



Family Violence in San Francisco

The 9th Comprehensive Report of the San Francisco Family Violence Council

Fiscal Year 2018 – Fiscal Year 2019
(July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2019)

Executive Summary



City and County of San Francisco
Department on the Status of Women

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The Family Violence Council is administered by the Department on the Status of Women, under supervision of Carol Sacco, Acting Director.

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Executive Summary

Violence impacts individuals at different stages of life. Child abuse, domestic violence (also known as intimate partner violence or IPV), and elder or dependent adult abuse are all forms of family violence that have traumatizing and far-reaching effects on individuals, families, and entire communities. Family violence can include abuse that is physical, sexual, psychological, or economic, and is characterized by behaviors that are used to isolate, neglect, or exercise power and control over a person. In 2007, the Family Violence Council was established by local ordinance to increase awareness and understanding of family violence and its consequences, and to recommend programs, policies, and coordination of City services to reduce family violence in San Francisco.

Each year, the San Francisco Family Violence Council and the San Francisco Department on the Status of Women issues a comprehensive report on family violence in San Francisco, including the prevalence of abuse, the response from City agencies, demographics of victims and survivors, access to community-based services, and demographics of people using abuse. This report aims to track trends of family violence in San Francisco, identify gaps and needs in response and services, and inform policymaking and funding priorities for the City.

This report is the ninth Family Violence in San Francisco report and covers the period between July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2019 (fiscal years 2018 and 2019). Data from more than 10 City public agencies and 27 community-based organizations has been included.

Overall Key Findings

This report elevates the following findings across all three forms of family violence. Key findings for each form of abuse is summarized in pages that follow.

1. There are clear racial disparities across all three forms of family violence; reported family violence disproportionately impacts Black/African American and Latinx populations.
2. Family violence disproportionately affects women and girls.
3. The use of weapons, especially firearms, in domestic violence incidents is on the rise; there has been an increase in 911 calls concerning weapons and multiple homicides related to firearms. Between FY 2018 and FY 2019, there was a 44% increase in armed assailants with guns.
4. There remains a significant need for shelter for survivors of family violence in San Francisco: four out of five clients are turned away from emergency shelter.

New Recommendations

Below are new recommendations that the Family Violence Council has prioritized for the upcoming year that are focused specifically on the City's response to COVID-19, which emerged in late 2019. The full list of 20 recommendations is available on page 9.

1. **Request emergency funding for agencies engaged in prevention of and response to child abuse, domestic violence, and elder abuse** to ensure that frontline staff are supported in response to COVID-19.
2. **Increase awareness around family violence during COVID-19**, including publishing culturally accessible education and resources for survivors of family violence, leveraging San Francisco's alert system to provide resources, and asking public officials to highlight this increased need.

Ensure that providers and first responders have the necessary tools and training to be able to assess family violence and provide resources to victims and those at risk.

3. **Ensure that all City departments that are members of the Family Violence Council create a response plan to address and prevent family violence in disaster planning.** Violence prevention plans might include public education and awareness, emergency data snapshots of both quantitative and qualitative data, plans to change how services are provided in response to disasters and policy recommendations based on emerging trends.

Key Findings: Child Abuse

Prevalence

Child abuse allegations: Between CY 2017 and CY 2018, **child abuse reports to Family and Children’s Services have remained steady** from 5,114 to 5,130.

Calls to 911: There were 391 and 432 calls to 911 related to child abuse in FY 2018 and FY 2019, respectively. **This represents a 10% increase in calls.**

Mandated reporters: There has been a **12% increase in reports from mandated reporters in schools** from SY 2017 to SY 2018.

System Response

Substantiated cases: In CY 2018, 489 of 5,130 cases were substantiated (10% of cases). In CY 2017, 509 of 5,114 cases were substantiated (10%).

Incidents presented to District Attorney: In FY 2019, 41 of 661 incidents reported to the police were presented to the District Attorney’s Office (6% of incidents reported).

Prosecutions: Between FY 2018 and FY 2019, **the prosecution rate increased by 9%**. Cases were relatively evenly split between physical abuse, sexual abuse, child pornography, and other.

Convictions: In FY 2018, there were seven trial convictions, and in FY 2019, there were three trial convictions.

Demographics of Victims

Race/ethnicity: **Latinx and Black/African American children are overrepresented.** Black children make up 44% of the total victims with substantiated allegations despite Blacks/African Americans representing 5% of the overall San Francisco population. Latinx children make up 28% of the total victims with substantiated allegations despite Latinx people representing 15% of the overall population in San Francisco.

Gender: **Girls experience child abuse at a higher rate than boys** (57% compared to 43% in CY 2018). Girls more frequently experienced emotional abuse, sexual abuse, caretaker absence/incapacity, and/or exploitation than boys. Boys were more likely to be victims of physical abuse.

Key Data Points

489

of 5,130 child abuse cases substantiated in CY 2018

432

911 calls related to child abuse in FY 2019

341

arrests related to child abuse in FY 2019

64

cases prosecuted by the District Attorney in FY 2019

44%

of child abuse victims were Black/African American in CY 2018

92%

of perpetrators in substantiated cases were parents or step-parents of the victim in CY 2018

Key Findings: Domestic Violence

Prevalence

Calls to 911: The most prevalent type of call concerned a fight or dispute where no weapons were used, representing approximately just over half of all calls in FY 2018 and FY 2019. The types of calls that experienced increases between FY 2018 and FY 2019 included calls related to armed assailants (**20% increase in armed assailants with knives and 44% increase in armed assailants with guns**).

Calls to domestic violence crisis lines: There has been a **60% decline in calls to crisis lines** between FY 2015-FY 2019.

Homicides: The Police Department reports three domestic violence related homicides and four family violence related homicides in CY 2018 and three domestic violence related homicides in CY 2019.

System Response

System response to domestic violence cases: In FY 2019, 520 of 3,710 incidents reported to police officers were presented to the District Attorney's Office (14% of incidents reported).

Prosecutions: There were 411 domestic violence cases prosecuted in FY 2018 and 575 cases prosecuted in FY 2019, representing a **40% increase in the number of cases prosecuted**. There were an additional 18 stalking cases prosecuted in FY 2018 and 24 cases in FY 2019.

Convictions: In FY 2018, 14 of 17 cases resulted in a conviction by trial. In FY 2019, 32 of 36 cases resulted in a conviction by trial.

Demographics of Victims

Race/ethnicity: **Blacks/African Americans and Latinx victims are disproportionately impacted by domestic violence**; of the known victims in FY 2019, 30% were Black, compared to Blacks/African Americans representing 5% of the general population, and 27% were Latinx, compared to 15% of the general population.

Gender: Based on data from the police department, **female victims made up 72% of cases in FY 2018 and 74% in FY 2019**.

Sexual orientation and gender identity: Based on data collected by organizations funded by the Violence Against Women Grant Program, 4% of clients served in FY 2018 and 6% of clients served in FY 2019 identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Questioning (LGBQQ). Based on the 2018 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, high school students who identify as Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual were more likely to have experienced violence.

Key Data Points (FY 2019)

18,841

individuals served by
VAW grant-funded
programs

8,647

calls to domestic
violence crisis lines

7,110

911 calls related to
domestic violence

3,710

incidents responded
to by police

760

cases prosecuted by
the District Attorney

3

domestic violence
related homicides

Key Findings: Elder Abuse

Prevalence

Reports of elder and dependent adult abuse: The number of reports received has been relatively consistent with a 2% increase between FY 2015 and FY 2019. However, the **number of reports substantiated has increased by 24%**.

Self-neglect cases: There has been a **12% increase in the number of substantiated elder abuse self-neglect cases** and a 6% increase in the number of substantiated dependent adult abuse self-neglect cases between FY 2018 and FY 2019.

Calls to 911: There were 159 and 142 calls to 911 in FY 2018 and FY 2019, respectively. There has been a **16% decrease in total calls** between FY 2015 and FY 2019.

System Response

System response to elder physical abuse cases: In FY 2018, there were 43 elder abuse incidents reported to the police department and 13 (30% of incidents) were ultimately presented to the District Attorney's Office. In FY 2019, of the 65 incidents reported, 6 (9% of incidents) were presented to the District Attorney's Office.

System response to elder financial abuse cases: In FY 2018, there were 395 elder financial abuse incidents reported and 21 (5%) cases were presented to the District Attorney's Office. In FY 2019, of the 437 incidents reported, 16 (4%) of cases were presented to the District Attorney's Office.

Demographics of Victims

Race/ethnicity: **Clear racial disparities exist in cases of abuse by others, particularly in dependent adult abuse cases**: Blacks/African Americans represent 5% of the general San Francisco population but represented 18% of substantiated elder abuse victims and 32% of dependent adult abuse victims in FY 2019.

Gender: Women comprise a slightly larger share of total victims of elder abuse (57%). Men and women were equally impacted by dependent adult abuse.

Sexual orientation and gender identity: Straight/heterosexual victims represented 64% of total victims in FY 2018 and 65% of total victims in FY 2019. A smaller percentage of victims identified as LGBTQ (approximately 10% in both years).

Key Data Points (FY 2019)

6,955

elder abuse cases
reported

54%

of 6,955 cases
substantiated

2,397

substantiated self-
neglect cases

29

cases prosecuted by
the District Attorney

25%

increase in elder
abuse victims served
by District Attorney
Victim Services

88%

of elder abuse victims
knew the perpetrator

Achievements of the Family Violence Council

The Family Violence Council completed the following recommendations in FY 2020. It will be important to codify these recommendations to ensure sustainability moving forward. Plans for doing so are outlined below. To monitor the progress of all recommendations, the Family Violence Council will ask for routine updates from agencies directly involved with implementation, including the San Francisco Police Department, the San Francisco Sheriff's Department, and the San Francisco Adult Probation Department.

Recommendation	Plan for Sustainability
1. Implement a firearms surrender program.	Request data from the Sheriff's Department on the number of firearms retrieved and include in Annual Report. Ensure that the Sheriff's Department has included a sustainable level of funding to support this program moving forward.
2. Ensure San Francisco Police Department complies with Family Code section 6228.	Routine agenda item at Family Violence Council quarterly meetings for a report of SFPD's progress on FC 6228.
3. Prioritize implementation of the finalized Police Department/Adult Protective Services cross-reporting protocol for investigating elder abuse.	When finalized, work with the San Francisco Police Department's Special Victims Unit to ensure all officers are trained on new protocol.
4. Develop Unit Orders at the Police Department Special Victims Unit for the Assignment of Child Abuse and Elder Abuse cases for investigation.	Codified as Unit Orders.
5. Increase awareness of elder victims of intimate partner violence.	Organize a cross training for Domestic Violence Agencies and IOA staff. On June 14, 2109, Institute on Aging and San Francisco Department of Aging and Disability Services hosted "Rights and Resources for Older Victims of Domestic Violence in San Francisco" in recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.
6. Meet with key representatives from the Police Department Special Victims Unit bi-annually.	Department on the Status of Women will coordinate meetings between the Tri-Chairs, Chief William Scott, and Special Victims Unit.
7. Support the work of the Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) public-private partnership to implement best practices.	Ensure that the public partners continue to provide a sustainable level of funding to maintain the standards of a nationally credited CAC.

Recommendations

Below is a full list of the 20 recommendations that the Family Violence Council has prioritized for the upcoming year. More details about each recommendation, including, rationale, responsible agency, and status of existing recommendations is at Appendix B.

Response to COVID-19

The following three recommendations directly address the significant ongoing challenges associated with the COVID-19 global pandemic, which began in late 2019. There is evidence that family violence increases during times of crisis, particularly for individuals who have been quarantined at home with people who use abuse.

1. **Request emergency funding for agencies engaged in prevention of and response to child abuse, domestic violence, and elder abuse** to ensure that frontline staff are supported in response to COVID-19.
2. **Increase awareness around family violence during COVID-19**, including publishing culturally accessible education and resources for survivors of family violence, leveraging San Francisco's alert system to provide resources, and asking public officials to highlight this increased need. Ensure that providers and first responders have the necessary tools and training to be able to assess family violence and provide resources to victims and those at risk.
3. **Ensure that all City departments that are members of the Family Violence Council create a response plan to address and prevent family violence in disaster planning.** Violence prevention plans might include public education and awareness, emergency data snapshots of both quantitative and qualitative data, plans to change how services are provided in response to disasters and policy recommendations based on emerging trends.

Protocols and Practice

4. **Ensure the cross-referring of domestic violence cases to Child Protective Service** by updating the supplemental domestic violence form used by San Francisco Police Department to include a check box on whether a child, in the home during a domestic violence call, has been referred to Child Protective Services, and why.
5. **Enhance accountability around Batterer Intervention Programs and create a plan to offer batterers intervention programs for monolingual Cantonese speakers.** The Adult Probation Department will provide routine updates on outcomes of certified batterer intervention and child abuse intervention programs, and seek funding for a recidivism study, to establish how effective these programs are.
6. **Institute a pretrial assessment tool to aid decision-making at arraignment that is tailored to domestic violence cases.**

7. **Ensure adequate and consistent staffing at the Special Victims Unit:** maintain consistent leadership with Captains and Lieutenants at Special Victims Unit for at least 2 years; and increase staffing at the San Francisco Police Department Special Victims Unit, to the level recommended by the Police Executive Research Forum.
8. **Finalize Domestic Violence Manual for Police Department.**
9. **Finalize Elder Abuse Manual for Police Department.**
10. **Create death review teams for domestic violence and elder abuse deaths and identify best practices and share lessons between these teams and the Child Death Review Team.** Death review teams identify and review unexpected child deaths and deaths related to domestic violence and elder abuse. In collaboration with local agencies, death review teams design recommendations for policies and protocols to reduce the incidence of family violence.
11. **Conduct targeted primary aggressor training for police officers arresting victims of domestic violence.** Investigate patterns in which police districts are arresting survivors who report abuse from their partners and are later released without charge and obtain demographic data on these cases. Train first-response officers to recognize the primary aggressor in a domestic violence situation and in issues related to language access.
12. **Support educators on screening for family violence and mandated reporting:** SFUSD will continue to provide annual Child Abuse Mandated Reporter Training for educators as required by California Education Code 44691. This online training will be completed within the first 6 weeks of each school year or the first 6 weeks of employment for new staff hired after school starts. An in-person training will be provided to student support professionals at least every other year. The California State Office of Child Abuse Prevention, Department of Social Services, should translate the on-line child abuse reporting training into different languages and incorporate instruction on implicit bias.

Training and Outreach

13. **Conduct child abuse, domestic violence, and elder abuse trainings led by community-based organizations at the Police Academy and other Police Department trainings.** Raise funds to develop a directory of the trainings community-based organizations can offer, for distribution amongst Family Violence Council members. Raise funds to convene a cross-disciplinary committee to conduct a needs assessment for county-wide trainings on all forms of family violence.

Planning, Research, and Data Collection

14. **Gather information on what service needs are not being met for domestic violence survivors and map existing services.** Expand tracking of shelter turn away rate to include other services that survivors cannot access.

15. **Focus on ‘engineering for equity’ approach in Violence Against Women-Grant funded community services**, particularly in relation to Black/African American survivors of all forms of family violence.
16. **Create a citywide Child Abuse Prevention Council focused on child abuse prevention to reduce substantiated allegations of child maltreatment for all race/ethnicities to 3.0 per 1,000 children by 2023.** Essential partner agencies of Family Violence Council should work to provide the Council with necessary data and input and to participate in the working group that will develop an action plan to reach the target. This research would also include understanding the root causes of neglect and community-wide solutions to effectively address these causes.
17. **Provide additional data on allegations of child abuse perpetrated by an adult other than a family member.**
18. **Work to improve data on LGBTQ families and individuals.**
19. **Explore the possibility of developing a workgroup in partnership with the San Francisco Department of Public Health to focus on capturing prevention measures for the Family Violence Council Annual Report and to jointly develop a prevention plan.** Workgroup will also expand the Family Violence Council’s focus on health equity, and social and racial justice.
20. **Organize a Strategic Planning Retreat for the Family Violence Council in 2021.**