



MENDOCINO COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

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DATE: April 24, 2026

TO: Mendocino County Board of Supervisors

FROM: James Schnitizus 
Chief DA Investigator

RE: Request to Maintain DA Victim Witness Advocate Status Quo

The District Attorney is ready to fill a position in his reduced staff Victim Witness Unit, caused by an internal resignation and deletion of the office staff assistant position. The assigned job duties of these positions have caused the remaining staff to become overwhelmed.

The Victim Witness Office has two (2) vacant advocate positions. Although both positions are critically important, the District Attorney is seeking to fill only one at this time in order to stabilize the unit and ensure statutory and grant-mandated services remain deliverable.

Recent staffing losses, coupled with increased responsibilities resulting from changes in state law have significantly intensified the workload of the remaining staff. Without restoring the advocate positions, the office's ability to meet legally required mandates-and to provide timely, effective assistance to victims and witnesses of crime-will be placed at serious risk.

Victim Witness Advocates are the front-line providers of direct services that are central to the mission of the program. These duties include:

- Guiding victims and witnesses through the criminal justice process
- Assisting with restraining orders, restitution claims, and access to crisis and financial support
- Providing psychological, safety, and resources assistance
- Conducting community outreach, education, and safety planning
- Training schools, law enforcement, and community groups on victim rights and available resources

These services have a profound and measurable impact on the safety, recovery, and well-being of crime, victims, witnesses, and the broader Mendocino County community. Year after year, the Board of Supervisors has recognized and praised the exemplary work of the Victim Witness Unit. Maintaining the status quo in staffing is vital for that high standard of service to continue.

For these reasons, approval to fill one Victim Witness Advocate position is necessary to preserve essential services, meet legal requirements, and sustain the County's commitment to supporting victims and witnesses of crime.