priors Unit with a total of 44 members, including Deputy District Attorneys, DDA Law Enforcement Liaisons, Paralegals, and Professional Staff. In addition to processing and reviewing all general felony case submissions, our team coordinates the review and filing of all felony cases downtown and oversees the eDiscovery process. Additionally, our division handles Prop. 57, Certificates of Rehabilitation, Clemency Petitions, and CODIS hit cases. Our Priors Unit is responsible for ordering and obtaining prior convictions and prison packets necessary for proving allegations and priors in court and responding to requests for dispositions and other information from outside agencies.

Collaborative Justice Division

The Collaborative Justice Division works to address the underlying causes of criminal behavior and resolve them in partnership with community treatment providers, mentors, law enforcement agencies, and the courts. This division consists of three teams: Collaborative Courts Team, Restitution Recovery Team, and Lifer Hearing Unit. It oversees the administration of the Community Justice Initiative program, responding to Prop. 47 and Prop. 64 petitions, and processing PC 290.5 petitions. Individuals with prior felony convictions for selected property crimes and simple possession of narcotics can petition the court for reduction to a misdemeanor under Prop. 47. Others with marijuana related prior convictions can petition the court for reduction to a misdemeanor and in most cases of simple possession the case can be dismissed. The District Attorney is responsible for screening all these petitions to make a recommendation to the court on whether the case is eligible for reduction or dismissal.



Consumer Protection Unit

The District Attorney's Office has a unit dedicated to stopping unfair, fraudulent and deceptive business practices. The Consumer Protection Unit is comprised of Deputy District Attorneys, Investigators and Paralegals dedicated to protecting consumers and law-abiding businesses. This unit is within the Economic Crimes and Consumer Protection Division. In 2024, the Consumer Protection Unit filed several civil actions related to unfair or deceptive business practices that netted more than $14.6 million in statewide civil judgments. The cases involved illegal automatic renewals, improper pricing policies and pricing inaccuracies. Companies that reached settlements with the DA's Office include Home Depot; Albertsons, Vons, and Safeway grocery stores; Travelers Insurance and Lamps Plus. To report a consumer complaint, call (619) 531-3507 or email consumer@sdcda.org.

Conviction and Sentence Review Unit

The Conviction and Sentence Review Unit is committed to the highest standard of professional integrity as it conducts meticulous reviews of post-conviction cases. This unit works collaboratively with all our criminal justice partners to identify post-conviction cases where there may be a credible claim of innocence and cases where new technologies would allow testing or retesting of remaining evidence. In 2024, the unit received 12 cases for conviction review. The Conviction and Sentence Review Unit also reviews previously sentenced cases to determine whether it would be in the interest



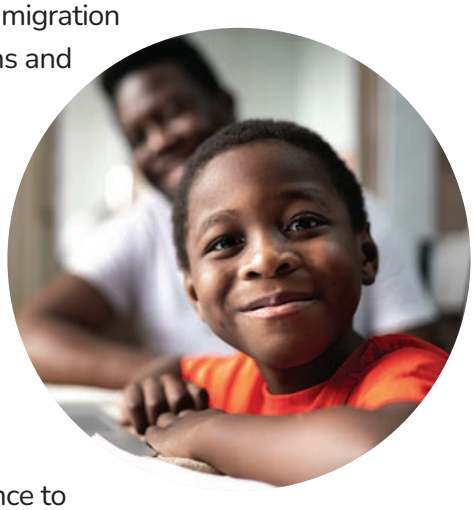
of justice to petition the court to recall and resentence a sentenced individual. When determining whether to support the resentencing of an individual, the unit carefully evaluates several factors, such as victim input, community safety, the disciplinary record or record of rehabilitation of the inmate, current sentencing law, and the prospects of successful reintegration of the sentenced individual. In 2024, we supported 12 such re-sentencings. The public, attorneys, or convicted persons can apply to have a conviction reviewed or a sentence recalled for resentencing via this page on the DA's public website.

Economic Crimes and Consumer Protection Division

Economic crimes often have dire consequences, from destroying family equity in a property to rendering corporate stocks worthless to shareholders. These crimes may be committed by individuals against institutions or other individuals. The Economic Crimes and Consumer Protection Division is responsible for prosecuting a wide variety of wrongdoing, including elder financial abuse, computer intrusion, complex identity theft, investment scams, embezzlements, real estate matters, counterfeit goods, environmental crimes and the theft of public assistance funds.

Extraditions Unit

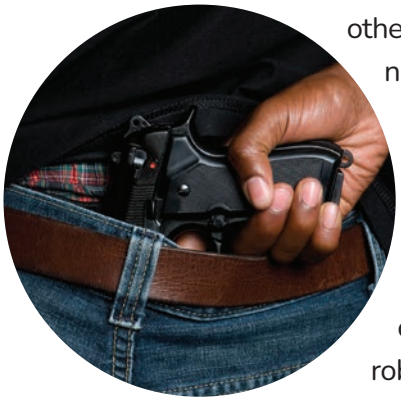
Criminals often flee San Diego after committing a crime here, attempting to hide in foreign countries such as Mexico. The DA's Extraditions Unit successfully brings fugitives from abroad or from other states to face criminal prosecution in San Diego and seeks justice for crime victims. International extradition is complex and varies from nation to nation with very specific legal requirements involving multiple agencies. We work with local and federal law enforcement organizations as well as the U.S. Department of Justice and foreign governments to extradite, deport or expel fugitives back to San Diego, within the parameters of extradition treaties and foreign immigration laws. In 2024, the extraditions team executed 66 domestic extraditions and six international extraditions.



Family Protection Division

The Family Protection Division is a team of dedicated, experienced, and specially trained Deputy District Attorneys, District Attorney Investigators, Victim Advocates, and staff who prosecute crimes of homicide, intimate partner violence, physical and sexual child abuse, internet crimes against children, elder abuse, stalking, and cases involving child sexual abuse material. The division is comprised of 46 Deputy District Attorneys, who handle all felony cases from issuance to trial. They are stationed in El Cajon, South Bay, Vista, and the Hall of Justice. In 2024, they reviewed 8,782 cases. The division is dedicated to supporting victims through the criminal justice process and ensuring all victims are treated with compassion and dignity and given access to the essential services they need. The division works closely with numerous law enforcement agencies to investigate and prevent violent crimes, while also working closely with community partners to provide life-saving resources and public service awareness campaigns. Through the Family Protection Division, the District Attorney's Office is committed to holding defendants accountable and seeking justice for the thousands of victims impacted by family violence each year in San Diego County.

Gangs Division



The District Attorney's Office successfully prosecutes complex murder cases and other serious crimes perpetrated by violent gang members who terrorize neighborhoods. These cases are handled by one prosecutor from beginning to end – also called vertical prosecution – in our Gangs Division. Cases in this division are expertly navigated by our 26 prosecutors and 20 investigators to bring justice to families left in the wake of violence. In 2024, the Gangs Division conducted 23 murder jury trials, which is more than 40% of the total murders tried in the DA's office. The division also prosecuted other cases including kidnapping for rape, assault with great bodily injury, robbery, carjacking and possession of illegal firearms, such as ghost guns, by gang members.



Information Technology Division

The Information Technology Division strategically uses technology to support the operation of the District Attorney's Office. The employees who make up this unit, design, develop, implement, and support all information technology hardware, software, business applications, and websites. They also provide support for prosecution in the courtroom and community outreach efforts. In addition, ITD provides direct support to the City Attorney's Office in their use of the District Attorney's case management system for criminal prosecution.

Insurance Fraud and Workplace Justice Division

The average person doesn't give insurance fraud or workplace justice a second thought. But the fact is insurance fraud costs U.S. consumers an estimated $80 to $90 billion per year. In California, it's a $15 billion-a-year problem. It's the second largest economic crime in America, exceeded only by tax evasion. The San Diego County District Attorney's Office combats this problem by using experienced specialists to confront the insurance fraud epidemic. Within this division is the Workplace Justice Unit, which is comprised of a dedicated prosecutor, DA investigator and paralegal. The Unit prosecutes unfair business practices, wage and hour violations, payroll tax evasion, wage theft and labor trafficking cases.

Juvenile Division

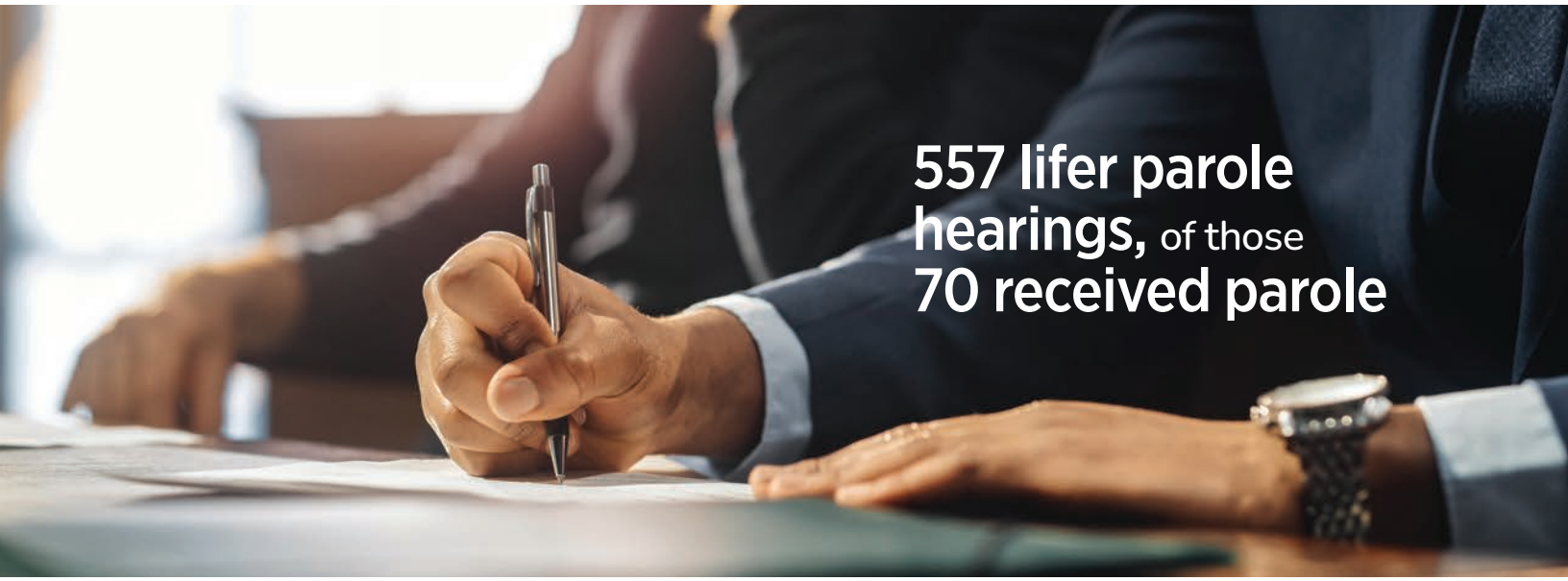


The goal of the juvenile justice system is to ensure that youth who touch our criminal system receive the appropriate rehabilitative services while safeguarding victims' rights and public safety. This division is comprised of dedicated support staff, investigators, paralegals, victim advocates and prosecutors. It handles cases involving those under 18 in all of San Diego County. Within this branch office, there are several vertical units with attorneys who specialize in child abuse and domestic violence, human trafficking, gangs, and school threats.

Juvenile cases can present unique and complicated issues that differ from adult court. Juvenile cases are confidential and little information is publicly available because the system is designed to provide rehabilitative services to youthful offenders outside the public eye. Juvenile court does not focus on punishing the youth, instead, it focuses on rehabilitation and trauma informed treatment in conjunction with public safety.

Law Enforcement Liaisons

Two experienced Deputy District Attorneys are on call 24/7 to answer questions, provide guidance, and help draft and review search warrants for all law enforcement officers who operate within our jurisdiction. Our liaisons also support 351 prosecutors in the office in the areas of case investigation and trial preparation. Our liaisons work closely with the bench and continually deploy, upgrade, and train users on the E-Warrant System.



Lifer Hearing Unit

The DA's Lifer Hearing Unit has two main goals: to ensure that dangerous prisoners with life sentences are not released carelessly or improvidently, and to ensure that crime victims and their families are given an opportunity to participate in the parole hearing process and have their voices heard. The Lifer Hearing Unit is comprised of a team of seasoned prosecutors who serve as gatekeepers at parole hearings for some of the most dangerous criminals in the state. In 2024, there were 557 lifer parole hearings scheduled. Seventy inmates received parole grants from the California Board of Parole Hearings and 507 hearings resulted in denials, postponements, or stipulations to a denial of parole.

Major Narcotics Division

The primary objectives of the Major Narcotics Division are to investigate and prosecute large-scale narcotics traffickers, dealers who furnish controlled substances leading to overdose and death, and cases involving drug endangered children, drug-related violence, clandestine drug labs, and illegal dispensaries. In addition, our deputies receive specialized training in the handling of confidential information and cooperating individuals. This division works closely with state and federal law enforcement agencies and partner with various organizations and community stakeholders to combat the proliferation of illegal and dangerous drugs and reduce the harm caused by their use.

Members of the Major Narcotics Division are active in educating the public on the dangers of illegal drug use and the resources available for those seeking help with a substance use disorder. The division strives to protect the public through fair and ethical prosecution, education, and collaboration.

In 2024, no children in San Diego County died due to a drug overdose, compared to 2021 when San Diego County saw 12 children die due to fentanyl. This decrease is attributable to a variety of factors, including widespread distribution of the life-saving overdose reversal medication, naloxone, swift and effective life-saving actions by emergency first responders, supply disruptions resulting from local, state, and federal law enforcement investigations, the aggressive and fair prosecution of persons selling harmful controlled substances in the community, along with online and in-person fentanyl education campaigns for the public.



Priors Unit

The Priors unit is responsible for ordering and obtaining prior convictions and prison packets necessary for proving allegations and priors in court. The unit also responds to requests for dispositions and other information from outside agencies. In 2024 the unit received and fulfilled 1,680 requests for local priors, 385 requests for out-of-county requests and 73 requests for prison packets.

Restitution Recovery Team

The Restitution Recovery Team was created in 2018 with the mission to improve restitution practices countywide. Its main goals are to improve the way restitution information is obtained, to provide attorneys and staff with resources and training to efficiently obtain restitution orders

in court, and to maximize restitution recovery by correcting deficient court orders and providing crucial victim information to collection agencies. In 2024, through collaboration with two major collection agencies, the Restitution Recovery Team assisted in the disbursement of restitution funds to previously unknown crime victims by obtaining and providing missing court documents. As a result, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation was able to disburse more than $119 million to victims and the Office of Revenue and Recovery was able to disburse $37,428.

Sex Crimes and Human Trafficking Division



Some of the most sensitive criminal cases are handled in the District Attorney's Sex Crimes and Human Trafficking Division. A team of prosecutors, investigators, victim advocates, paralegals and professional staff come together in this unit to protect victims and prosecute those who sexually assault and sell human beings for profit. This team also promotes awareness in schools and in the community so young people have the tools they need to recognize the red flags of human trafficking.

Special Operations Division

The Special Operations Division investigates cases involving misuse of public funds, political corruption, hate crimes, threats and other crimes impacting the integrity of the justice system, such as criminal misconduct of government officials, including peace officers and other public employees. The division also reviews officer-involved shootings and in-custody deaths.

Superior Court Division

The Superior Court Division is responsible for prosecuting some of the most challenging cases in the District Attorney's Office, including assaults, burglaries, robberies, fatal DUIs, and murders. It is one of the busiest divisions in the office and handles all felonies not assigned to a branch or vertical prosecution. This division is responsible for many of the felony cases tried by the District Attorney's Office, including about 30% of the DA's homicide cases. In addition, the Superior Court Division handles pre- and post-conviction mental health cases for defendants alleged to be incompetent to stand trial and those found to be a danger to the community because of mental illness.



The unique combination of senior trial attorneys and junior deputies in this division helps junior deputies develop the skills and knowledge necessary to become highly skilled felony trial attorneys.



HALL OF JUSTICE
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