

2023

SAN DIEGO COUNTY
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
ANNUAL REPORT



The background of the entire page is a photograph of several large, fluted, light-colored stone columns, likely from a classical building. The columns are arranged in a row, with some in the foreground and others receding into the background. The lighting is bright, creating strong shadows and highlights on the fluted surfaces.

INDEX

- 1** District Attorney's Message
- 2** Overview of the District Attorney's Office
- 4** New Programs and Initiatives
- 6** High Profile Prosecutions
- 13** In the News
- 16** Supporting Victims and Restoring Lives
- 21** Facts and Figures
- 26** Staff and Budget
- 28** Specialized Units and Divisions

MESSAGE

from **Summer Stephan** San Diego County District Attorney



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

Our team reflects the diverse cultures, races, religions, gender and sexual orientation of the communities we serve. While we cherish our unique experiences, we are united by our mission to pursue fair and equal justice for all and to build safe neighborhoods through the ethical prosecution of crime, protecting victims, preventing harm and partnering with the community. Our enhanced focus on preventing harm by interrupting cycles of violence and reducing recidivism is producing positive results that we are closely tracking.

As one of the few public service offices that represent all 18 cities and 39 unincorporated communities that make up our beloved San Diego County, we are fiercely committed to the right of every child, adult and senior to live with safety and dignity. We know from having daily experiences of looking into the eyes of victims whose lives have been ripped apart by crime, that nothing thrives without safety. It is an essential human right that must be safeguarded. This relentless commitment to every person in our region in partnership with law enforcement and the communities we serve, continues to keep us one of the safest urban counties in our nation. This past year, we obtained justice for victims of domestic violence, human trafficking, hate crimes, organized retail theft, fentanyl poisoning, environmental and consumer fraud, elder abuse, sexual predators and many more.

- We served thousands of vulnerable victims and their children in our North County Family Justice Center, removing them from a sure path to homelessness and despair.
- We diverted hundreds of kids away from the school to prison pipeline through our Juvenile Diversion Initiative by addressing the root causes of the youth's criminal conduct and assuring balanced accountability.
- We grew and supported a first-of-its-kind Elder Justice Task Force that is working around the clock to protect seniors from fraud that destroys their hard-earned retirement.
- We updated our unique school threats protocol with all 42 school districts that is laser focused on preventing school shootings.

In this 2023 annual report you will read about the many initiatives upon which our team embarked on behalf of victims of crime and about community-based programs that embrace public health, public safety and crime prevention. I want to thank you for your partnership and support of our team. I want to thank my team for persisting in the pursuit of justice for the most vulnerable, despite the impact that the secondhand trauma that they feel from the impact of witnessing horrific forms of abuse committed on our victims. Finally, this year we launched an internal wellness program, ServeWell, to assure that our team can be well in order to serve you well.

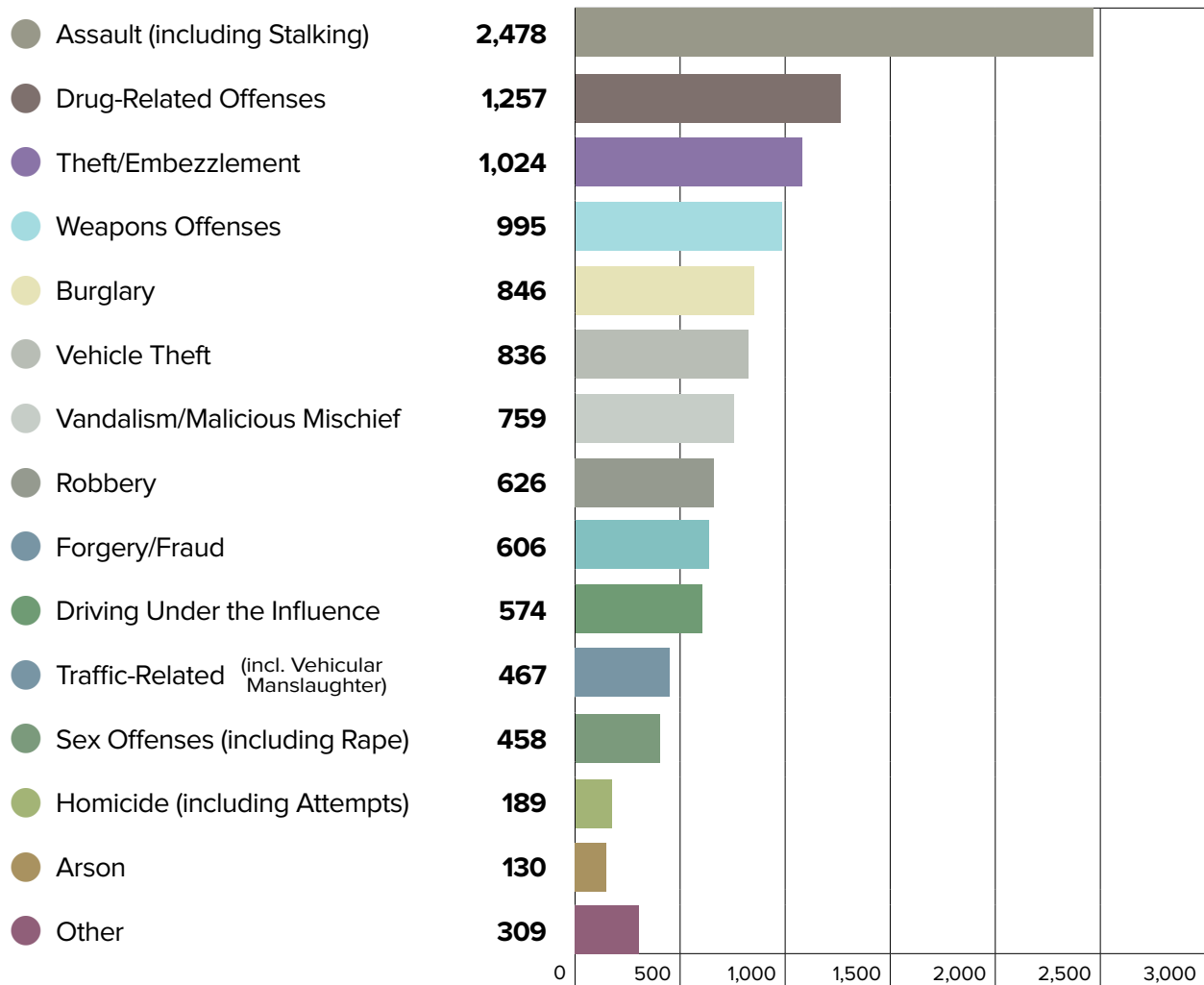


Overview of the **DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE**

The San Diego County District Attorney's Office is responsible for prosecuting felony crimes committed in the county. It also prosecutes misdemeanor offenses that occur outside the City of San Diego. Each year, the more than 300 prosecutors in the DA's Office file about 40,000 criminal cases on behalf of the county's nearly 3.3 million residents.



2022 FELONY PROSECUTIONS BY TYPE OF CRIME



What Does the District Attorney Do?

The mission of the District Attorney's Office is to pursue fair and equal justice for all and to build safe neighborhoods by ethically prosecuting crime, protecting victims, preventing harm and partnering with the community.

More than 1,000 DA employees work across 22 divisions, branch offices, special units a community center and a Family Justice Center, each carrying out specialized work on behalf of the people of San Diego County. The easiest way to understand what the District Attorney's Office does is by watching this video.





NEW PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

Each year, the District Attorney's Office implements new initiatives and looks for ways we can advance our mission. Here are some of the new programs rolled out in 2023 that support safe and healthy neighborhoods.



Hospital Violence Task Force

In response to increased violence against healthcare workers, the District Attorney's Office in partnership with Scripps Health, formed San Diego Hospital Workforce Violence Task Force. The goal is to prevent, address and prosecute crimes involving violence against doctors, nurses and others who care for patients in San Diego County. Task force members include more than a dozen healthcare organizations and law enforcement agencies.

Healthcare employees are five times more likely to experience workplace violence than other workers, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. A 2022 poll conducted by the American College of Emergency Physicians among its members found that violence in hospital emergency departments increased by 24% between 2018 and 2022, a period that covered the explosion of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reducing the threats and violence and preventing potential crimes that put health care workers in danger is critical to making our health system the best that it can be. So far, the task force's efforts to support hospital employees and reduce the number of violent incidents have included:

- Establishing liaisons between hospitals and law enforcement agencies
- Arranging rounding (tours) through hospitals by law enforcement to increase their understanding of the environment where hospital staff members work
- Improving training for both hospital staff and law enforcement officers
- Developing a new tracking system for hospital workforce violence cases in order to better understand the volume and nature of these incidents
- Updating and coordinating policies and procedures related to hospital violence
- Discussing potential legislation and regulations that could help deter assaults in hospitals





LENS OF JUSTICE

Through Significant Cases

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



People v. Margarito Angeles Vargas – Drunken Driver Hits and Kills Toddler

After consuming multiple beers and leaving a party, defendant Margarito Angeles Vargas, who had a previous DUI with a blood-alcohol level over .20%, ran a stop sign taking a wide turn while three children, including an 18-month-old girl, ran across the street. Angeles Vargas struck the toddler and fled the scene, stopping to buy food from a street vendor. He was convicted of murder and sentenced to 15 years-to-life in prison.



People v. Jorge Murillo – Serial Sex Abuser Convicted of Sex Crimes with Multiple Children

Jorge Murillo, a serial child sex abuser, was convicted by a jury after three courageous victims testified about the crimes he committed against each of them when the victims were 4, 5 and 6 years old. The sex abuse took place between 2004 and 2011 and even though the children disclosed the abuse to family members, their reports were ignored. Multiple members of the family testified on behalf of the defendant's character. Murillo was found guilty by a jury and sentenced to 130 years-to-life in state prison.



People v. Adam Thomas – Man Kills Brother with Crossbow

Defendant Adam Thomas traveled to San Diego from Sacramento under the guise of visiting his brother to celebrate his birthday. After arriving, Thomas took his brother to an isolated park late at night and blindfolded him. Using a crossbow he brought with him from Sacramento, he shot his brother in the head and immediately fled, dumping the crossbow in a nearby canyon. The brother died from his injuries and defendant Thomas was convicted of murder and sentenced to 25 years-to-life in prison.

People v. Nery Garcia – Domestic Violence Murder

Defendant Nery Garcia was convicted of killing his girlfriend of two years by strangling her to death with a wire. He previously attempted to fatally poison her. After the strangulation, Garcia stabbed the victim and dumped her body in Mexico. He told his friend what he had done, and that friend reported the crime to San Diego Police. Garcia was eventually convicted and sentenced to 32 years-to-life in prison.

People v. Mark Thompson Hunter – 1999 Cold Case Rapist Brought to Justice by Genealogical DNA

Mark Hunter repeatedly and violently raped a 19-year-old victim in February 1999 after pulling her into his van and driving her to a dead-end street. Following the brutal attack, Hunter threw the victim out of his van, drove off, and went unidentified for more than two decades. The victim reported the crime to law enforcement and completed a forensic medical exam, but the available DNA testing at the time did not match any individuals in the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) database. Fortunately, through the use of genealogical DNA technology, a cold case team linked the DNA profile to Hunter, who was arrested for these crimes and brought to justice. Following an October 2023 trial, a jury convicted Hunter of multiple counts of forcible rape, kidnap for rape, and related sex crimes. He was sentenced to 130 years-to-life in state prison.



People v. Thornell Brown – Victim Murdered in Parking Lot

Defendant Thornell Brown parked his car in front of Big Ben Market in National City, just as the victim, Frank Gallegos, was walking toward the store. The defendant jumped out of the car, ran toward Gallegos and punched him. The fighting continued with the defendant ultimately stabbing the victim in the back while he was on all fours. Gallegos managed to walk away, toward the nearby parking lot. The defendant waited for Gallegos to enter the lot, then ran him over, reversed the car, and struck Gallegos again. A jury convicted the defendant of second-degree murder and possession of a firearm by a felon. He was sentenced to 42 years-to-life in prison.

People v. Johnny Lee Hill and Floyd Garrett – Murder of Alpha Project Security Guard

Two gang members were sentenced to life 55 years-to-life in prison after hunting down and ambushing an Alpha Project security guard, Ernest Buchanan Jr. The security guard would not allow drug deals in the area surrounding the homeless shelter, and in response the gang members hid and waited for the victim to go on a break so they could kill him. After a jury trial, the defendants – Johnny Lee Hill and Floyd Garrett – were both convicted of murder with gun allegations.

Hells Angels Indicted

In 2023, the DA's Gang Unit announced the grand jury indictment of 17 Hells Angels for a vicious and racially motivated attack in Ocean Beach. Three young African American men were attacked, chased down and stabbed by Hells Angels members, an outlaw motorcycle gang with chapters across California, including San Diego. The DA's Office Gang Unit worked tirelessly with SDPD to assemble the case and present it to a grand jury, who returned indictments that included attempted murder with a knife, assault likely to cause great bodily injury, along with the gang and hate crime allegations.



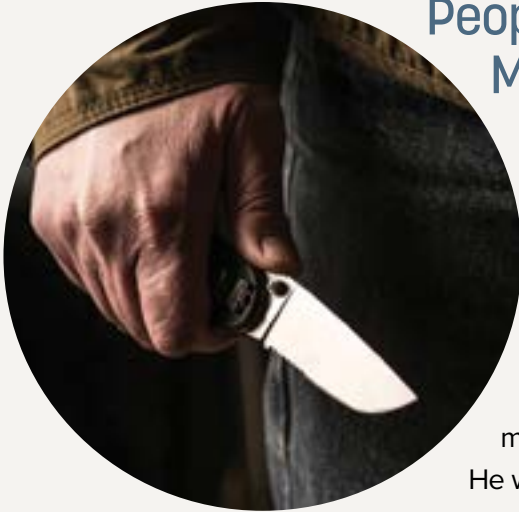
People v. Victor Hernandez – North County Child Molester Convicted

Defendant Victor Hernandez was convicted of sexual abuse and domestic violence after sexually abusing his girlfriend's daughter for years, as well as the girl's younger cousin. When the victim's mother confronted Hernandez about the abuse, he hit her, adding a domestic violence charge to his lengthy sex crimes charges. After a jury found him guilty, Hernandez was sentenced to 263 years in prison.

Operation Blue Lotus Joint Law Enforcement Drug Seizure

In this undercover narcotics operation, which ran for two months in the spring of 2023, law enforcement authorities seized more than 4,700 pounds of fentanyl, 4,600 pounds of methamphetamine, more than 1,050 pounds of cocaine, and more than 72 pounds of heroin. Operation Blue Lotus was led by the Department of Homeland Security Investigations. Over 250 narcotics traffickers were arrested in the Southern and Central Districts of California. In San Diego County alone, the operation resulted in a 300% increase in fentanyl seizures versus the same time period in the previous year – from 732 pounds in 2022 to 2,931 pounds in 2023. The District Attorney's Office brought felony drug trafficking charges against 24 defendants. Other cases were prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office.





People v. Kellon Razdan – Man Murders Former Classmate

Defendant Kellon Razdan held a strong but incorrect belief that he was being bullied by a former classmate. The night he murdered the 20-year-old victim, the former classmate had just finished Sunday dinner with his parents and took his dog for a walk. The defendant attacked and repeatedly stabbed the victim 44 times. The stabbing was so brutal that the Razdan cut off his own pinkie finger and left it at the crime scene. The defendant was found guilty of first-degree murder, along with the allegations of personal use of a deadly weapon. He was sentenced to 26 years-to-life in state prison.

People v. Pacifica Senior Living Management LLC – Failure to Comply with Asbestos Laws

This corporation operates senior living communities throughout California. The company failed to comply with asbestos laws during renovations and demolitions in 10 counties including San Diego. Investigators discovered that contractors did not thoroughly inspect for asbestos before beginning the work, nor did they contact the air district prior to demolition as required by federal and local regulations. A civil law enforcement action was brought by district attorneys in San Diego, Monterey, Riverside and Orange County. The company cooperated with prosecutors during the investigation, and agreed to pay \$1.1 million civil penalties, \$250,000 for supplemental environmental projects and \$200,000 in costs.

People v. Ernesto Cruz and Jordan Lopez – Complex Retail Theft

Defendants Ernesto Cruz and Jordan Lopez were convicted and sentenced in connection with a series of brazen organized retail theft crimes where multiple Sunglass Hut store locations were targeted, resulting in a reported loss of \$238,847. The men sometimes threatened employees by alleging they had weapons. They grabbed hundreds of pairs of sunglasses from nine Sunglass Hut store locations, some of which were targeted more than once. The defendants also targeted other high-end stores, stealing more than \$4,000 in shoes from Nordstrom Rack, more than \$7,000 in merchandise from Bloomingdale, and over \$6,000 in jackets from Burberry. The defendants pleaded guilty to robberies and were sentenced to prison.



People v. Jesus Rodriguez – Altercation Leads to Murder

Defendant Jesus Rodriguez went out for drinks with his ex-wife. When he dropped her off at her home, an altercation ensued between the defendant and the new boyfriend, Shelby Dorris. The defendant threatened the victim, saying he would be back. Rodriguez returned to the home in the early morning hours and argued with the victim, leading to a fight and struggle over the defendant's gun. The victim was shot several times and died. Rodriguez was convicted of first-degree murder, with a firearm allegation and he was sentenced to 50 years-to-life in prison.

Operation Sunrise – Regional Auto Theft Task Force

The Regional Auto Theft Task Force (RATT) conducted a year-long undercover investigation called Operation Sunrise, into auto theft and related offenses. More than 50 perpetrators were indicted for a host of crimes including vehicle theft, identity theft, burglary, insurance fraud, drug, and firearm possession. In total, 172 stolen vehicles were recovered and to date, 35 defendants have been convicted and more than 36 years in custody has been ordered.



People v. John Mosby – Nurse Case Manager Billed for Services Not Rendered

Defendant John Mosby, a nurse case manager, was convicted of insurance fraud for billing for services not rendered. An analysis of hundreds of invoices Mosby submitted over a four-year period showed that he routinely billed for more than 24 hours worked each day (sometimes up to 50) and claimed he drove up to 1,700 miles daily to visit his patients. Moreover, a good portion of these billings occurred during various COVID-19 lockdowns, when only emergency medical services were authorized. Mosby was sentenced two years of probation a suspended prison sentence and ordered to pay \$915,000 in restitution.

People v. Jesus Faraj – Gang Boss Ordered Murder Hit While in Prison

A gang boss, who ordered a murder hit while he was serving nearly 20 years in prison, was convicted and sentenced to life in prison for calling for the execution-style murder of 32-year-old Jimmy Khieu. As the 'shot caller' of his gang, defendant Jesus Faraj used mobile phones from prison to order assaults, kidnapping, and drug deals in San Diego.



IN THE NEWS

Much of what the District Attorney's Office does is noteworthy because the work of public safety and justice has a tremendous impact on the quality of life for San Diego County residents. Here are some examples of our high-profile work.



Prolific Thieves Sentenced

Two thieves, known for traveling throughout San Diego County to find elderly victims to prey upon, were sentenced to local custody and to prison after being convicted of robbery, attempted residential burglary and theft from an elderly person. The defendants – Daniel Miclescu and Simona Paun – were a husband-and-wife team who targeted three victims pretending to sell jewelry before forcefully stealing one victim’s Rolex watch and another victim’s purse containing \$850 in cash. The third victim was able to prevent the thieves from accessing her home by quickly slamming the door once the defendants tried to force their way in. She had rebuffed the sellers the previous day in a Mira Mesa parking lot, and they followed her home, unbeknownst to her. The defendants are part of nationwide ring involving hundreds of suspects.



Gaslamp Shooter Sentenced

Travis Sarreshteh, who was convicted by a jury of premeditated murder, premeditated attempted murder and assault with a firearm, was sentenced to 175 years in prison plus four life terms. Sarreshteh shot and killed a parking valet on a busy downtown street in April 2021 before walking several blocks and shooting three tourists and a local San Diego man. Sarreshteh was stopped by two good Samaritans near Fifth Avenue and Island Avenue. Sarreshteh had been going through a breakup with his girlfriend, who wanted out of the relationship due to domestic violence incidents.



Solana Beach Woman Sentenced to Prison for Killing Stepdad

A woman who drugged and strangled her 64-year-old stepfather to death on New Year's Eve 2020 because she found nude photos of herself on his computer was sentenced to 25 years-to-life in prison in 2023. A jury found Jade Banks guilty of first-degree murder. The victim, Tom Merriman was the co-founder of the education and research nonprofit Butterfly Farms, which had a half-acre vivarium in Encinitas. Merriman was found by Sheriff's deputies buried under a pile of trash in his driveway.

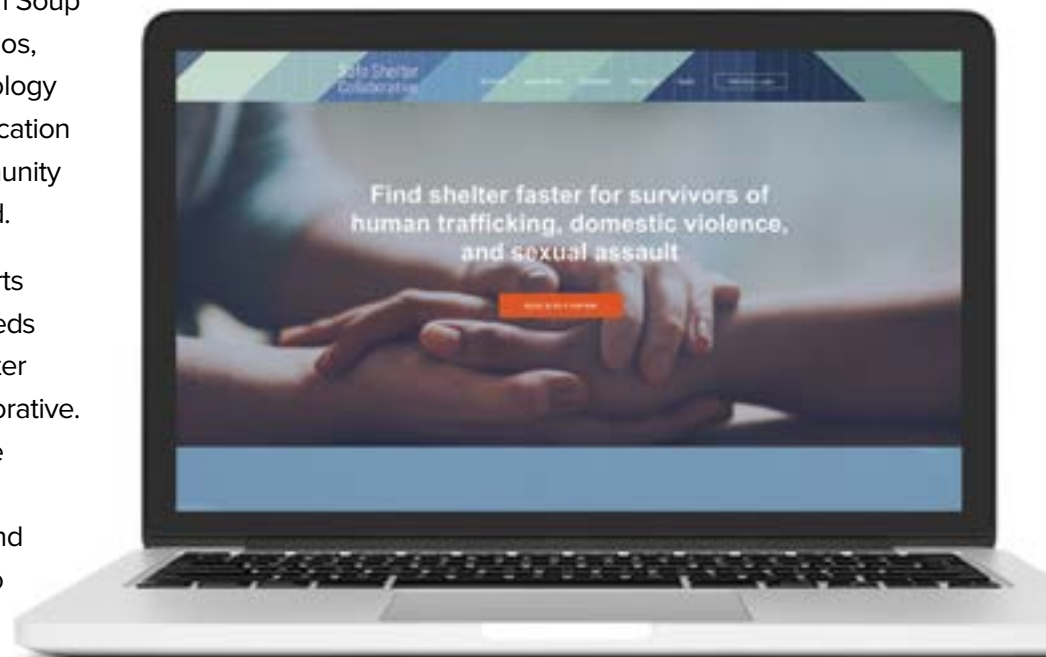
DA Developing New App to Connect the Unhoused with Shelter

In March 2023, the District Attorney's Office announced that it is addressing the intersection of homelessness and crime by leading the effort to develop technology that can quickly locate suitable shelter beds for individuals experiencing homelessness, improving on the process that's currently in place. The proposed technology would mobilize a more efficient county response, providing access to comprehensive and centralized information about the capacity, quantity, and availability of shelter beds and services across the county. The San Diego County Board of Supervisors approved allowing the DA's Office to work with Tech Soup and its subsidiary, Caravan Studios, to move forward with the technology development phase of the application that would implement the community design vision already developed.

The DA's Office currently supports a similar effort to address the needs of victims of crime needing shelter through the Safe Shelter Collaborative.

Sheltering agencies that provide resources to survivors of human trafficking, domestic violence, and sexual assault can use an app to find shelter beds quickly for those attempting to escape

violence. Leveraging the positive outcomes of the Safe Shelter Collaborative and expanding this model to include all homeless populations will allow the county to maintain real time and accurate data regarding shelter use and availability and help to inform policy decisions regarding future needs and investments to better address homelessness.





Cold Case Arrest and Prosecution

The 1974 cold case murder of Christy Bryant, a former Marine and 7-Eleven clerk was solved in 2023 through genetic genealogy and a law enforcement reexamination of the case, which led to the arrest of Carlin Cornett. On July 31, 1974, Bryant was working the overnight shift at the 7-Eleven on Highland Ave. in National City when she was attacked. After being stabbed more than 30 times, she died at the scene. During the struggle, the defendant cut himself with the knife and left a blood trail as he fled the store.

The National City Police Department in collaboration with the DA's Cold Homicide and Research Genealogy Effort (CHARGE), applied the new tool of investigative genetic genealogy to the unidentified blood. An investigative lead was generated, and the defendant was ultimately identified as the attacker through a standard DNA test.

CHARGE, which is funded by a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Justice and the Bureau of Justice assistance, is an innovative project by the District Attorney's office to solve cold case homicides using investigative genetic genealogy, the same research technique that identified the Golden State Killer.

DA Testifies before Congress

San Diego County District Attorney Summer Stephan testified in Washington, D.C. last December before the House Sub-Committee on Counterterrorism, Law Enforcement and Intelligence, providing her perspective on the increasing crime of organized retail theft. At a hearing titled, "From Festive Cheer to Retail Fear: Addressing Organized Retail Crime," DA Stephan discussed the scope of the problem in the U.S., the solutions being pursued by law enforcement and success stories in holding retail thieves accountable.



Stephan appeared in her capacity as both San Diego DA and President-Elect of the National District Attorneys Association. DA Stephan told committee members there are three key challenges facing prosecutors across the nation who are working to fight organized retail theft: the evolution of more sophisticated criminal networks, an inadequate legal framework of laws and penalties and the need for better coordination.



SUPPORTING VICTIMS AND RESTORING LIVES

One of the main roles and responsibilities of the District Attorney's Office is to support victims of crime. We do that in several ways, including assisting victims through the court process, informing them of their rights in the criminal justice system and advocating for them through each step of a criminal case. In addition, our [Victim Assistance Program](#) offers comprehensive services free of charge, even if a suspect is not identified or if criminal charges have not been filed.



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

ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY THE DA'S VICTIM SERVICES DIVISION

In 2023 the Victim Assistance Program:

Assisted **10,379** crime victims

Provided **814** crisis interventions

Made **11,859** referrals to community resources

Provided **5,574** case status updates

Made **2,415** court accompaniments

Provided **\$54,169** in emergency assistance for immediate needs, such as medical, housing, relocation, food, and personal items

The Joint Powers Claims Unit:

Processed **727** claims from victims of violent crime

Processed **1,622** bills from victims and service providers

Issued more than **\$1 million** in payments from the California Victim Compensation Board

The Criminal Restitution Compact Unit:

Facilitated the completion of **1,792** restitution orders

Secured **\$1.4 million** in restitution from defendants payable to the Victim Compensation Board



- ▶ Victim advocates continue to provide outreach and education by participating in numerous community events. They also provide trainings and presentations to local police academies, law enforcement agencies, and community agencies. Ollie, the North County Facility Dog, provided support for 251 crime victims during interviews and court hearings.
- ▶ The Program held its annual Holiday Drive for crime victims and their families. Through staff coordination, nine families (13 adults and 24 children) were provided with household goods, toys, clothing, and gift cards.
- ▶ The Victim Services Division also maintains a Crisis Response Team whose members have received specialized training and are available to respond to provide services and support to victims and survivors after a mass violence incident occurs.



ONE SAFE PLACE: THE NORTH FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER

One Safe Place, which opened in July 2022, gives trauma survivors in North County a safe place to receive acute crisis care, advocacy, counseling, legal services, childcare, connections to shelter and housing, and social service benefits – all under one roof. There are 102 partner agencies working collaboratively to provide hope, healing and justice the community.



IN 2023, ONE SAFE PLACE:

Served **2,721** guests

Conducted intakes with **1,489** primary victims

Coordinated **4,110** return visits for services with staff and partners

Held **3,192** case management sessions

Distributed **8,287** pounds of food

Provided **18,430** items of clothing, hygiene, blankets and baby supplies

Provided **644** legal services attorney consultations including assistance with restraining order applications

Conducted **4,095** therapy sessions

Helped **238** guests search for emergency shelter and other housing

Welcomed **2,443** children including 1,199 visits to our child waiting area

Responded to **6,751** phone calls received on our main reception line

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

Launched a peer support thriver “voices” committee and peer support groups in English and Spanish

SIGNIFICANT ‘HOPE MOMENTS’ AT ONE SAFE PLACE INCLUDED:

▶ A young mother and her 3-year-old son received wrap-around services including safety planning, emergency housing and clothing after leaving an abusive husband. The young mother was financially dependent on her spouse, who controlled her through addictive substances. The woman confided that she wished she had discovered the Family Justice Center when she was an abused child.

▶ A woman who was struggling as a victim of domestic violence and child sexual trauma, was unemployed and on the verge of returning to her abusive husband until she received vital therapy through One Safe Place. After completing therapeutic work, she made strides in improving her situation, mindset and understanding her circumstances. Her future goals include one day sharing her story to support others impacted by trauma.

▶ A woman who was brutally stabbed by her ex-partner in front of her children, received counseling at One Safe Place. After attending weekly therapy sessions, the family said the center felt like a second home thanks to the partners who banded together to strengthen and support their family unit.

DA CARE CENTER

The CARE Community Center is a satellite office of the District Attorney's Office located in National City that provides crime prevention and intervention services for the community. In 2023, the CARE Community Center had 4,526 guests sign-in for services. The center conducted 188 evidence-based needs assessments that ultimately resulted in 376 referrals to community-based organizations. In addition to administering needs assessments, the CARE Community Center also serves as a free, clean, and safe meeting space for the community. More than 48 organizations used the CARE Community Center over 300 times.



In addition to providing services at its National City location, the CARE Community Center provides resources in the community through talks, health and wellness fairs, a senior outreach fair, a transitional aged youth fair, and quarterly DocuReady fairs. Last year, the center provided resources through 16 Homeless Court pop-up fairs, in which more than 1,500 community members were served by various service providers.





FACTS AND FIGURES

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





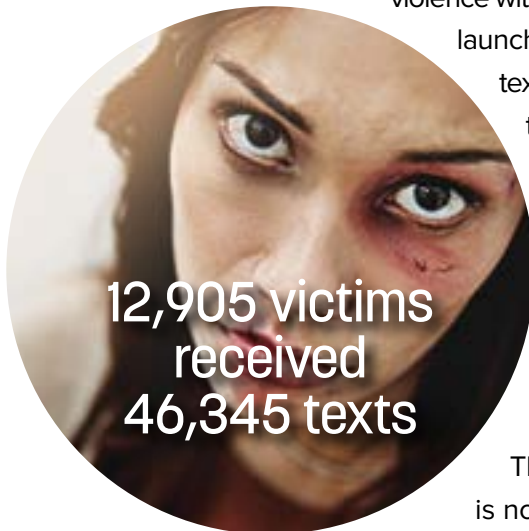
In 2023, more than **1,000 San Diegans** were victimized by elder financial scams for a total loss of **\$100 million!**

Elder Justice Taskforce

In 2023, more than 1,000 San Diegans fell victim to elder financial scams losing a staggering \$100 million. The San Diego Elder Justice Task Force, which launched in 2021, brings together partners including the San Diego County District Attorney's Office, the FBI, Adult Protective Services, the U.S. Department of Justice and the local U.S. Attorney's Office as well as local law enforcement agencies and the San Diego Law Enforcement Coordination Center. Together, the taskforce is tracking scams in an unprecedented way and developing a response to financial elder abuse, which is far greater than reported.

Using Technology to Protect Victims of Domestic Violence

In 2021, the DA's Family Protection Division initiated a texting program to provide victims of domestic violence with immediate updates on the status of their cases. Since the program launched, 12,905 victims of crime were kept abreast of their case using text messages. 46,345 texts have been sent. The system sends automated text messages to a victim's cell phone with case updates, links to domestic violence resources and other pertinent information, including the status of the case review, the name and contact number of the assigned prosecutor and victim advocate, whether charges are being filed or not, and other case status updates. Thousands of text messages have been successfully sent and received. This gives victims the information they need with links to obtain additional information on their own time as they choose. The program started as a pilot in the DA's North County Branch and is now being adopted countywide in domestic violence cases after receiving a nearly 90% approval rating by those receiving text messages.



12,905 victims
received
46,345 texts

De-Escalation Training


The District Attorney’s Office continued its collaboration with police agencies in San Diego County in 2023, providing curriculum for de-escalation training for peace officers. The DA’s Office is committed to engaging in the development and implementation of effective, evidence-based crisis intervention and de-escalation programming by providing access to tools in support of law enforcement officers, dispatchers, first responders, and others who may come into contact with people in crisis. The goal is a reduced need for the use of deadly force, improved officer safety, and reduced likelihood of injury to the person in crisis and the public. In 2023, 1,881 peace officers completed the DA-led training.

Training by the numbers



Veterans Treatment Court

Veterans Treatment Court provides an opportunity for veterans to earn redemption through a nationally recognized criminal diversion program that takes participants with criminal convictions and places them on a separate and specialized track of treatment and rehabilitation rather than incarceration. Most participants are in the program for 18 to 24 months. If all treatment, supervision, and community service commitments are met, their case can be dismissed and sealed.



In 2023 there were
16 new participants
and 15 who successfully
completed the program and
had their **rights restored**.

Providing Safe Shelter for Victims of Crime

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



CURRENT ACTIVE PARTNERS

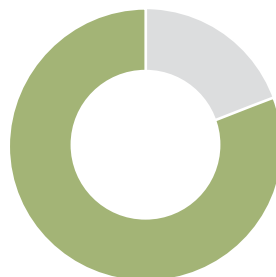
45 total participating
12 Sheltering agencies with 300 beds
33 Referral only organizations



REQUESTS FOR SHELTER

1,497 requests submitted

79% “possible” match and opening for available shelter*



52% survivors with one or more children seeking safe shelter



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



Office of the District Attorney

987 Permanent Staff

345 Prosecutors



121 Investigators



127 Paralegals



322 Support Staff



72 Administration



Our Budget

Revenues and Expenditures

FISCAL YEAR 2023 TO 2024	Expenditures
Salaries/Benefits	\$227,036,000
Supplies/Services	41,268,000
To Other Agencies	2,211,000
Assets	25,532,000
Public Assistance Fraud Reimbursement	(1,066,000)
Other Expenditures	55,000
Total Budgeted Expenditures	\$295,036,000
FISCAL YEAR 2023 TO 2024	Revenues
Proposition 172	\$115,735,000
General Revenues	135,424,000
Federal Funds	4,431,000
State Funds	27,078,000
Other Funds	12,368,000
Total Budgeted Revenues	\$295,036,000



SPECIALIZED UNITS AND DIVISIONS



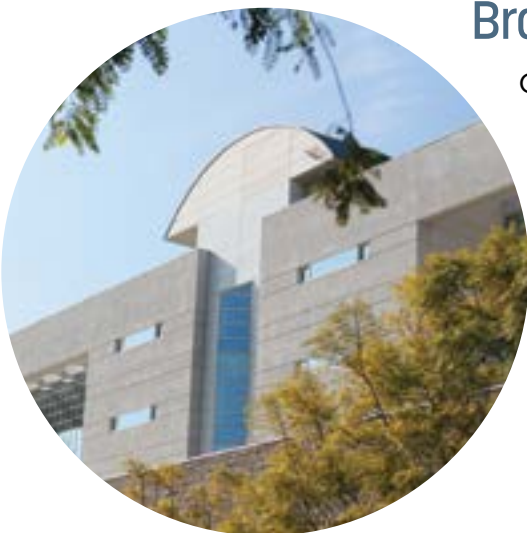
Appellate and Training Division

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



In 2023, this division was on the forefront of evolving law and public safety issues. Recognizing the considerable health and safety risks posed by homeless encampments and the need to address mental health and homelessness issues in a thoughtful and proactive manner, the Appellate and Training Division filed an amicus brief supporting a grant of review by the U.S. Supreme Court in the Grants Pass matter in order to clarify what efforts beyond those measures already taken can be made within the bounds of the law. This Division has been instrumental in navigating the evolving areas of law affecting racial justice, mental health, bail, and juvenile resentencing. And we continue to assist the public and outside agencies with records requests. With the transition of capital habeas litigation to the Superior Court, this Division has engaged in complex litigation in capital matters and other post-conviction habeas issues.

Branch Offices



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

Bureau of Investigation

The Bureau of Investigation is the law enforcement arm of the San Diego County District Attorney's Office. In 2023, the Bureau was comprised of 121 District Attorney Investigators and 43 professional support staff, including Paralegals, Investigative Specialists, Trial Support Specialists, Crime & Intelligence Analysts, and Process Servers. The Bureau has earned the reputation of having some of the most experienced and highly trained investigators among its ranks, who have been recruited from law enforcement agencies across California.



In 2023, the Bureau of Investigation:

- ▶ completed more than **32,000** investigative tasks
- ▶ conducted over **3,300** interviews
- ▶ executed **521** search warrants
- ▶ completed **57** extraditions
- ▶ arrested **62** defendants

The Bureau provides a wide range of skilled investigative services to support the District Attorney's prosecutorial and crime prevention mission, including victim and witness protection in serious gang and narcotics cases so witnesses can safely testify. The Bureau is also responsible for original investigations across specialized domains such as public corruption, insurance fraud, economic crimes, organized retail crime, series related robbery and burglary, parental child abduction, and cold case homicide.

Case Issuing and Extraditions Division

This division is the front line of all cases when they arrive in the District Attorney's Office. In 2023, our issuing staff processed 6,823 cases.

Cold Case Homicide Unit

Established in 2003, the Cold Case Homicide Unit works with law enforcement to solve and prosecute unsolved murders. The victims come from all walks of life and from all areas of the county, including children and the elderly. The District Attorney's Office prioritizes these cases through the Cold Case Unit, which has dedicated and experienced investigators and prosecutors that use the latest forensic technology to deliver justice to victims.

The oldest case solved and prosecuted by the unit is the 1969 rape and murder of Mary Scott which resulted in a conviction following a trial in 2022.

The Cold Case Unit also manages the Cold Homicide and Research Genealogy Effort (CHARGE.) Funded by a 3-year grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, CHARGE uses the power of investigative genetic genealogy to solve more cold case homicides. The San Diego District Attorney's Office was one of only 10 prosecutor's offices nationwide to receive this grant.



Collaborative Justice Division

The Collaborative Justice Division works to address the underlying causes of criminal behavior and resolve them in partnership with community treatment providers, mentors, law enforcement agencies, and the courts. This division consists of four teams: Collaborative Courts Team, Restitution Recovery Team, the Lifer Hearing Unit and the CARE Center located in National City. It oversees the administration of the Community Justice Initiative program, responding to Prop 47 and Prop 64 petitions, and processing PC 290.5 petitions.

Consumer Protection Unit

The District Attorney's Office has a unit dedicating to stopping unfair, fraudulent and deceptive business practices. The Consumer Protection Unit is comprised of Deputy District Attorneys, Investigators and Paralegals dedicated to protecting consumers and law-abiding businesses. An example of this in 2023 includes an investigation into PetSmart, LLC, which found many times the prices charged at the check-out register were more than the price set forth on the shelves. The San Diego County District Attorney's Consumer Protection Unit, along with a team six other DA's' offices, obtained an injunction requiring systematic changes in pricing policies and a total of \$1.4 million in civil penalties, costs, and restitution to support further pricing accuracy enforcement. To report a consumer complaint, call (619) 531-3507 or email consumer@sdcca.org.



Conviction and Sentence Review Unit

The Conviction and Sentence Review Unit is committed to the highest standard of professional integrity as it conducts meticulous reviews of post-conviction cases. This unit works collaboratively with all our criminal justice partners to identify post-conviction cases where there may be a credible claim of innocence and cases where new technologies would allow testing or retesting of remaining evidence. In 2023, the unit received five cases for conviction review. The Conviction and Sentence Review Unit also reviews previously sentenced cases to determine whether it would be in the interest of justice to petition the court to recall and resentence a sentenced individual. When determining whether to support the resentencing of an individual, the unit carefully evaluates several factors, such as victim input, community safety, the disciplinary record or record of rehabilitation of the inmate, current sentencing law, and the prospects of successful reintegration of the sentenced individual. In 2023, we supported 25 such resentencings. The public, attorneys, or convicted persons can apply to have a conviction reviewed or a sentence recalled for resentencing via a page on the DA's public website.



Economic Crimes Division

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

Extraditions Unit

Criminals often flee San Diego after committing a crime here, attempting to hide in foreign countries such as Mexico. The DA's Extraditions Unit successfully brings fugitives from abroad or from other states to face criminal prosecution in San Diego and seeks justice for crime victims. International extradition is complex and varies from nation to nation with very specific legal requirements involving multiple agencies. We work with local and federal law enforcement organizations as well as the U.S. Department of Justice and foreign governments to extradite, deport or expel fugitives back to San Diego, within the parameters of extradition treaties and foreign immigration laws. In 2023, the extraditions team executed 79 domestic extraditions and one international extradition.



Family Protection Division

The Family Protection Division is a team of dedicated, experienced, and specially trained Deputy District Attorneys, Investigators, Victim Advocates, and clerical staff who prosecute crimes of homicide, intimate partner violence, physical and sexual child abuse, Internet crimes against children, elder abuse, and stalking. The Family Protection Division is comprised of 47 Deputy District Attorneys stationed in Vista, El Cajon, Chula Vista, and downtown San Diego. They review about 10,000 cases each year. The division is dedicated to supporting victims through the criminal justice process and ensuring all victims are treated with dignity and receive the essential services they deserve. The division works closely with numerous law enforcement agencies to investigate and prevent violent crimes, while also working with community partners to provide life-saving resources and public service awareness campaigns. Through its Family Protection Division, the District Attorney's Office is committed to holding defendants accountable and seeking justice for the thousands of victims impacted by family violence each year in San Diego County.



Gangs Division

The District Attorney's Office successfully prosecutes complex murder cases and other serious crimes perpetrated by violent gang members who terrorize neighborhoods. These cases are handled by one prosecutor from beginning to end – vertical prosecution – by our Gangs Division. Cases in this division are expertly navigated to bring justice to families left in the wake of violence. In 2023, the Gangs Division conducted 19 murder jury trials, which is 36% of the total murders tried in the DA's office. It also prosecuted other cases including assault with great bodily injury, robbery, carjacking and possession of illegal firearms, such as ghost guns, by gang members.

Information Technology Division

The Information Technology Division strategically uses technology to support the operation of the District Attorney's Office. The 27 employees who make up this unit, design, develop, implement, and support all information technology hardware, software, business applications, and websites. They also provide support for prosecution in the courtroom and community outreach efforts. In addition, ITD provides direct support to the City Attorney's Office in their use of the District Attorney's case management system for criminal prosecution.

Insurance Fraud and Workplace Justice Division



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

investigator and paralegal. The Unit prosecutes unfair business practices, wage and hour violations, payroll tax evasion, wage theft and labor trafficking cases.

Juvenile Division

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

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



Law Enforcement Liaisons



Two experienced Deputy District Attorneys are on call 24/7 to answer questions, provide guidance, and help draft and review search warrants for all law enforcement officers who operate within our jurisdiction. Our liaisons also support 320 prosecutors in the office in the areas of case investigation and trial preparation. In 2023, our liaisons helped obtain, implement, and train users on a new E-Warrant System which now accommodates five different kinds of warrants.

Lifer Hearing Unit

The DA's Lifer Hearing Unit has two main goals: to ensure that dangerous prisoners with life sentences are not released carelessly or improvidently, and to ensure that crime victims and their families are given an opportunity to participate in the parole hearing process and have their voices heard. The Lifer Hearing Unit is comprised of a team of seasoned prosecutors who serve as gatekeepers at parole hearings for some of the most dangerous criminals in the state. In 2023, there were 664 lifer parole hearings scheduled. Of those, 96 inmates received parole grants from the California Board of Parole Hearings. The remaining 568 hearings resulted in denials, postponements, or stipulations to a denial of parole.

Major Narcotics Division

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



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

Priors Unit

The Priors unit is responsible for ordering and obtaining prior convictions and prison packets necessary for proving allegations and priors in court. The unit also responds to requests for dispositions and other information from outside agencies. In 2023 the unit received and fulfilled 2,080 requests for local priors, 434 requests for out-of-county requests and 98 requests for prison packets.



Sex Crimes and Human Trafficking Division

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

Special Operations Division

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



Superior Court Division

The Superior Court Division is responsible for prosecuting some of the most challenging cases in the District Attorney's Office, including assaults, burglaries, robberies, fatal DUIs, and murders. It is one of the busiest divisions in the office and handles all felonies not assigned to a branch or vertical prosecution.



This division is responsible for many of the felony cases tried by the District Attorney's Office, including about 30% of the DA's homicide cases. In addition, the Superior Court Division handles pre- and post-conviction mental health cases for defendants alleged to be incompetent to stand trial and those found to be a danger to the community as a result of mental illness.

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



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