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Solano County Administrator's Office  
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675 Texas Street, Suite 6500  
Fairfield CA 94533

December 6, 2021

Dear Ms. Corsello,

Thank you for allowing us to send our team to Solano County in October to evaluate the operation of the Solano Family Justice Center. Below is our letter report with recommendations. I am prepared to come to Solano County on December 14, 2021, at 9:00 AM and present our findings and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors if you would like me to do that in person or, alternatively, I am happy to appear via Zoom or another online platform. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly with any questions.

With Great HOPE,



Casey Gwinn, Esq.  
Founder & President, Alliance for HOPE International  
San Diego City Attorney (1996-2004)



## Solano Family Justice Center Snapshot Report October 2021

By invitation of the Solano County Board of Supervisors, in conjunction with the County Administrator's Office, the Family Justice Center Alliance (FJCA) Technical Assistance Team, a program of Alliance for HOPE International (Alliance), conducted a Snapshot of the Solano Family Justice Center in Fairfield, CA on October 13-15, 2021. The Snapshot process was an opportunity for the Alliance team to meet with key stakeholders, service providers, and survivors to learn more about the services being provided by the Family Justice Center in Solano County. The focus of the Snapshot was to evaluate the Grand Jury's findings in two separate reports by identifying strengths and gaps in the current service delivery system, pinpointing any processes that could potentially present challenges to survivors, and determining the next steps to enhance the Solano Family Justice Center. As part of the Snapshot, the Alliance Technical Assistance Team reviewed the two Grand Jury Reports and associated documents provided by the County Administrator's Office, reviewed operational documents, gathered feedback and information about the community through pre-planning meetings, anonymous community partner surveys, online research, onsite observation of the Center, and held meetings with the Family Justice Center Leadership Team, stakeholder meetings, and two focus groups (English and Spanish) with survivors.

### Background About the Alliance

For more than fifteen years, the Alliance has been leading the effort to break down silos by integrating and coordinating services using the Family Justice/Multi-Agency (FJ/MA) Center framework. The Alliance serves as the comprehensive training and technical assistance provider for all federally funded Family Justice Centers in the United States and operates as the umbrella organization for all affiliated FJ/MA Centers in the country. Our collective community impact model creates a collaborative approach that comes alongside survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, elder abuse, and human trafficking to break generational cycles of family violence. The Alliance is one of the leading systems and social change organizations in the country, creating innovative, collaborative, trauma-informed, hope-centered approaches that meet the needs of survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault and their children. The Alliance and its allied FJ/MA Centers serve between 150,000 and 200,000 adult and child survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault each year in the United States.

The mission of the Alliance is to create pathways to hope for women, children, and men who are victims of domestic violence and sexual assault through collaborative, integrated multi-disciplinary centers, teams, and initiatives in order to break the generational cycle of violence and abuse in families across the United States and around the world. The Alliance team was pleased to learn more about Solano County's alignment with that

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mission and its commitment to strengthening collaboration and implementing effective strategies that better serve survivors and their children.

## Our Team

The Alliance team conducting the Snapshot consisted of Raeanne Passantino, Director of Technical Assistance for the FJCA, Lisa Mantarro Moore, Executive Director of the Stanislaus Family Justice Center, and Maryann Postiglione, FJCA Program Assistant. Over the course of the two and a half-day event, held in Fairfield, the team conducted over 25 meetings with more than 60 people to learn more about the community's response to domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, sexual assault, and human trafficking by way of the current Solano Family Justice Center framework.

The Alliance team had the honor of meeting with the following key stakeholders:

- Broken by Violence, an onsite local non-profit organization
- Solano County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
- Catholic Charities of Yolo-Solano, Inc, a local non-profit organization
- Child Haven, an affiliate of Victor Community Support Services, a non-profit organization
- County Administrator and key staff
- County Board of Supervisors
- Empowered Aging, an onsite local non-profit organization
- Fighting Back Partnership, a local non-profit organization
- Health & Social Services (H&SS)
  - Management
  - Onsite staff
  - Offsite referral staff
- Law Enforcement
- Napa Solano SANE/SART (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner / Sexual Assault Response Team), a local non-profit organization
- SafeQuest Solano, a local non-profit organization
- Solano Advocates for Victims of Violence (SAVV), a local non-profit organization
- Solano County District Attorney
- Solano County District Attorney Victim Witness Program Staff
- Solano Family Justice Center Interns
- Solano Family Justice Center Leadership Team
- Solano Family Justice Center Staff (former and current)

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- Solano Partnership Against Violence (SPAV), a community collaborative and Advisory Board to the Solano County Board of Supervisors
- Survivors

## The History

As a result of two Grand Jury Reports, in 2017 and 2021, critical of the Solano Family Justice Center, the Board of Supervisors, at the County Budget Hearings, requested a review of the Center. The Board believed there to be a need for a deeper look into service delivery and overall operations of the Center. Accordingly, the County Administrator’s Office contacted the Alliance in July 2021 to begin conversations about the feasibility of conducting an overview, or Snapshot, of the Solano Family Justice Center. The Alliance team, representatives from the County Administrator’s Office, and the Solano Family Justice Center Director met regularly to facilitate the Snapshot Planning Phase. This included providing the Alliance team with requested documentation, disseminating the anonymous community partners survey, and creating an agenda that included the names of community partners, onsite and offsite agencies, and other key stakeholders listed above.

## THE SNAPSHOT

### Meetings

The Alliance team met with a variety of key stakeholders, former and current Family Justice Center staff, former and current onsite and offsite partners, and leaders from agencies across Solano County who are passionate about the work they are doing to support survivors and their families. The conversations produced compelling insights from professionals who are currently handling domestic violence, sexual assault, and elder abuse cases, and their thoughts and experiences illuminated the current state of service provision and collaboration in the county and by the Solano Family Justice Center. Their perspectives were crucial for gaining a deeper understanding of service delivery effectiveness and existing survivor needs.

Conversations and meetings identified existing strengths of the Solano Family Justice Center and illuminated the current challenges that must be addressed to maximize impact and facilitate much needed changes in service delivery at the Center. The Alliance team found that there is widespread support for the Family Justice Center framework in Solano County and an eagerness to improve service delivery and operations as soon as possible. It is important to note that no names of individuals have been included in this report because many were afraid of retribution or retaliation for meeting with our team and expressed those concerns during meetings.

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From our meetings we identified **six key themes** that continuously surfaced throughout the Snapshot process:

- There is little public awareness of the Family Justice Center and the types of services provided
- The current layout of the facility does not support the needs of survivors, onsite partners, nor Family Justice Center staff
- There is no clear communication or collaboration between the Family Justice Center and onsite or community partners
- There is no alignment between the County Board of Supervisors, the County Administrator's Office, and the District Attorney's Office on overall governance of the Family Justice Center
- The geography of Solano County results in tremendous transportation challenges for survivors who need Family Justice Center services
- Many concerns exist about the leadership style and approach of the current Family Justice Center Director

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## CONCLUSIONS FROM MEETINGS WITH PARTNERS

Meetings with stakeholders and community partners helped the Alliance team learn more about what is working well and what gaps exist in service delivery at the Solano Family Justice Center. A Snapshot meeting agenda was created to provide a balanced overview of the current state of the Family Justice Center. These meetings helped us identify current strengths, challenges, and barriers as follows:

### Strengths

- There is tremendous support for a successful and healthy Family Justice Center framework in Solano County
- There is robust work and advocacy being provided by onsite District Attorney Victim Witness staff
- Well-respected elder abuse services are provided onsite at the Family Justice Center
- Office of Family Violence Prevention social workers (aka, navigators) work well with survivors at the Family Justice Center and are trauma-informed in their approaches
- Family Justice Center staff is very supportive of one another

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- Clients feel safe coming to the Family Justice Center
- There is unanimous consensus that political conflicts surrounding the history and current state of the Family Justice Center need to be addressed in order to create a framework that supports survivors and their families more comprehensively

## Challenges/Barriers

- No transportation or transportation plan for survivors to access the Family Justice Center
- Lack of funding at all levels within the county
- The current Family Justice Center Director's leadership style is highly problematic and confrontational and does not facilitate effective services at the Center
- There is no formal onboarding process or orientation for partners or staff
- There is no understanding of partner roles due to lack of regular partner meetings/cross trainings and open transparent team building activities
- Applications for funding are not coordinated among partner agencies
- There is no clear understanding by survivors, onsite partners, or the community of who the onsite partners are or what a dynamic Family Justice Center framework can be and what should exist
- Satellite space in Vallejo is not at all adequate or appropriate and is currently viewed by many as a space Family Justice Center staff are sent as a form of punishment
- The current Center is not a true drop-in Family Justice Center framework that promotes walk-in, on demand services for survivors which is a fundamental element of healthy Family Justice Centers
- The current building layout is not conducive to supporting the number of partners or services needed nor their ability to provide confidential and privileged services
- No services, programs, or adequate play spaces exist for children and teens while their caregivers receive services
- The Family Justice Center Foundation is not operating as it was designed (i.e., it is not bringing in any funding to support Center operations) and appears to be out of 501(c)3 compliance with federal/state government requirements as of August 2020
- Core onsite services are missing (i.e., full-time law enforcement officers, full-time prosecutors, civil legal services, programming for children, etc.)
- The District Attorney's Office is not the best entity to oversee the Family Justice Center in Solano County

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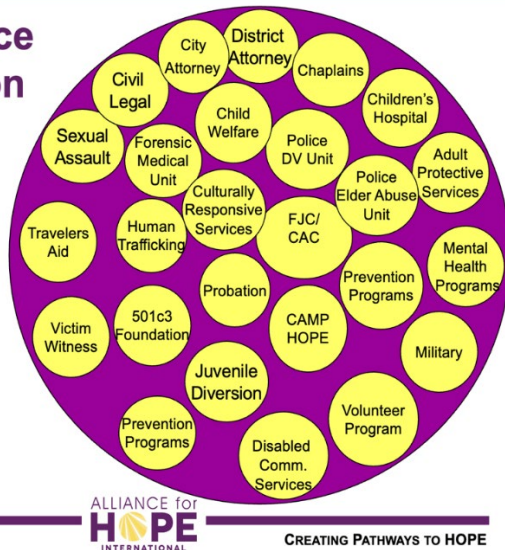
- Law enforcement is not fully aware of Family Justice Center services and not fully integrated
- The Center has no online or social media presence promoting the activities and programs at the Center
- There is no consistency or quality control on the assistance for emergency orders and how they are obtained and there are no clear accountability processes to survivors for the work of the Center – a core value and principle of well-run Family Justice Centers

Our review found there are very few onsite services compared to a Dynamic Family Justice Center Framework.

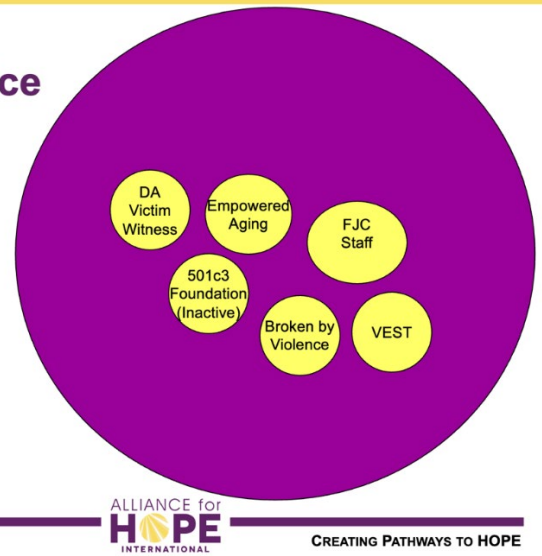
### Partners in a Dynamic Family Justice Center Framework

### Current Partners in the Solano Family Justice Center

#### Family Justice Center Vision



#### Solano Family Justice Center



(Graphic 1)

The Alliance team reviewed the original documents of the Solano Family Justice Center and identified the following partners that were either onsite originally *or* were planned to be onsite but never actually co-located at the Center: SANE/SART Solano Trauma Recovery Center (left Center); OVFP Family Violence Intervention Team (planned to be in Center); LIFT3 Support Group (planned to be in Center); Solano Advocates for Victims of Violence (left Center); Safequest Solano (left Center); Child Haven (planned to be in Center); pro-bono legal services (planned to be in Center); District Attorney Domestic Violence Unit (planned to be in Center); District Attorney Victim Witness Unit (planned to

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be Center). These partners are all core partners in most Family Justice Centers across the United States but are not currently present in the Solano Family Justice Center. During our analysis of the Center, there were differing reasons provided by the partners not currently in the Center, but each missing partner is a reflection of the failed leadership and collaboration necessary for a dynamic, comprehensive services model. In analyzing Family Justice Centers across the United States, most dynamic Centers add partners over time based on the needs of survivors – both adults and children. In Solano County, the attrition among partners reflects the leadership of the Family Justice Center and the collaborative commitment of the lead agency in charge of the Center.

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## THE COMMUNITY PARTNERS SURVEY

Prior to the Snapshot, community partners throughout Solano County were invited to participate in an anonymous Community Partners Survey. The data collected from the survey allows the Alliance team to better understand the current state of interdisciplinary collaboration and shortcomings. The survey is designed to pinpoint any sources of apprehension, which then helps the Alliance work with the community to mitigate perceived challenges connected to the current Family Justice Center framework.

### Training

The Community Partners Survey looked at training processes and perceptions of the benefits and drawbacks of the Center. Responses pertaining to cross-training revealed a strong need for a variety of trainings. Only 35% of survey respondents have received domestic violence/intimate partner violence training in the last 12 months; only 34% received training on special and marginalized populations, such as working with immigrants and refugees; and less than 30% received training in the last 12 months on sexual assault or the general operation and processes of the criminal justice system. The lack of emphasis on trainings is in line with Alliance team findings that Family Justice Center staff and interns are not required to receive the 40-hour domestic violence training as part of their onboarding and instead, are expected to find and attend such a training on their own.

Also concerning is that no survey respondents identified having received training on fatal and non-fatal strangulation assault in the last 12 months. Strangulation survivors are at the highest risk for domestic violence homicide and are most likely to suffer major long-term health impacts from the abuse they have experienced. Based on our national research, the majority of all Family Justice Center clients are survivors of near or non-fatal strangulation assaults. Based on the research of the Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention, another program of the Alliance, the majority of all women killed in domestic violence homicides and the majority of all law enforcement officers killed in

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intentional homicides are killed by men with a history of strangulation assault against women in intimate relationships. Law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, community partners, medical providers, and Family Justice Center staff are strongly encouraged to follow our recommendations below on receiving Advanced Strangulation Prevention Training (See also [www.strangulationtraininginstitute.org](http://www.strangulationtraininginstitute.org)).

## Benefits and Drawbacks

The Community Partners Survey asked respondents to express their degree of agreement or disagreement with a variety of statements to capture thoughts on the benefits and drawbacks of the Family Justice Center in Solano County. The strongest responses on **the benefits** of the Family Justice Center include:

- Gain new knowledge about services, programs, or people in the community
- Development of valuable relationships
- Enhanced ability to address domestic and sexual violence in this community
- Heightened public profile of domestic violence issues
- Enhanced ability to affect public policy related to domestic violence

Those responding to the survey identified the following **anticipated drawbacks**:

- Diversion of time and resources away from other priorities or obligations
- Frustration or aggravation with operations and systems
- Insufficient influence and input into Family Justice Center activities and operations

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## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FOCUS GROUPS WITH SURVIVORS

*“I want a way to keep everyone connected. The community needs to understand what the Family Justice Center is and why it is needed.”*

The Alliance team conducted two survivor focus groups, one in English and the other in Spanish, on Day 1 of the Snapshot. Focus groups with survivors are key to providing information on what is working well at a Family Justice Center and what is not, along with feedback and gaining insight on who is supportive and trauma-informed in their approach and who is not. The local Snapshot planning team was asked to reach out to as many community partners as possible to recruit survivors.

The English-speaking group had eight participants, six of whom received services from the Center (the other two were present for support). Three participants were survivors of elder abuse/financial abuse, two of child abuse, and one of domestic violence. They all

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came to the Family Justice Center to get help with their criminal cases or to get a protection order. Focus group participants cited genuine concern and care by Family Justice Center staff who made no judgments, shared information in a manner that was not overwhelming, helped complete paperwork, and who seemed very interested in their needs as positive attributes of the Center. None of these participants were aware that services other than criminal justice system assistance were available.

When asked about their experiences at court, participants in this group expressed the same sentiment heard in over 230 survivor focus groups conducted around the country, *“The whole judiciary experience is scary.”* They added that there was no one there to help them with paperwork, no court advocates were in the courtrooms, and *“we received the runaround trying to get help.”* They all agreed having virtual hearings by video (a standard procedure in Family Justice Centers) would have made them feel much safer.

The Spanish-speaking focus group was attended by three survivors who sought services related to domestic violence and sexual assault. They each said the trauma of going through the system to seek justice within their communities was equally, if not more, traumatizing than the initial reason for seeking services. Two of the monolingual Spanish speakers felt that staff providing court accompaniment and services during their trial did not effectively communicate what was to be expected during the court process, did not check in on their comfort level during the trial, and had limited Spanish speaking skills. None of the survivors had legal representation, while their abusers did, and survivors were shocked that the only service offered to them was Victim Witness accompaniment rather than other support such as mental health services or ongoing advocacy. Survivors said hospital medical staff were cold toward them during their examination and they felt discriminated against because of their immigration status.

Working with law enforcement was not easy – survivors in this group felt the police did not believe them and were not kind or empathetic about the trauma they were experiencing. In addition, the monolingual Spanish-speakers were each transferred to different police officers until they were connected to one who spoke Spanish. The survivors in this focus group do not feel comfortable having a law enforcement presence at the Family Justice Center because officers do not appear to be trained in working with trauma survivors and are not currently trauma-informed, nor bilingual, and they all feared deportation due to their immigration status. However, they stated they would feel comfortable having officers who are trained be a part of the Family Justice Center framework, especially if they were present without uniforms. In most Family Justice Centers, full-time assigned detectives and officers do not wear uniforms on a daily basis. Survivors in this focus group unanimously agreed that if they encountered a police officer in uniform at the Solano County Family Justice Center, they would immediately leave.

*“I would love for this to continue and get as much support as possible for others to come.”*

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Each of the focus groups listed their recommendations for improved systems. The combined list includes: more training for law enforcement and the community about the Family Justice Center framework and the services available; better outreach in the schools; funding for attorneys to provide pro bono or low bono legal support from the Center; training for law enforcement, the courts, and hospital on domestic violence and providing trauma-informed services; comprehensive safety planning for all survivors; better follow-up with survivors after their initial visit to the Center; more bi-lingual staff at the Center; and *“the ability of having a case manager who has all of my information, will always be there to answer the phone, and who knows what is going on with each and every partner.”*

Importantly, we saw no evidence that regular focus groups with survivors are conducted with clients of the Family Justice Center. Monthly or quarterly focus groups and exit interviews with Family Justice Center clients are standard practice in most dynamic and healthy Family Justice Centers.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Alliance Technical Assistance Team spent a great deal of time preparing for this Snapshot by reviewing the two Grand Jury Reports, comments/responses, and other documents provided in advance of our time in Solano County. That information and the conclusions above guided the creation of the following list of recommendations presented for your consideration as you move forward with improving and reimagining the Solano Family Justice Center framework for survivors and their families.

- 1. Leadership:** Many Family Justice Centers struggle because the Director does not have the right gift mix for such a complex and challenging leadership role. Some Directors, though well-meaning and good people, struggle to motivate staff and/or build a positive rapport with onsite partners and key stakeholders who play a very important role in supporting the Center. One of the themes identified above focuses on the leadership style and approach of the current Director of the Solano Family Justice Center. Many individuals described a style where the Director focuses on favorite staff members, plays people against one another, does not create an atmosphere of collaboration among community partners, and can be harsh and controlling at times. We recommend a comprehensive leadership training program for the current Director with training that includes topics such as: conflict resolution, dealing with change, problem-solving, building trust and respect, managing effective meetings, interpersonal relationships, self-awareness, effective communication skills, and the science of hope. A Director, with a strong ability to bring together partner agencies, who emphasizes relationship building and

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collaboration is central to developing a trauma-informed, hope-centered Family Justice Center framework. Without the comprehensive leadership program, we would strongly encourage the County to provide additional oversight to help guide the day to day operations of the Center as changes are made to the operation and a governance structure is chosen for the Center, as recommended below.

- 2. Governance:** Of the 130 Family Justice Centers in operation across the county, approximately 40% are under the leadership of law enforcement, the Prosecutor's Office, city or county government agencies, or the courts. The remaining 60% of Centers are under the leadership of a local domestic violence shelter or community-based agency, an existing domestic violence advocacy program, or a newly formed stand-alone non-profit agency. There is no right or wrong governance structure, but structures that do not champion the mission and vision of the Family Justice Center will not produce a dynamic and healthy Family Justice Center. We recommend that the County hold further discussion about the overall governance and leadership of the Family Justice Center. Based on our observations and that the current Solano Family Justice Center structure does not champion the mission and vision of a Dynamic Family Justice Center Framework (see Graphic 1), showing a lack of collaborative commitment, our team has significant reservations about maintaining the leadership of the Center under the District Attorney's Office and therefore recommends an RFP process to select a new lead agency. We recommend an open, transparent community discussion about the best model for providing inclusive and collaborative leadership for the Center as part of development of the RFP.
- 3. New Request for Proposals Process:** We recommend the County work with the Alliance to create a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to identify the most qualified lead agency for the Solano Family Justice Center within 30-60 days. In the interim, we recommend Board of Supervisors establish a County Working Group to help provide support for day to day operations. The RFP process should not limit itself to local county agencies. There are dynamic Family Justice Center frameworks in Contra Costa County and Alameda County that could potentially help develop a regionalized approach to leadership of the Solano County Family Justice Center. A regional approach has precedent in other parts of the country and may be a viable model for Solano County. There could also be a benefit to having a multi-county approach given the history of challenges regarding collaborative work in Solano County.
- 4. Strategic Planning:** After identifying a new lead agency for the Solano County Family Justice Center, we recommend working with the Alliance to host a Strategic Planning event in 2022 for both public and private agencies in Solano County. Many Centers across the country include Strategic Planning as part of their Snapshot process to re-engage their entire community in the revisioning and

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reimagining of their Center. This revisioning and reimagining is crucial in Solano County to establish a dynamic public-private partnership model for the Solano Family Justice Center framework. The Alliance offers these services on a fee-for-service basis. It is generally a two day event, facilitated by the Alliance, in collaboration with the lead agency and key stakeholders. Strategic Planning brings together a wide variety of community partners, key stakeholders, law enforcement, city and county services, survivors, the faith-based community, and many others to work together to create a new vision for a local Family Justice Center framework.

Strategic Planning, when facilitated by the Alliance, includes a fast-paced process called “Dimensional Strategies”, that focuses on collaboration by having attendees participate in activities whereby they work together to create a unified vision for the Family Justice Center. We generally recommend the creation of four Work Groups in any strategic planning process: Governance and Facilities, Operations and Service Delivery, Funding and Sustainability, and Community Outreach and Education. Some communities also identify other necessary Work Groups in the planning process such as Volunteer Program Operations and/or Outcome and Evaluation. Our planning processes result in a Strategic Planning roadmap document with a new vision for the Center and action items for each Working Group that are essential components to help address many of the recommendations listed in this Snapshot Report. However, a new strategic planning process assumes the right Lead Agency and the well-trained management for the future of the Family Justice Center. We, therefore, recommend the RFP process, selection of a lead agency, and identification by the lead agency of a Director and key stakeholders before the strategic planning event is conducted.

5. **County Working Group:** Prior to the completion of the RFP Process, we recommend creating a committee consisting of an the Family Justice Center Director and one person from each Family Justice Center partner agency and others from county agencies that meets at least monthly, and more often as needed, to address Center operations and issues that arise in this period of transition. In most Centers, this Operations Committee/Working Group works together to identify solutions, as a team. The current process in Solano appears to be a top-down, power and control approach that does not resonate well with onsite partners, thereby creating a revolving door of onsite partners who leave out of frustration with the current leadership and decision-making processes.
6. **Funding and Sustainability:** The funding model for successful Family Justice Center frameworks is a public/private funding mix. This funding mix can include funding from federal grants, state funding, local government funding, individual donors, and corporate and foundation grants. Expecting a single source to fund this framework is not wise and is most often one of the reasons a Center fails, especially when the funding source is tied to a specific governmental agency whose

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original champion (a particular leader or visionary) of the Center moves on, such as a particular City Mayor or City official, a particular county manager or supervisor, one passionate person from the District Attorney's Office, or a particular Law Enforcement official or specialist, etc. We recommend the County consider creating a Funding and Sustainability Team to create a robust funding plan that includes supporting and collaborating with, rather than competing against, community partners; engaging with large employers and foundations in the area; creating fundraising activities that engage the community while bringing in donations for the Center, etc. A specific Work Group to address this recommendation should be created as part of a new Strategic Planning process as recommended below.

- 7. Facility:** A robust Family Justice Center framework includes the efficacy of the facility and how it supports partners' ability to provide effective services: some of the most efficiently run Centers in the country are less than 10,000 square feet. The issue is not the amount of space but how the space is utilized. Engaging partners input in the redesign of the entire space is a crucial component in ensuring the longevity of their commitment. We recommend the County engage the services of a space-planner to create a plan to revamp the interior spaces of the Family Justice Center. Its current layout is not at all suitable for conducting trauma-informed, hope-centered services for clients. There is a tremendous amount of unused and inadequately used space, no proper area for children to be out of earshot of day-to-day conversations with clients, partners or staff, no common meeting space to support private conversations, and no signage to help visitors or clients navigate the space. The parking lot is no better: the first sign people see reads, "Employee Parking Only" with no further instructions on where clients should park. Consider reserving all parking spaces near the entrance of the building for clients and relocating employee spaces farther down the lot or to the rear of the building. Use of the facility including layout and possible reconfiguration should be a topic during the strategic planning process.
  
- 8. Satellite Services:** Many individuals with whom we met mentioned the need for wrap-around services for victims and survivors of domestic violence in Vallejo. Our team toured the planned satellite space and we recommend you completely scrap the current plan. The single office space located on the second floor of the Public Library is not at all conducive to providing a true wrap-around service model as defined by the Family Justice Center framework. There are no community partners, nor are there plans to have partners, whose focus is on domestic violence or sexual assault in this space; there is currently no direct access to the office other than unkept, back stairwells because the elevators are out of service which directly affects survivors with any type of mobility challenge or disability; there is no signage anywhere that the Solano Family Justice Center is located within the library, even though the space has been used as such for some time; and the office, currently

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setup to house two staff, does not provide for confidential phone or in-person conversations with clients. At this time, it appears the only services intended for this satellite office include phone intake and referrals to offsite partners. This is not a Family Justice Center nor a Family Justice Center satellite approach. During the upcoming strategic planning process, this should be addressed.

- 9. Community Education:** Community partners and survivors stated they have no real understanding of the Family Justice Center framework, what services are available, or which partners are onsite. We recommend the County create a Community Education and Awareness Plan as part of the new strategic planning process to let the community know the Solano Family Justice Center exists. The plan should include a 30-second elevator speech (with talking points) that each Family Justice Center staff member and partner agency knows and shares in their day-to-day work in the community; a fact sheet about the Solano Family Justice Center; a regularly updated list of all onsite partners; a website that is not buried within the Solano County page; a list of all regular community meetings and clearly assigned staff members or partners from the Family Justice Center who will attend to give a quick introduction about the Center or update community groups on a regular basis; attendance at activities besides the annual health fair; a robust social media plan; etc. Survivors need to know the Family Justice Center exists and currently, neither they nor the community have any general awareness or knowledge about the Center.
  
- 10. Focus on Children:** There are currently no viable onsite services specific to addressing child abuse, child witnesses to domestic violence, counseling, support groups, or other mental health services. Additionally, there are no play or recreation spaces that prevent children from overhearing conversations among adults about violence and abuse at the Center. It is vital that the needs of children are moved to the forefront of the services provided at the Solano Family Justice Center. This includes re-establishing healthy working relationships between the Family Justice Center and community partners that support the wellbeing of children who have been exposed to domestic and sexual violence. We recommend this be a priority focus area during strategic planning.
  
- 11. Transportation:** In meetings with community partners and survivors, and as stated in the Grand Jury Reports, it was acknowledged that transportation is a significant barrier to survivors accessing services. Our team did not see a single public bus during our visit, nor any free parking access for survivors. We strongly encourage the new leadership of the Center work with the Office of Transportation who has offered real-time rideshare services for survivors. Some Family Justice Centers have purchased vehicles and hired or brought retired law enforcement, or others, on as volunteers to provide transportation services to survivors. Other Centers have fundraised to provide clients with gift cards for gas, bus passes, and ride

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sharing apps. We recommend transportation as a line item in future projected budgets and expenses for the Center along with a well thought out plan, created during the strategic planning process.

**12. Survivor Engagement:** As mentioned above, survivor voices are central to the success of a Family Justice Center framework and their inclusion will be essential to the revamping of your Center. The participants with whom the Alliance met during the survivor focus groups were eager to engage in the planning process. We recommend adding survivors to your County Working Group and FJC Leadership Team (whether paid or volunteer). In addition, consider conducting more survivor focus groups by adopting the Alliance protocol on survivor focus groups, and engaging all potential partner agencies in conducting additional focus groups with survivors. The Alliance has a [Focus Group Toolkit](#) to assist with this process. It is imperative for a large, diverse group of survivors to provide input regarding their experiences with the current systems and agencies, along with their ideas for what a countywide Family Justice Center framework should be in Solano County. Finally, consider starting a VOICES Chapter as a mechanism to bring more survivors to the table to provide continuous input on how the Center is doing. You can access the Alliance [VOICES Toolkit](#) for guidance. The utilization of additional focus groups can occur as part of the strategic planning process and should become standardized during day to day operation of the Center.

**13. Expand Community Partner Outreach:** The voices of the LGBTQ+, military, medical community, K-12 educators, and immigration/immigrant communities were not present during the Snapshot. These stakeholders play an important role in gaining community buy-in and creating a Center where all survivors feel safe, seen, and supported. Regularly scheduled meetings and consistent updates with law enforcement, prosecutors, and agencies that work with underserved populations will be crucial for engaging all key voices in ongoing Family Justice Center operations. During the planning meetings for the strategic planning process, special emphasize should be focused on inviting marginalized and underserved populations and service providers working with those populations.

**14. Legal Services:** Consider working with other civil legal service providers to meet the demand for assistance. Many of the survivors we spoke with stated they had to find their own legal representation for their cases. One way of doing this could be a legal incubator model. [Legal incubator models](#) have been adopted by several Family Justice Centers across the country to provide more representation to victims in criminal and civil legal matters. Most incubator models require pro bono service and emphasize creating a practice around service to low and moderate income people. Finally, begin thinking of more streamlined and coordinated processes for survivors to be connected to the variety of legal services they may need. This must be a priority area in the upcoming strategic planning process to reimagine the Center.

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**15. Court System:** We recommend the Family Justice Center County Working Group focuses on working with judges and court professionals to begin creating trauma-informed, hope-centered video court processes even before the formal strategic planning process occurs. The Alliance strongly recommends including a space for electronic filing and virtual hearings in the redesign of the Family Justice Center. Survivors could receive services in a safe and secure location at the Center as they wait for their protection orders and/or trials instead of entering the courthouse. Most courthouse services can be provided remotely from the Family Justice Center and in many Family Justice Centers these processes are already in place. Video teleconferencing could be utilized for protection order hearings and other court procedures where information is needed from the victim without the victim ever having to come to court. We recommend judges and other court personnel are included in the Family Justice Center revisioning, reimagining process. The Alliance also recommends looking at ways to incorporate greater offender accountability into the Family Justice Center framework, and to assess the following: *How effective are offender programs? How do they measure success? How are offenders signing up for treatment?*

Directors of Family Justice Centers around the country have begun talking about the need to safely incorporate offender accountability into the co-located service delivery framework. This conversation is focused on supporting survivors who want to keep their family intact while ensuring their partner is held accountable and receives help. These important conversations challenge the notion that only addressing the needs of survivors will end abuse. These processes or even conversations about such processes appear very minimal in the Solano Family Justice Center even though the Center is currently under the leadership of the District Attorney's Office – charged with the primary responsibility for offender accountability.

**16. Data Collection:** All Family Justice Centers are encouraged to create a robust data collection protocol that helps them tell the story of how well they are supporting survivors and their families, and to identify gaps in services that may require additional funding or programmatic supports. Reliable data collection methods provide vital information that informs the community of important work the Center is doing as well as letting funders know their dollars are being well spent. To date there appears to be no specific method of consistent data collection or outcome data for even the most basic statistics in the Center, such as the number of new clients versus returning clients served by the Center. Consider creating a data collection, evaluation, and outcomes team made up of onsite partners and researchers from local universities who will work together to determine what data each partner needs for their own statistical purposes and how that data can be shared with the Family Justice Center, the community, and key stakeholders in a

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way that allows for benchmarking, evaluation, and the overall success of the Center.

**17. Training:** Training was identified as an existing need among service providers based on the Community Partners Survey and in the Alliance’s meetings throughout the Snapshot site visit. As work continues to enhance the Solano Family Justice Center, pinpoint additional training needs for community partners and core team members, including, but not limited to the Family Justice Center framework, the Solano Family Justice Center itself, domestic violence and sexual assault trainings for law enforcement, Family Justice Center staff and interns, medical personnel, etc.

**18. Strangulation Training:** Based on the Alliance’s national research and experience, 70% of cases can be proven without victim testimony when law enforcement investigators follow up on domestic violence strangulation calls with comprehensive investigations and forensic medical examinations. The most at-risk victims are those who have been strangled. If a victim is strangled one time, she is 750% more likely to later be killed by her abuser, yet per the Community Partners Survey, no service providers in Solano County have received training on strangulation assault within the last 12 months. To improve your response to non-fatal strangulation cases, consider sending a multi-disciplinary team, emphasizing law enforcement and medical and emergency room staff, to the Alliance’s [strangulation prevention trainings](#) to better understand the risks, lethality, signs, and best practices for treating and prosecuting strangulation crimes. There are also a variety of tools and resources in our [Resource Library](#) that will assist with better supporting survivors of near and non-fatal strangulation assault.

**19. Attend the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual International Family Justice Center Conference:** We recommend Solano County identify and send a County Working Group/multi-disciplinary team to attend the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual International Family Justice Center Conference in San Diego, May 25-27, 2022. We recommend both county government representatives and community-based non-profit leaders and partner agencies attend the Conference as a team. Such a team could include current Family Justice Center staff and partners but should also include potential future leadership of the Center as identified in a County RFP process.

**20. Attend Monthly Directors Calls:** We also recommend Family Justice Center leadership regularly attend the Alliance’s monthly Directors Calls for developing and operating Centers as well as full engagement in the newly developed California Family Justice Center Network ([www.cfjcn.org](http://www.cfjcn.org)). The monthly Alliance calls for Directors are held at 11:30 am PT, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of every month.

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**21. Resources from the Alliance:** We recommend that any County Working Group created to reimagine the Family Justice Center become familiar with the Alliance's Online Resource Library funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, which includes toolkits, webinars, sample protocols and forms. Visit <https://www.familyjusticecenter.org/resources/> for access to the library and more information about Family Justice Centers.

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## CONCLUSION

This Snapshot Report demonstrates the commitment and passion of staff, partners, key stakeholders, and survivors who care deeply about the quality of services available for survivors of domestic violence and their children in Solano County. The state of the current Solano County Family Justice Center framework balances on finding ways to overcome political differences and conflicts to implement the recommendations cited above.

The Alliance is committed to doing all we can to support this process, and we look forward to seeing an improved Family Justice Center framework emerge in Solano County that will provide trauma-informed and hope-centered services for survivors and their children. Survivors in your community long to see the Family Justice Center become a dynamic location for wraparound services to address their needs. They need all of you working together to create pathways to hope and healing through evidence-based best practices.

Respectfully Submitted,



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