

DVC

Domestic
Violence
Commission

2006
Annual
Report

*coming together
to respond*
to domestic violence



The DV Commission has five goals as mandated by the Santa Cruz County Code Chapter 2.118:

- **Help increase coordination between agencies, departments and the courts, and with victims of domestic violence and abuse;**
- **Promote effective and accessible education, prevention, intervention and treatment techniques which will be developed based upon research and data collection;**
- **Seek to improve the response to domestic violence abuse so as to reduce incidents of domestic violence;**
- **Examine issues relating to domestic violence and make recommendations in regard to administrative and legislative action to be taken by the Board of Supervisors;**
- **Establish a committee from among the membership, with the addition of a representative of the office of the Santa Cruz County Counsel, as specified by Penal Code Section 853.6(a), to develop protocols for use by law enforcement officers and recommend adoption of said protocols to the Board of Supervisors**

We hope that the many hours of data collection, discussion and hard work by all our members and stakeholders—the results that you see here—will help to further our mission: to collaborate countywide to develop and recommend educational, prevention-oriented intervention policies to prevent domestic violence and its reoccurrence in our community.

On behalf of the Santa Cruz Domestic Violence Commission (DVC), I am pleased to present our fourth annual Report to the Community for calendar year 2006.

This year's Report to the Community was the result of much discussion and some controversy at our regular meetings, over which I have had the privilege of serving again as Chair. Our Report's standing committee saw significant turnover, as did our overall membership. The result has been many lively conversations about how we collect and analyze our data.

The fruit of these discussions has been an overwhelming commitment of the Commission membership to continued dialogue at each public meeting as well as how we more effectively utilize our Report to decrease domestic violence in our community. The result will be more meaningful data, and better collaboration between all our stakeholders.

The Report has become a valuable tool to showcase the good work that advocacy agencies, law enforcement and county agencies do to prevent, educate about and prosecute domestic violence, and highlight areas for improvement. We see firsthand how new policies and new team efforts succeed or fail in each of our stakeholder's agencies.

Further challenges will face us in the coming years. Our local courts

will be stepping into new ground in 2007-08 with the opening of a full-service, state-of-the-art courthouse in Watsonville, serving the entire County. Consolidated domestic violence courts will no longer be the norm, but rather several courtrooms will be handling domestic violence for felonies, misdemeanors, family violence and dependency courts. Many more prosecutors, attorneys, advocates, judges and court staff members will be trained and ready in the coming year to address domestic violence in a truly countywide forum.

I want to thank the many people who were responsible for contributing to developing this report: Alan Hiromura, Joanne De Los Reyes, Janet Seminerio, Susan Rozario, Patty King, Scott MacDonald, Kristie Clemens, Linda Starn and Tod Connor. We owe special thanks to the Dominican Hospital's Communications and Marketing Department.

At the bottom of the pages you will find the reference to Santa Cruz County women who have lost their lives at the hands of abusive partners. These women paid the ultimate price. We wish to keep their memories in the forefront as a reminder to all.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Simonson'.

Heidi Simonson, Esq.
Chair of Domestic Violence
Commission

contributors

We would like to thank the following agencies and individuals for their participation in gathering data for this report:

Advocacy Agencies

Dee O'Brien

Walnut Avenue Women's Center

Kristie Clemens

Walnut Avenue Women's Center

Laura Segura Gallardo

Women's Crisis Support-Defensa de Mujeres

Joanne De Los Reyes

Women's Crisis Support-Defensa de Mujeres

Janet Seminerio

Women's Crisis Support-Defensa de Mujeres

Law Enforcement and Death Review Team

Chief Richard Ehle

Capitola Police Department

Lorrie Wilson

Capitola Police Department

Chief Howard Skerry

Santa Cruz Police Department

Bonnie Stow

Santa Cruz Police Department

Sheriff Steve Robbins

SC County Sheriff-Coroner

Heather Harris

SC County Sheriff-Coroner

Chief Michael Aluffi

UCSC Police Department

Linda Wolfe

UCSC Police Department

Chief John Weiss

Scotts Valley Police Department

Tamera Melrose

Scotts Valley Police Department

Chief Terry Medina

Watsonville Police Department

Evangelina Acosta

Watsonville Police Department

Public Safety Superintendent

Karl Tallman

California State Parks

Senior Deputy Harbor Master

Don Kinnamon

Santa Cruz Harbor Patrol

Sheriff's Office

Death Review Team

Santa Cruz County Family & Children Services

Judy Yokel – Division Director

Family & Children's Services, Human Resources Agency

Benjamin Lum – Information

Technology Support, Human Resources Agency

Patty King – Senior Staff Analyst

Family and Children's Services

DA's Office

The Honorable Bob Lee

District Attorney

Eric Seib

Chief of Administration

Jean Jordan

Assistant District Attorney
Family Protection Unit

Sylvia Nieto

Victim Witness Assistance Center
Program Manager

Superior Court

The Honorable Irwin Joseph

Family Court Commissioner
Superior Courts

Lily Heredia

Domestic Violence Court Coordinator
Civil Courts

Stephen Carlton

Domestic Violence Court Coordinator
Civil Courts

DV Intervention Programs and Probation

Mary Simoni

Pacific Treatment Associates

Tim Mayo

Alto Counseling

RC Padilla

Alto Counseling

Jodi Harvey

Simply Your Best

Jenny Sarmiento

Pajaro Valley Prevention and
Student Assistance

Rose Chavez-George

Fenix Services

Bonnie Rondaris

Fenix Services

Judith Cox

Probation

Julie Langley

Probation



Domestic Violence Commission

2006 Annual Report

advocacy agencies

- 4 More education and outreach programs result in more reporting of domestic violence incidents

law enforcement agencies

- 6 Training and community outreach result in a greater number of domestic violence arrests

child witness

- 8 Child welfare cases involving domestic violence increasing in volume and complexity

district attorney

- 10 Balancing the safety of the victim and the community against the need to rehabilitate the perpetrator

probation and dv intervention programs

- 12 A vital public safety component in the response to domestic violence

courts

- 14 More victims of domestic violence following through with their cases and receiving permanent relief via Permanent Restraining Orders

advocacy agencies

More education and outreach programs result in more reporting of domestic violence incidents

Women's Crisis Support~Defensa de Mujeres (WCS~DdM) and the Walnut Avenue Women's Center (WAWC) continued to provide immediate crisis intervention, counseling, legal assistance, emergency shelter or safe homes, long-term supportive services and educational programs for battered women and their children.

The advocacy agency statistics for this year reflect efforts made throughout 2006 to improve data quality and to eliminate duplicate client counts. In general, there has been a slight increase in clients in the south county area (at the WCS~DdM Watsonville office), and a decrease in clients in the Santa Cruz area (WCS~DdM and WAWC Santa Cruz offices). Combined, this makes for an overall decrease in the number of clients receiving assistance. In analyzing this data, it must be kept in mind that domestic violence continues to be an under-reported crime.

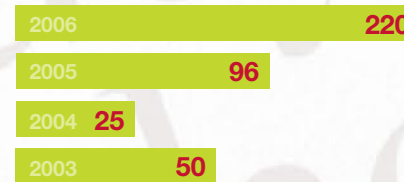
The statistics show an increase of approximately 53 percent in the

number of advocacy agency clients reporting their domestic violence incidents to law enforcement, although overall reports to law enforcement agencies have shown a slight decrease. This may be due to improved legal information, advocacy and assistance provided by advocacy agencies.

There has also been an increase in the number of clients who were provided emergency shelter or safe housing. This could be due to the fact that serving fewer clients overall allows advocacy agencies to provide more intensive services to those clients. WCS~DdM experienced a drop in overall shelter bed-nights provided. More clients are being sheltered, but their goals are being met and they are exiting facilities sooner. WAWC's safe homes provide housing for women and children for whom emergency shelter may not be appropriate, or for those who would benefit from long-term residency with support services.

Unfortunately, women are usually abused several times before they

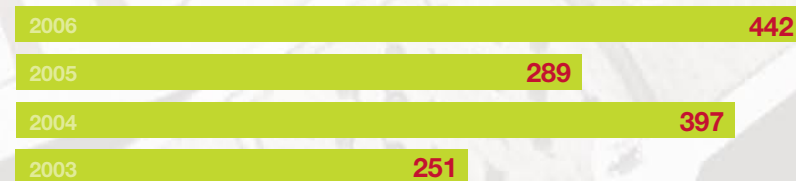
clients reporting domestic violence after the first incident from 2003-2006



number of clients in safe/shelter housing from 2003-2006



number of clients reporting to law enforcement agencies from 2003-2006



make the decision to contact an advocacy agency. However, during

2006, advocacy agencies experienced an increase in the number of clients seeking assistance after their first domestic violence experience, especially in the south county area. We believe this is a result of several domestic violence prevention and education programs conducted there.

WCS~DdM's Healthy Families Workshops focus on building communication, positive parenting skills and domestic violence education. Last year, WCS~DdM conducted three eight-week Healthy Families Workshop series' for 69 participants, with concurrent and curriculum-aligned children's and teen's workshops. Workshop alumni and other community members may participate in our "Grupos de Unidad" program, which trains participants to become leaders in promoting domestic violence education in their own communities.

The WCS~DdM Neighborhood Outreach program provides for outreach worker visits to individual families in neighborhoods identified as high-risk for domestic violence, with low protective factors. The neighborhoods were identified with the collaboration of the Watsonville Police Department, based on emergency and non-emergency calls received. A worker visits families in

these neighborhoods individually and also conducts neighborhood meetings, providing information, education and referrals as appropriate. During 2006, 667 outreach visits were conducted with 127 families in these neighborhoods. Other community awareness programs in south county included bilingual, culturally appropriate educational presentations on domestic violence and sexual assault for schools, community groups and service providers, and a public awareness campaign in conjunction with Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October 2006.

WAWC has focused education and prevention programs on issues such as teen dating violence, the co-occurrence of drug and/or alcohol addiction in abusive relationships, parenting and pregnant teens and the impact of domestic violence in the workplace.

WAWC's bilingual life skills workshops in middle and high schools focus on teen dating violence, peaceful conflict resolution and relationship standards. WAWC partners with other youth service providers, such as the Teen Coalition, to involve parents and teens in our programs, and trains UCSC interns to mentor youth who have experienced domestic violence.

WAWC's prevention work with incarcerated women at Blaine Street

Jail and mothers in recovery at Mondenero/Baskin Center is done through our educational support groups. The aim of these groups is to recognize how experiencing abuse has shaped the decisions participants have made, and to provide them with support and services so that they may have the opportunity and skills to thrive.

In conjunction with job placement services, WAWC's educational series on domestic violence in the workplace focuses on how to support an employee or coworker who may be experiencing domestic violence. Finding and keeping employment is a huge barrier for survivors of domestic violence to creating an independent life. With that in mind, we examine the impact that domestic violence has not only on employees but the workforce in general and identify employee/employer rights with respect to addressing this serious issue at work.

Any of these education, outreach and awareness activities may have contributed to the increasing number of women who are taking a stand against abuse at the first instance by seeking advocacy and assistance.

Domestic violence victim advocacy agencies will continue to address the special needs of clients and provide life-saving and life-changing services.

Victim Witness Services

The Santa Cruz County District Attorney's Offices' Victim Witness Assistance Center provides the victim with a direct link to the Assistant District Attorneys prosecuting their domestic violence cases. The center advocates are also trained to take applications for reimbursement from the State Victim Compensation Fund and are able to assist victims in understanding the types of benefits that are available to them. The local center administers the program by accepting and processing claims for crime-related expenses and works directly with local providers to see that services are accessible.

While there has been an increase in the number of victims who apply for the relocation and mental health benefits, the numbers are not nearly what were anticipated. In 2006, the center worked with 643 victims of domestic violence. Approximately 34 percent of the domestic violence victims for whom we provided services applied for compensation. The 66 percent who chose not to apply did so for a variety of reasons: fear of retaliation, hope that the abuser will change and an impaired ability to follow through due to the severity of the abuse are the most predominant ones. As more local agencies become aware of the benefits of the program, referrals increase.

Training and community outreach result in a greater number of domestic violence arrests

Law enforcement agencies (LEAs) across Santa Cruz County are taking steps to make sure victims of domestic violence are safe. By using emergency protective orders, increasing officer training and interagency communication, examining data discrepancies and adding additional focus on the problem, these agencies are becoming increasingly more effective in the fight against domestic violence.

Emergency Protective Orders

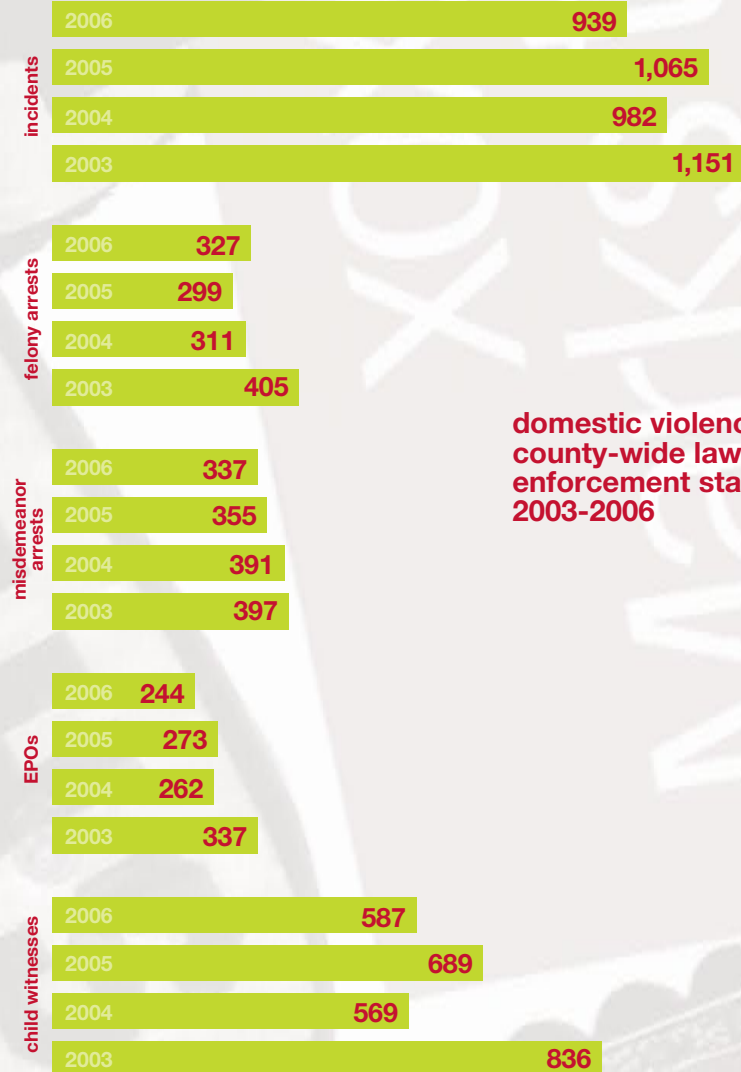
Based on the countywide Domestic Violence Protocol for Law Enforcement, when responding to a domestic violence incident, an officer must tell the victim about emergency protective orders (EPOs). The victim, at their discretion, has the right to request or not request an EPO. In extraordinary circumstances, when the victim chooses not to pursue an EPO, but the officer fears for his or her safety, the investigating officer may request one on behalf of the victim. If there is no arrest and the victim wants an EPO, the officer must then complete an application and contact the on-call judge for evaluation and issuance.

The number of EPOs generated by law enforcement at the request of victims has decreased by close to 11 percent, while the number of felony and misdemeanor arrests has increased by about 2 percent.

Incidents down, arrests up

The number of domestic violence incidents reported to law enforcement agencies has dropped by approximately 12 percent, but the combination of felony and misdemeanor arrests has increased by close to 2 percent.

In 2006, the Santa Cruz County District Attorney's Office, the University of California Santa Cruz Police Department and the Capitola Police Department partnered for a refresher course in domestic violence legislation, investigation and prosecution. Typically, these types of trainings increase a patrol officer's expertise, resulting in an increase in domestic violence arrests. This may be one significant cause for the increase in domestic violence arrests even though there was a decrease in overall incidents.



domestic violence county-wide law enforcement statistics 2003-2006

Child witnesses

According to reports by law enforcement officers, there were 587 child witnesses of domestic violence in 2006. However, according to Child Protective Services (CPS), there were 476. Since it is assumed that both agencies' data is based on the number of children that reside in the home, that number should be similar. Although the Countywide Domestic Violence Protocol mandates that officers include all children living in the home in their reports, the realities of responding to and reporting about domestic violence incidents may not include children that are absent at the time of the officer's arrival. LEAs and CPS are working to resolve this difference.

Watsonville's felony arrests

Watsonville Police Department has reported a significantly higher number of felony arrests in 2006 than any other local law enforcement agency, a number significantly higher than in 2005.

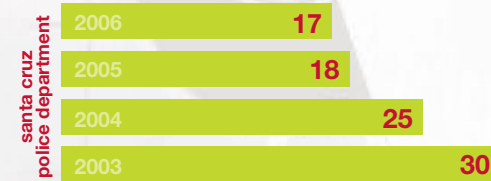
Watsonville Police Department is devoting more resources to identifying repeat domestic violence offenders to help increase the safety of the victims and their families.

They are also working with Women's Crisis Support~Defensa De Mujeres and Healthy Families, as well as the District Attorney's Office, to increase public education and awareness of domestic violence. The goal is to help educate victims and their families to increase awareness and understanding of the entire court process. These additional resources have resulted in more arrests.

Efforts in Santa Cruz

Law enforcement agencies in Santa Cruz are also continuing their efforts to improve communication with the public regarding domestic violence. The Santa Cruz Police Department is the only agency in the county that has an in-house victim advocate who works with victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Through this position, the department has worked to improve the lines of communication with the District Attorney's Office. It also updates and improves the victim resource card, which identifies the countywide resources available to victims of domestic violence.

The Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office and the District Attorney's Office have provided domestic violence training related to procedures and information given to victims of domestic violence to advocacy agencies.



domestic violence law enforcement graphs by jurisdiction 2003-2006

number of felony arrests based on population/10,000

child witness

Child welfare cases involving domestic violence increasing in volume and complexity

Domestic violence has a shattering impact on everyone involved, and leaves its victims living in the shadow of fear.

California courts have held that exposing a child to domestic violence constitutes emotional abuse, actionable under California's Welfare and Institutions code. In plain language, children witnessing domestic violence are considered to be victims of abuse, and consequently the court can assert its authority over the safety and welfare of that child. These children are subject to temporary or permanent removal from their parents' care and custody.

Children witnessing domestic violence often suffer significant emotional and psychological distress. It is not uncommon for them to experience negative changes in school performance and general physical health. They may become fearful for their own safety and may doubt their parents' ability to effectively protect and care for them. They often assume a care-

taking role, attempting to protect their victimized parent from further violence, and are deprived of their opportunity to experience the innocence of childhood. Further, because children learn what they live, children who witness violence can come to see those behaviors as the norm. Witnessing domestic violence can, and often does, teach children to become batterers or victims.

When child witnesses of domestic violence are removed from parental custody and placed in foster or alternative care, or when the offending parent is forced to leave the family home as a result of domestic violence, the entire fabric of the child's life is disrupted. Children may be subjected to poverty and may be forced to choose one parent over another. If removed from parental care, these children may be required to change schools and possibly reside with strangers.

Offending parents are often subjected to legal intervention. They may be convicted of felony- or misdemeanor-level assault, and may be ordered



number of child witnesses of domestic violence by jurisdiction by child per capita 2003-2006

rate per 1,000 children (ages 0-17)

by the Court to complete a 52-week treatment program as part of their sentence. However, according to the Domestic Violence Commission's statistics in the probation domestic violence intervention program section of this report, only 49.7 percent of participants actually complete treatment. Many untreated offenders return home, their behavior unchanged. The cycle often begins again, generally escalating in intensity, sometimes resulting in homicide.

Children generally receive counseling to assist them in developing plans to keep themselves safe, and to teach them alternative, non-violent behaviors, giving them an opportunity to learn how to avoid becoming batterers or victims. Without this education and training, the cycle of domestic violence generally remains unbroken, perpetuated from one generation to the next.

Of the nearly 60,500 children living in Santa Cruz County, child welfare and law enforcement statistics indicate that between 476 and 587 children witnessed domestic violence last year. If only half of all domestic violence incidents are reported

to authorities, as indicated in the Domestic Violence Commission's 2003 report, then it is possible that as many as 1,200 local children witnessed domestic violence in 2006.

Determining the actual number of child witnesses to domestic violence in Santa Cruz County is a difficult task at best. Statistics gathered by the District Attorney's Office, law enforcement agencies, domestic violence advocacy agencies and the child welfare agency reflect variations in data-gathering and reporting methodologies. For example, statistics compiled from law enforcement agencies indicate that 587 children witnessed domestic violence in 2006. However, child welfare data reports 476 child witnesses in a statistic compiled from reports received from law enforcement agencies. A more consistent data-gathering and cross-reporting process would be beneficial.

Anecdotal information received from child welfare social workers indicates that numbers of child welfare cases involving domestic violence are increasing in volume and complexity.

Often, several other factors are present, including substance abuse, financial problems and insufficient housing. The effort required to assist these families is significant.

Domestic violence crosses all cultural boundaries and permeates the lives of thousands of people in Santa Cruz County each year, causing a significant range of problems. As long as domestic violence exists, children's safety will be at risk, and child witnesses will learn abusive behaviors that they are likely to carry out as adults. One child living in the shadow of fear is one too many.

district attorney

Balancing the safety of the victim and the community against the need to rehabilitate the perpetrator

In 2006, the Santa Cruz County District Attorney's Office received 1,059 domestic violence referrals, of which 653 were filed with the courts: 186 as felonies and 467 as misdemeanors. A total of 406 referrals were not filed with the courts.

In 2006, four prosecutors from the District Attorney's (DA's) Office staffed the Family Protection Unit. One of four operational units in the District Attorney's Office, the Family Protection Unit prosecutes cases involving domestic violence as well as child abuse, non-familial stalking and elder abuse. Domestic violence cases include acts of violence, harassment, spousal stalking and violations of restraining orders.

Case referrals come into the DA's Office from local law enforcement agencies, and most filing decisions are made immediately. All cases are evaluated with regard to victim safety issues.

The decision to file a case is multi-faceted. First and foremost, the prosecutor has an ethical obligation to prosecute only those cases that can be proved at trial beyond a reasonable doubt. In reaching their decision, prosecutors look at issues such as existence and severity of injury; credibility of parties involved; intoxication levels; history of domestic violence (reported and unreported); and children in the home.

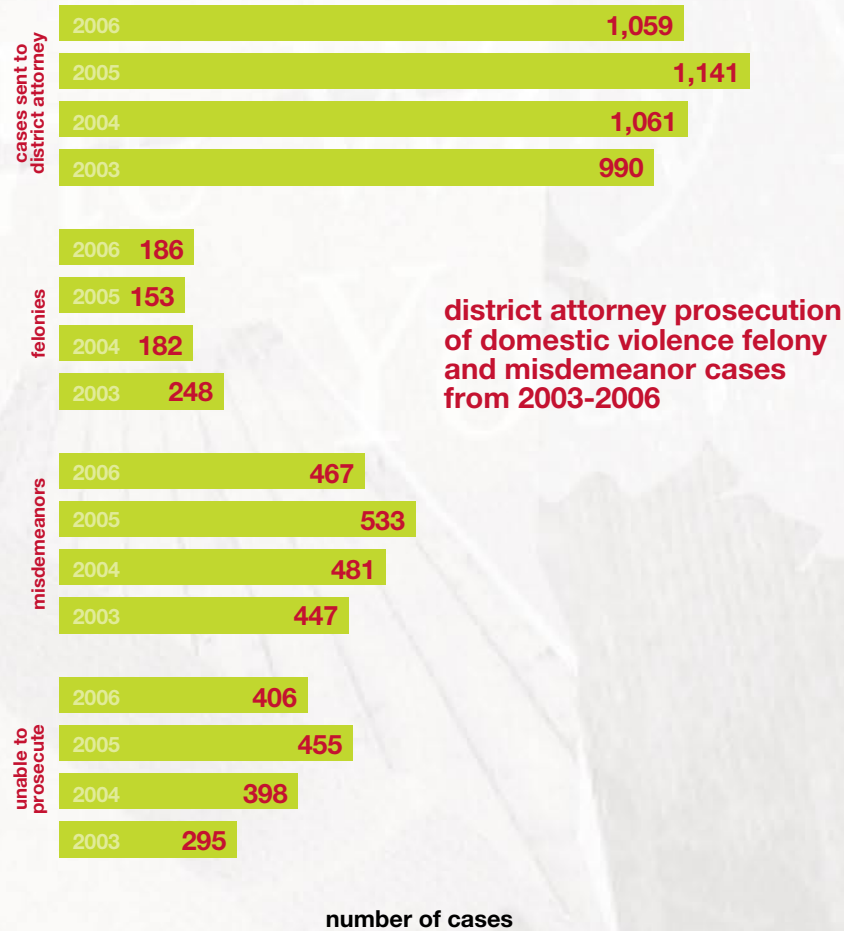
After a decision is made to file charges, all cases are assigned to a prosecutor who follows the case from arraignment to sentencing. This practice is called vertical prosecution and is utilized to give the victim consistent information and support, and to be certain that an accurate history of the case is made available to the court.

Family Protection Unit prosecutors work in conjunction with District Attorney inspectors to conduct any follow-up investigation necessary to support conviction via plea bargain, court trial or jury trial.

In addition, the DA's Victim Services Advocates assist victims with financial and emotional recovery. Strong working relationships with outside agencies help make the system as responsive to the victim as possible. A "soft" waiting room filled with chairs, couches and a television provides a safe and comfortable area for victims and witnesses outside of the courtroom. Pagers are also provided to give additional flexibility to victims and witnesses who must often wait long periods of time for their appearances at court proceedings.

In the early stages of the case, the Family Protection Unit attempts to contact the victim to find out if there are safety issues, and directs them as needed to appropriate agencies for counseling and other assistance. It is common for domestic violence victims to be uncooperative towards authorities. Family Protection Unit prosecutors and inspectors are aware of the socio-economic and psychological issues behind this behavior and strive to develop working relationships with all victims.

Time To Change



Prosecutors in the Family Protection Unit receive ongoing training on a variety of pertinent issues. In order to successfully prosecute a case, it is critical that prosecutors have an understanding of issues like the effects of children witnessing family violence, the effect of mental illness on the family dynamic, substance abuse and treatment concerns, and the special needs of particular populations. Additionally, a bilingual prosecutor and inspector are focusing on Spanish-speaking victims from South County, per our “No Más” grant program, in order to provide comprehensive services to the Latina community.

There are a number of tools that can be used to achieve prosecutorial goals even if the victim is uncooperative. Law enforcement

agencies are encouraged to audiotape conversations with victims and photograph injuries at the scene. Videotaped interviews with victims and/or children and witnesses are even better, since video captures the nuances of complex family dynamics and can assist in reaching plea bargains in the early stages of prosecution. Video can also assist the prosecution in a case at trial.

Negotiating the appropriate sentence for perpetrators is complex. It is necessary to balance the safety of the victim and the community against the need to attempt to rehabilitate the perpetrator, because the likelihood that the perpetrator will return to the family is high. The goal of the Family Protection Unit is to seek the maximum sentence the law will allow for repeat offenders.



probation and domestic violence intervention programs

A vital public safety component in the response to domestic violence

The Santa Cruz County Probation Department operates a specialized domestic violence unit. Probation makes recommendations to the Courts for sentencing of individuals convicted of a domestic violence offense and monitors individuals granted probation. Officers assigned to this unit ensure all court orders pertaining to an individual's probation are fulfilled. These conditions may include:

- **Serving a jail sentence, typically at the beginning of the probation period**
- **Completing a domestic violence intervention program tailored to reducing the risk of recidivism**
- **Abiding by a protective order to ensure the offender does not contact the victim**
- **Participating in individual therapy**
- **Performing community service**

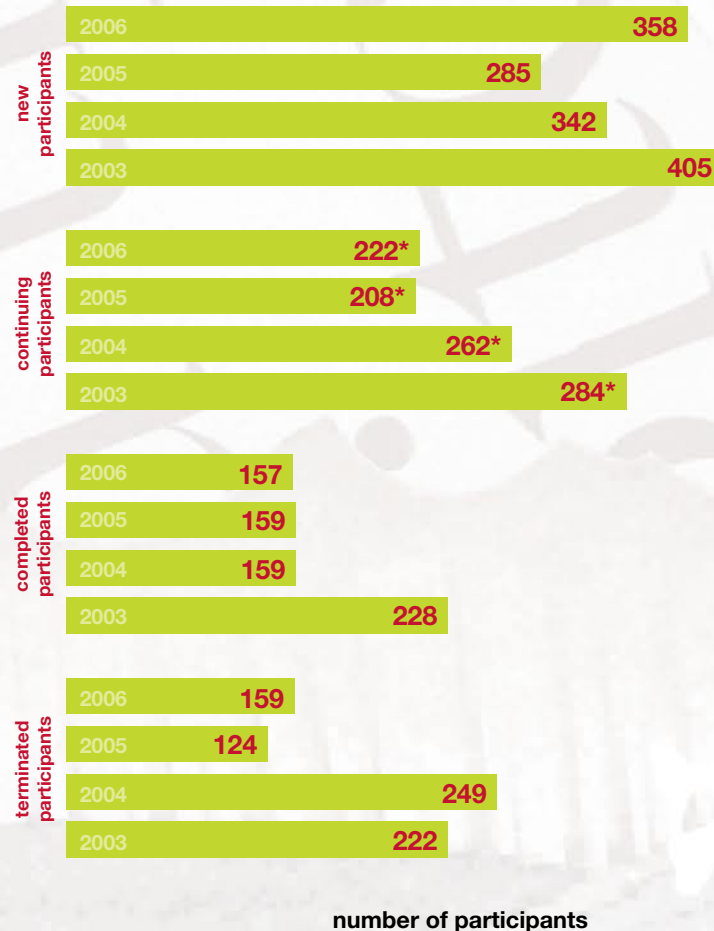
- **Agreeing to submit to warrantless search and seizure**
- **Drug and alcohol testing**
- **Paying restitution**

Probation offers reinforcement and support to defendants by visiting them at their home, office and intervention programs, testing for drugs and alcohol, and by making referrals for counseling and social services.

Victims of domestic violence undergo tremendous turmoil and fear. Their feelings and potential for suffering further harm are always of the utmost consideration. Probation contacts victims by phone, mail or in person at home or in the probation office. Officers support victims with protective orders and other case-management tools, as well as referrals to counseling and social services as needed. In cases where restitution is ordered, the Probation Department handles the collection and distribution of payments.

client participation in domestic violence intervention programs from 2003-2006

*monthly average rather than annual totals



Court Mandated Domestic Violence Programs

Domestic violence perpetrators are routinely ordered into a 52-week domestic violence intervention program. The Probation Department's role is to approve these programs and to oversee the curriculum. The department works closely with the programs to ensure that clients follow all terms of probation and remain violence-free.

Participation in these approved programs is a key element in ensuring offender accountability and victim safety. Program attendance and compliance are closely monitored. Non-compliance results in reprimand, probation violation or arrest.

Regular court reviews are held for continued monitoring of program participation and progress of probation. The program participant may not accrue more than three absences without also receiving a referral back to the Probation Department for possible intervention by the court. State law allows participants 16 months to complete a program, yet some participants have been granted a leave of absence for valid reasons, such as family emergencies, medical issues or military leave.

There are currently five programs approved by the Probation Department. There are three in north county: Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley and San Lorenzo Valley. There are two in south county: Aptos and Watsonville. Clients referred to the intervention programs have varied backgrounds, needs and experience with the criminal justice system. The programs provide culturally competent curriculum, in both English and Spanish, and include both male and female offenders. There are no co-educational classes. The currently approved programs are:

- **Alto Counseling Center**
- **Fenix Services**
- **Pacific Treatment Associates**
- **Simply Your Best**
- **Pajaro Valley Prevention and Student Assistance (program closed 6/2006)**

The program curriculum includes:

- **gender roles**
- **socialization**
- **the nature of violence**
- **the dynamics of power and control**
- **the effects of abuse on children and others**

- **cultural influences**
- **strategies to hold defendant accountable for violence in a relationship**
- **anger management techniques**

According to data tracked by the treatment program providers, there were 358 new clients who participated in these programs throughout the year. An average of 50 percent of participants who completed the program did so successfully. During this period, 157 participants completed all program requirements, while 159 participants failed to complete and were discharged from the program. Participants were released or discharged for one of the following reasons:

- **failing to pay program fees**
- **excessive absences**
- **violating substance use policies**
- **incurring a new offense**
- **transferring to another program**
- **relocating out of the county**
- **absconding from jurisdiction**

Domestic violence intervention programs promote client attitude and behavior change, as well as favorable probation performance.

A probation officer remarked on one client's success, saying, "Last Friday in court a client was on calendar for review. He presented a certificate of completion of the domestic violence intervention program and was beaming with pride. He told the judge how much he enjoyed the classes and that he would continue to attend. He said that he benefited from learning and his family did as well—he specifically mentioned his children. He also said that he tells all the men he can what a difference it made in his life and tries to get them to attend as well."

The Probation Department remains concerned over the impact of domestic violence on children and over the next reporting year is working with stakeholder agencies, including the courts, law enforcement and child protective services to develop strategies to improve coordination between agencies and to increase the quality and quantity of the services available to children who are traumatized by the exposure to violence in their lives.

courts

More victims of domestic violence following through with their cases and receiving permanent relief via Permanent Restraining Orders

The number of individuals seeking domestic-violence related temporary restraining orders (TROs) is generally consistent with past years with the exception of 2004. However, the number of permanent restraining orders (PROs) is on the rise. In 2006, the number of individuals receiving TROs declined by approximately 12 percent, while the number of permanent restraining orders rose by approximately 4 percent.

There are a number of possible contributing factors, which may explain the decrease in TROs:

- There are still a significant number of situations in which the Family Law Judges are declining to issue TROs, instead waiting until the cases are heard in open court before making decisions on the merits of the request.
- A higher percentage of perpetrators within our jurisdiction are now the subject of either criminal protective orders or civil permanent restraining orders, and this is acting as a deterrent to repeat offenses.
- The number of incidents of domestic violence may be decreasing.

With respect to the number of permanent restraining orders, the increase may appear insignificant. However, when taken in light of the decrease in TROs being issued, it does show that an ever-increasing percentage of victims of domestic violence who seek TROs are following through with their cases and receiving permanent relief.

number of emergency, temporary and permanent restraining orders issued 2003-2006



number of orders issued

2007 Domestic Violence Report Summary

Officials in Santa Cruz County are dedicated to helping staunch the flow of domestic violence assaults in the community. Community education and outreach efforts seem to be making a difference in informing community members that domestic violence will not be tolerated in our county, and that when domestic violence occurs a wide array of agencies will mobilize to assist and support the victim and prosecute the perpetrator.

Advocacy

Both Women's Crisis Support~Defensa De Mujeres and the Walnut Avenue Women's Center support specific community needs through their outreach programs in high-risk neighborhoods, cultural-specific programs, employment programs, self-defense classes, and programs aimed specifically at teenagers.

The number of women that seek assistance from the advocacy agencies as well as report their domestic violence incident to a law enforcement agency has substantially increased by 53 percent from last year. Community education, as well as increased confidence in law enforcement agencies competence in handling domestic violence cases, appear to be making it more likely that victims of domestic violence turn to both advocacy and law enforcement agencies for help.

At Women's Crisis Support~Defensa De Mujeres, there has been a dramatic increase (129 percent) in the number of clients seeking assistance after their first domestic violence incident. Generally, women are abused several times before they seek help. Administrators attribute this to a rise of domestic violence awareness programs in the community.

In addition, the Santa Cruz County District Attorney's Office Victim Witness Assistance Center assists close to 34 percent of victims apply for State compensation.

Law Enforcement

New legislation, increased outreach to the community and recent training means that, although incidents of domestic violence have gone down, arrests are up in Santa Cruz County. That's particularly noticeable in Watsonville, where police officers have reported a significantly higher number of felony arrests in 2006 than any other local law enforcement agency.

And in Santa Cruz, law enforcement agencies are continuing to improve communication with the public regarding domestic violence issues, via an in-house victim advocate with the Santa Cruz Police Department, the only such advocate in the county.

Child Witness

Exposing a child to domestic violence constitutes abuse, according to state law, and children who experience it are eligible for temporary or permanent removal from home.

Child welfare and law enforcement statistics estimate that between 476 and 587 children were witnesses to domestic violence at home in 2006—and if authorities suppose correctly and only have of all incidents are reported, that number skyrockets to 1,200 child witnesses in Santa Cruz County.

Unfortunately, anecdotal data shows that the number of child welfare cases involving domestic violence is increasing.

Children removed from violent homes generally receive counseling and education on choosing non-violent behaviors, but the cycle of domestic violence is strong, and these behaviors are usually passed on generation by generation.

District Attorney

The Santa Cruz County District Attorney's Office is home to the Family Protection Unit, staffed by four prosecutors and designed to prosecute cases involving domestic violence, child abuse, non-familial stalking and elder abuse. This unit is specially trained to intricacies of prosecuting domestic violence cases.

In 2006, the District Attorney's (DA's) Office received nearly 24 percent more domestic violence cases from law enforcement agencies. In turn, the DA's office filed approximately 22 percent more felony cases and approximately 12 percent fewer misdemeanor case than in 2005.

Probation and Domestic Violence Intervention Programs

According to department tracking data, the number of new batterers entering into domestic violence intervention programs has increased by more than 25 percent from 2005. There was a slight decrease in the number of batterers completing the programs and a slightly more than 28 percent increase in batterers terminating from programs. The Probation Department will be investigating the reasons for the increased numbers of probationers terminating from programs. However, their initial assessment is that financial inability to pay program fees may be a major barrier to completion of the programs.

Courts

In 2006, the number of temporary restraining orders filed and issued dropped by a little less than 12 percent from 2005 and a little more than 30 percent from 2004. This continues the three-year downward trend of this statistic. While the TROs declined, the number of permanent restraining orders increased by a little more than 4 percent from 2005 and a little more than 9 percent from 2004. Although there are fewer TROs issued, the number victims who seek TROs follow through and receive permanent relief.



Domestic
Violence
Commission

**2006
Annual
Report**

- Battered Women's Task Force
- Batterer's Treatment Provider
- Chief Probation Officer
- City of Santa Cruz Commission for the Prevention of Violence Against Women
- Community Clinic Coalition
- County Administrative Officer
- District Attorney
- Dominican Hospital
- Family Law Bar of Santa Cruz County
- Family Mediation Service
- Health Services Agency
- Human Resources Agency
- Law Enforcement Chiefs Association
- Public Defender
- Representative of the Gay/Lesbian Bisexual Community
- Representative of the Latino Community
- Senior's Commission
- Sheriff-Coroner
- Superintendent of Santa Cruz County Office of Education
- Superior Court Judge
- Survivor of Domestic Violence
- Sutter Maternity and Surgery Center of Santa Cruz
- Walnut Avenue Women's Center
- Watsonville Community Hospital
- Women's Commission
- Women's Crisis Support-Defensa de Mujeres