

ATTENTION: PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEMBERS WILL RECEIVE A UNIQUE PANELIST LINK BY EMAIL. PLEASE USE THIS LINK TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS MEETING.



PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

**MONDAY, MAY 9, 2022
9:00 a.m.**

Pursuant to Assembly Bill 361 and the findings made by CVAG, this meeting will only be conducted via video/teleconferencing.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Members of the public may use the following link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89831240687?pwd=VlJUTdWaS91OUNZQTZ0Q1k3N0lzdz09>

Password: 517239

One Tap Mobile: +16699009128,,89831240687#

Dial In: +1 669 900 9128

Webinar ID: 898 3124 0687

Password: 517239

***This will provide listening access and ability to address the
Public Safety Committee when called upon.***

IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO CONNECT VIA DIAL IN OPTION, PLEASE CALL 760-346-1127.

Public comment is encouraged to be emailed to the Public Safety Committee meeting prior to the meeting at cvag@cvag.org by 5:00 p.m. on the day prior to the committee meeting. Comments intended to be read aloud should be no more than 300 characters.

**THIS MEETING IS HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE.
ACTION MAY RESULT ON ANY ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA.**

**UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED, ALL ACTION ITEMS WILL BE PRESENTED TO THE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FOR FINAL APPROVAL.**

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chair Waymond Fermon, Mayor, City of Indio
2. **ROLL CALL** – Jennifer Nelson
- A. **Member Roster** [4](#)
3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
4. **PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS**

This is the time and place for members of the public to address the Public Safety Committee on agenda items. At the discretion of the Chair, comments may be taken at the time items are presented. Please limit comments to three (3) minutes.
5. **CHAIR /COMMITTEE MEMBER/CVAG STAFF COMMENTS**
6. **EX-OFFICIO UPDATES**
7. **CONSENT CALENDAR**
- A. **Approve the January 10, 2022 Public Safety Committee Minutes** [5](#)
8. **DISCUSSION/ ACTION**
- A. **Update from the Riverside County District Attorney’s Office – Erica Felci** [9](#)

Recommendation: Information
- B. **Rollout of the 9-8-8 Mental Health Crisis Hotline in Riverside County – Erica Felci** [40](#)

Recommendation: Information
9. **INFORMATION**
- A. **Attendance Record** [41](#)
- B. **Update on legislative advocacy efforts** [42](#)
- C. **CVAG Meeting Calendar for Fiscal Year 2022/23** [56](#)
- D. **Update on Ad Hoc Efforts to Explore Additional Homelessness Resources** [57](#)

and Policies

10. **PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

This is the time and place for members of the public to address the Public Safety Committee on items of general interest within the purview of this committee. Please limit comments to two (2) minutes.

11. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Upcoming Meetings:

The next meeting of the **Public Safety Committee** will be held on Monday, June 13, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. via Zoom webinar.

The next meeting of the **Executive Committee** will be held on Monday, June 6, 2022, at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom webinar.

The next meeting of the **General Assembly** will be held on Monday, June 27, 2022, at 6 p.m. via Zoom webinar.

12. **ADJOURNMENT**

Item 2A

**Coachella Valley Association of Governments
Public Safety Committee
Member Roster
2021-2022**



Voting Members	
Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians	Councilmember John Preckwinkle III
City of Blythe	Councilmember Johnny Rodriguez
City of Cathedral City	Councilmember Raymond Gregory
City of Coachella	Councilmember Megan Beaman-Jacinto – VICE CHAIR
City of Desert Hot Springs	Councilmember Roger Nuñez
City of Indian Wells	Councilmember Greg Sanders
City of Indio	Mayor Waymond Fermon - CHAIR
City of La Quinta	Councilmember John Pena
City of Palm Desert	Councilmember Karina Quintanilla
City of Palm Springs	Mayor Pro Tem Grace Garner
City of Rancho Mirage	Councilmember Iris Smotrich
County of Riverside	Supervisor V. Manuel Perez
Ex-Officio Members	
Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians	Robert Bradbury, Emergency Services Manager
California Highway Patrol	Dennis Woodbury, Commander
Cathedral City Fire	John Muhr, Fire Chief
Cathedral City Police	George Crum, Chief of Police
Desert Hot Springs Police	Jim Henson, Chief of Police
District Attorney's Office	Michael Hestrin, District Attorney
Indio Police	Mike Washburn, Chief of Police
Palm Desert Sheriff Station	Dean Agnoletto, Captain
Palm Springs Fire	J. Kevin Nalder, Fire Chief
Palm Springs Police	Andrew Mills, Chief of Police
Riverside County Fire Department	Robert Fish, Deputy Chief
Riverside County Probation Department	Ron Miller, Chief Probation Officer
Riverside County Sheriff's Department	Sheriff Chad Bianco
Thermal Sheriff Station	Michael Bianco, Captain
U.S. Border Patrol	David Kim

ITEM 7A

Public Safety Committee Meeting Minutes January 10, 2022



The audio file for this meeting can be found at: <http://www.cvag.org/audio.htm>

1. **CALL TO ORDER** - The meeting was called to order by Chair Waymond Fermon, City of Indio, at 9:00 a.m. via Zoom videoconference, pursuant to AB 361 and the guidelines for virtual meetings.
2. **ROLL CALL** - Roll call taken and it was determined that a quorum was present.

Members Present

Aqua Caliente Band of	
Cahuilla Indians	Councilmember John Preckwinkle III (arrived during Item 6)
City of Blythe	Councilmember Johnny Rodriguez
City of Cathedral City	Councilmember Raymond Gregory
City of Desert Hot Springs	Councilmember Roger Nuñez
City of Indian Wells	Councilmember Greg Sanders
City of Indio	Mayor Waymond Fermon, Chair
City of La Quinta	Councilmember John Peña
City of Palm Springs	Mayor Pro Tem Grace Garner (arrived during Item 4)
City of Rancho Mirage	Councilmember Iris Smotrich
County of Riverside	Juan Perez, Chief Operating Officer

Ex-Officio Members Present

Agua Caliente Band of	
Cahuilla Indians	Robert Bradbury, Emergency Services Manager
Cathedral City Fire	Chief John Muhr
City of Desert Hot Springs Police	Chief Jim Henson
City of Indio Police	Chief Mike Washburn
Palm Desert Sheriff's Substation	Captain Dean Agnoletto
City of Palm Springs Police	Chief Andrew Mills
City of Palm Springs Fire	Chief J. Kevin Nalder
Riverside County Fire	Deputy Chief Robert Fish
Riverside County Probation	Ron Miller, Chief Probation Officer
Riverside County Sheriff	Lt. David Wright
Thermal Sheriff Station	Captain Michael Bianco

Members & Ex-Officios Not Present

City of Coachella	Councilmember Megan Beaman-Jacinto, Vice Chair
City of Palm Desert	Councilmember Karina Quintanilla
California Highway Patrol	Commander Dennis Woodbury
City of Cathedral City Police	George Crum, Chief of Police
U.S. Customs and Border Patrol	Assistant Chief Patrol Agent David Kim
District Attorney's Office	Michael Hestrin
Palm Springs Fire	Chief Kevin Nalder

Others Present

CVAG

Tom Kirk
Erica Felci
Joanna Stueckle
Jennifer Nelson
Kathleen Brundige
Anyse Smith
Greg Rodriguez
Pat Cooper
Christine Castro
Kim Sarawatari
Dr. Matthew Chang, Director
R. Tethal
Chris Willison
Kristen Nelson

County of Riverside
County of Riverside
Riverside County Probation
Riverside County Public Health
Riverside University Health System
Individuals

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Councilmember Raymond Gregory led the Committee in the pledge.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

None

5. CHAIR / COMMITTEE MEMBER/CVAG STAFF COMMENTS

Erica Felci requested that Committee members keep their video on during the meeting so the public can see them.

Councilmember Raymond Gregory shared his enthusiasm to be back on the Public Safety Committee and expressed his thanks to the Committee for a job well done.

Chair Fermon indicated that he attended the recent College of the Desert's Public Safety Academy graduation ceremony and expressed his support for the program.

6. EX-OFFICIO COMMENTS

Palm Springs Police Chief Andrew Mills provided updates on COVID-19 staffing challenges, and information on ghost guns and what actions are being taken to curb their availability.

Indio Police Chief Mike Washburn provided an update that included COVID-19 staffing updates and efforts to prepare for upcoming events in the City.

At the request of Chair Fermon, Sheriff's Captain Michael Bianco from the Thermal Station introduced himself and indicated he was looking forward to working with the CVAG Public Safety Committee going forward.

7. CONSENT CALENDAR

IT WAS MOVED BY COUNCILMEMBER PENA AND SECONDED BY COUNCILMEMBER SANDERS TO:

A. Approve the November 8, 2021 Public Safety Committee Minutes

THE MOTION CARRIED WITH 9 AYES, 1 ABSTENTION AND 2 MEMBERS ABSENT

Councilmember John Preckwinkle	AYE
Councilmember Johnny Rodriquez	AYE
Councilmember Raymond Gregory	ABSTENTION
Councilmember Megan Beaman Jacinto	ABSENT
Councilmember Roger Nuñez	AYE
Councilmember Greg Sanders	AYE
Mayor Pro Tem Waymond Fermon	AYE
Councilmember John Peña	AYE
Councilmember Karina Quintanilla	ABSENT
Mayor Pro Tem Grace Garner	AYE
Councilmember Iris Smotrich	AYE
COO Juan Perez	AYE

8. DISCUSSION / ACTION

A. COVID-19 Public Health Crisis & Vaccine Distribution

Kim Saruwatari, Riverside County Health Director, provided a detailed update on the COVID-19 public health crisis including the latest information on cases and positivity rates as well as medical staff shortage issues. She recognized the Coachella Valley for leading the County in vaccination numbers.

Member discussion ensued, and Director Saruwatari addressed members' questions.

No action was taken as this was an informational item.

B. Presentation on Riverside County's Community Behavioral Assessment Team & coordination with law enforcement

Dr. Matthew Chang, Riverside University Health System-Behavioral Health Director gave a report on deploying behavioral health teams throughout Riverside County, including highlighting various partnerships as well as the future program goals.

Member discussion ensued. No action was taken as this was an informational item.

C. Partnership for Cooperative Land Management on Habitat Lands – Kathleen Brundige

Kathleen Brundige provided a PowerPoint update on habitat land conservation and how partnerships with law enforcement are helping with protection of sensitive species and addressing illegal activity such as dumping and off roading.

Member discussion ensued. No action was taken as this was an informational item.

9. INFORMATION – The following items were provided for information only:

- A. Attendance Record**
- B. Law Enforcement Coordination with CV Housing First**
- C. Human Trafficking Awareness Month**

10. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None

11. ANNOUNCEMENTS – Upcoming Meetings:

Upcoming Meetings:

The next meeting of the **Public Safety Committee** will be held on Monday, February 14, 2022, at 9 a.m. via Zoom webinar.

The next meeting of the **Executive Committee** will be held on Monday, January 31, 2022, at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom webinar.

12. ADJOURN

Chair Fermon adjourned the meeting at 10:20 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Nelson
Executive Assistant/Clerk

ITEM 8A

**Coachella Valley Association of Governments
Public Safety Committee
May 9, 2022**



STAFF REPORT

Subject: Update from the Riverside County District Attorney's Office

Contact: Erica Felci, Assistant Executive Director (efelci@cvaq.org)

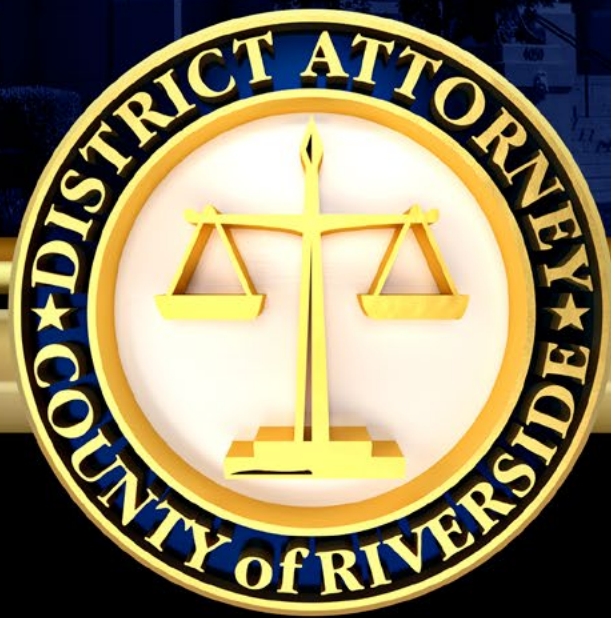
Recommendation: Information

Background: On March 31, 2022, the Riverside County District Attorney's Office released its biennial report to recap significant cases and policy efforts between 2020 and 2021. Riverside County District Attorney Michael Hestrin will present an overview to the CVAG Public Safety Committee at its May meeting.

The report is attached. Of particular note are the efforts to address the emerging fentanyl epidemic. Fentanyl is a synthetic, manmade opiate that can easily be produced in a lab or on the streets. Fentanyl is less expensive than other opiates and is highly addictive. Fentanyl is 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. Officials have noted that deadly amounts of fentanyl are also being used in manufacturing and packaging of other drugs, with these counterfeit pills being misrepresented as Xanax and/or Oxycodone. The District Attorney's Office efforts have included a public education campaign to highlight the dangers of fentanyl through public service announcements, social media and school presentations in the Inland Empire.

Fiscal Analysis: There is no cost to CVAG for this update.

Attachment: Riverside County District Attorney's Biennial Report for 2020-2021



BIENNIAL REPORT

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE RIVERSIDE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

2020 - 2021

Mission Statement

The District Attorney of Riverside County, as the public prosecutor acting on behalf of the People, vigorously enforces the law, pursues the truth, and safeguards the rights of all to ensure that justice is done on behalf of our community.

The District Attorney works with every component of the criminal justice system to protect the innocent, to convict and appropriately punish the guilty, and to protect the rights of victims.

The District Attorney also works within our community to prevent and deter crime and to promote public safety, now and for future generations.

The District Attorney fulfills these critical responsibilities through the efforts of the employees of the District Attorney's Office, and each employee is integral to achieving this mission. To that end, we, the employees of the Riverside County District Attorney's Office, will adopt the highest standards of ethical behavior and professionalism and proudly commit ourselves to the following core values in the performance of our duties:

Integrity, Respect, Quality, Loyalty, Teamwork,
Partnership, Innovation, Fairness, and Service.

Core Values

Integrity

As professionals, members of the criminal justice system, officers of the court, and highly visible public employees, we hold ourselves to the highest standards of integrity and professional conduct. Ethics and integrity are not negotiable.

Respect

We treat each other and all members of the public with dignity and respect. Because the people of this organization are its most valuable asset, each of us must nurture a working climate that is based on trust, courtesy, and mutual respect. We must also apply that attitude of consideration, dignity, and respect to the public we serve. We must remember that the personal dignity of each individual is inviolate.

Quality

To earn and hold the trust and confidence of our community, we must perform our duties with uncompromising commitment to quality. Each of us is responsible for ensuring that our community receives the finest prosecution services possible, and we are committed to hiring and training the most qualified individuals to accomplish our mission.

Loyalty

We recognize that the District Attorney's mission is a public trust, and we are loyal to that mission. We take seriously our obligations to the community, to law enforcement, and to the victims of crime.

Fairness

We are committed to treating people reasonably and consistently without personal bias, discrimination, favoritism, or animus. Each of us must act fairly toward our fellow employees and others within the criminal justice system. In addition, we are committed to developing leaders at all levels that communicate expectations and provide consistent feedback, who motivate and inspire others, and who understand the importance of equality, fairness, and diversity.

Innovation

We accept a shared responsibility to ensure the most effective use of resources and to identify and apply new methods and technology for increased efficiency. Each of us strives for continuous improvement, which allows the District Attorney's Office to deliver better prosecution services and further enhances public safety.

Partnership

We are committed to building strong and viable partnerships with other law enforcement agencies, every component of the criminal justice system, and the community we serve. We recognize that a united and cohesive effort to prevent and punish crime allows us to achieve the highest level of public safety for our community.

Service

The core mission of our entire organization is to promote public safety by delivering quality prosecution services to the citizens of Riverside County. However, we recognize that we are also part of the Riverside County community and our effectiveness as an office is enhanced through our employees' community service. We value and encourage community involvement, volunteerism, and participation in community improvement efforts.

Teamwork

We work as a team, encouraging both diversity of thought and unity of action. Each of us plays an integral part, but we must work together to achieve our mission. "Teamwork divides the task and multiplies the success."

TO THE CITIZENS OF RIVERSIDE COUNTY

The Riverside County District Attorney's Office was faced with many challenges in 2020 and 2021. I am proud of our perseverance during these unprecedented times and most importantly, our unwavering dedication to the pursuit of justice. Not only did we pivot to remote working during a pandemic, but we also remained true to our core values and continued to provide transparent public safety services to our community members.

Justice can be delivered in various formats. At times, it requires vigorous prosecution of violent felons, such as the prosecution of Jesse Perez Torres for the violent 2010 murder of 17-year-old Norma Lopez as she walked from school to a friend's house in Moreno Valley. In other cases, it involves alternative programs to incarceration, such as a veteran experiencing struggles like Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder as a result of their service. However, in all cases, our value of providing safety to our community members remains our focus.

Despite the many hardships provided by the pandemic, our office continued to prosecute cases while maintaining a victim-centered approach of assisting victims of crime through the criminal justice system. Our Victim Services Specialists continued their commitment to providing supportive services both virtually and in-person to victims of violent crime. In 2021, we were able to enhance our services to victims of crime with the addition of K-9 Rachel. K-9 Rachel is a support services dog that is trained to comfort victims and witnesses during traumatic events, such as interviews and testifying.

Our commitment to keeping our community safe often involves community outreach, education, and prevention. Our Crime Prevention Unit continues to work with at-risk youth in our schools. Engaging the youth in positive programs and activities provides them with opportunities to achieve academic success and positive life skills. In 2020, our Crime Prevention Unit started a partnership with the SAFE Family Justice Centers. This collaboration has strengthened the services that both entities provide to youth who are at risk and have experienced adverse childhood trauma.

In 2021, we identified that our community was being terrorized by the fentanyl crisis. Our office led the way in combating the fentanyl epidemic with a three-pronged approach: education, prevention, and prosecution. Our office was one of the first in the state to prosecute fentanyl dealers with homicide charges. Our Bureau of Investigation seized more than 20 pounds of fentanyl, taking it out of our community. Additionally, we informed the public about the dangers of fentanyl by creating a social media campaign and a prevention presentation aimed at educating the youth in our schools.

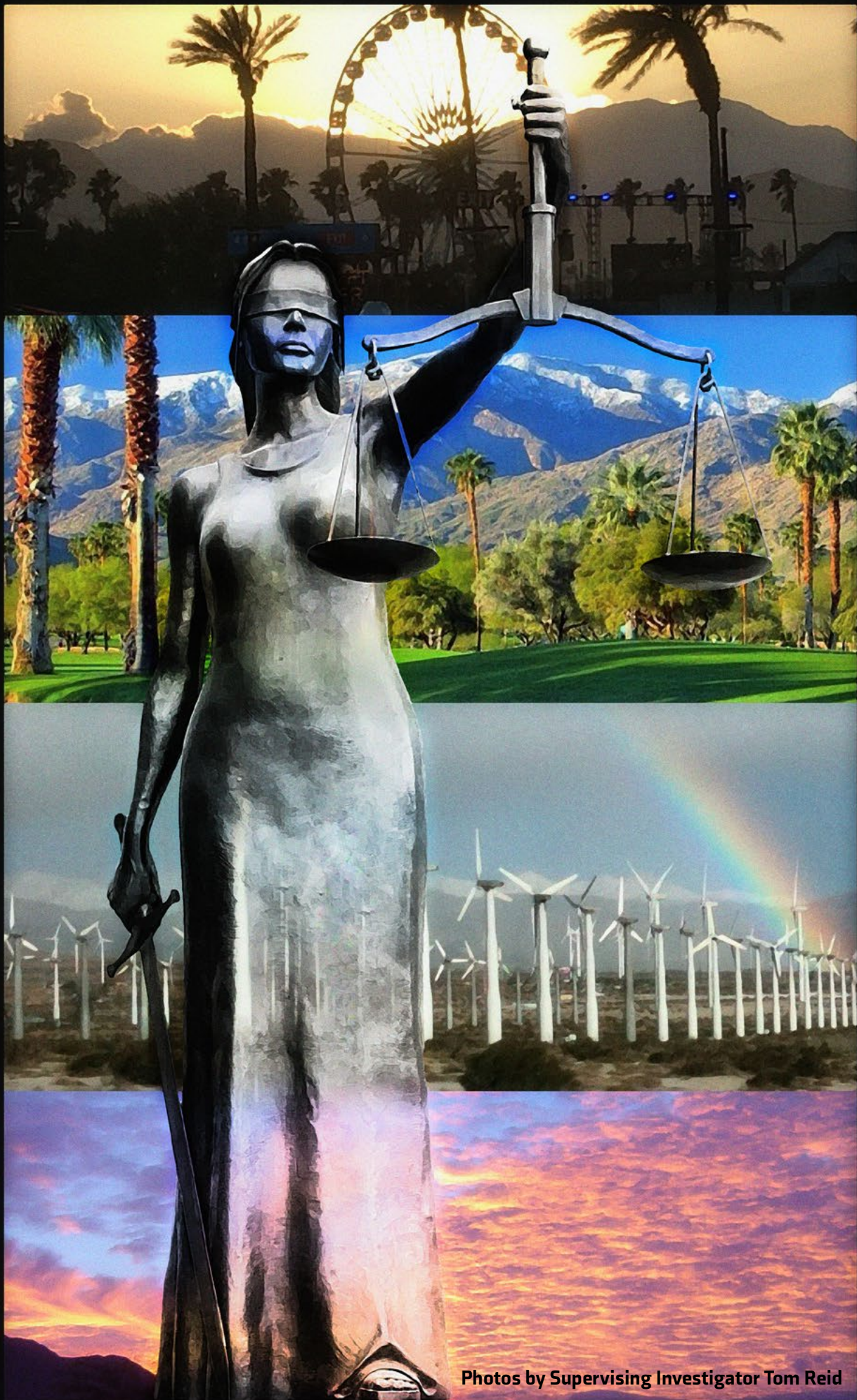
Our Bureau of Investigation is the investigative arm of our office that provides a full range of law enforcement services to keep our community members safe. For example, our Bureau of Investigation developed the Riverside County Child Exploitation Team (RCCET), which proactively apprehends online child predators. During the pandemic, children were spending more time online than ever before, and so were predators looking for victims. The Riverside County Board of Supervisors recognized the need to expand RCCET and approved the additional costs to provide one additional Supervising Investigator, two additional Senior DA Investigators, and an additional DA Computer Forensic Examiner. In 2020, RCCET also added a special team member, K-9 Chewie. K-9 Chewie is an electronic detection canine, trained to locate electronic devices used to store digital media. Chewie has discovered more than 100 different electronic storage devices throughout these operations, which included cell phones, USBs, SD cards, iPads, laptops, external hard drives, and digital cameras.

In closing, our office is comprised of more than 700 dedicated staff members across Riverside County in the pursuit of justice for victims of crime. I am deeply honored to serve as the District Attorney for the people of Riverside County. I invite you to read more about our mission, values, and the work that we do. We are currently operating in a time where the justice system is under great scrutiny. My pledge and obligation to our community is that we will continue to maintain transparency and integrity in everything we do. Thank you for your ongoing support and trust in each of us.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael A. Hestrin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michael" and last name "Hestrin" clearly legible.

MICHAEL A. HESTRIN
RIVERSIDE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



Photos by Supervising Investigator Tom Reid

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Chief DDA Carlos Monagas addresses the judge in the case of The People vs. Michael Joseph Callahan.



JURY FINDS MAN GUILTY OF MURDERING CHP SERGEANT

Sergeant Steven Licon was killed on the afternoon of April 6, 2019, when he was struck by a vehicle driven by a Winchester man. Sgt. Licon was standing next to his CHP motorcycle on southbound Interstate 15, near Nichols Road in Lake Elsinore when a Toyota Corolla hit him. The driver of the Toyota, Michael Joseph Callahan, had been traveling at an estimated 65 mph on the freeway's right shoulder before striking Sgt. Licon. Sgt. Licon had stopped a 2017 Chrysler 300 for a traffic violation and the Chrysler and Sgt. Licon's CHP motorcycle were stopped on the freeway's right shoulder. The Toyota was traveling along the right shoulder and not in the designated freeway lanes. Sgt. Licon was transported by medical helicopter to Inland Valley Medical Center in nearby Wildomar but died from his injuries. He was a 27-year veteran of the California Highway Patrol.

The DA's Office charged Callahan with second-degree murder under the theory that he was aware of the dangers of driving while intoxicated because of a 2004 misdemeanor DUI conviction in Orange County. As a term of his probation in that case, Callahan was required to attend Mothers Against Drunk Driving courses where he was educated about those dangers.

Callahan was sentenced to 15 years to life by Riverside County Superior Court Judge Timothy Freer on Oct. 1, 2021, at the Southwest Justice Center in Murrieta. The case, SWF1907227, was prosecuted by Chief Deputy DA Carlos Monagas and Deputy DA Allison Pace.



California Highway Patrol Sgt. Steven Licon

ILLICIT FENTANYL MURDER CHARGES FILED

Joseph Michael Costanza, of Eastvale, has been charged with four felonies: one count of murder; one count of sales of a controlled substance, fentanyl, to a minor with an enhancement of drug sales to a minor at least four years younger and an allegation of causing great bodily injury, and two counts of possession of a controlled substance, fentanyl, for sales.

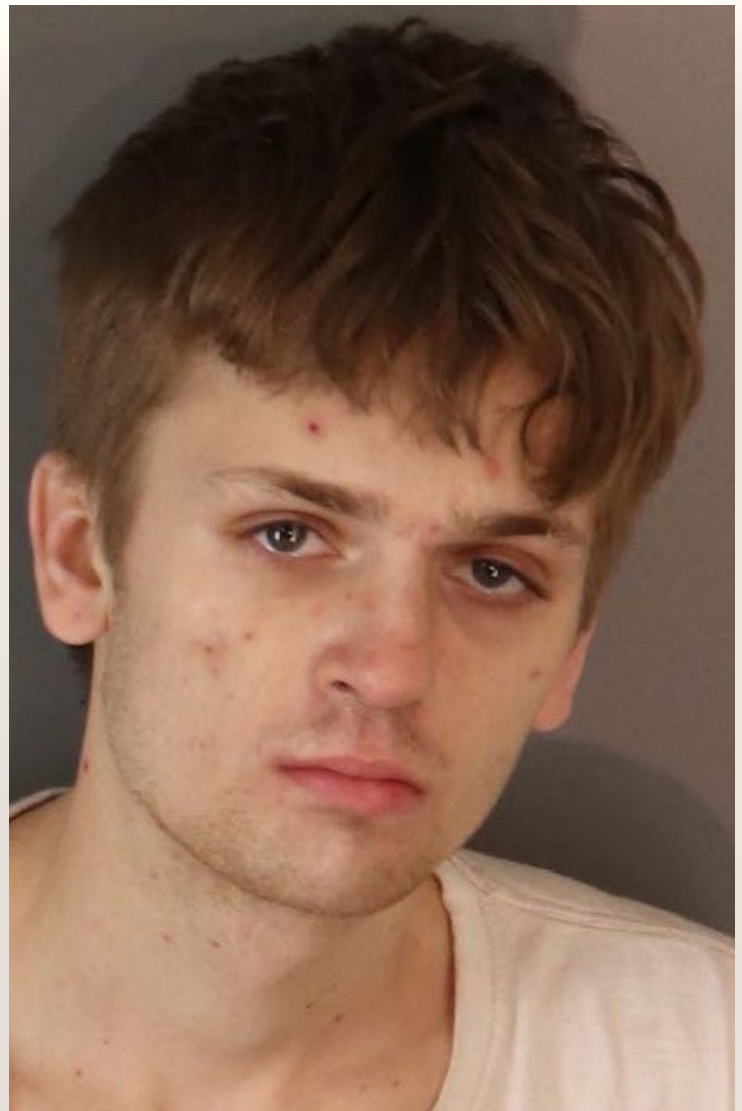
The victim who died in this case is Angel Vazquez, 18. The morning of Oct. 4, 2020, he was found unresponsive at a home in Eastvale. He was transported to a nearby hospital and pronounced dead about an hour later. A 16-year-old victim, listed in count two, overdosed but survived and was found in the same home on that day.

“There is no safe way to use or to sell fentanyl. Simply put, it is lethal,” DA Mike Hestrin said. “Those who sell fentanyl should know that and, if they choose to sell it anyway and someone dies, the dealer should be prosecuted for murder.”

This was the first fentanyl-related murder case filed by a DA's Office in Southern California and among the very first in the state. Our office will continue to file murder charges, based on the evidence, against anyone who sells or provides drugs containing illicit fentanyl to someone who dies after ingesting it.

Fentanyl is known to be an extremely dangerous and potent manmade opioid that is very lethal and potentially deadly in even very small amounts. It is 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times more potent than morphine. It only takes about two milligrams of fentanyl to potentially be lethal for most people. For perspective of how small that amount is, it takes 5,000 milligrams to make one teaspoon.

The case, RIF2100641, is being prosecuted by Deputy DA Gerald Pfohl.



Joseph Michael Costanza

Image provided by the Riverside County Sheriff's Dept.

On February 22, 2021, District Attorney Mike Hestrin announced that his office has filed a murder charge against a man accused of selling fentanyl-poisoned drugs to a victim who overdosed and died.



TWO SAN JACINTO MEN INDICTED INCLUDING A CITY COUNCILMEMBER

On June 18, 2021, a Riverside County criminal grand jury indictment was unsealed, charging two San Jacinto men – including a then city councilmember – with four counts involving the operation of an illegal cannabis dispensary.

Joel Lopez and Edward Padilla were each charged in the indictment with one felony count of conspiracy to commit misdemeanor possession of a controlled substance for sale, one felony count of maintaining a place for the purpose of unlawfully selling or giving away a controlled substance, one misdemeanor count of operating without a seller's permit by the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration, and one misdemeanor count of failure to file a sales and use tax return. Lopez was a councilmember in the City of San Jacinto at the time.

In June 2021, Padilla pled guilty to the conspiracy count and was sentenced to 180 days in custody to be served on work release, and 24 months of formal probation. In December 2021, Lopez pled guilty to the court and the judge sentenced him to 365 days in custody and five years of formal probation.

Among the overt acts alleged in the indictment were: That both defendants hired individuals to work for an unlicensed illegal cannabis dispensary called “Santa Fe Co-Op,” “Santa Fe Collective,” or “Santa Fe”. That both defendants placed cannabis and/or THC products for sale in display cases inside 1190 S. San Jacinto Ave., in San Jacinto. That both defendants, and others, sold cannabis and/or THC products from that same address to members of the public. That both defendants sold cannabis and/or THC products to the public through a delivery service. And that Lopez received the proceeds from the illegal sale of cannabis.

The case BAF2101021, was prosecuted by Deputy DA Lauren Dossey of the DA's Public Protection Unit.



Deputy DA Lauren Dossey

MAN SENTENCED TO DEATH FOR MURDER OF TEENAGE GIRL

On Dec. 4, 2020, a Long Beach man was sentenced to death for the 2010 murder of 17-year-old Norma Lopez as she walked from school to a friend's house in Moreno Valley. Jesse Perez Torres was found guilty on March 13, 2019, of one count of first-degree murder and jurors found the special circumstance of murder during the commission of a felony, in this case kidnapping, to be true. A week later, the same jurors determined that Torres should be sentenced to death. Judge Bernard Schwartz affirmed the jury's decision and sentenced Torres to death.

Norma was kidnapped on July 15, 2010, as she walked from summer school at Valley View High School in Moreno Valley to a friend's house. Five days later, her body was found in a dirt field about three miles away. Torres was later identified as the suspect and was charged in October 2011 by the District Attorney's Office with Norma's murder. At the time of the crime, Torres lived in the Moreno Valley neighborhood where the murder and kidnapping happened. The case, RIF1105550, was prosecuted by Deputy DAs Michael Kersse (now retired) and Kevin Beecham.



Norma Lopez, 17

Image provided by Riverside County Sheriff's Department.

TWO PEOPLE SHOT IN THEATER CHARGES FILED IN CORONA CASE

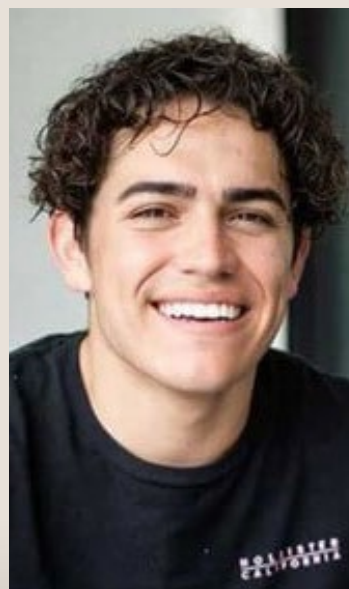
In July 2021, the Riverside County District Attorney's Office filed charges against a man accused of shooting and killing two people in a Corona movie theater July 26, 2021. Joseph Jimenez of the unincorporated area of Corona, has been charged with two counts of murder with a sentencing enhancement of personal use of a firearm causing death, a sentencing enhancement of personally inflicting great bodily injury and a sentencing enhancement of personal use of a firearm causing great bodily injury. The DA's Office has also filed two special circumstance allegations -- lying in wait and multiple murders. Those special circumstance allegations make Jimenez eligible for the death penalty.

On July 26, 2021, the victims in this case, Rylee Goodrich, 18, and Anthony Barajas, 19, both of Corona, attended the 9:35 p.m. showing of a movie at the Regal Edwards Theatre at the Crossings at Corona shopping center. After the movie ended, theater employees went to clean the auditorium and made the horrific discovery that the two victims had been shot in the head. Goodrich was pronounced dead at the scene and Barajas was taken to a nearby hospital where he later died.

The case, RIF2103205, is being prosecuted by Deputy DA Kevin Beecham of the DA's Homicide Trial Team.



Joseph Jimenez charged with two counts of murder.



Anthony Barajas, 19



Rylee Goodrich, 18

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

The Bureau of Investigation



Joe DelGuidice
Chief of Investigators

The Bureau of Investigation is the investigative arm of the District Attorney's Office, comprised more than 115 sworn DA investigators, and more than 70 non-sworn support team members which includes investigative technicians, examiners, forensic accountants and technicians, computer forensic specialists, audio-video technicians, dispatchers, and clerical support. We provide a full range of professional law enforcement services in our effort to keep the residents and visitors of Riverside County safe.

The Bureau conducts criminal investigations, prepares and serves warrants, collects additional evidence for prosecution, and arrests suspects. We also detect and locate witnesses, conduct interviews, and serve subpoenas. Our work takes us not just throughout the county, but also throughout the state, country, and in certain cases, the world.

The Bureau's management structure is comprised of a Chief Investigator, two Assistant Chief Investigators, six Commanders, and 17 Supervising Investigators. There are more than 50 different investigative assignments, including homicide, gangs, drugs, crimes against children, sexual assault, white-collar crimes, environmental protection, and many more. We also lead or participate on a variety of innovative law enforcement task forces with local, state, and federal law enforcement partners, such as fugitive apprehension, organized crime involving gangs and cartels, cannabis regulation, auto theft, human trafficking, and more. All of this makes us one of, if not the most successful and progressive DA bureaus in the State of California.

The following examples are but a glimpse into the heroic efforts that these law enforcement professionals undertake daily.

EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT EDD & Fraud Task Forces

Riverside County District Attorney Mike Hestrin serves as the Team Leader for the Southern California Working Group Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and Unemployment Insurance Fraud Task Force. The task force was formed to combat Employment Development Department (EDD) fraud in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The State of California responded to the pandemic and offered much needed financial assistance through EDD benefits. The benefits helped support those who lost their jobs or had a reduction in work hours and provided financial assistance to stressed businesses. Many families relied on these benefits for basic living expenses.

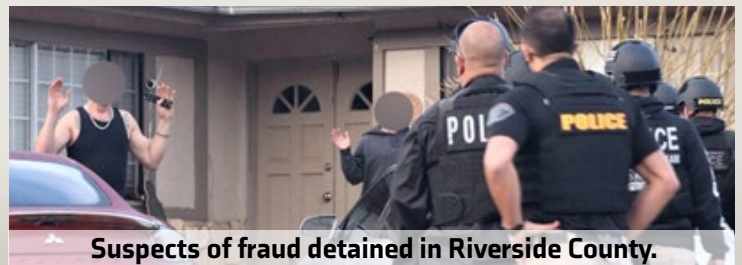
As the pandemic progressed, more and more Californians applied for EDD economic relief benefits. Unfortunately, the easy availability of EDD money, funded by California taxpayers, attracted many fraudsters and identity thieves who used unsuspecting victims' stolen personal information to obtain EDD payments. These victims only became aware of the crime when they filed legitimate unemployment claims or were notified by their employer.

Another massive source of EDD fraud involves California state prisoners and county jail inmates. These inmates conspired with criminals on the outside to file

falsified EDD applications. These outside facilitators would withdraw money using EDD debit cards and share the fraudulently obtained benefits with the prisoners. The loss is estimated to be in the billions of taxpayer dollars which ultimately may never reach the neediest Californians.

In late 2020, DA Hestrin tasked the Bureau of Investigation with fighting EDD fraud by conducting criminal investigations. DA Investigators are working tirelessly, side-by-side with our prosecutors and allied law enforcement agencies, as part of the statewide EDD fraud task force. The investigations are complex and require countless hours of painstaking document review and financial analysis to identify fraudulent activity.

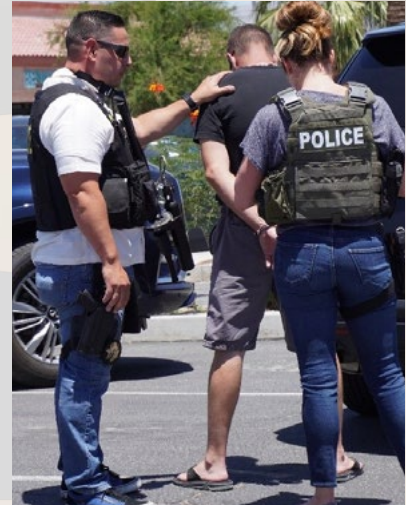
Our team is currently investigating more than 40 active EDD fraud cases. The goal is to bring criminals to justice and recover stolen EDD funds. To that end, our investigators have arrested multiple suspects, served more than 100 search warrants, and seized hundreds of thousands of dollars in ill-gotten assets including luxury goods purchased with fraudulently obtained benefits.



Suspects of fraud detained in Riverside County.

RCCET

Riverside County Child Exploitation Team



District Attorney investigators operate in the field.

In June 2020, the Bureau identified a dramatic increase in the number of online predators targeting children in Riverside County with the nefarious purpose of meeting in-person and engaging in sexual activity.

To facilitate the fast identification and apprehension of these suspects, the Bureau of Investigation developed the Riverside County Child Exploitation Team (RCCET). This proactive approach is a Bureau-led task force comprised of investigators from the DA Bureau of Investigation and other local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies.

Since 2006, the Bureau of Investigation has been directly involved in monitoring registered sex offenders and investigating internet cyber-tips in Riverside County. Proactively pursuing sexual predators online is among RCCET's highest priorities. Additionally, internet cyber-tips are forwarded to the Bureau of Investigation by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) from their cyber-tip database. One of the many complex cases this unit has worked involves an incident which occurred late last year.

On December 4, 2020, RCCET began investigating multiple cyber-tips involving a suspect. This 36-year-old man was uploading numerous images and videos of himself having sexual relations with several underage females. Investigators discovered that he had gained access to two of these individuals by posing as their father. Subsequent investigation positively identified the suspect and his place of residence.

During the extensive investigation, numerous victims were identified including the suspect's own daughters. Investigators learned that the youngest daughter—and most recent victim—was in Mexico with him on vacation. Through the assistance of an ex-wife, investigators learned the suspect was aware of the investigation and was taking active measures to avoid apprehension in Southern California.

On December 9, 2020, RCCET investigators located a family in Long Beach, California that was actively helping the suspect avoid arrest. During his flight to avoid justice, he had abandoned his personal property including a cell phone which the investigators had been tracking. Through further investigation it was determined he had been dropped off at a bus terminal in Huntington Park, intending to take a bus to Mexico and disappear. While en route to Mexico, the bus stopped in the City of Anaheim, and with the assistance of the Anaheim Police Department, the suspect was detained.

The suspect was then arrested by RCCET investigators and returned to Riverside County. Although the nature of his crimes has undoubtedly caused lasting damage to the victims, the dedicated work of RCCET investigators brought him to justice and ended the nightmare they were experiencing at his hands.

The Riverside County District Attorney's Office - Bureau of Investigation is proud of this unit, and all of those that serve or work with our partner agencies. We will continue to dedicate resources to remove these monsters from our streets.

RCCET consists of law enforcement officers and investigators dedicated to proactively monitoring and tracking registered sex offenders to ensure their compliance with registration requirements, and to protect our children through community education and the identification, apprehension, and prosecution of those who commit internet crimes against children. The task force works in partnership with the following agencies: Riverside County Sheriff's Department, the Beaumont, Blythe, Desert Hot Springs, Menifee, Murrieta, and Riverside police departments, California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation, FBI, the Inland Regional Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking task force, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and U.S. Marshals Service. RCCET is an affiliate of the San Diego Internet Crimes Against Children task force. For more information about RCCET or sex offender information and internet safety tips, please visit www.RivCoSAFE.org.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Division of Victim Services



Melissa Donaldson
Director of Victim Services

The dominating factor for all of us has been COVID-19 and how to navigate our way to continue to serve crime victims during this very challenging time. As designated essential workers, the Division of Victim Services continued to provide services throughout the pandemic, albeit differently due to the use of technology, but they were delivered! Out of all crisis comes opportunity and that opportunity for those of us in advocacy was the ability to continue to serve victims while evaluating our delivery systems to ensure help was delivered. The ability to access more online training than ever before helps ensure we maintain a professional staff that is educated on trauma informed service delivery for the citizens we serve.

A very exciting addition to our commitment to trauma-informed care was securing our first K-9 facility dog, Rachel. Research shows the addition of facility dogs into the justice system results in less trauma for victims and witnesses, and Rachel has also been a benefit to our staff. The work done here in Victim Services is stressful and heart wrenching and seeing Rachel's wagging tail sometimes makes all the difference for all she comes in contact with. We know our youngest victims can recount trauma with less stress when K-9 Rachel is with them and because of the positive effects on child victims we are adding another K-9 facility dog in 2022.

Professionalism, knowledge and compassion are the attributes that are required by all staff working in the Division of Victim Services. We have successfully built a team with those attributes and more. Due to the changes internally, it was recognized by county officials that there was a need to move from a para-professional classification to a professional one. This change brought respect, pay and acknowledgment of the importance of the work we do as part of the prosecution team. This division is the social services arm of our office. Riverside County is now the model for the state and perhaps nation. Once the best kept secret of the Riverside County District Attorney's Office, the Division of Victim Services is now recognized as critical to helping victims of crime and our communities in the prevention, intervention and treatment of those affected by crime.

HELPING VICTIM'S FAMILY

AFTER MURDER OF TEENAGE GIRL

In December 2020, the man who kidnapped and murdered 17-year-old Norma Lopez was sentenced to death. But that disposition in Norma's case took a decade to finally happen and our Victim Services Specialist was with the family the entire time.

In July 2010 the case of a missing 17-year-old girl resulted in significant media attention as well as concern from the public. In the early hours of July 15, 2010, Norma Lopez was doing what many teens do -- innocently walking to a friend's house from summer school. But she was never seen again. The Lopez family was devastated when their daughter went missing and ultimately it was determined that she had been the victim of a kidnapping and murder. The family was consumed with grief and sadness at the loss of their daughter. Victim Services Specialist Yadira Vega took this tragic case and began working with the family even before our office filed any charges. Victim Service Specialists have a very challenging job to do especially when a young person is missing. Yadira met with the family to explain the process of the investigation of a missing child alongside local law enforcement and the FBI. The Lopez family was in a state of shock and despair and relied on Yadira being able to provide trauma-informed services, and to assist the family in navigating the criminal justice system. The case

unfortunately turned from a missing person to a murder investigation when Norma's body was found. Yadira was asked to help the family with making funeral arrangements. Yadira's commitment to and concern for the family compelled her to attend the funeral to continue to provide support and care.

This criminal case went on for a decade from 2010 to 2020 and through almost 100 court hearings Yadira was there, supporting and accompanying the family. During those 10 years, there were changes in personnel and even Yadira switched assignments, but she always requested to keep the case and provided the family with much-needed consistency. Yadira always worked hard to assist the family in understanding the many hearings, meetings and evidence that happened. The trial for Norma's killer went on for two months and everyday Yadira was always there with the family. Yadira not only coordinated the many witnesses that testified during the trial she also provided critical court support for the grief-stricken family. She explained to them in Spanish what had happened in court so that the family knew and understood everything that had transpired. Yadira's decade long commitment to this case and this family is an example of the passion and professionalism we have come to expect from our Victim Services Specialists.

BUTANE HONEY OIL EXPLOSION CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM



Members of the Crisis Response Team respond to a butane honey oil explosion.



Victim Services Specialists of the Crisis Response Team



Leaders of DVS and SAFE FJC

On March 1, 2021, the DA's Division of Victim Services (DVS) received an urgent call from the Riverside Police Department (RPD) requesting the assistance of the Crisis Response Team (CRT). DVS Supervisor Jeanette Hunter took the call from the RPD sergeant who was at the scene of a butane honey oil lab explosion.

The explosion caused a fire and ongoing hazards impacted the surrounding apartments and its tenants. Jeanette supervises the Crisis Response Team which is comprised of specially trained Victim Services Specialists who deploy and respond to mass victimization crimes to assist victims and witnesses.

Thankfully no one was killed or injured in the explosion, but the structure of the apartment building was damaged causing the surrounding tenants to be displaced. Riverside Police Department requested emergency assistance for a family of three, including a 5-year-old child. The family had remained there with police and said they had nowhere to go. Assistance was also requested to contact additional victims who had fled the scene. At the direction of DVS Director Melissa Donaldson, Jeanette deployed two CRT Victim Services Specialists to meet with RPD and the family so that emergency resources could be provided. Jeanette coordinated follow-up assistance for this family and the other tenants through the American Red Cross.

Victim Services Specialist Denise Diamond and Claims Unit Supervisor Tara Fuller contacted three other families providing emergency assistance with temporary lodging and vouchers for groceries and necessities since they were unable to access their belongings. The Division of Victim Services worked closely with the Red Cross which assigned a case manager to the families to provide ongoing assistance with lodging while their apartments were uninhabitable. The DVS Crisis Response Team works closely with various partners to provide a coordinated response with law enforcement, the Red Cross, and California Victim Compensation Board (CalVCB) to provide immediate assistance to victims. The Crisis Response Team is made possible through the support of special grant funding from the California Office of Emergency Services.



K-9 CHEWIE

BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

There is a member of the DA's Bureau of Investigation that loves to meet new people, chew on branches, and play "tug-o-war." But he also is very good at finding electronic device that suspects, like those involved in child pornography, try to hide from authorities.

Meet Chewie, an electronic scent detection canine with the Riverside County Child Exploitation Team (RCCET), which is led by our Bureau of Investigation. Chewie is an English Labrador who joined our office in August 2020.

Chewie is specially trained to locate electronic devices - such as laptops, thumb drives, SD cards, external hard drives, cell phones, tablets, etc. - used to store digital media. One of the important missions of the RCCET task force is investigating crimes committed against children using the internet and other electronic communications including possessing, distributing, and producing child pornography; sextortion of minors; and adults seeking sex with a minor. That's where Chewie's skills truly help.

DA Sr. Investigator Joel Pabelico II was selected in 2020 to be Chewie's handler. "Being Chewie's handler is a lot of work. It's fun and tiring at the same time," Pabelico said. "I am extremely proud to be his handler because of the work we are doing. Knowing that Chewie has the ability to locate electronic storage devices that may contain videos or images of child sexual assault material which can help convict a suspect and ultimately save a child - there is no greater satisfaction."

When our Bureau of Investigation determined there was a need for an electronic scent detection (ESD) canine to assist the task force they found Operation Underground Railroad, a non-profit organization that agreed to sponsor an ESD canine. Chewie was deployed 53 times in 2021 when RCCET was conducting operations. Chewie will often find devices that have also been found by investigators, but there were at least two electronic storage devices that Chewie found that had not been located by investigators. Chewie is also utilized as a "comfort" canine during these operations when children are also at these traumatic scenes.

RCCET is a team of local, state, and federal law enforcement officers and investigators dedicated to proactively monitoring and tracking registered sex offenders to ensure their compliance with registration requirements, and to protect our children through community education and the identification, apprehension, and prosecution of those who commit internet crimes against children. The task force works in partnership with the following agencies: Riverside County Sheriff's Department, the Beaumont, Blythe, Desert Hot Springs, Menifee, Murrieta, and Riverside police departments, California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation, FBI, the Inland Regional Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking task force, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and U.S. Marshals Service. RCCET is an affiliate of the San Diego Internet Crimes Against Children task force. For more information about RCCET or sex offender information and internet safety tips, please visit www.RivCoSAFE.org.



K-9 RACHEL

DIVISION OF VICTIM SERVICES

K-9 Rachel joined the Riverside County DA's Office on Nov. 12, 2020. She is the first facility dog with the Division of Victim Services. K-9 Rachel's mission is to work directly with victims and witnesses to help them through trauma from victimization and provide some comfort as they move forward in the criminal justice system.

Rachel can help children get through meetings and interviews that can be very stressful for them, especially if they must talk about what has happened to them. These meetings are necessary and can be emotionally difficult for all concerned, but K-9 Rachel helps the victims manage their stress – especially if they are testifying in court.

K-9 Rachel is partnered with her certified handler, Rosa Gutierrez, who is also an experienced Victim Services Specialist with the Division of Victim Services. Raised and trained by Assistance Dogs of the West, a service dog organization that is accredited by Assistance Dogs International, K-9 Rachel has been specifically trained as a Courthouse Facility Dog which is different than a therapy dog.

She sits quietly under the witness stand with distraught and upset individuals as they testify, and can handle the intense, emotional environment of a courtroom during a preliminary hearing, jury trial, or sentencing hearing without being with her handler. The leash can be held by our young victims, which brings comfort and a sense of control. During interviews, K-9 Rachel and her handler work together with the Deputy District Attorney and Victim Services Specialist assigned to the case to use K-9 Rachel's special training for a more trauma-informed environment.

She supports the prosecutor and Victim Services Specialist in building rapport with the victim or witness. This could simply include providing K-9 Rachel's quiet, calming presence and empathy, or creating some relaxing games by using the more than 90 cues to which K-9 Rachel has been trained to respond. K-9 Rachel even has her own coloring book which children love to use and take home.

Participating in criminal justice proceedings is often re-traumatizing for victims of crime and arguably can be one of the most stressful events a child may experience. The Division of Victim Services is looking forward to growing its Facility Dog Program, expanding the reach and impact of these unique services throughout the county.

What's in your pills? Fentanyl kills.

Illegally obtained pills may contain Fentanyl.

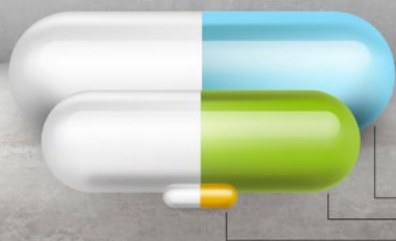


RIVERSIDE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

HOW MUCH DOES IT TAKE TO KILL?

A lethal dose of fentanyl is 2mg.

Fentanyl is 50x stronger than heroin
and 100x stronger than morphine.



Morphine
Heroin
Fentanyl



One in four pills containing fentanyl is lethal.
Counterfeits are made to look real.



Fentanyl is 50x stronger than heroin and 100x stronger than morphine.
More than **150 people die each day** due to overdoses related to synthetic opioids.
California has seen a **40% spike in fatalities** compared to the previous 12 months.

It's not a drug.
It's a poison.

1 Lethal Dose



Penny for scale.

THE DANGER OF FENTANYL LEADS TO NEW OUTREACH CAMPAIGN

In 2020, Matt Capelouto contacted our office. He shared the heartbreaking story of how his daughter, Alexandra, died from fentanyl poisoning. It is then that our office realized the impact that fentanyl was having in our community.

We quickly learned that fentanyl changes the paradigm of drug use. What the public generally thinks about the dangers of drug use was no longer entirely accurate. Fentanyl was killing people – including young people like Alexandra – in our community at an alarming rate.

Fentanyl is so deadly that high school and college students who were just experimenting with drugs and took one pill were dying. In many cases, they had no idea that fentanyl was in the pill or illicit drug that they were taking. Most people do not know what fentanyl is, or how deadly it is, until it is too late. Once we realized the impact fentanyl was having and the limited information available to the public, we started our commitment to informing the community about the dangers of fentanyl.

Fentanyl is a synthetic, manmade opiate that can be easily produced in a lab or on the streets. Fentanyl is less expensive than other opiates and is highly addictive. Fentanyl is 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine.

Fentanyl is being added to counterfeit pills and misrepresented as prescription items like Xanax, Percocet, and Oxycodone. Fentanyl is also mixed with other street drugs such as heroin, cocaine, and even marijuana. It only takes two milligrams (1/2500 of a teaspoon) to be a lethal dose. In 2016, Riverside County had two fentanyl-related deaths and in 2020 we had 227. That is a startling 800 percent increase.

Our office recognizes that fentanyl is terrorizing our community. We are dedicated to combatting the fentanyl crisis with a three-prong approach: education, prevention, and prosecution.

In 2021, we created a social media campaign “What’s in your pills? Fentanyl Kills” to educate the public about the dangers of fentanyl which includes several informative graphics and videos. We partnered with local community organizations like the Corona Chamber of Commerce to provide vehicle bumper stickers with our phrase “What’s in your pills? Fentanyl kills.” The bumper stickers were placed on official DA’s Office vehicles and were also provided to the public at various community outreach events and presentations. The same image and message seen on the bumper stickers is also on a freeway billboard that is being placed in various locations across the county.

On a countywide level, our office is an active participant in the Board of Supervisors-directed Multidisciplinary Committee for Fentanyl Response. Our office also is collaborating with the federal Drug Enforcement Administration, the U.S. Attorney’s Office, and the San Bernardino District Attorney’s Office to implement law enforcement trainings, public service announcements, and school presentations in the Inland Empire.

Our Crime Prevention Unit recognized the importance of educating our youth about the dangers of fentanyl. They created a presentation aimed at the high school student audience that includes various videos to grab and hold their attention. At the end of each presentation, they have a parent share how they have lost their child to fentanyl poisoning. These presentations have been given to students and parents both virtually and in-person across Riverside County.

In addition to our public outreach efforts, our Bureau of Investigation has played a vital role in prevention and enforcement. The Riverside County Gang Impact Team (GIT), which is supervised by the DA’s Bureau of Investigation, has seized fentanyl from dealers in our community on multiple different occasions. From Feb. 4 to March 10, 2021, GIT seized 10 kilos, or about 22 pounds, of fentanyl in Riverside County. That equates to about 5.5 million lethal doses. To put that into perspective, Riverside County’s population is 2.5 million people. In that short period, our investigators seized enough fentanyl to kill every person in Riverside County. Twice.

Our office is dedicated to taking a tough stance on prosecuting fentanyl dealers and those who provide drugs mixed with fentanyl. Our office was the first DA’s Office in Southern California and among the few offices to criminally charge drug dealers with murder for selling or providing fentanyl-laced drugs to someone who dies from ingesting it. At the time of publication, our office has filed 12 cases, charging 13 defendants with fentanyl-related murder.

Fentanyl is a new epidemic. The Riverside County DA’s Office is dedicated to informing, preventing, and prosecuting others to keep our community safe.

To learn more about the dangers of fentanyl, visit our website: rivcoda.org/dangers-of-fentanyl

SAFE FAMILY JUSTICE CENTERS COMPREHENSIVE VICTIM ASSISTANCE

Over the last 16 years, the Riverside County SAFE Family Justice Centers (SAFE FJC) have been serving victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, elder abuse, child abuse, human trafficking, and youth who are at risk by the thousands with comprehensive multiagency services under one roof.

Riverside County was the first county in the United States to have more than one “Family Justice Center” and now serves as home to four regional centers. Three of the SAFE FJC office locations are hosted by the Riverside County District Attorney’s Office. This unique public and private partnership serves as a nationwide best practice service delivery model for victims of crime and ensures that victim safety is at the forefront in the pursuit of justice. The fourth center is sponsored by the City of Temecula and has been serving Southwest Riverside County since 1998, proving that local government agency sponsorships are invaluable to the sustainability of nonprofit victim service providers.

The SAFE Family Justice Centers were established to help increase victim reporting to law enforcement, reduce domestic violence-related homicide rates, provide

confidential services, address the needs of underserved populations, and provide more streamlined access to victim services in the community. While the centers are not a part of the District Attorney’s Office, these nonprofit centers are uniquely located within proximity to the District Attorney’s Office, courts, jails, and law enforcement agencies to help victims who are navigating the criminal justice system. The goal of SAFE FJC is to deliver urgently needed and confidential services to the most vulnerable children, youth, and adults who have become victims of abuse in our community and to help close the gap in services for those who must navigate the criminal justice system.

On average, a victim of abuse may be required to navigate upwards of 10 different systems and service providers at one time to obtain help that is critically necessary to support their safety, healing, and security following an act of violence. The SAFE Family Justice Center is designed to provide centralized services to the community so that residents do not have to retell their story multiple times and travel across the county with limited resources to obtain help with while seeking justice. Working within each center, victims will find that they can access services from confidential domestic violence advocates, rape crisis centers, law enforcement officials, social workers, district attorney’s office prosecutors, victim service specialists, courthouse facility dogs, investigators, counselors, and other community-based organizations. Individuals seeking services obtain immediate and long-term relief services that are unique to their needs.

The SAFE Family Justice Centers experience high family violence recidivism rates and 25 percent of the client service population represents children ages 0-17 who have been directly abused or witnessed violence. Children exposed to violence and other adversities are substantially more likely to smoke, misuse alcohol and drugs, and engage in high-risk sexual behavior. They also have higher rates of anxiety, depression, other mental health problems, and suicide. It is a priority of the SAFE Family Justice Centers to not only treat people with immediate intervention needs but to provide prevention and education services as well. In 2020, SAFE Family Justice Centers began a partnership with the Riverside County District Attorney’s Office Crime Prevention Unit to provide in-depth case management, stability, and response services to at-risk children and their families. This partnership serves as an arm of the Riverside County Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council which is comprised of several government and community-based organizations that work together to provide prevention and intervention services for youth who are at risk and have experienced adverse childhood experiences.

Forging the collaborative relationships of both government and community-based organizations is the foundation for providing quality services to Riverside County residents. This multidisciplinary model increases service provider awareness and connects victims with expedited access to services.



Students browse toys, school supplies, and personal products during an event held by SAFE FJC.



DDA Justin Morrill plays board games with students participating in CPU's Boys Council program.



SAFE Family Justice Centers teamed with Tame Barber Studio in Temecula to provide local families free back-to-school haircuts and school supplies.



Members of the Riverside SAFE Family Justice Center and the District Attorney's Division of Victim Services receive a proclamation from the Riverside County Board of Supervisors for Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

CRIME PREVENTION UNIT PROGRAMS PROVEN TO HELP MINORS

The most effective way to keep our communities safe is to prevent crime before it ever happens. That was District Attorney Michael Hestrin's purpose in creating the Crime Prevention Unit (CPU). Since its inception in 2015, the CPU has worked collaboratively with local schools, community-based organizations, and law enforcement partners to help at-risk youth avoid any involvement with the criminal justice system.

Our goal is to help young people stay in school, achieve academic success, and develop positive life skills. That is why the CPU has developed programs and strategies designed to suppress crime, prevent victimization, and address the disparate needs of at-risk youth and their families.

School Attendance Review Boards (SARB): There is a proven correlation between poor school attendance and the likelihood of criminal justice system involvement. Researchers and educators have long recognized that students who miss school at an early age are more likely to struggle academically and, in later years, drop out entirely. Studies have confirmed that for low-income elementary students who have missed five days of school, each additional school day missed decreased the student's chance of graduating by 7 percent. Without a high school diploma, these children are more likely to end up unemployed and at risk of becoming involved in crime, both as victims and offenders.

That is why, even during the COVID-19 pandemic and remote online learning, CPU attorneys and victim service specialists increased their collaborations with local school districts. By working with educators and implementing recognized best practices to reduce chronic absenteeism, there was a positive increase in school attendance for more than two-thirds of families that met with CPU members and school district representatives during the 2020-21 school year.

Youth Empowerment and Safety (YES) Presentations: "YES" presentations provide youth empowerment and anti-victimization education spanning a wide range of critical social issues like bullying, internet safety, fentanyl awareness, human trafficking, and teen dating/domestic violence. In 2020-2021, CPU members provided 222 YES presentations to more than 15,000 residents.

Gang Awareness, Mentorship, and Education (GAME): We are dedicated to reducing youth drug abuse and gang violence through the District Attorney's GAME program. As a testament to its effectiveness in 2020-2021, 98.1 percent of survey respondents said that GAME presentations made them want to stay away from gangs and 98.6 percent of respondents said the presentations made them want to abstain from illegal drug use.

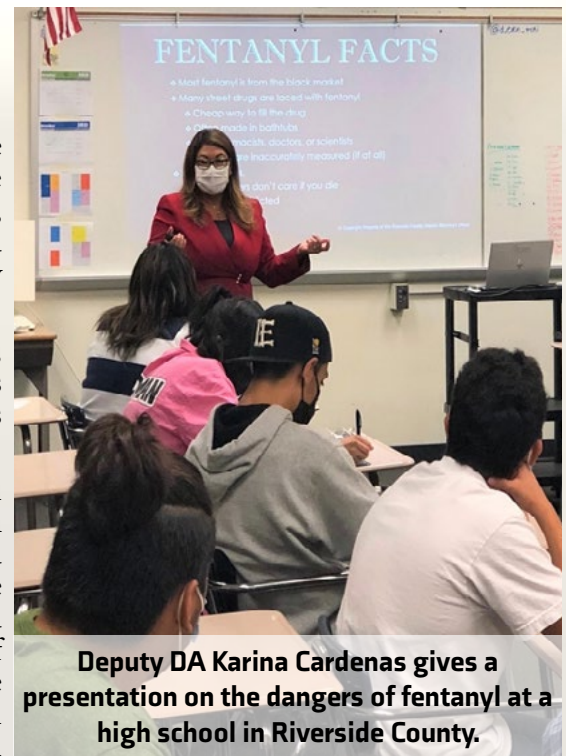
Aware to Care Exchange: In 2020 and 2021, the CPU partnered with the Riverside County Office of Education, first responders, and school districts to create the Aware to Care Exchange. The Aware to Care Exchange is a notification system supporting children exposed to violence and other adverse experiences. The system allows first responders (e.g., paramedics, fire, police) who encounter trauma-affected children to send a notification to the child's school district. The notifications do not provide confidential details about the incidents or identify the referring agencies. However, the Aware to Care Exchange alerts a child's school site that the student experienced a traumatic event and may require support from educators and counselors.

School staff can then observe the child's school performance and provide trauma-sensitive services and interventions if they believe it will be helpful and appropriate. In 2021, the Aware to Care Exchange received over 170 notifications of children experiencing trauma in our communities. Those notifications spanned 80 different schools across 20 Riverside County school districts.

De-Escalation, Assistance, and Resource Team (DART): Created and implemented during 2020-2021 in the Moreno Valley Unified School District, DART provides preventive anti-violence and anti-victimization education. DART also deploys an experienced Deputy DA and victim services specialist to school sites in response to school-related traumatic events. They provide students with social and emotional support as well as referrals to community resources.

REStoring Opportunities After Rehabilitation (RESTOAR): The District Attorney's Office is steadfastly dedicated to vigorous and ethical prosecution of every case. We also recognize a responsibility to help former offenders reintegrate back into society and make positive contributions to our communities.

The District Attorney's RESTOAR helps justice-involved adults move beyond their past transgressions. In 2020-2021, RESTOAR spearheaded its countywide collaboration which connects adults with resource providers who directly assist those with criminal backgrounds. RESTOAR attorneys also provide free webinars addressing how to obtain court relief for criminal convictions and how fair employment laws apply to those with criminal records.



Deputy DA Karina Cardenas gives a presentation on the dangers of fentanyl at a high school in Riverside County.





RECRUITING PROGRAM 2020-2021

The District Attorney is firmly committed to hiring only the most outstanding and ethical attorneys to serve the People of Riverside County. One of the primary ways the office ensures it is recruiting only the highest caliber of attorneys is through its Law School Summer Externship pipeline-to-employment program.

Each year, in anticipation of the Summer Externship Program, the District Attorney's Office embarks on an aggressive recruitment campaign. In both the Fall and Spring semesters of the law school year, the DA's Office recruits at every law school in California and Arizona, as well as dozens of law schools across the country, and at numerous large law school consortium public interest career fairs. Additionally, to ensure the DA's Office is as diverse and vibrant as Riverside County, the office actively collaborates with various affinity groups that advocate for groups that are historically underrepresented in law enforcement or the legal community. The District Attorney's Summer Externship Program has developed a reputation in the law school community as one of the most elite training grounds for future prosecutors in the nation. During the 2020-2021 recruitment season alone, the DA's Office interviewed 369 law students for approximately 40 summer law clerk positions.

Starting the Tuesday after Memorial Day, these high-performing students begin their clerkship with a week-long Extern Training Academy that includes courses on criminal procedure, evidence, legal research and writing, police and prosecutorial misconduct prevention, and oral advocacy, among other topics. In addition to classroom learning, they also participate in a research and writing workshop that has them practice drafting a sample legal motion and conducting a practice preliminary hearing. After this intensive training academy, they are assigned to our office locations in Riverside, Indio, Murrieta, and Banning for the duration of their 10-week externship.

While externing, first-year students assist attorneys with true legal research and writing assignments from various units throughout the office. Under the supervision of experienced prosecutors, first-year students can expect to draft several trial briefs, motions in oppositions to suppress evidence, objective research memorandums analyzing novel or unique legal issues, letters to the California State Board of Parole opposing the early release of a violent convicted felon, and various other similar legal assignments. First-year law students also engage in an oral advocacy training program weekly throughout the summer. At the conclusion of the summer, the highest performing first-year clerks are invited to participate in our second-year clerkship.

Second-year law students must be certified by the California State Bar to appear in court and appear in court they do. While the first-year program teaches first-year students the fundamentals of legal analysis in research and writing, the second-year program is centered on combining those fundamentals with real life oral advocacy in court. Under the supervision and with the guidance of experienced prosecutors, second-year clerks conduct preliminary hearings, argue legal motions, negotiate with defense counsel, advocate to the court in chambers conferences, and many even conduct jury trials either as first chair in select misdemeanor cases or as second chair in felony cases.

The summer concludes with the countywide Extern Closing Argument Competition for all first- and second-year clerks. Since 2007, this competition is not only a staple of the externship program, but also the highlight for most extern's summer. All externs give a closing argument and throughout the week top competitors advance further in the competition, receiving new police reports, exhibits, and witness statements to incorporate throughout their preparations. The final two competitors in the "championship round" give their closing argument to a panel of judges. Past judges have included the elected District Attorney, his Chief and Assistant District Attorneys, the Chief of the Bureau of Investigation, the Director of Victim Services, Superior Court Judges, Associate Justices of the 4th District Court of Appeals, and the Riverside County Public Defender.

Throughout this essentially 10-week on-the-job interview, each extern's ethics, legal acumen, research and writing ability, oral advocacy skill, commitment to excellence, dedication to public service, and work ethic are evaluated. Those that have demonstrated they meet the highest standards in all these categories will earn an offer to become a Riverside County Deputy District Attorney upon graduating law school and passing the bar exam.

VETERANS TREATMENT COURT

CONSIDERATION FOR INVISIBLE WOUNDS

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Military Sexual Trauma (MST). Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

These are just a few of the invisible wounds of military service that the Riverside County Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) seeks to treat through a multi-disciplinary, collaborative approach to alternative sentencing. This court seeks to bolster public safety by treating the physical and invisible wounds of those who have entered the criminal justice system as a result of their dedicated service.

The Riverside County District Attorney's Office is joined by other partners including Riverside County Superior Court, Riverside County Probation Department, Department of Veterans Affairs, Riverside University Health Systems (RUHS), Riverside County Public Defender, and Reaching New Heights Foundation. The DA's Office has one dedicated Deputy District Attorney assigned to the department who is tasked with evaluating the eligibility and suitability of each case and each Veteran while ensuring that victim's rights continue to be a priority for the life of the case.

A defendant is eligible for VTC if the defendant was/is a member of the United States military, the defendant suffers from a mental health problem or substance abuse problem as a result of that service, and the defendant committed the criminal offense as a result of that service.

Once a case is referred for VTC consideration, the defendant is ordered to participate in a psychological assessment by a clinical therapist from RUHS and a case worker from Veterans Affairs. The Probation Department performs a risk assessment. Those reports are provided to the committee for review and discussion. An eligibility hearing is conducted at the Riverside Hall of Justice in Department 31. Victims are invited to present an impact statement to the court or may provide a statement in writing through the District Attorney's representative. The judge makes the ultimate decision to accept or reject the

defendant based on the recommendations of the District Attorney, Public Defender, and assessment team. If the defendant is accepted into VTC, the defendant must plead guilty/agree to a reinstatement of probation.

The program's length is a minimum of 12 months for misdemeanors and 18 months for felony matters. All participants are required to complete comprehensive individualized treatment based on the participant's needs, including court-mandated classes for anger management, impaired driving, or intimate partner violence. Frequent random drug/alcohol test results are used to evaluate progress. A dedicated probation officer closely supervises each of the Veterans. All participants attend frequent court progress hearings to ensure continued judicial intervention. The goal of the program is to provide ancillary services that prevent recidivism and achieve long term recovery.

The program boasts hundreds of graduates who have transformed their lives and returned as contributing members of our community. Here are just some examples: For the Vietnam War Veteran who has suffered from alcohol abuse disorder for decades, resulting in a felony charge for driving under the influence causing injury—this program has helped him attain sobriety and reunite with his family. For the three-time combat Marine who has suffered from PTSD, resulting in a felony domestic violence charge—this program has helped him acquire coping skills so he can regain the trust of his wife and his children. For the Army Veteran who was the victim of military sexual trauma during her service, resulting in a prescription drug addiction—this program helped her attain sobriety and maintain her nursing license.

The VTC has ensured that each Veteran has met their obligations to themselves, the court, and their community. The Riverside County District Attorney's Office is doing its part to support the VTC mission to serve those who have served through their military service.



Veterans salute during Veteran's Court graduation ceremony.



The Hon. Mark Johnson speaks to a graduating veteran.

GERRY LOPEZ RECEIVES LEGACY AWARD

In 2021, Managing Deputy District Attorney Gerry Lopez was recognized with a Legacy Award from the Riverside County Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Commission (JJDC) for his outstanding service and dedication to youth.

Gerry was a prosecutor in our office for 31 years and supervised our Crime Prevention Unit, which was the first unit of its type when it was formed by DA Hestrin when he took office in 2015. Gerry Lopez is well known and respected in the community for the crime prevention work he has done with youth spanning over three decades.

Managing DDA Lopez created the Parent Power presentation, which has been recognized as a best in practice program by the White House and Harvard University. Gerry has received numerous awards, including Juvenile Prosecutor of the Year in 1999, recipient of the Chief Probation Officer's Award in 2012, the Riverside County Office of Education's Community Partnership Award, and most recently the Michael A. Hestrin Award by the SAFE Family Justice Center. Gerry Lopez retired in December of 2021, and he certainly has left a legacy in Riverside County.



**Retired Managing DDA Gerry Lopez received
a Legacy Award from JJDC.**

SUE STEDING & KEVIN RUDDY COUNTY SERVICE MEMORIALIZED

Certain individuals have made an indelible mark on the Riverside County District Attorney's Office and its mission. Two of those people are Sue Steding and Kevin Ruddy. On Nov. 8, 2021, DA Mike Hestrin recognized them for their enduring service with the unveiling of plaques honoring them in The Grover Trask Training Center in our downtown Riverside office.

Sue Steding served in our office from 1973 to her retirement in 2010 and was the first female prosecutor in our desert region. Her trailblazing didn't stop there as then-District Attorney Grover Trask appointed her our office's first female Assistant District Attorney in 1987. She also was the first person to be "second-in-command" serving as the Chief Assistant DA.

During her 34 years of distinguished service to our office and the community, Sue was known and respected as a tremendous mentor with leadership skills second to none. Her positive and undeniable influence as both a leader and a role model has made an everlasting impression on our office.

Sue not only influenced our office and those she worked with, but also the Coachella Valley. Her passion to serve was evident in the many accolades she received from various community and service groups in the valley. Even after retiring, she continued that service as the Dean of Students at the California Desert Trial Academy College of Law.

Kevin Ruddy served in our office from 1978 to 1988 and from 1992 to 2009, retiring as a Chief Deputy DA. Over his career as a prosecutor, he tried 31 homicide cases, including six death penalty cases. He was recognized as Prosecutor of the Year in 1993 and 1994.

Kevin was responsible for reorganizing the review process of homicide and death penalty cases and was instrumental in the development of our "lifer" parole hearing unit. Both of those crucial and far-reaching endeavors were recognized statewide for their innovations.

We thank and honor Sue Steding and Kevin Ruddy for all the amazing work they did for our office and our community.



**Sue Steding
Retired Assistant DA**



**Kevin Ruddy
Retired Chief DDA**

PRIDE AWARDS

2020-2021

Traditionally, the outstanding work done by employees at the Riverside County District Attorney's Office is recognized at an annual PRIDE Awards banquet. In 2020 and 2021, this looked a little different due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Although we were not able to gather as a large group, it was still very important to recognize the achievements of our staff members. DA Mike Hestrin provided plaques to recognize the exceptional work done by our prosecutors, investigators, victim advocates, and support staff. We also recognized the outstanding work done by those in our community. Our Communications Division created videos so our staff could virtually celebrate these accomplishments of their peers.

The lists below recognize the recipients of the 2020 and 2021 awards. We are very proud of their dedication and commitment to excellence.



2020 RECIPIENTS

Prosecutor of the Year	Marcus Garrett
Appellate Prosecutor of the Year	Jesse Male
Crime Prevention Prosecutor of the Year	Evelyn Essenwanger
Juvenile Prosecutor of the Year	Breeanna Fujio
Misdemeanor Prosecutor of the Year	Adelaida Hernandez
Paralegal of the Year	Esperanza Garcia
Investigator of the Year	Paul Bracciodieta
Technician of the Year	David Junior
Advocate of the Year	Carla Aguilar
Clerical Employee of the Year	Janet Garcia
Clerical Employee of the Year	Diana Guerrero
Administration Employee of the Year	Ashley Smith
Volunteer of the Year	Linda Sherman-Nurick
DA Achievement/Leadership Award	Joshlyn Pulliam
Administration Group Award	Accounting/Budget
Administration Group Award	Technology Services Bureau
Administration Group Award	Human Resources
Western Region	Felony Prosecution Unit
Eastern Region	Felony Prosecution Unit
Special Prosecution Region	Brady Unit
Bureau of Investigation	Dispatch



2021 RECIPIENTS

Prosecutor of the Year	Jon Brandon
Prosecutor of the Year	Brittany Bulthuis
Prosecutor of the Year	Steve Sorensen
Appellate Prosecutor of the Year	Sophia Choi
Crime Prevention Prosecutor of the Year	Karina Cardenas
Filing Prosecutor of the Year	Lorie Ronce
Juvenile Prosecutor of the Year	Rick Majchrzak
Misdemeanor Prosecutor of the Year	Ashley Loret
SPR Prosecutor of the Year	Kristen Buie Allison
SPR Prosecutor of the Year	Timothy Mulhere
Paralegal of the Year	January Papanastasatos
Investigator of the Year	Angela Carranza
Technician of the Year	Thane Gallagher
Victim Services Specialist of the Year	Lorena Serrano
Clerical Employee of the Year	Reosha Campbell
Administration Employee of the Year	Devin Michaels
Administration Employee of the Year	Mike Romney
Community Hero of the Year	Dr. Karen Kirschinger
Community Hero of the Year	Dr. Chuck Fischer
Community Hero of the Year	Brian Sousa
Eastern Region	Special Victim's Unit
SPR Region	Child Abduction Unit
Countywide Group/Unit	RCCET

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

LIAISON OFFICER PROGRAM

The Riverside County District Attorney's Office Bureau of Investigation has a Liaison Officer Program to generate and maintain positive working relationships with our allied law enforcement agencies and civilian organizations.

The goals and objectives of the program are to build professional relationships by promoting mutual respect, cooperation, assistance, and education. The Bureau of Investigation understands that cooperation and information sharing is key to increased public safety. As stated in our guiding principles, each member of the Bureau is committed to building strong and viable partnerships with other law enforcement agencies, every component of the criminal justice system, and the community we serve. We recognize that a united and cohesive effort to prevent and punish crime when appropriate allows us to achieve the highest level of public safety for our community.

The professional mandates and job functions of district attorney investigators are quite often misunderstood by our law enforcement partners. This misunderstanding can lead to a lack of communication, cooperation, and respect. The Bureau is determined to build partnerships with other law enforcement agencies and, by fostering improved professional relationships, the Bureau will be contributing to a higher level of service for Riverside County residents. As we work more collaboratively with our law enforcement partners, they will begin to understand the needs of the prosecutor and how valuable their input is to successful prosecution of the cases submitted to the District Attorney's Office. It is the goal of the Bureau to be a leader and innovator in our unique branch of the law enforcement community.



COMMUNITY ACTION TEAM

The Riverside County District Attorney's Office recognizes that communication is an important part of the job. It is especially important to communicate with the 28 independent cities within Riverside County. District Attorney Mike Hestrin has created a new program known as the Community Action Team (CAT). Comprised of 28 Deputy District Attorneys acting as liaisons, the team keeps the county's 28 cities informed about the office, the criminal justice system, and how the criminal justice system affects each of them.

Every month, CAT reaches out to city officials. A CAT liaison designated for that city communicates with the city attorney, city manager, and police chief letting them know about the issues that directly affect them, discuss potential training for their law enforcement, and help with communication. CAT members have also addressed city councils to let them know they are available and offer to be a point of information. As a result of these communications, CAT members have helped cities work on issues from homelessness to understanding what COVID-19 has done to the court system. The CAT liaison for Menifee worked closely with their new police department when it started, helping the new department hit the ground running to protect the residents of that city.

CAT also created a monthly newsletter for cities. It has discussed issues including how SAFE/Family Justice Centers are available to help victims of crime, how the Aware to Care program works with schools to identify those kids who are victims of trauma that would benefit from services, and how our Crime Prevention Unit works to keep kids in school - so they don't become part of the criminal justice system.

Since 2019, cities have not only known that the DA's Office is listening and available, but who specifically they can reach out to when they need information. City managers, police chiefs, and city attorneys know that a CAT liaison Deputy District Attorney will reach out to them every month to see if they can help. If a city has a concern, they know that the District Attorney's Office is just a phone call away.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Transparent communication with the community continues to be a priority at the Riverside County District Attorney's Office. Our Communications Division is dedicated to sharing important information with our community every day via our social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube.

In 2020 and 2021, our office heavily relied on our social media platforms to communicate during challenging times. For the first time ever, our offices were temporarily closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, we utilize social media to immediately inform the public about critical incidents such as a large protest in front of our downtown Riverside office, an officer-involved shooting, and various high-profile cases.

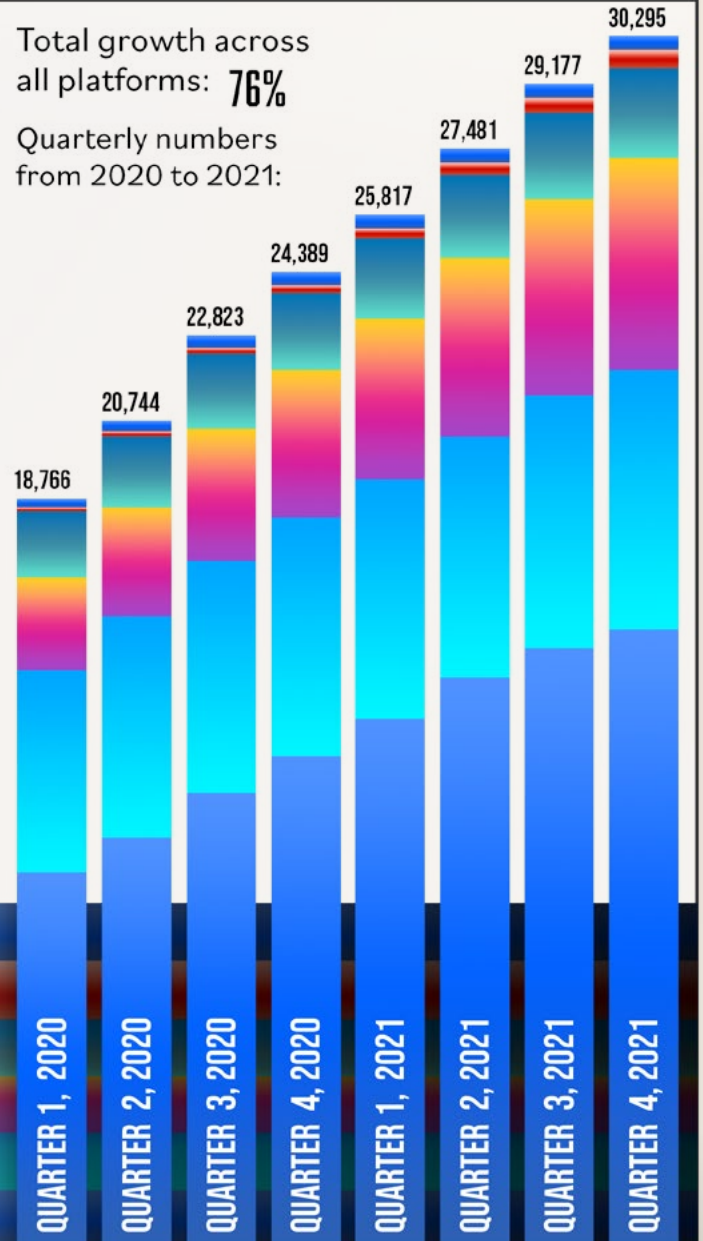
Our office is proactive in reaching as many residents as possible. In 2021 our office joined a new service provider platform called "Nextdoor". This platform currently serves more than 1,500 different neighborhoods in Riverside County. Nextdoor allows us to send out pertinent information to geographic locations within the county. It delivers instant distribution of relevant content to subscribers in designated neighborhoods. Our office has shared public service announcements, case updates, and other important information about the criminal justice system and our office to the nearly 500,000 residents Nextdoor serves.

The continued growth of our social media audience is due to our commitment to consistently creating engaging, dependable, relevant, and timely information. Our Communications Division strives to publish innovative social media posts that inform and captivate our community members. This is evident in the growth of our social media platforms. We started 2020 with less than 18,000 followers on our platforms and ended 2021 with more than 30,000 followers – a 76 percent increase.



Total growth across all platforms: **76%**

Quarterly numbers from 2020 to 2021:



ACCOUNT GROWTH & FOLLOWER COUNT

PLATFORM	GROWTH	FINAL COUNT
SPANISH FACEBOOK:	56.3%	361
YOUTUBE:	386.3%	462
LINKEDIN:	46.6%	2,246
INSTAGRAM:	157.5%	5,287
TWITTER:	30.3%	6,473
ENGLISH FACEBOOK:	79.1%	15,466



82-995 Highway 111,
Suite 101,
Indio, CA 92201



135 N. Alessandro St.,
Banning, CA 92220



220 N Broadway,
Blythe, CA 92225



3960 Orange St.,
Riverside, CA 92501



30755-D Auld Road,
3rd Floor,
Murrieta, CA 92563



ITEM 8B

**Coachella Valley Association of Governments
Public Safety Committee
May 9, 2022**



STAFF REPORT

Subject: Rollout of the 9-8-8 Mental Health Crisis Hotline in Riverside County

Contact: Erica Felci, Assistant Executive Director (efelci@cvaq.org)

Recommendation: Information

Background: In October 2020, President Trump signed bipartisan legislation that established 9-8-8 as the nation's new hotline for mental health emergencies. The idea is that a three-digit number would be easier to remember in times of crisis, instead of the existing, 10-digit National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK).

This hotline transition comes at a time when there is growing momentum at the federal, state and county levels about coordinating responses to mental health emergencies. It also comes on the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which time national health experts warned that mental health concerns were exacerbated. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there were 45,979 suicide deaths in 2020 – which is about one death every 11 minutes. The number of people who think about or attempt suicide is even higher. In 2020, an estimated 12.2 million American adults seriously thought about suicide, 3.2 million planned a suicide attempt, and 1.2 million attempted suicide.

The 9-8-8 hotline is due to roll out by July 2022. The goal will be for the 24-hour hotline to have operators who will not only counsel callers but eventually be equipped to dispatch specially trained responders. This approach should help reduce the resources currently devoted by law enforcement and emergency rooms.

In Riverside County, the Riverside University Health System-Public Health is working to implement 9-8-8. Helpline Coordinator Jenn Carson will provide an update on these efforts to the CVAG Public Safety Committee at its May meeting.


Fiscal Analysis: There is no cost to CVAG for this update.

Item 9A

**COACHELLA VALLEY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
ATTENDANCE RECORD
FY2021-2022**

Voting Members	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	ATTENDED		
Aqua Caliente			●		○		●						2	out of	3
City of Blythe			●		●		●						3	out of	3
Cabazon Band - Vacant			*		*		*						0	out of	3
City of Cathedral City			●		●		●						3	out of	3
City of Coachella			●		●		○						2	out of	3
City of Desert Hot Springs			●		○		●						2	out of	3
City of Indian Wells			●		●		●						3	out of	3
City of Indio			●		●		●						3	out of	3
City of La Quinta			●		●		●						3	out of	3
City of Palm Desert			●		●		○						2	out of	3
City of Palm Springs			●		●		●						3	out of	3
City of Rancho Mirage			●		●		●						3	out of	3
Riverside County			●		●		●						3	out of	3
Total Attendance Per Meeting			12		10		10								

Ex Officio / Non-Voting Members	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	ATTENDED		
Agua Caliente			●		○		●						2	out of	3
California Highway Patrol			●		●		○						2	out of	3
Cathedral City Fire			○		○		●						1	out of	3
Cathedral City Police			○		○		○						0	out of	3
County Probation Department			○		○		●						1	out of	3
Desert Hot Springs Police			●		●		●						3	out of	3
District Attorney's Office			○		●		○						2	out of	3
Indio Police			●		●		●						3	out of	3
Palm Desert Sheriff Station			○		○		●						1	out of	3
Palm Springs Fire			●		●		●						3	out of	3
Palm Springs Police			●		●		●						3	out of	3
Riverside County Fire			●		●		●						3	out of	3
Riverside County Sheriff			○		●		●						2	out of	3
Thermal Sheriff Station			○		○		●						1	out of	3
U.S. Border Patrol			○		○		○						0	out of	3
Total Attendance Per Meeting			7		8		11								

No Meeting 
 Vacant *
 Present ●
 Absent ○

ITEM 9B

**Coachella Valley Association of Governments
Public Safety Committee
May 9, 2022**



STAFF REPORT

Subject: Update on legislative advocacy efforts

Contact: Emmanuel Martinez, Senior Programs Manager (emartinez@cvag.org)

Recommendation: Information

Background: To align and elevate CVAG's regional projects with federal and state funding opportunities, the CVAG Executive Committee in September 2021 approved retaining state and federal lobbyists. The Ferguson Group was retained for federal advocacy and the Politico Group for the state representation, and both firms started in November 2021. The initial phase of their work consisted with better understanding the work and priority projects of CVAG and its member agencies to help align them with the state and federal budgets, programs and legislation.

To guide the workplan, CVAG staff in coordination with the advocacy team developed a legislative platform to help direct strategic advocacy efforts through the legislative cycle. The platform provides policy positions and priorities key categories including transportation, energy, environmental, homeless and affordable housing, public safety and the broadband. It was presented for input to the city and tribal managers as well as the county chief executive officer. Additionally, the platform was discussed before the Administrative/ Personnel Committee. The draft legislative platform was then presented to, and approved by, the CVAG Executive Committee at the February 28, 2022 meeting.

A copy of the legislative platform is being shared with CVAG's various committees as an informational item. It will be reviewed at least annually and guide the state and federal advocacy efforts. A top priority will be positioning the region for funding, particularly from the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the state's \$31 billion surplus. Additionally, these advocacy efforts would supplement regional advocacy efforts and be better coordinated with other local and regional agencies.

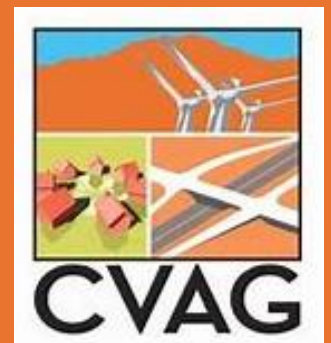
Fiscal Analysis: The costs of the legislative platform are part of the advocacy efforts approved by the Executive Committee, which authorized \$100,000 for both state and federal advocacy for a period of six months beginning November 1, 2021. The retainer for the Ferguson Group is \$10,000 per month and for the Political Group is \$5,000 per month. Regional transportation funds are available for these costs.

Attached: CVAG's State and Federal Legislative Platform

COACHELLA VALLEY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS

2022 Federal and State Legislative Platform

January 2022



Coachella Valley Association of Governments

The Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG) is a council of governments in the Coachella Valley and eastern Riverside County that funds and delivers transportation projects, operates regional programs and coordinates government services in order to improve and address issues of regional significance. CVAG's activities include, but are not limited to, improving the regional transportation system, providing services to the chronically homeless and promoting the use of green energy and sustainability. CVAG's membership includes 10 cities, the County of Riverside and four Indian tribes. As an organization committed to addressing issues of common interest and concern of its member agencies, CVAG strives to implement regional programs and policies that advance a better quality of life and balanced growth for residents, businesses and tourists of Central and Eastern Riverside County.

The legislative platform will guide the tracking and analysis of priority legislative, budget, regulatory, and administrative issues at the federal and state levels. It will assist in providing staff and lobbyists guidance on policy-related matters that may impact the operation and implementation of the various programs and services offered by CVAG. This document will also facilitate the development of a federal and state strategy and focused action plan to address the needs and priorities of CVAG and its member jurisdictions.

**Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla
Indians**

City of Blythe

Cabazon Band of Mission Indians

City of Cathedral City

City of Coachella

City of Desert Hot Springs

City of Indian Wells

City of Indio

City of La Quinta

City of Palm Desert

City of Palm Springs

City of Rancho Mirage

County of Riverside

**Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla
Indians**

**Twenty-Nine Palms Band of
Mission Indians**

CVAG

**73-710 Fred Waring Drive
Suite 200**

Palm Desert, CA 92260

Tel: 760-346-1127

www.cvag.org

Key Categories



TRANSPORTATION

Reliable, sustainable, and safe multimodal transportation infrastructure is a top priority for the Coachella Valley Association of Governments as it strives to support the transportation needs of current and future residents and visitors.



ENERGY

Supporting and securing funding for clean energy sources and energy efficiency initiatives that reduce our carbon footprint, improve air quality, and increase climate resiliency for our member agencies and our residents.



ENVIRONMENTAL

Conservation of the Coachella Valley's natural resources and maintaining and growing our rich and abundant wildlife is a focus of CVAG and our members.



BROADBAND

Deployment of middle-mile infrastructure that can facilitate a high-speed last-mile broadband network for beneficial use among CVAG's residents, businesses, and members is key to the success and vitality of CVAG and the communities it serves.



HOMELESS AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Addressing the dual challenges of homelessness and development of affordable housing through regional solutions is critical to ensuring a high quality of life in the Coachella Valley.



PUBLIC SAFETY

Maintaining a safe and secure community, free of crime, while ensuring clean and engaging public spaces, is essential to maintaining vibrant and growing business and residential communities.

FEDERAL

Transportation

Bridges, Regional Arterials and Improved Access

- Support regional efforts for the Coachella Valley-San Geronimo Pass Rail Corridor Service (CV Rail), including funding opportunities to advance the preferred alternative, to support alternate transportation modes and better connect desert communities and attractions with Los Angeles, Orange County and the Inland Empire.
- Support actions by the Riverside County Transportation Commission, the Federal Railroad Administration and the California Department of Transportation that advance CV Rail and advocacy efforts by the Facilitate Equitable Deals Task Force to improve coordination and collaboration with Union Pacific Railroad (FED-UP).
- Secure funding for CVAG's priority projects as outlined in the Transportation Project Prioritization Study (TPPS), including interchanges along the Interstate 10 corridor and State Highway Route 86, in order to reduce the burden on regional and local funds.
- Support legislative and regulatory efforts that increase funding for the expansion and improvement of regional arterial projects in order to improve public safety, encourage economic development, ease traffic congestion, and reduce air quality and environmental impacts.
- Support efforts by Riverside County Transportation Commission, San Diego Association of Governments and the San Bernardino Association of Governments, to reduce congestion and increase mobility to and from the CVAG region, including increased funding for bypass roads, bridges and transportation improvements in the pass area.
- Support Congressionally directed spending requests for transportation projects in the Coachella Valley and in eastern Riverside County.
- Support increased funding for Tribal nations in the Coachella Valley for implementation of regional transportation projects.
- Support efforts that expand public transportation opportunities in the City of Blythe, including increased transit.
- Support National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) reform to expedite and streamline environmental review and project delivery for transportation projects.
- Support efforts that dedicate funding for goods movements projects, including grade separation projects, in eastern Riverside County.
- Oppose efforts that infringe on CVAG's control in collecting and administering revenue sources, including, but not limited to, Measure A sales tax revenue and the Transportation Uniform Mitigation Fee (TUMF).

- Oppose efforts that would divert revenue derived from transportation sources to non-transportation related projects or activities.
- Monitor implementation of programs in the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (2021 Infrastructure Bill), such as the Bridge Investment Program, and support funding for existing programs such as the Highway Bridge Program and the Transportation Infrastructure Financing Innovation Act (TIFIA) Program.
- Monitor regulatory and legislative changes to the recently authorized Federal Highway Administration's Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program which would impose additional requirements on, or decrease funding for, CVAG or its member agencies.
- Monitor efforts that would make changes to the Clean Air Act and associated transportation programs to meet nonattainment or maintenance requirements.
- Monitor potential replacement mechanisms for the federal gasoline excise tax.

Active Transportation

- Support and identify programs that provide funds for regional projects identified in CVAG's Active Transportation Plan.
- Advocate for increased federal funding to the state's Active Transportation Program, including opportunities to augment the program through infrastructure legislation such as the 2022 Build Back Better Act.
- Monitor legislative and regulatory activity related to new mobility devices, such as scooters and automated vehicles, to ensure adequate safety compatibility with active transportation systems.

Intelligent Transportation Systems

- Identify and pursue funding opportunities supporting intelligent transportation systems, including CVAG's synchronization (CV Sync) traffic signal program.
- Monitor legislative and regulatory changes to funding sources for intelligent transportation systems, including the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program, and oppose efforts to decrease funding for non-attainment areas.

Energy and Environment

- Support legislation and programs that invest in projects that achieve environmental benefits, including improved air and water quality, water and energy conservation, and urban greening initiatives in the region.
- Support programs that fund implementation of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan and that support habitat restoration in the Coachella Valley.
- Support Salton Sea Authority efforts related to the Salton Sea and legislation that provides funding for the restoration and revitalization of the Salton Sea to limit regional impacts to air quality, wildlife habitat, and health of communities, including the Phase One: 10 Year Plan.
- Support legislation that facilitates environmentally sensitive renewable energy development at the Salton Sea Known Geothermal Resource Area, including lithium extraction.
- Support legislation that provides funding for electric vehicle infrastructure and incentives for early adoption of electric vehicles.
- Monitor federal legislative, regulatory, and administrative activities that may impact the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan and the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan.
- Monitor legislative and regulatory actions that may impact Property Assessed Clean Energy programs.
- Identify programs and support legislation that provides funding for clean energy, energy efficiency, decarbonization and green building programs.
- Monitor and support funding opportunities for wildlife crossing structures to increase habitat connectivity and decrease wildlife-vehicle collisions in areas where populations are fragmented by highways and interstates.
- Support policies and funding that expand access for rooftop solar to households of all incomes. Monitor issues related to Net Energy Metering and initiatives that impact availability and affordability of rooftop solar.

Broadband

- Support implementation of the California Department of Technology's statewide open-access middle-mile broadband initial projects list which includes CVAG's proposed middle-mile project.
- Support and advocate for funding for open access middle-mile infrastructure to facilitate last-mile connections and leverage existing networks and construction projects to build networks, when possible.
- Support efforts that prioritize connectivity to unserved and underserved communities and community anchor institutions.

- Support and identify programs that support middle-mile and last-mile broadband infrastructure and that leverage dig-once opportunities such as CVAG's CV Sync project.
- Monitor actions by the Federal Communications Commission related to broadband and implementation of the broadband investments as authorized in the 2021 infrastructure Bill.

Homeless and Affordable Housing

- Identify and advocate for opportunities for CVAG's member agencies to secure funding that assists in building affordable housing and increasing housing opportunities for low-, moderate-, and workforce housing.
- Monitor and support programs and funding for CVAG's CV Housing First program and regional solutions to addressing homelessness.

Public Safety

- Identify, monitor and support legislation that provides funding for operations, maintenance, and updates to early earthquake warning systems.
- Identify funding opportunities for member jurisdictions to mitigate and reduce the incidents of green waste fires.
- Monitor legislation and administrative actions related to race, diversity and inclusion policies as it pertains to law enforcement.
- Monitor and support funding opportunities that will assist in the reduction of the spread of COVID-19 and other public health and safety concerns, to assist public entities in their response.

STATE

Fighting for Fairness and Funding

- Support legislative efforts that improve funding opportunities for the Coachella Valley in the state's Cap-and-Trade program and oppose policies that disproportionately disadvantage the CVAG region to compete for funding.
- Support legislative and regulatory changes to the Transformative Climate Communities program to allow eligible and qualifying planning grant recipients to also be eligible and qualify to apply for implementation grants.
- Support policies that allow for a diverse set of social equity metric measuring tools to qualify and compete for Cap-and-Trade funded grant programs including, but not limited to, household income and the AB 1550 low-income definition and oppose efforts that would limit use to, or increase reliance on, the CalEnviroScreen in grant programs.
- Support policy changes to funding programs that use the CalEnviroScreen tool that would broaden eligible competitive areas and that better reflect the diversity in the Coachella Valley.
- Oppose legislative and regulatory actions that utilize CalEnviroScreen and high-housing density criteria, which favor large urban centers, to determine allocation of state grant funds and would decrease funding competitiveness for areas such as the Coachella Valley.
- Oppose program guidelines that use transit oriented development standards, such as the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities program, that disproportionately favor large urban centers and do not reflect the reality of growth and development in the Coachella Valley, therefore decreasing funding opportunities for the CVAG region.
- Advocate for policy changes that allow for regional variances related to transit quality, transit frequency and density related to housing oriented development, to allow the CVAG region better compete for funding in the state's Cap-and-Trade program.

Transportation

Bridges, Regional Arterials and Improved Access

- Support regional efforts to increase passenger rail service between Los Angeles and the Coachella Valley, including funding opportunities and actions by the Facilitate Equitable Deals task force to improve coordination and collaboration with Union Pacific Railroad (FED-UP).
- Support legislation that increases funding opportunities for bridges, interchanges and regional arterials in the Coachella Valley.
- Support efforts by the California Department of Transportation, Riverside County Transportation Commission, San Diego Association of Governments and the San Bernardino Association of Governments, to implement congestion projects identified in the Inland Empire

Multimodal Corridor Plan that increase mobility to and from the CVAG region, including increased funding for bypass roads, bridges and transportation improvements in the pass area.

- Support California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) reform to expedite and streamline project delivery for transportation projects.
- Support and advocate for actions that increase transportation resources in the City of Blythe and local Tribal Nations, to address historic underinvestment and improve mobility, economic development opportunities and quality of life.
- Monitor the state's road charge pilot program and other potential replacement mechanisms for the state gasoline excise tax.
- Monitor legislative changes to Senate Bill 1 (Statutes 2017); oppose efforts to divert funding to non-transportation related uses, such as housing, or otherwise qualifying eligibility of SB 1 funds on non-transportation related goals and objectives.
- Oppose legislative changes that create or strengthen a nexus between the availability of transportation funding and local jurisdictions' ability to meet their requirements under the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) numbers.
- Monitor legislation that would increase voter approval thresholds for the creation, extension, or increase of local transportation tax measures.

Active Transportation

- Support efforts to increase funding to the Active Transportation Program (ATP) to address the backlog of applications and increase the program's funding capacity.
- Support increased investment in active transportation infrastructure as a component of other state-funded transportation programs that increase access and opportunities for walking, biking, and complete streets that connect the multimodal transportation system.
- Support policies and programs that promote increased use of active transportation infrastructure and systems.
- Support efforts that streamline project delivery, build local capacity such as additional technical assistance, and provide increased flexibility to innovate and strategically invest funds to meet local needs.
- Oppose legislative, regulatory, and administrative efforts to score ATP applications on non-transportation related criteria, such as housing-related policies, CalEnviroScreen and policies which would hinder low density areas like the Coachella Valley and the City of Blythe.
- Oppose changes to the ATP that would decrease CVAG's competitiveness, such as the elimination of leveraged funding and other categories that are advantageous to CVAG and its members jurisdictions.

Intelligent Transportation Systems

- Support programs that leverage technology to improve mobility, increase goods movement efficiency, reduce emissions and help to mitigate environmental impacts.
- Identify state programs and funding that supplement CVAG's CV Sync project, such as the Coachella Valley's middle-mile broadband project as selected as one of 18 initial statewide projects.
- Monitor legislation that incorporates new innovative technologies into the state transportation system, such as zero or near-zero emission vehicles, autonomous vehicles, and small electric mobility devices that improve transportation accessibility, efficiency and reduce environmental impacts.

Energy and Environment

- Support legislative and regulatory efforts to increase the flexibility of funding programs from the California Air Resources Board's Cap-and-Trade Program to ensure the Coachella and Palo Verde Valleys get their fair share, including taking into account regional variances related to growth, housing, and greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction strategies.
- Support increased investments of the state GHG reduction funds toward transportation projects to reduce transportation related GHG emissions.
- Support investments in Cap-and-Trade funded programs, such as the Clean Vehicle Rebate Program, Single-Family Energy Efficiency, and Low-income Weatherization programs.
- Advocate for changes in the CalEnviroscreen mapping tool that reflect the socio-economic realities of the diverse communities in the Coachella Valley and Palo Verde Valleys, or the use of alternative tools such as household income.
- Support policies that ensure criteria for defining disadvantaged communities and environmental justice areas accurately represent eastern Riverside County, including those that mirror AB 1550 community mapping, in order to ensure the region can compete for funding opportunities.
- Support policies, programs, and funding for electric vehicle charging infrastructure and increased use of electric vehicles in the region.
- Support efforts that provide necessary resources for implementation of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan as well as resources for desert communities to prepare and adapt to changing climate and natural disasters, such as the Climate Resiliency programs.
- Support funding for programs that support local planning and response measures to extreme heat events, including nature-based solutions, to protect critical infrastructure, habitat and public health and safety.

- Identify and support legislation that provides funding for the restoration and revitalization of the Salton Sea to limit regional impacts to air quality, wildlife habitat, and health of communities, including the Phase One: 10 Year Plan.
- Support mitigation efforts at the Salton Sea that address air quality and facilitate economic development, such as lithium extraction.
- Monitor actions related to the 1934 Agreement of Compromise between Imperial Irrigation District and the Coachella Valley Water District and support Coachella Valley Energy Commission efforts to achieve a permanent service option and governance structure between Coachella Valley stakeholders and IID post-2033.
- Identify programs and support legislation that provides funding for clean energy, energy efficiency, decarbonization, and green building programs.
- Monitor legislative and regulatory efforts related to vehicle electrification and building decarbonization that would add new requirements to local governments, including Title 24 building standards.
- Monitor implementation of the state's climate resiliency efforts and efforts related to environmental justice communities and AB 617 (Statutes of 2017) emission reduction funding programs.
- Support policies and funding that expand access for rooftop solar to households of all incomes. Monitor issues related to Net Energy Metering and initiatives that impact availability and affordability of rooftop solar.

Broadband

- Support funding and implementation of the Coachella Valley's middle-mile broadband project and the creation of ongoing programs to assist with last-mile connections that bridge the digital divide in the Coachella Valley.
- Monitor legislative and regulatory actions related to SB 156 (Statutes of 2021) and related actions by the California Department of Technology and the Office of Broadband and Digital Literacy.
- Monitor the California Middle-Mile Advisory Committee and its recommendations regarding implementation of middle-mile infrastructure.
- Monitor the California Public Utilities Commissions proceedings related to broadband infrastructure implementation, such as Rulemaking (R.) 20-09-001 and Rulemaking proceeding, R.20-08-021.

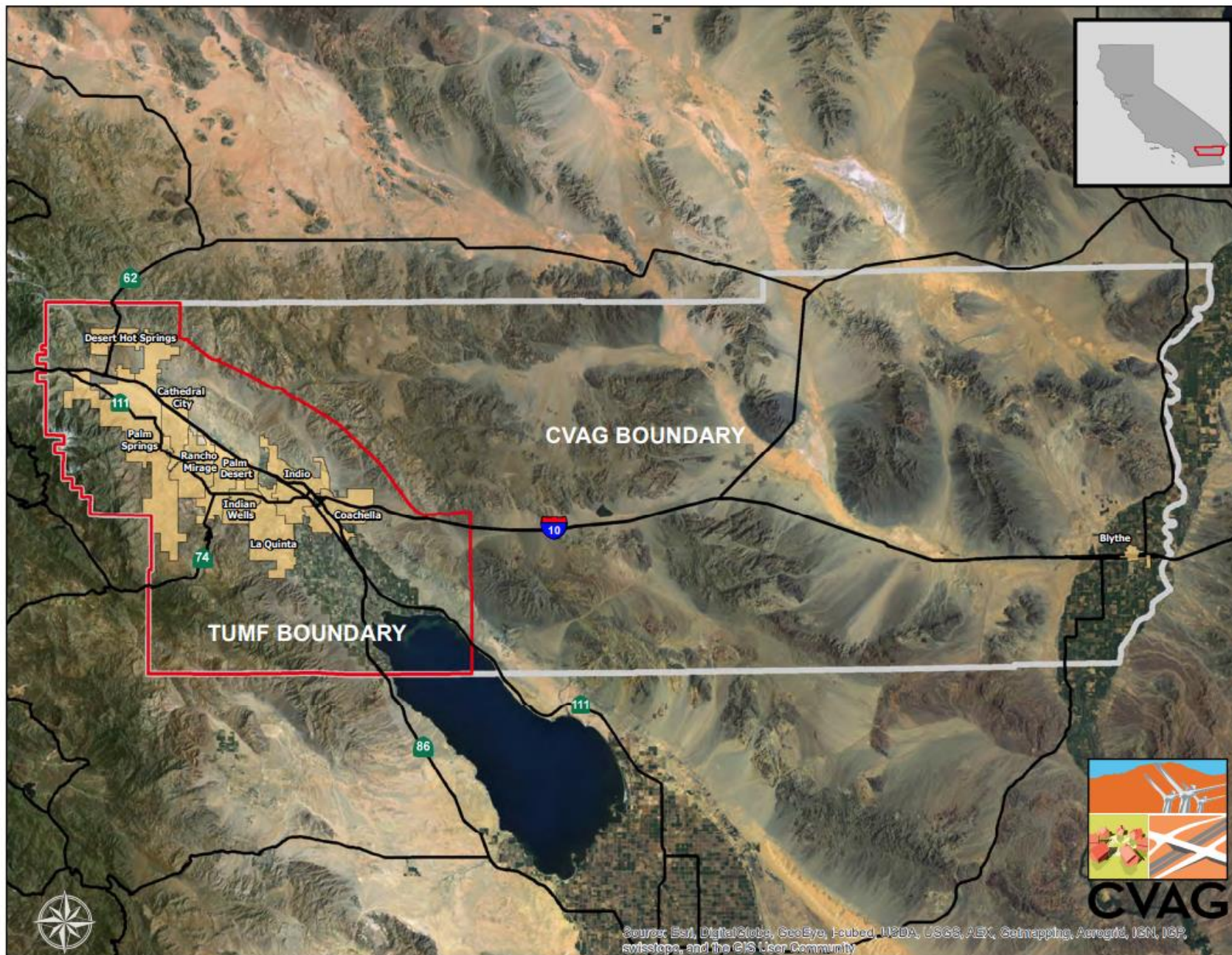
Homelessness and Affordable Housing

- Support increased investment in, and creation of, programs that assist local governments, counties and regional collaborations to address the challenges associated with homelessness.

- Support legislative efforts that allow for sustainable financing options, as outlined in CVAG's Regional Early Action Plan (REAP) and member jurisdictions' Local Early Action Plans (LEAP), in order to address housing shortages and provide affordable housing options.
- Support efforts by Lift to Rise to establish the Coachella Valley Housing Catalyst Fund to increase housing production in the Coachella Valley and create homeownership opportunities for low- and very-low income families, permanent supportive housing for the homeless and address unpermitted mobilehome park issues.
- Support CEQA reform to streamline the delivery of housing projects.
- Monitor the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program and advocate for increased flexibility and changes that ensure a greater share of funding is available to areas that don't have Transit Oriented Developments (TOD) and thereby more accurately account for unique community characteristics and growth patterns in the Coachella Valley.
- Support the extension of state-funded solutions, including Project RoomKey and Project HomeKey, with an emphasis on ensuring those investments are used in the Coachella Valley.
- Support legislative efforts that would allow local jurisdictions to implement, if they choose, programs and ordinances that require unsheltered individuals to accept housing solutions and treatment solutions.
- Support efforts to establish homeless courts that can help local jurisdictions provide additional solutions and services for homeless individuals.
- Support legislative efforts that would allow local jurisdictions to implement, if they choose, programs and ordinances that increase the available housing units and/or require unsheltered individuals to accept housing solutions and treatment solutions so long as there are adequate housing units available.

Public Safety

- Support programs and policies that provide funding for the CVAG region to obtain, enhance, operate, maintain and update early earthquake warning systems.
- Monitor legislation and executive orders related to the COVID-19 pandemic and other public health and safety emergencies and support programs that provide assistance to negatively impacted communities in the Coachella Valley.
- Monitor legislation impacting race, diversity, and inclusion policies as it pertains to local law enforcement.



COACHELLA VALLEY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

FISCAL YEAR 2022/2023



CVAG STANDING COMMITTEES	DAY	TIME	JULY (Dark)	AUG (Dark)	SEPT	OCT (Dark)	NOV	DEC (Dark)	JAN	FEB	MAR (Dark)	APR	MAY	JUN
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE	Last Monday	4:30 p.m.	-	-	26	-	H Dec 5	-	30	27	-	24	H June 5	26
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE	1 st Monday	10:00 a.m.		-	H Aug 29	-	7	-	H Jan 9 11:00 am	6	-	3	1	5
COACHELLA VALLEY CONSERVATION COMMISSION	2 nd Thursday	10:30 a.m.	-	-	8	-	10	-	12	9	-	13	11	8
DESERT COMMUNITY ENERGY	3 rd Monday	3:00 p.m.	18	22	19	17	21	-	H Jan 9	H Feb13	20	17	15	19
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE	2 nd Thursday	12:00 p.m.	-	-	8	-	10	-	12	9	-	13	11	8
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE	2 nd Monday	9:00 a.m.	-	-	12	-	14	-	9	13	-	-	8	12
HOMELESSNESS COMMITTEE	3 rd Wednesday	10:00 a.m.	-	-	21	-	16	-	18	15	-	19	17	21
GENERAL ASSEMBLY	Last Monday in June	6:00 p.m.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	26

H = Holiday * = Special Meeting

AGENDAS CAN BE FOUND AT: www.cvag.org.

UPDATED: May 3, 2022

PLEASE NOTE: When it becomes necessary to have a special meeting or to change the date of a meeting, committee members will be alerted and the change will be noted on the CVAG website calendar.

ITEM 9D

Coachella Valley Association of Governments Public Safety Committee May 9, 2022



STAFF REPORT

Subject: Update on Ad Hoc Efforts to Explore Additional Homelessness Resources and Policies

Contact: Erica Felci, Assistant Executive Director (efelci@cvag.org) and Greg Rodriguez, CVAG contract staff, (GRodrigu@rivco.org)

Recommendation: Information

Background: Since September 2021, the Homelessness Committee's ad hoc committee has been meeting to consider additional approaches to addressing homelessness, particularly for those who are refusing current services. The goal of the ad hoc has been to evaluate optional programs that would be in addition to CV Housing First, then return to the full Homelessness Committee with a report and recommendations in 2022. The following members of the Homelessness Committee are on the ad hoc: Cathedral City Councilmember Mark Carnevale, Desert Healthcare District/ Foundation Director Carole Rogers, Indio Mayor Waymond Fermon, Palm Desert Mayor Pro Tem Sabby Jonathan, and Palm Springs Councilmember Christy Holstege, who is chair of the Homelessness Committee.

The ad hoc members have provided regular updates to the Homelessness Committee. This included an update in February 2022, where the ad hoc detailed the exploration of the City of Sacramento's policy proposal to have the City adopt a first-in-the-nation right to housing, which includes an obligation of homeless individuals to accept housing if offered. The proposal, which is still being vetted, would have applied to every unsheltered resident who was previously housed for at least one year in the city limits. According to the City, "each person offered at least two forms of shelter or housing would have an obligation to accept one, or they could be moved from their camping site." The general consensus from the Homelessness Committee at the February 2022 meeting was that the ad hoc was on track and they should continue exploring options.

Around the same time, ad hoc members had learned of an initiative supported by Riverside County District Attorney Mike Hestrin and Sheriff Chad Bianco that would establish a new sentencing program to help homeless facing criminal prosecution for low-level crimes. The Homeless Outreach Mediation and Education (HOME) program is a collaborative court approach that is being launched in partnership with a number of agencies and organizations, including the county's behavioral health services. CVAG ad hoc committee members were provided a briefing from the District Attorney's office on February 8. The program will focus on providing treatment for willing and mentally competent homeless individuals who have low-level offenses. The goal is that up to two years of case management would be provided, ultimately leading to their offenses being removed from their record. The HOME program is starting as a pilot program, primarily in the City of Riverside.

As a next step, the ad hoc committee will explore the roll out of Gov. Gavin Newsom's proposed Community Assistance, Recovery and Empowerment (CARE) Court. The CARE Court, which must be approved by the Legislature, would allow courts to order CARE plans, which would require counties to provide comprehensive treatment to the most severely impaired and untreated Californians and hold patients accountable to following their treatment plans. As described by the Governor's office, "CARE Court is a paradigm shift; it focuses on providing individuals with mental health and substance use services before they end up cycling through prison, emergency rooms, and encampments. CARE Court prioritizes the sickest Californians, helping many who live on our streets without shelter or medical care." CVAG staff will be scheduling a briefing on the CARE Court proposal for ad hoc's consideration in the near future.

Fiscal Analysis: There is no cost to CVAG for this update. However, depending on the extent of the ad hoc's scope and analysis in the future, CVAG staff may ask the Homelessness and Executive Committee to consider allocating additional resources beyond staff time.

Attachments:

1. News release from Riverside County District Attorney's Office, February 15, 2022
2. Gov. Newsom's outline of CARE court



RIVERSIDE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
NEWS RELEASE
MIKE HESTRIN, DISTRICT ATTORNEY

WEBSITE: WWW.RIVCODA.ORG

TWITTER: @RIVCODA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FEB. 15, 2022

CONTACT: JOHN HALL
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER
951.955.8662

**NEW PROGRAM TO HELP THE HOMELESS FACING PROSECUTION
WILL BEGIN SOON IN RIVERSIDE COUNTY**

RIVERSIDE – A new alternative sentencing program to help the homeless who are facing criminal prosecution for low-level crimes is expected to start in Riverside County Superior Court in next few weeks.

The Riverside County Partnership for the Homeless Outreach Mediation and Education (HOME) program promotes community-based treatment to assist homeless individuals with underlying issues such as mental illness, substance abuse disorders, joblessness, and familial issues with their transition to a stable environment of health, family, and employment.

The HOME program will promote a therapeutic approach to sentencing for non-violent and low-level crimes instead of incarceration and fines and fees.

“The two main factors driving the increase in homelessness are substance abuse or addiction and mental illness, and can often be a combination of both,” DA Mike Hestrin said. “This new Collaborative Court will allow us to use innovative approaches to getting people into the drug treatment and rehabilitation programs they need.”

The DA’s Office will work in conjunction with the following agencies in the HOME program: the Riverside County Sheriff’s Department, the Office of the Public Defender, Riverside University Health System – Behavioral Health Department, Riverside County Probation Department, Riverside City Attorney’s Office, Riverside Police Department, and several other community partners.

“The Public Defender’s Office is very pleased to welcome the new Homeless Court to Riverside,” said Public Defender Steve Harmon. “We will work together to help these vulnerable members of our community. Many lives will be changed for the better, and our community will be proud of what we all do here. We in the Public Defender’s Office will dedicate ourselves to working hard and doing everything possible to make this a success.”

Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco said: “Being able to address substance abuse and mental health is the most important aspect of confronting the issues we face with the homeless. This program will not only allow offenders to detox in a safe environment where they will receive proper medical and mental health treatments, it will provide the structure and assistance for participants to break the cycle of addiction that contributed to the situation they find themselves in.”

The partnership of all those dedicated to the HOME program shows the mutual goal of providing a collaborative response to the issue of homelessness and crime within our communities -- all with the intent to work cooperatively to benefit these offenders by offering treatment and rehabilitation while still holding them accountable for their actions. The HOME program will work to reduce homelessness and crime while promoting accountability, integrity, independence, and personal development of its participants through supervision, support, and treatment.

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GOVERNOR NEWSOM'S NEW PLAN TO GET CALIFORNIANS IN CRISIS OFF THE STREETS AND INTO HOUSING, TREATMENT, AND CARE

- Community Assistance, Recovery and Empowerment (CARE) Court is a new framework to get people with mental health and substance use disorders the support and care they need.
- CARE Court is aimed at helping the thousands of Californians who are suffering from untreated mental health and substance use disorders leading to homelessness, incarceration or worse.
- California is taking a new approach to act early and get people the support they need and address underlying needs - and we're going to do it without taking away people's rights.
- CARE Court includes accountability for everyone – on the individual and on local governments – with court orders for services.

HOW CARE COURT WORKS


CALIFORNIA'S CARE COURT

Community Assistance, Recovery and Empowerment (CARE) Court is Governor Newsom's new plan to get Californians in crisis off the streets and into housing, treatment, and care.



ACTING EARLY TO GET PEOPLE THE SUPPORT THEY NEED

CARE Court is aimed at helping Californians who are suffering from untreated mental health and substance use disorders leading to homelessness, incarceration or worse. Each person is connected with a court-ordered Care Plan and Supporter for up to 24 months.



SETTING THEM UP WITH AN INDIVIDUALIZED CARE PLAN

CARE Court connects a person with a care team in the community and can include clinically prescribed, individualized treatment with supportive services, stabilizing medication, and a housing plan.

CARE Court connects a person struggling with untreated mental illness – and often also substance use challenges – with a court-ordered Care Plan for up to 24 months. Each plan is managed by a care team in the community and can include clinically prescribed, individualized interventions with several supportive services, medication, and a housing plan. The client-centered approach also includes a public defender and supporter to help make self-directed care decisions in addition to their full clinical team



CARE Court is designed on the evidence that many people can stabilize, begin healing, and exit homelessness in less restrictive, community-based care settings. It's a long-term strategy to positively impact the individual in care and the community around them. The plan focuses on people with schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic disorders, who may also have substance use challenges, and who lack medical decision-making capacity and advances an upstream diversion from more restrictive conservatorships or incarceration.

The court-ordered response can be initiated by family, county and community-based social services, behavioral health providers, or first responders. Individuals exiting a short-term involuntary hospital hold or an arrest may be especially good candidates for CARE Court. The Care Plan can be ordered for up to 12 months, with periodic review hearings and subsequent renewal for up to another 12 months. Participants who do not successfully complete Care Plans may, under current law, be hospitalized or referred to conservatorship - with a new presumption that no suitable alternatives to conservatorship are available.

All counties across the state will participate in CARE Court under the proposal. If local governments do not meet their specified duties under court-ordered Care Plans, the court will have the ability to order sanctions and, in extreme cases, appoint an agent to ensure services are provided.

CARE Court builds on Governor Newsom's \$14 billion multi-year investment to provide 55,000 new housing units and treatment slots as well as a more than \$10 billion annual investment in community behavioral health services. The Governor's comprehensive approach combines a focus on bridge housing to quickly rehouse unsheltered individuals with behavioral health issues, all while more new units come online, while also transforming Medi-Cal to provide more behavioral health services to people struggling the most.