



Board of Supervisors Memorandum

May 26, 2026

Additional Support for Pima County's Victim Service and Domestic Violence Response System

Background

County Administration has evaluated targeted opportunities to strengthen Pima County's response to domestic violence and victim services. This review focused on enhancing crisis response, forensic services, and survivor stabilization through a more coordinated and sustainable County-led approach.

Pima County relies on a network of partners to respond to domestic violence incidents, including the Southern Arizona Center Against Sexual Assault (SACASA) and Emerge Center Against Domestic Abuse (Emerge). While these services are well-established and effective, increasing demand and evolving service needs present an opportunity for the County to strengthen its role in coordinating a supporting victim-center public safety services.

The recommendations below are intended to enhance service delivery, improve coordinating, and ensure continuity of care for residents, particularly during high-risk and after-hours periods.

- **After-Hour Victim Services and Advocacy**

This proposal enhances the County's support to provide enhanced after-hours victim services and advocacy. Currently this partnership is between the County Attorney's Victim Services Division and Emerge, with a focus on individuals impacted by domestic violence and other high-risk situations. The County Attorney currently funds this critical service in the amount of \$50,000; however, actual costs exceed this amount.

This enhancement will strengthen the County's crisis response infrastructure by ensuring that victims have access to immediate support, safety planning, and connection to ongoing services outside of standard business hours. Staff are in conversation about including this contract under Crisis and Detainee Services in the upcoming fiscal years.

Services will be coordinated in partnership with the Emerge Center Against Domestic Abuse and will complement existing law enforcement and crisis response efforts.

Funding of \$60,000 will support staffing, coordination, and service delivery associated with this enhanced after-hours response.

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- **Southern Arizona Center Against Sexual Assault (SACASA) – Comprehensive Strangulation Forensic Services**

Pima County currently supports trauma-informed forensic strangulation exams through the Southern Arizona Center Against Sexual Assault (SACASA) in partnership with Emerge Center Against Domestic Abuse and the Pima County Domestic Violence Coordinated Community Response Team (DV CCR). These services have been supported through the federal STOP Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program.

Strangulation is one of the strongest indicators of elevated lethality risk in domestic violence cases and requires immediate forensic response and specialized follow-up evaluation. In 2024, SACASA launched specialized follow-up strangulation exams to reassess injuries and symptoms, identify injuries that may not have been visible during the initial exam, update medical recommendations, continue safety planning, and strengthen forensic evidence collection.

Due to the anticipated loss of federal funding, I am recommending the County increase our current contract with SACASA of \$40,000 for strangulation exams related to incidents of domestic violence to \$80,000 to include specialized follow up evaluation.

- **Emerge Center Against Domestic Abuse –Emergency Shelter Support**

Emerge provides crisis response, shelter, and ongoing support services to domestic violence survivors throughout Pima County. Emergency services include a 24-hour hotline, shelter, and overflow hotel placements for individuals who cannot be accommodated in existing facilities.

Due to resource constraints, housing stabilization services – which support survivors in transitioning to safe, long-term housing – have been reduced. Emerge is currently spending nearly \$30,000 per month on hotel costs to sustain access to emergency shelter for domestic violence survivors.

This proposal includes a \$60,000 investment to strengthen housing stabilization services and improve long-term outcomes for survivors while reducing reliance on emergency shelter and hotel placements.

- **Domestic Violence Firearm Transfer Program**

The City of Tucson's Domestic Violence Court, working with Emerge, runs a unique and effective program to remove firearms from those who are perpetrators of domestic violence, thus decreasing continued incidents of domestic violence and increasing general community safety.

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This program was funded by a Firearms Technical Assistance Grant from the federal Office of Violence Against Women, which has ended, thus jeopardizing the future of this important effort.

Funding provided by the County would complement and augment the City of Tucson's allocation to provide for staff of Emerge who serve coordination, navigation and advocacy functions to facilitate the transfer of firearms as mandated by City of Tucson and Pima County courts.

An allocation of \$90,000 from Pima County matches the City of Tucson's financial commitment and ensures the availability of Emerge staff to assist in this critical program.

These recommendations reflect a strategic effort to strengthen the County's victim services infrastructure, improve coordination with community partners, and enhance public safety outcomes. By investing in after-hours response, forensic capacity, and housing stabilization the County can better support survivors while reducing pressure on emergency and public safety systems.

Recommendation

I recommend that \$250,000 from the Contingency Fund be allocated to support these critical programs.

Sincerely,



Jan Lesher
County Administrator

JKL/dym – May 18, 2026

c: The Honorable Laura Conover, Pima County Attorney
Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator
Steve Holmes, Deputy County Administrator
Chad Kasmar, Deputy County Administrator
Art Cuaron, Director, Finance & Risk Management
Paula Perrera, Director, Detainee & Crisis Systems