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For Immediate Release

Contact: [Steve Walker](#) (619) 531-3890  
[Tanya Sierra](#) (619) 531-3315  
*En Español* [Barbara Medina](#) (619) 531-3305

# District Attorney Releases Comprehensive Plan to Empower Crime Victims and Survivors

## *'Call to Action' Includes 12 Specific Recommendations*

Saying that crime victims have become invisible in important discussions around funding priorities, community programs, and criminal justice reform, San Diego County District Attorney Summer Stephan today released a detailed plan that recommends a dozen specific solutions in direct crime victim services and improved support of crime survivors. The DA's [Blueprint for Transforming Victim and Survivor Care : A Strategic Approach for Empowering Crime Victims, Preventing Harm, and Reducing Violence](#) is the culmination of input from hundreds of stakeholders, victims, survivors, and community members.

The plan comes as a recent [SANDAG report](#) shows violent crime in San Diego County is up 14% in the first half of 2021, aggravated assaults with a firearm are up 55% and a statewide report shows California's homicide rate increased 31% in 2020.

"This blueprint is a call to action for all elected officials, community leaders, and policy makers to always consider the victim's voice in implementing laws that affect them," said DA Stephan. "Keeping the victim and survivor perspective at the core of our work is the best way to interrupt cycles of poverty, disrupt pipelines to prison, and prevent generational violence born of childhood trauma and the normalization of crime."

To better map the intersection of victims and survivors who encounter the criminal justice system and countywide victim services and to identify areas of gaps and needs for needed change, District Attorney Stephan and her team led three key initiatives to collect community input and to shape a new approach:

- 1) The formation in April of 2019 of a Victim and Survivor Advisory Board made up of survivors from a wide array of crime types.
- 2) A virtual Crime Victim and Survivor Summit in November of 2020, engaging over 1,300 community partners, survivors, professionals who work with survivors, and others dedicated to elevating the victim voice.
- 3) The release of the Blueprint for Transforming Victim and Survivor Care, reporting recommendations for significant changes in how to respond in trauma-informed ways and identifying areas of needed programs, policies and legislation, all through a lens of racial and social equity to best serve San Diego County victims of crime.

These initiatives provided opportunities for community partners and professionals to work alongside survivors of trauma to identify gaps and needs in our criminal justice response and to develop ideas for solutions.

As a result, [12 specific recommendations](#) came from the culmination of stakeholder and community input, survey data, crime victim and survivor board input, Summit participant data, and strategic planning sessions. The recommendations include:

- Developing regional hubs throughout the county of co-located professional services specific to victims and survivors of crime and their families.
- Supporting and expanding the use of technology for improved victims' safety, reporting, communication and access.
- Expanding and funding best practices such as forensic interviews and domestic violence forensic examinations.
- Building and increasing school-based prevention education and support systems.
- Screening for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) to reduce a child's potential for lifelong health and criminal justice negative outcomes
- Expand housing for victims and survivors of crime from emergency shelter to permanent housing

“Our society will be judged by how we care for our most vulnerable including children and seniors,” DA Stephan said. “To do this with excellence, we must consult with crime victims and survivors, hear their voices and together pave the way for transformational innovative solutions.”

The District Attorney's Office is the largest victim service provider organization in San Diego County, serving about 14,000 crime victims annually. The office is the natural community convener to begin and lead an expansive dialogue about empowering the victim voice and best practices in victim and survivor services. The District Attorney's Office Victim Services team responds with culturally competent, trauma-informed care to individuals plagued by crime, and dispatches mass critical incident teams to provide emotional support and counseling when the community is ravaged by hate crimes such as school shootings or shooting at houses of worship. Because victims and survivors of trauma frequently intersect with the criminal justice system, their perspective is critical to achieving racial and social equity and fair and equal justice for all. The victim and survivor voices are also critical as legislators and political leaders consider changes in the law.

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### **About the San Diego County District Attorney's Office**

*The San Diego County DA's Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.*