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New Effort to Prevent Domestic Violence Homicide by Firearm *Survivors to access on-site GVRO services at Your Safe Place – A Family Justice Center*

Citing the deadly connection between domestic abuse and firearms, San Diego City Attorney Mara W. Elliott has launched a new service at [*Your Safe Place – A Family Justice Center*](#) to help survivors of domestic violence reduce their risk of becoming victims of gun violence.

Elliott announced that a dedicated team of specially trained attorneys and victim services staff will work directly with domestic violence survivors at *Your Safe Place* to assess their vulnerability to gun violence and, when warranted, seek a Gun Violence Restraining Order against their abuser. Under California’s “red flag” law, GVROs quickly remove firearms from individuals who pose a threat to themselves or others.

Elliott launched California’s first comprehensive GVRO Program in 2017, and the San Diego City Attorney’s Office has since been a leader in the state and nation in using the orders to avert potential tragedies. Since the program’s inception, the City Attorney’s Office has used GVROs to intervene in more than 700 dangerous situations, one-third of which involve domestic and family violence (See page 3 for examples). Threats to shoot and kill one’s current or former partner are common in these cases. Sometimes these threats are made in front of children, and often the person has a weapon in hand when making the threat.

Studies have found that the presence of a gun in domestic violence situations increases the risk of homicide by 500 percent.

“The nexus between gun violence and domestic abuse is terrifyingly clear,” City Attorney Mara W. Elliott said. **“That’s why we’re expanding the scope of our Gun Violence Response Unit to serve anyone who comes to *Your Safe Place* seeking protection, healing, and a fresh start.”**

The move was praised by California Attorney General Rob Bonta, state Sen. Susan Rubio, and Assemblyman Phil Ting. Rubio, D-Baldwin Park, is the Legislature’s leading voice on domestic violence issues and the author of SB 538, signed into law last week, which allows remote testimony by victims seeking Domestic Violence Restraining Orders and GVROs. Ting, D-San Francisco, is the author of AB 61, which expanded the state’s gun violence restraining order law.

Recent City Attorney media releases can be accessed on the San Diego City Attorney’s home page located on the Internet at <https://www.sandiego.gov/cityattorney>

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“California’s Gun Violence Restraining Orders are a proven method of reducing gun violence. Vital resources like *Your Safe Place* build off of City Attorney Elliott’s standout GVRO program, which has become a national model for public safety,” said Attorney General Rob Bonta. **“*Your Safe Place* provides critical resources to survivors of domestic violence and other abuse, and the newly-expanded GVRO services will save lives by removing guns from the hands of individuals who may be a danger to themselves or others.”**

“The expansion of *Your Safe Place – A Family Justice Center* highlights the strong leadership of City Attorney Mara W. Elliott, Mayor Todd Gloria, and the City of San Diego,” State Senator Susan Rubio said. **“My collaboration with them on the state level and their innovative approach in providing resources to victims confronted with the epidemic of gun violence in San Diego is a testament to their work. I’m hopeful to see these types of services replicated throughout the state and country and look forward to working with them in the future on behalf of victims.”**

“Petitioning the courts to request the removal of firearms from a home can be intimidating for families in potentially dangerous situations,” Assemblymember Phil Ting said. **“The idea of a service center that helps them through the process is groundbreaking and serves as a model not only for the rest of California, but also the nation. I applaud City Attorney Mara Elliott’s innovative efforts to curb gun violence.”**

San Diego’s Family Justice Center, which opened in 2002, was the first of its kind in the nation and has served as a model throughout the United States. At the Center, domestic violence survivors and their families can obtain comprehensive services from housing assistance to legal advice to forensic medical examinations. Services also include counseling, safety planning, assistance with finding housing, childcare, transportation, and access to basic necessities.

Under Elliott’s leadership, the City Attorney’s Office took over the operations of the Center in 2018 and has continued to expand and improve services since. In 2019 the Center expanded its scope to serving survivors of sex trafficking, and victims of elder abuse can access services as well.

The Center was recently renamed *Your Safe Place – A Family Justice Center* to reflect its welcoming and all-inclusive atmosphere to anyone seeking safety and healing from violence. Other recent enhancements include new remote court hearing rooms, a children’s library provided by The Wildflower Initiative, and partnerships that offer client families free tickets to Balboa Park museums and Padres tickets. Sharia’s Closet, founded by Shamine Linton, now provides free personalized wardrobes in a boutique-like setting to prepare clients for court appearances and job interviews.

Elliott’s announcement of this expansion of *Your Safe Place* services takes place during Domestic Violence Awareness Month. In 1987, October was officially recognized as Domestic Violence Awareness Month and the first national toll-free domestic violence hotline was established that same year.

To arrange a media tour of *Your Safe Place*, please contact Hilary Nemchik at hnemchik@sandiego.gov.

Victims of domestic or sexual abuse or sex trafficking can contact *Your Safe Place – A Family Justice Center* here:

San Diego Housing Commission Building
1122 Broadway, 2nd Floor
San Diego, CA 92101
Hours of operation: 8 a.m.-5 p.m. (New clients welcome before 3 p.m.)

Phone: 619-533-6000 (Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.)
Toll-Free: 866-933-HOPE (4673)
After hours, call the 24-hour San Diego Domestic Violence hotline: [888-DV-LINKS](tel:888-DV-LINKS) (888-385-4657)

More information is available here: [Your Safe Place: San Diego Family Justice Center | Office of the City Attorney | City of San Diego Official Website](#)

Examples of domestic and family violence GVRO interventions:

- While arguing in front of their children, a man held a gun to his wife’s head and threatened to pistol-whip and shoot her, then blamed her for making him mad. She had repeatedly asked him to keep his gun locked up because of their children, but he refused.
- A woman whose husband had strangled and battered her reported that he pointed his gun at her head and said, “I should just put a bullet through your skull.” When the wife told her husband she was leaving him, he threatened to shoot himself in front of their children.
- A woman received a video message from her ex-husband, in which he was loading a gun and said that one bullet was for her and the rest were for him.
- A man who lived with his elderly parents battered and punched his mother and said he was going to buy a gun and kill both his parents and the family dog.
- During an argument a man fired a gun into the mattress inches from where his wife was lying, and told her, “I can kill you if I want to.”

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