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**District Attorney**

**NEWS RELEASE**

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**Expansion of the Ventura County Family Justice Center Services to Help Hate Crime Victims**

*VENTURA, California* – On April 27, 2021, District Attorney Erik Nasarenko announced to the Ventura County Board of Supervisors, the expansion of the Ventura County Family Justice Center’s (FJC) services to help victims of hate crime. Since opening on March 1, 2019, the FJC has provided services to over 4,000 victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, elder abuse, and human trafficking.

By expanding FJC services to include services to hate crimes victims, they will have one-stop access to victim advocacy, assistance with obtaining restraining orders, civil legal services, counseling, emergency financial assistance, emergency housing and many other services provided on-site by staff from 15 different Ventura County agencies and community-based non-profits.

A hate crime is defined under California Penal Code Section 422.6 and 422.55 as a crime in which:

- (A) Any person who by force or threat, willfully injures, intimidates, interferes with, oppresses, or threatens another person
- or
- (B) Any person who knowingly defaces, damages, or destroys the real or personal property of another person because of one or more of the actual or perceived characteristics of the victim’s:
  - (1) Disability
  - (2) Gender
  - (3) Nationality
  - (4) Race or Ethnicity
  - (5) Religion
  - (6) Sexual Orientation

(7) Association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics

Speech alone does not constitute a hate crime unless the speech itself threatens violence against a protected class AND the offender had the apparent ability to carry out the threat.

If you or someone you know is a victim of a hate crime, help is available at the Ventura County Family Justice Center at NO COST. To learn more about available services, call Monday through Friday, between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., (805) 652-7655, text (805) 947-7981, or email [vcfjc.coop@ventura.org](mailto:vcfjc.coop@ventura.org).

If assistance is needed after hours, 211 Info Link Ventura County is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, via phone or at [www.211ventura.org](http://www.211ventura.org). Call or text 211 to be connected. This free confidential service will connect people across Ventura County to the resources they need. If emergency assistance is needed, please call 911.

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The Ventura County District Attorney's Office is the public prosecutor for the county's 850,000 residents. The office employs approximately 280 employees including attorneys, investigators, victim advocates, and other professional support staff who strive to seek justice, ensure public safety, and protect the rights of crime victims.

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