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**NEWS RELEASE**



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**Ventura County Behavioral Health Partners with District Attorney's Office  
to Implement Family Justice Centers Peer Program**

VENTURA, Calif. – The Ventura County Board of Supervisors has approved a new partnership between Ventura County Behavioral Health (VCBH) and the Ventura County District Attorney's Office to implement the Family Justice Centers Peer Program. Funded through Proposition 63 Mental Health Services Act, VCBH is committing \$1.25 million through June 30, 2026.

Through this agreement, critical peer support will be provided to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, helping them navigate the path to recovery. VCBH funds will support the research, development, and implementation of the peer support program at the Family Justice Centers. The program aims to foster resilience and empower victims by offering peer navigation and mentorship from trained specialists who have lived experience in overcoming similar challenges.

"This collaboration underscores our commitment to providing survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault with compassionate, effective support," District Attorney Erik Nasarenko said. "Peer specialists, who can relate firsthand to these experiences, will be instrumental in guiding victims on their journey to healing."

The program seeks to develop an evidence-based peer support model specifically designed for adult survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. It will ensure scalability so other qualified organizations can adopt and implement similar services. Peer Specialists, including a Peer Specialist Supervisor, will be employed to provide consistent individual and group support. Child watch services will be established to enable victims to fully participate in program activities. Outreach materials will be created and distributed to increase community awareness and engagement. The initiative will also focus on providing ongoing training and support for peer specialists, incorporating self-care and trauma intervention techniques. Additionally, regular

program evaluations will be conducted to measure effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

The District Attorney's Office will work closely with VCBH to implement the program, ensuring that survivors receive peer-guided support to connect with behavioral health services and other community resources. The partners will also coordinate training opportunities and public outreach to raise awareness of available victim support services.

"Peers have become a vital part of the VCBH system of care," County Behavioral Health Director Dr. Loretta Denering said. "Consumers note that peers provide unique perspectives and offer an understanding that comes from their lived experiences offering validation. Benefits include increased engagement, hope, and connection. Introducing this program to the Family Justice Center is a powerful and empowering approach to services in this field."

The program design includes one-on-one and group peer support, peer navigation at intake, and a train-the-trainer model that will allow the program's expansion to additional service areas in the future. The peer support staff will be hired through a vendor identified via a competitive bidding process, following Ventura County procurement guidelines.

This initiative reinforces County of Ventura's dedication to advancing victim services and creating a supportive, trauma-informed network for survivors.