

# Urgent Request for Review – Mishandling of Evidence in Suspicious Death of Brynia Kayle Harris-Czubko

Karen [REDACTED] @gmail.com>

Tue, May 20, 2025 at 4:55 PM

To: esmith@kernda.org, dmckillop@kernda.org, czimmer@kernda.org  
Cc: Karen [REDACTED] @gmail.com>

Dear Ms. Zimmer, Mr. Smith, and Mr. McKillop,

I am writing to formally request an investigation into the handling of my niece Brynia Kayle Harris-Czubko's death by the Bakersfield Police Department (BPD). Her date of birth is [REDACTED]. Her body was found up the canyon at the Kern River on August 4, 2020, [REDACTED]. The case was [REDACTED] closed as an accidental drowning. [REDACTED]

On August 3, 2020, two dashcam videos were recorded by eyewitnesses:

- The first video, [REDACTED], shows Brynia's car parked by the Kern River [REDACTED] along with a white truck nearby and two men standing around.
- The second video, [REDACTED] carrying a dead body just feet from Brynia's car. The body is visibly stiff with rigor mortis in the elbows, shoulders, and knees—indicating she had already been deceased for some time.

These videos were submitted to BPD on August 5, 2020, by the eyewitness. After I located the eyewitnesses [REDACTED] I personally resubmitted the evidence and their contact information to BPD on November 2, 2021. To date, BPD has not interviewed the eyewitnesses [REDACTED]

The autopsy [REDACTED] there was no fluid in her lungs, making the initial "accidental drowning" ruling [REDACTED] questionable. The Kern County Sheriff-

Coroner ultimately listed the cause of death as "undetermined." It wasn't until I brought forward the dashcam videos and raised formal complaints in 2021 that the case was even reclassified as a "suspicious death."

respectfully urge your offices to initiate a formal investigation

Please confirm receipt of this message. I

Sincerely,  
Karen [redacted]

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## Urgent Addendum to May 20, 2025 Email Regarding Brynia Kayle Harris-Czubko (Previously Reported Evidence)

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Karen [REDACTED]@gmail.com>

Thu, May 22, 2025 at 11:03 AM

To: esmith@kernda.org, dmckillop@kernda.org, czimmer@kernda.org  
Cc: Karen [REDACTED]@gmail.com>

[REDACTED]

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**Dear Ms. Zimmer, Mr. Smith, and Mr. McKillop,**

I am writing to provide an addendum to the email I sent on May 20, 2025, regarding the suspicious death of my niece, Brynia Kayle Harris-Czubko.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

By the fall of 2023, after receiving no response to my July 12, 2023 email to the Bakersfield Police Department (see attached screenshots), I realized I needed to step back from pursuing justice—for [REDACTED]

I retired in April 2025, [REDACTED]

My niece's body was dumped in the Kern River. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] still have no explanation as to how the BPD initially concluded—with definitive proof—that her death was an “accidental drowning.”

[REDACTED] Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Karen [REDACTED]

## Attachments (Screenshots): Description and Relevance:

### 1. Final Email to BPD (July 12, 2023):

- The first screenshot shows the opening paragraph of my last email sent to the Bakersfield Police Department. No one ever responded to this email. [REDACTED]

### 2. Expanded Recipient Fields:

- Another screenshot expands the recipient fields, clearly showing the BPD personnel who received the message.

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### 3. Initial Contact from BPD Supervisor:

- This screenshot captures the initial outreach from a BPD supervisor following my complaint via text to Detective Frank McIntyre and sharing a portion of the video with Brynia's body being carried.
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### 4. Two Men in Dashcam Still:

- Another screenshot includes a still image from the first dashcam video, with a white circle drawn around two men who are faintly visible in the background.
- This image was shared with me by the eyewitness, and without this image, I would not have known there were individuals present in that footage.

### 5. White Truck with Camper [REDACTED]

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## Final Submission of Key Evidence for Independent Review of Brynia Kayle Harris-Czubko's Death

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Karen [REDACTED]@gmail.com>

Wed, May 28, 2025 at 2:10 PM

To: czimmer@kernda.org, esmith@kernda.org, dmckillop@kernda.org  
[REDACTED]

Dear Ms. Zimmer, Mr. Smith, and Mr. McKillop,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Documented Concerns of BPD Conduct:

November 2, 2021: After I resubmitted the dash cam videos, and after it was demonstrated that he had [REDACTED] the initial investigation, detective Felipe Juarez was assigned back to the case to correct his error.

On January 7, 2022, I privately asked Michael Garrity for a new set of eyes on the investigation, and I outlined in very specific detail why I was making my request in relation to a January 5, 2022 e-mail exchange between me and Detective Juarez. In his response, Michael Garrity retained my original email and copied Matthew Gregory, Nathan McCauley, Jeremy Grimes, and Detective Felipe Juarez — the very subject of my complaint.

I was shocked and deeply intimidated to see my confidential concerns about Detective Juarez disclosed directly to him.

[REDACTED]

It appears that Michael Garrity may have failed to ensure due process for a fair and impartial reinvestigation. [REDACTED] it might be possible that the BPD didn't commit to a due process for a fair and impartial reinvestigation on Brynia's case by keeping Juarez on the case after his initial "accidental drowning" ruling. BPD's actions may come across as having the appearance of a conflict of interest, an appearance of impropriety, investigative misconduct, and a breach of procedural integrity.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

In 2020: November 27

In 2021: August 9, November 2, November 3, November 3, November 3, November 3, November 3, November 4, November 4, November 4, November 4, November 8, November 29, November 30, December 1, December 2

In 2022: January 4, January 5, January 7, January 7, March 4, March 4, September 7, September 7, September 7, September 9, September 9, November 22

In 2023: February 9, February 11, July 12

Emails received from BPD staff:

In 2021: November 2, November 3, November 3, November 3, November 4, November 4, November 4, November 4, November 30

In 2022: January 5, January 7, September 7

In 2023: February 11

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Karen

Attachment: [REDACTED]

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 attachment to May 28 email.docx  
3486K

## Independent Review of Brynia Kayle Harris-Czubko's Death

Karen <k[REDACTED]@gmail.com>

Fri, Jun 13, 2025 at 6:25 PM

To: czimmer@kernda.org, esmith@kernda.org, dmckillop@kernda.org  
Cc: Karen [REDACTED]@gmail.com>

Dear Ms. Zimmer, Mr. Smith, and Mr. McKillop,

I'm Karen [REDACTED], from Tehachapi, [REDACTED] writing to you regarding the suspicious death of my niece, Brynia Kayle Harris-Czubko. In addition to my e-mails sent to you on May 20, 22, and 28, [REDACTED]

The information is separated into the following:

\*\*\*\*\*

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Thank you for your time and attention on this matter.

Sincerely, Karen [REDACTED]

 DA June 13 2025.docx  
1535K

## Independent Review of Brynia Kayle Harris-Czubko's Death

**Eric Smith** <esmith@kernda.org>

Fri, Jun 13, 2025 at 6:54 PM

To: Karen [REDACTED]@gmail.com>

Cc: Daniel Perez <DPerez@kernda.org>

Ms. [REDACTED],

I wanted to advise that I have received your emails about the death of Brynia Kayle Harris-Czubko. The Kern County District Attorney's office has never received the case you are referencing from the Bakersfield Police Department for review. I recommend providing any evidence in your possession to the Bakersfield Police Department since they are the investigating agency.

Respectfully,

**Eric Lawrence Smith** | Chief Trial Deputy

**Kern County District Attorney's Office**

Homicide | Crimes Against Peace Officers

[esmith@kernda.org](mailto:esmith@kernda.org)







Karen <[REDACTED]@gmail.com>

## [REDACTED] **Independent Review of Brynia Kayle Harris-Czubko's Death**

Karen [REDACTED]@gmail.com>

Fri, Jun 13, 2025 at 8:39  
PM

To: Eric Smith <esmith@kernda.org>

Cc: Daniel Perez <DPerez@kernda.org>, Karen [REDACTED]@gmail.com>

Hello Mr. Smith,

I appreciate your acknowledgement. My allegation includes documented information that BPD buried my niece's homicide case, not once, but twice. Your email appears to support my claim: the BPD never referred my niece's case to the District Attorney's office.

Thank you for your time, Karen [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



Karen [REDACTED] @gmail.com>

## Independent Review of Brynia Kayle Harris-Czubko's Death

Karen [REDACTED] @gmail.com>

Sun, Jun 15, 2025 at 12:29 PM

To: Eric Smith <esmith@kernda.org>

Cc: Daniel Perez <DPerez@kernda.org>, czimmer@kernda.org, dmckillop@kernda.org, Karen [REDACTED] @gmail.com>

Dear Mr. Smith,

I understand that my coming to the Kern County District Attorney's office was the next appropriate step in the chain of command. As a whistleblower against the BPD, the KCDA's office suggested that I go back to the very department that I am a whistleblower against. If District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer recused her office from this matter and referred it to the proper authorities instead, I would find no fault in that. My intention was to give her the benefit of the doubt first, an opportunity to lead on this matter instead of skipping over her. I'm fully aware it's a difficult decision for anyone in her position. District Attorney Zimmer has every right to uphold her own dignity, no matter which way she decides. A recusal is just as honorable and may be the best way to allow the KCDA to maintain the inner integrity to represent other victims who have no voice. I am including DA Zimmer and Mr. McKillop again here to ensure full visibility, out of respect for the seriousness of this matter and to prevent any further breakdown in institutional continuity.

Respectfully,

Karen [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**NOTES:**

**I had noticed the grant funding request is for the area where my niece's body was dumped. (Document attached 2 pages below.)**

**Link:**

<https://www.kget.com/news/local-news/kern-county-district-attorney-seeks-federal-funding-to-enhance-investigation-prosecution-for-domestic-violence-crimes/>

# **Kern County District Attorney seeks federal funding to enhance investigation, prosecution for domestic violence crimes**

by: [Sangmin Kim](#)

Posted: Jun 20, 2025 / 12:39 PM PDT

Updated: Jun 20, 2025 / 12:39 PM PDT

**I had noticed that the very staff member that District Attorney Eric Smith had cc'd on his reply to me was also getting funding to attend a training to attend a POST management course. (Document attached on next page.)**

**I had also noticed that the grant funding request did not include the usual statement that some type of county official had reviewed the request. (Two examples below taken from the KCDA's other requests.)**

The County Administrative Office has reviewed this request

County Counsel has reviewed and approved our request, and the Resolution is approved as to form.



# OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY C O U N T Y O F K E R N

CIVIC CENTER JUSTICE BUILDING  
1215 TRUXTUN AVENUE  
BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA 93301  
(661) 868-2340, FAX: (661) 868-2700

JOSEPH A. KINZEL  
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

CYNTHIA J. ZIMMER  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

KENNETH M. RUSSELL  
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

June 24, 2025

Board of Supervisors  
Kern County Administrative Center  
1115 Truxtun Avenue  
Bakersfield, California 93301

**UNUSUAL TRAVEL REQUEST FOR DISTRICT ATTORNEY LIEUTENANT DANIEL PEREZ TO  
ATTEND THE PEACE OFFICER STANDARDS & TRAINING (POST) MANAGEMENT COURSE IN SAN  
DIEGO, CA  
(Fiscal Impact: \$4,313; Budgeted; Mandated)**

The District Attorney's Office is requesting your Board's approval of the unusual travel request for District Attorney Lieutenant Daniel Perez to attend the POST Management Course in San Diego, California.

The POST Management Course provide the Lieutenant Perez with information and knowledge of developing leadership skills, understanding the changing roles of middle-managers for his recent promotion. The Management Course contains 3 modules which Lieutenant Perez is scheduled to attend from July 6 through July 11, July 27 through July 31, and August 17 through August 21, 2025. Attendance at this training will require Lieutenant Perez to be on travel more than seven calendar days which requires your Board's approval.

The estimated costs to attend this course are as follows: Lodging \$2,929, per diem \$ 1,013, parking \$234, and gas/mileage \$137. The State of California reimburses the participating agency lodging, meals, and mileage for this training at the State allowable rate.

The County Administrative Office has reviewed and approved this request.

Therefore, IT IS RECOMMENDED that your Board approve the unusual travel request for District Attorney Lieutenant Daniel Perez to attend all three modules of the POST Management Course in San Diego, CA in an amount not to exceed \$4,313.

Sincerely,

  
Cynthia J. Zimmer  
District Attorney



# OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY C O U N T Y O F K E R N

CIVIC CENTER JUSTICE BUILDING

1215 TRUXTUN AVENUE

BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA 93301

(661) 868-2340, FAX: (661) 868-2700

JOSEPH A. KINZEL

ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

CYNTHIA J. ZIMMER

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

KENNETH M. RUSSELL

ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

June 24, 2025

Board of Supervisors  
Kern County Administrative Center  
1115 Truxtun Avenue  
Bakersfield, CA 93301

**REQUEST APPROVAL TO AUTHORIZE THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
TO SUBMIT GRANT APPLICATION FOR THE ENHANCING INVESTIGATION AND  
PROSECUTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, DATING VIOLENCE, SEXUAL ASSAULT AND  
STALKING (EIP) INITIATIVE FROM OCTOBER 1, 2025 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 31, 2028**  
**Fiscal Impact: \$750,000; Federal Grant; Budgeted; Discretionary**

The U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women has solicited grant proposals from eligible agencies for the Enhancing Investigation and Prosecution of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking (EIP) Initiative. The District Attorney's Office is requesting authorization to submit a grant application to OVW to request funding for the Enhancing Investigation and Prosecution of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking (EIP) Initiative from October 1, 2025 through September 31, 2028.

The purpose of the Program is to enhance investigation and prosecution efforts for VAWA victims in the metropolitan and Northeast Lake Isabella area. This can be accomplished by partnering with the Bakersfield Police Department and Kern County Sheriff's Office to address the strategies used to address investigations and prosecutions in this service area, partnering with a non-profit victim service provider Waymakers to generate and enhance training efforts; hiring staff to dedicate prosecution and services that meet the needs of this population, training staff and law enforcement on response to VAWA crimes, and increasing outreach efforts.

The grant requires that recipients of funding focus on a specific service area to enhance responses to VAWA crimes. The District Attorney's Office has identified the need to address the cases that are filed in the metropolitan area that include the rural outlying area of Northeast Kern that have limited resources. If awarded, this grant will provide \$750,000 to be utilized for direct services to VAWA victims of crime; training staff and law enforcement partners; review policies, procedures, protocols and strategies with a goal of enhancing investigation and prosecution efforts; expand outreach and receive feedback from the community; and improve data collection.

The District Attorney's Office proposes to utilize grant monies to address the challenges and

needs identified for crimes relating to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking for cases filed in the metropolitan area, along with dedicating a victim advocate to provide direct services. Funding will allow for the dedication of one full-time equivalent Victim/Witness Services Specialist and fifty percent of one full-time equivalent Deputy District Attorney. The Victim/Witness Services Specialist will be bi-lingual.

Therefore, IT IS RECOMMENDED that your Board adopt the approval authorizing the District Attorney to submit an application to the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services for the Enhancing Investigation and Prosecution of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking (EIP) Initiative from October 1, 2025 through September 31, 2028 in the amount of \$750,000 and authorize the District Attorney to execute all grant documents.

Sincerely,



CYNTHIA J. ZIMMER,  
District Attorney

cc: County Administrative Office

## Purpose of the Proposal

### **Population**

Kern County is the third largest county in California with an estimated population of 922,529 reported by the United States Census Bureau in 2024. It is spread over 8,134 square miles with roughly half of the population residing in the City of Bakersfield over 151 square miles and one-third of the population living in rural areas. Budget cuts at the Federal, State, County and City level have impacted available personnel who respond, prosecute, and are adequately trained on crimes involving domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Victims who live in rural unincorporated areas of Kern, including the Northeast Lake Isabella area, have fewer resources and law enforcement personnel who patrol. This includes a small parcel of land 19 miles North of Lake Isabella is also home to the Tübatulabal Tribe.

The needs for the population of Kern County will be addressed by addressing purpose areas in the Metropolitan area where a majority of VAWA cases are investigated and submitted for prosecution. This area includes the City of Bakersfield and the unincorporated Northeast Lake Isabella area.

### **Characteristics of Service Area**

The United States Census Bureau survey (2024) indicates that the population in Kern County is predominately Hispanic or Latino at fifty-seven percent, nearly half of the population speaks a language other than English in the home at forty-five percent, and nineteen percent of the population is living at the poverty level. Agriculture and oil are the industries that drive Kern County's economy. These industries have brought residents to our communities in search of work and lower housing costs. Many transient workers who are employed in the agricultural industry live below the poverty rate and speak a language other than English making them vulnerable to becoming victims of crime which are often unreported due language barriers and fear of deportation. Alternatively, the instability of the oil industry leads to layoffs which in turn creates instability in the home leading to higher risk of domestic violence.

While known to be underreported in migrant and disadvantaged communities, the Bakersfield Police Department (**BPD**) and Kern County Sheriff's Office (**KCSO**) have provided statistics on calls for service relating to domestic disturbances, sex offenses and stalking for the last two years. KCSO has responded to 15,659 domestic disturbances, 431 sex offense and 86 stalking reports in unincorporated areas of Kern County. BPD has responded to 7,137 domestic disturbances, 474 sex offense and 104 stalking reports in the city.

The Kern County District Attorney's (**KCDA**) Victim Services Unit has assisted 4,792 victims of domestic violence (including dating violence & familial violence), 2,061 sexual assaults, and 1,031 who have experienced stalking and harassment in the last two years. Many of the domestic violence victims assisted did not report to law enforcement or seek assistance further assistance after reporting a crime.

### **Challenges and Needs**

The KCDA has received additional funding to respond and support rural areas of Kern through Measure K State funds. However, law enforcement has not had adequate funding to support outlying communities or the need for specialized training. The KCDA receives many complaints filed by law enforcement agencies in the Metropolitan area with no additional funding to provide specialized training for prosecutors. One goal of this project is to provide specialized training for law enforcement and prosecution personnel.

While the KCDA's office and law enforcement have expanded efforts to identify the needs of our communities, there are still victims who are reluctant to report, participate in prosecution or seek services. Providing opportunities for community feedback and outreach events in Bakersfield and the Northeast Lake Isabella area, we hope to build trust and transparency. Collaboration with our law enforcement partners in a mutual effort to enhance our response to VAWA is essential to make real changes in our community. The KCDA's office, Victim Services and many law enforcement agencies throughout the County routinely participate

in multidisciplinary teams (**MDT**) that focus on sexual assault, elder abuse and community resources. However, an MDT is needed to address domestic violence responses.

The KCDA has filed 55,880 cases over the last two years. Of the cases filed, 5,435 cases involved domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking and around 2,600 were rejected for insufficient evidence, further investigation or due to victim declining to testify. The data collected to support these numbers were based on a search of PC273.5(a), PC288, PC261, PC243(e)(1) and PC646.9 at all court branches in Kern and may be higher than the number provided. Limitations on data collected from our case management system make it difficult to get a true number. In 2023, the KCDA's office implemented the Karpel case management system that allows us to run reports on data collected in the system. However, lack of funding has prevented our office from generating custom reports in this system for internal review and data collection. The collective data provided in this report required many different reports to be run in Karpel and for the data to be placed into a readable spreadsheet to narrow down data. Additional funding to generate customized reports would assist in more accurate and enhanced reporting.

Government and law enforcement agencies across the State of California continue to see budget cuts at the Federal, State, County and City level. Funding has not been able to keep up with the cost of living, the need for resources and the personnel to support our communities. To provide support for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking and hold offender's accountable additional funding is needed for personnel.

### **Supporting Agencies**

This project will support the KCDA's Office and law enforcement partners from BPD and KCSO to address the enhancement of investigation and prosecution of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. The District Attorney (**DA**) is a member of the executive branch of the California government, provided for by Article XI, Section 1 of the California Constitution. The duties and functions of the DA are set forth in Government Code

section 16500. The DA is responsible for the prosecution of all criminal acts that occur in Kern County in violation of state laws and county ordinances. The KCDS's Office is divided into five main divisions: Administrative Services Division, The Bureau of Investigation, the Criminal Division, the Forensic Science Division, and the Victim Services Division.

BPD is dedicated to the delivery of quality professional service in all activities that promote community safety, security, and public trust. Their goal is to provide for the safety and welfare of the citizens of Bakersfield utilizing effective law enforcement systems, including crime prevention, patrol and traffic enforcement, criminal investigation follow-up, crime analysis, vice and narcotic enforcement, gang suppression and community relations.

The KCSO is "committed to work in partnership with our community to enhance the safety, security and quality of life for the residents and visitors of Kern County through professional public safety services. In addition to providing police and investigation services to the unincorporated area of Kern County, the Sheriff has the responsibility of the jail system, providing bailiff and prisoner transportation service to the courts, search and rescue, coroner services, and civil process.

### **Relationship with CBOs**

The KCDA's Office and their Victim Services Unit have a longstanding relationship with local victim service providers and community-based organizations (**CBOs**). Collaboration with agency and CBOs has helped expand and advance victim services and communication in our County. The Victim Services Unit has established fifty-four operating agreements with CBOs and governmental agencies throughout the County for over twelve years. Collaborating agencies are committed to referring victims to the Victim Services Unit and the KCDA's Office. Cross training between the agencies is an essential element of these collaborative efforts. It provides an opportunity to enhance mutual understanding and benefit of the different programs and available resources. Through these collaborative efforts and routine meetings to discuss

needs in our community, we can review, evaluate and amend our current policies, procedures and protocols. Our partnerships include but are not limited to the following:

- Bakersfield Police Department
- Kern County Sheriff's Office
- Kern County Aging & Adult Services Department
- Kern County Department of Human Services
- Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance, Inc. 501(c)(3) non-profit
- The Open Door Network 501(c)(3) non-profit
- Kern County Department of Child Support Services
- Kern County Behavioral Health & Recovery Services
- Bakersfield American Indian Health Project 501(c)(3) non-profit
- Garden Pathways, Inc. 501(c)(3) non-profit
- Kern County Forensic Services
- Women's Center High Desert 501(c)(3) non-profit

Many of these agencies play a part in many different MDTs, including the Sexual Assault Response Team (**SART**) that is hosted monthly by the KCDA's Office and Kern County Forensic Services. Law enforcement, victim service providers and criminal justice-based advocates meet to discuss issues and concerns regarding the investigation, prosecution and service provision of sexual assault cases, along with a review of cases that were referred for forensic exams and interviews. MDT meetings such as SART foster accountability and create space for open conversation between criminal justice and victim service providers.

Relationships with CBOs outside of Kern County have been established with Waymakers in Orange County and Family Justice Centers statewide.

## What Will Be Done

### **Training**

Training opportunities for our prosecutors, investigators and victim advocates located within the KCDA's Office are limited due to budget restrictions and are needed to enhance knowledge in the field of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. Additionally, the knowledge and benefits of the availability of domestic violence forensic exams. Grant funded staff and law enforcement partners will participate in OVW-sponsored training and technical assistance (TTA) when made available to enhance training, policies, procedures and strategies for responding to VAWA crimes. Our victim service provider partnership through Waymakers will allow our office to supplement training throughout the subaward period and allow virtual participation to all personnel within the KCDA's office and law enforcement partner agencies. KCDA will encourage grant funded staff and partners to attend free training opportunities.

### **Outreach**

The grant funded staff will participate in community outreach events to provide information on the criminal justice system, victim services, safety planning and to build rapport with the service area. Brochures specific to domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking will be created to address prevention, victim safety and offender accountability. Brochures on Marsy's Law and restraining orders, and resources on safety planning will be made available through our Victim Services Unit.

### **Transparency & Community Trust**

An article by the Urban Institute (La Vigne, et al. 2019) addresses the importance of building community trust with law enforcement in the effort of making significant changes to policies and procedures. The article states that communities with high crime rates and marginalized populations are less likely to trust law enforcement, report crimes and partner on making their communities safer. They conducted an initiative with law enforcement agencies among six cities

to focus on issues and concerns from residents through training and listening sessions which resulted in policy change across five out of six cities. To address accountability, transparency and to build community trust in our service area, we will provide space for the community to raise concerns and issues related to law enforcement and prosecution response to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking by providing opportunities to speak with representatives from the District Attorney's Office in partnership with BPD and KCSO; provide satisfaction surveys at the beginning of a case and after a disposition; engage in community workshops; and increase awareness for victim safety, prevention and offender accountability through the use of social media.

Additionally, the funding of a victim advocate would increase transparency for victims navigating the criminal justice system by providing them with a direct contact who is trained in trauma-informed care and the criminal justice system; has knowledge of community resources; and can act as a liaison between prosecutors and law enforcement.

### **Internal Improvements**

Internal improvements will be made by reviewing, revising and implementing policies, procedures, protocols and strategies that promote prompt and thorough investigations and prosecutions. To meet this purpose area, we will set quarterly focus group meetings with KCDA , BPD and KCSO Administrations. Data collection from Karpel and our law enforcement partners will be essential in quantifying improvements needed in investigations and prosecution.

We will invite law enforcement personnel to participate in training opportunities and ask that they complete satisfaction surveys once a year to measure the level of improvement in their responses to VAWA crimes.

Satisfaction surveys will be provided to victims at the beginning of a case and after a disposition by the grant funded victim advocate to measure the level of satisfaction with the KCDA, law enforcement and the case progression and outcome.

## **Collaborative Efforts**

KCDA and grant funded staff will participate in collaborative efforts with law enforcement partners to address investigations and prosecutions of VAWA cases; provide information on services provided by our grant funded victim advocate; available resources to victims in the service area; and participate in MDT meetings.

SART is an established MDT that addresses sexual assault cases and will be attended by grant funded staff. The KCDA's Office will work to establish a Domestic Violence Response Team (**DVRT**) that will address issues with cases (including dating violence and stalking), create open discussion on specific cases that are being investigated and/or prosecuted, and coordinate victim assistance.

## **Data Collection**

Funding supported by this grant will be used to address the need for enhanced data collection through the generation of customized reports in Karpel. The goal is to better identify filing decisions, rejections and dispositions for domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking cases through single reports that incorporate more penal code sections to increase the accuracy of reporting. Additionally, we plan on working with Karpel to incorporate additional data collection on victim age, and timeframes from complaint to filing decision to disposition of case. The identification of these metrics will help our office when reviewing and implementation of policy changes within our office.

## **Personnel**

Grant funding will allow for a full-time Victim Witness Services Specialist (**victim advocate**) and half a Deputy District Attorney (**DDA**) to address the project goals within the proposed service area. The need for a designated prosecutor and advocate to be funded under this program will allow for additional funding in other programs and county funding for additional personnel for the next three years. Grant funded staff will focus on cases filed at the

Metropolitan courthouse, including the Northeast Lake Isabella area of Kern that currently does not have advocate or prosecution presence.

### **Accommodations for Disabled and Deaf/Hard of Hearing**

The KCDA's Victim Services Unit has implemented and budgeted for a language access line that includes video ASL interpretation which can be accessed by DA staff for individuals who speak a language other than English or Spanish and who are deaf or hard of hearing. DA staff have access to court interpreters and headsets. Reasonable accommodations are available for individuals who are disabled including building accessibility, captioning for videos, personal support options, magnifying glasses, and a wheelchair. Accommodations are continually reviewed to meet the needs of the community. In addition, training on interviewing people with disabilities for law enforcement is provided through a mandated Crisis Intervention Training program hosted by Kern County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services.

### **Who will Implement the Proposal**

The KCDA's Office will act as the single point of contact for this grant. Our office is familiar with and has the capabilities to meet all reporting and administrative functions. The Program Director for this project will be the Victim Services Program Supervisor who is overseen by the Assistant District Attorney and reports to the DA. The Victim Witness Program Supervisor manages the Victim Services Unit which includes the overseeing of the Victim Witness Program Coordinator, grants, budget and is responsible for ensuring that program mandates are carried out. The Victim Witness Program Supervisor is also responsible for data collection and semi-annual reports. The Program Director will be responsible for implementing and overseeing the EIP project, ensure that grant funded staff and partners are meeting project goals and purpose areas, data collection and required grant reporting.

The budget and financial functions are administered by the Administrative Services Division Staff. The Program Director will work closely with the Administrative Services Officer to ensure financial reports are submitted to meet grant requirements.

The KCDA's Office employs sixty-eight (68) Deputy District Attorneys. We currently have one (1) DDA in the Domestic Violence Unit and four (4) DDA's in the Special Victims Unit that vertically prosecute sexual assault, domestic violence, child abuse, human trafficking, and elder abuse cases. The grant funded **DDA** will be prosecuting felony domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking cases filed in Bakersfield-that include the Northeast Lake Isabella area-under the supervision of a Supervising Deputy District Attorney in the Special Victims Unit who reports to the Assistant District Attorney. They will also be responsible for working with the Project Director, grant funded advocate and partners to carry out project activities including training, community outreach, internal review, collaboration with partners and collection of data. The DDA funded by this grant will be working in a specialized unit that requires years of experience as a prosecutor and has extensive knowledge of the law that applies to VAWA crimes.

The Kern County Victim Services Unit, under the direction of the KCDA's Office, provides professionally trained advocates to assist crime victims, such as domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking and elder abuse victims, in applying for reimbursement of losses incurred as a result of a crime. Additional services include crisis intervention, emergency assistance, resource and referral assistance, restitution assistance, and many other supportive services.

The Victim Services Unit employs fifteen (15) victim advocates that work in different areas of Kern County under various grants awarded by CalOES and State funding. There are (2) victim advocates assigned to Delano and East Kern under Measure K State funding, one (1) assigned the Lamont South Kern Family Justice Center under a UV grant, one (1) assigned to the Family Justice Center under the FJ grant, eleven (11) assigned to specialized crimes types or areas of Kern including Shafter, Juvenile Justice Center, homicides and post-conviction cases, and the larger metropolitan area in Bakersfield to address property crimes, thefts, general felonies, and interpersonal violence. The grant funded victim advocate will assist with

direct services for victims of felony domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking cases filed in the Metropolitan area that includes the Northeast Lake Isabella area. The victim advocate will be bilingual to meet the needs of the population; work with other community agencies for housing assistance; and will be responsible for working with the Project Director, grant funded DDA, and partners to meet the project needs and goals. This includes training, community outreach, creating informational brochures, collaboration with partners, and collecting data to support project goals. The grant funded victim advocate would be under supervision of and report to the Victim Witness Program Coordinator. The advocate assigned to this project will have at least 6 months experience working as a victim advocate; trained to assist victims of crime; experience with attending collaborative meetings and outreach events; and have knowledge of VAWA crimes. The victim advocate will work on-site as a partner at the Family Justice Center under the Victim Services Unit to provide direct services and referrals to other community agencies.

The Bakersfield Police Department and Kern County Sheriff's Office will act as a Law Enforcement partners to carry out the project goals including the investigation of VAWA crimes; participate in training, multidisciplinary teams and outreach; collaborate in an effort to build community trust and transparency; provide our office with statistics and updates on agency activities in relation to this grant; meet with the District Attorney's Office to discuss policies, practices and protocols in relation to trauma-informed investigations and prosecution strategies.

Waymakers will act as our victim services provider partner to provide supplemental training to the KCDA, grant funded staff and law enforcement partners. Waymakers is a non-profit 501(c)(3) that provides victim services, counseling, shelter and education. They have been a recipient of grant funding through CalOES and the California Crime Victim's Assistance Association (CCVAA) for many years-providing professional victim advocacy training across the state. Their responsibility as a partner will be to generate and provide virtual training with a

focus on VAWA crimes and trauma-informed responses when working with victims. Grant funding will be provided to Waymakers for their work to support project activities.