



Memorandum

TO: MAYOR LICCARDO
SUBJECT: BUDGET DOCUMENT

FROM: Councilmember Sylvia Arenas
DATE: 5/25/2021

Approved *Sylvia Arenas*

Date *5/25/2021*

RECOMMENDATION

That the following recommendation be enacted.

Proposal

Program/Project Title: Children's Advocacy Center of Santa Clara County Referral Policy Update

Amount of City Funding Required: \$3,000,000

This change is:

One-time Ongoing

Cost Estimate Number (if applicable): 89

Proposal Description, including the reason for the need and anticipated outcomes (Please describe how the proposal will affect services for San José residents, community groups, businesses, etc.):

Im grateful to Police Chief Anthony Mata, Deputy Chief Ellen Washburn, Lieutenant Jaime Jimenez, and the San Jose Police Department for their partnership and commitment to strengthen our survivor-centered approach to serve survivors of gender-based violence and child sexual abuse. Among these discussions include improving our SJPD referral policy and criteria to refer *all* children for physical exams, commonly referred to as SART (Sexual Assault Response Team) and/or SAFE (Sexual Assault Forensic Exam) exam as the responsible party, per statute, for the payment of physical exams.

According to a 2015 study from John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Health¹, the annual economic impact of child sexual abuse in the U.S. was far-reaching and costly of up to \$9 Billion nationwide which includes costs associated with health care, child welfare, special education, violence and crime, suicide, and survivor productivity losses. The reasonable budget request for \$3,000,000 from the City's General Fund will be a worthy and necessary investment in our children.

¹ <https://www.jhsph.edu/news/news-releases/2018/one-years-losses-for-child-sexual-abuse-in-us-top-9-billion.html>

In the past, community providers and medical experts that serve child survivors have shared recommendations for system improvements that we can all work together to provide a better survivor-centered approach, especially when it comes to child survivors. With the recent grand opening of the new Children’s Advocacy Center of Santa Clara County, we have the opportunity to reevaluate how we engage and integrate our services with key support service providers to provide true wrap around services for child survivors and families impacted by violence.

As our City prepares for recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and children return to in-person learning, we must also anticipate and account for the high potential of underreporting of child sexual abuse during the past 14 months of distanced learning. During this unprecedented time, community providers have reported unusual trends of increased lethality in family violence due to the increased stress, anxiety, and depression from loss of employment, financial security, and struggle to provide basic needs. With the lack of access to mandated reporters, teachers, and school faculty during distanced learning, delayed reporting of child sexual abuse may be an inevitable likelihood as children return to schools in the Fall.

While I understand that the decision to refer children for physical exams includes consideration for when the crime(s) occurred, the specificity of the crime(s), and the potential re-traumatization of the child survivor – physical exams are recommended by medical experts and survivor support service providers as a critical step in reassuring the child survivor and family that they are physically ok. Not only does this reassurance provide child survivors with the building blocks to heal but it also provides them and the family with trusted support services that may ultimately lead to improved survivor collaboration and case closure rates.

Support services referred to child survivors during the physical exams can influence and determine the trajectory of the child survivor’s future. Child sexual abuse is known as the gateway to a lifelong intersectionality of sexual assault, domestic violence/intimate partner violence, and human trafficking. Referrals to physical exams for child survivors and connection to support services based on the crime that is being reported should serve as the referral determination point and not limited by subjective expectations of the likelihood of evidentiary value.

Physical exams determine the preventative wrap around services needed to disrupt this cycle of violence and a lifetime of trauma, physical and mental health issues, and addiction for our child survivors as well as improved case collaboration and closure rates.

Funding Source

Essential Services Reserve:

Other (Please specify program/project/fund): General Fund

Department or Organization Contact

Please list the contact information for the individual that certified cost estimates contained within your recommendation:

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