

August 13, 2025

Subject: Family Violence Council Historical Context & Accomplishments

Dear Commission Streamlining Task Force,

We, the former and current chairs of the Family Violence Council (FVC), write to urge you to recommend that the FVC remain in place. We recognize and support the mission of the Commission Streamlining Task Force and share its commitment to efficient, effective governance. In support of these goals, we are writing to make clear that the FVC does not duplicate any existing body and should be preserved; it fills a distinct and critical role, gathering important data to ensure data-driven policymaking, coordinating across siloed systems, providing essential perspectives, and ensuring meaningful community engagement. To support this recommendation, we wish to provide historical context, outline our structure, and underscore the value of the FVC.

The purpose of the FVC is to prevent and reduce harm caused by family violence. The FVC is unique in bringing together three areas that have traditionally operated separately: domestic violence, elder abuse, and child abuse/neglect. Each of these three areas is represented on the Steering Committee by a chair who is a leader in their field. The key city departments, involved in family violence prevention and alleviation, serve as members, such as the San Francisco Police Department, San Francisco Sheriff Department, District Attorney's Office, Public Defender, Family and Children's Services (FCS), Department of Disability and Aging Services (DAS) and Department of Early Childhood (DEC) along with six seats designated for community members. Quarterly meetings are open to the public to encourage broad community participation. Each year, the FVC publishes a data-driven report on the state of family violence in the community, including policy recommendations. The chairs collaborate with the host department, currently the Mayor's Office for Victims' Rights, as well as all member departments, to advance these recommendations and strengthen the city's response to family violence. Read the **FVC Report FY 2023** at: <https://www.sf.gov/family-violence-council-report>

This unique format, with department-based representation and the integration of domestic violence, elder abuse, and child abuse and neglect into a single FVC, was established in direct response to deficits in collaboration and recognition of the interconnected nature of violence that contributed to the tragic death of Claire Joyce Tempongko in 2000. In her case, despite making at least five 911 calls and multiple police reports, court hearings, a restraining order, and her abuser being enrolled in a court-mandated batterer intervention program, critical gaps in coordination among city agencies left her unprotected. No one followed up when the abuser violated the restraining order or dropped out of the intervention program. When her probation officer retired, no replacement was assigned, and key information about her escalating risk was

never shared between police, probation, the courts, or child welfare, despite the fact that her children were present during previous, violent incidents. The lack of a unified, cross-agency approach to addressing overlapping patterns of abuse ultimately allowed repeated violence to continue unchecked, ending in her murder in front of her two children.

In the wake of Claire Joyce Tempongko's tragic murder, there was a sweeping review of the city's deficiencies, revealing the dangerous lack of coordination across police, probation, courts, and victim services. The resulting *Justice & Courage Report* (2002) offered over 100 reforms and sparked a decade of cross-agency work to fix systemic gaps. These reforms indicated the importance of creating a permanent body to connect the dots between domestic violence, child abuse, and elder abuse, and to hold the city departments accountable for coordination. In response, the FVC was established by local ordinance in August 2007, and the FVC held its first meeting that October, creating a sustained, structured space for collaboration across sectors and city departments. By design, the FVC institutionalized the kind of collaboration that was missing in Tempongko's case, embedding prevention, coordination, and accountability into San Francisco's safety net for the long term.

For nearly two decades, this model has driven deep, sustained improvements throughout San Francisco's response to family violence. The accomplishments detailed below demonstrate the FVC's critical role and show that cross-sector, data-driven collaboration remains essential to the city's efforts.

Data Systems and Equity Focused Reporting: One of the big takeaways from Ms. Tempongko's murder was the need for data to be accessible to all departments. Thus, the city invested in an integrated computerized system called JUSTIS, designed to enable real-time data and case tracking across departments, replacing outdated paper-based methods. In 2017, the FVC further transformed San Francisco's family violence response by centering equity and data in city policy, reporting, and funding. This reporting has highlighted that Black and Latinx children remain overrepresented among neglect cases and that unmet basic needs are a primary risk for maltreatment, which has led to significant policy changes, including expanded city investment in Family Resource Centers, now a network of 27 sites serving close to 10,000 families and children each year. This data-driven approach enables departments to coordinate services and target funding toward the populations at most significant risk. Over the past 20 years, cases of child abuse and neglect in San Francisco have dropped by 60 percent.

Citywide Training and Prevention Education: Ms. Tempongko's murder highlighted the need for more comprehensive and coordinated training and prevention education across all city departments that interact with family violence cases. The FVC has met this need by embedding trauma-informed, best-practice training across city departments. For example, cross-departmental staff are trained on domestic violence protocols; domestic violence training has been established as a cornerstone curriculum at the police academy, and by 2020, all newly hired

staff at Department of Public Health-funded agencies were required to complete standardized trauma-informed care and family violence response training. Ongoing mandated reporter training for child-serving professionals educates over 2,500 participants each year, and the FVC collaborates with SFUSD and Safe & Sound to enable in-school child safety education to over 3,000 children per year. As a result, professional response to suspected abuse and concerns about families has improved, and the city workforce is better equipped to meet the needs of survivors and high-risk families.

Basic Needs and Awareness during COVID-19: During the COVID-19 crisis, the FVC led San Francisco's efforts to keep families experiencing or at risk of violence safe and stable. By coordinating with the Mayor's Office, the FVC launched 311 emergency alerts and virtual town halls to raise public awareness and successfully advocated for family violence prevention to be built into disaster planning and emergency relief. The FVC also helped to mobilize city agencies and nonprofit and private partners to keep domestic violence shelters open, sustain support services, and prioritize access to basic needs for survivors. As part of these actions, over 4,000 families received direct, emergency supplies and support through Family Resource Centers during the pandemic, reaching families most at risk, including those facing language and cultural barriers, and establishing basic needs support as a core part of the city's long-term family safety net.

Collaboration with Law Enforcement: The FVC has played a key role in improving San Francisco's police response to family violence by advising on and shaping law enforcement protocols and developing reference manuals for domestic violence and elder abuse. Regular meetings between the FVC Steering Committee and SFPD leadership ensure that citywide law enforcement efforts reflect current best practices and prioritize survivor safety. During the height of the Anti-Asian Hate incidents and Blessing Scams targeting AAPI seniors, SFPD and DA staff worked closely with FVC partners to develop policies on language access, case management, and emergency housing for victims. This year, the FVC successfully collaborated with the Special Victims Unit to drive significant changes: prioritizing staffing increases of approximately eight additional civilian and sworn members, changing processes for restraining order violations by assigning dedicated civilian staff, and working with the Department of Police Accountability to improve SFPD fugitive recovery team responses for sexual assault cases. These collaborative efforts have strengthened police response and enhanced survivor safety across all family violence cases.

Securing Critical Funding for Family Violence Services: Since its creation, the FVC has secured significant resources for domestic violence services in San Francisco. That vital advocacy has now expanded to encompass other direct services related to strengthening our families and communities, which in turn prevents family violence. Our community-based organizations are the foundation for prevention and support work; they are trusted and relied upon by the people who use them. In 2023, 13,436 survivors of domestic violence were served

by community-based organizations; 911 calls for domestic violence over the same period were under half that number, demonstrating that community members connect with local support long before they reach a crisis point or seek formal services. This year, the FVC has been actively raising awareness amongst the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor's Office to ensure that victim services remain a part of public safety funding and that community organizations providing direct family violence services receive adequate resources to meet demand.

These advances and achievements did not happen overnight. They were the result of years of relationship-building, honest dialogue, and a commitment to shared accountability. The FVC has served as the connection that allows siloed systems and departments to understand the whole picture, respond holistically, and evolve together.

Today, this work remains as urgent as ever. It requires coordinated prevention, intervention, and healing strategies that reflect the experiences of survivors and families. This level of sustained coordination cannot be taken for granted. Family violence-related homicides in SF have reduced by around 90% since the FVC was founded. The FVC needs to exist; without it, we risk returning to a fragmented response that leaves families vulnerable to harm.

Sincerely,

Current Family Violence Chairs

Antonia More, Director/Managing Attorney, Pro Bono Legal Services,
Justice & Diversity Center of the Bar Association of San Francisco
Anni Chung, President & CEO, Self-Help for the Elderly
Dr. Pegah Faed, CEO, Safe & Sound

Former Family Violence Chairs

Beverly Upton, Executive Director, Domestic Violence Consortium
Jenny Pearlman, Former Chief Policy Officer, Safe & Sound
Shawna Reeves, Former Director of Elder Abuse Prevention, Institute on Aging
Katie Albright, Former CEO, Safe & Sound
Kathy Baxter, Former Director, S.F. Child Abuse Council

Current Community Participants

Ali Chiu, Former Executive Director of the Consortium for Elder Abuse Prevention
Glen Fishman, Senior Program Development Specialist, Elder Abuse Prevention Program,
Institute on Aging
Dr. Pamela Tate, Executive Director, Black Women Revolt Against Domestic Violence
Esther Leong, Former Administrative Director, Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach