

LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

LADA

# YEAR IN REVIEW

*December 8, 2021*

## DISTRICT ATTORNEY GEORGE GASCÓN



PROTECTS  
*the community*



RESTORES  
*victims of crime*



HONORS  
*the rights of the accused*





## A MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

As the elected District Attorney of the nation's most populous county, I am committed to maintaining and enhancing public safety. My office is redefining the role of a 21st century prosecutor as a catalyst for change within the criminal legal system. In building a national model of criminal justice reform our promise is to support and restore crime victims and survivors while addressing mass incarceration, racism and social systemic inequities.

I'm proud to say that in my first year we have maintained public safety, as evidenced in our filing rates, and taken these bold steps toward reforming the criminal legal system:

- **Implementing trauma-informed resources for victims and survivors of crime**
- **Embedding deputy district attorneys into communities beset by violence so they may work on systemically improving the lives of residents**
- **No longer charging children as adults**
- **Diverting many misdemeanors associated with substance abuse, poverty and mental illness out of the criminal legal system**
- **Eliminating many sentencing enhancements that do not benefit public safety and contribute to mass incarceration**
- **Ending the death penalty as a sentence in Los Angeles County**
- **Removing cash bail for misdemeanor or nonserious or nonviolent felony offenses pursuant to California law as determined by the California Supreme Court in its *People v. Humphrey* decision**
- **Holding accountable law enforcement officers who violate the law and ensuring that their misconduct is disclosed to the defense in cases in which they are witnesses**

There is much work to be done to bring fairness and equity to the criminal legal system and better, more holistic services to crime victims and to improve public safety. I look forward to continuing to lead this transformation in the years ahead.

I welcome your thoughts, comments and suggestions as we build a safer and healthier Los Angeles County.

George Gascón  
Los Angeles County District Attorney



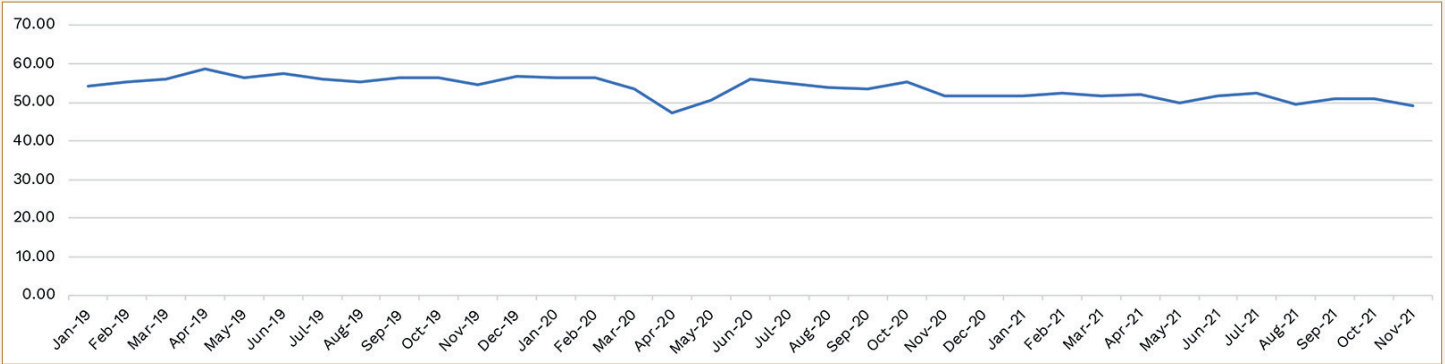
## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office will advance an effective, ethical, and racially equitable system of justice that protects the community, restores victims of crime, and honors the rights of the accused. We are a learning organization that believes in reduced incarceration and punishment except in circumstances in which it is proportional, in the community's interest, and serves a rehabilitative or restorative purpose.

# MAINTAINING CONSISTENT CHARGE FILING RATES ON FELONIES AND MOST MISDEMEANORS

The District Attorney's Office is utilizing science and data to craft thoughtful and humane policies that enhance public safety, target the root causes of criminal behavior and build healthier communities. For the first time, the office has begun using data to shape its approach to holding people accountable and providing trauma-informed services to victims and survivors of crime. Through the publication of data, transparency has increased, giving the residents of Los Angeles County access to information that demonstrates the office's commitment to keeping them safe.

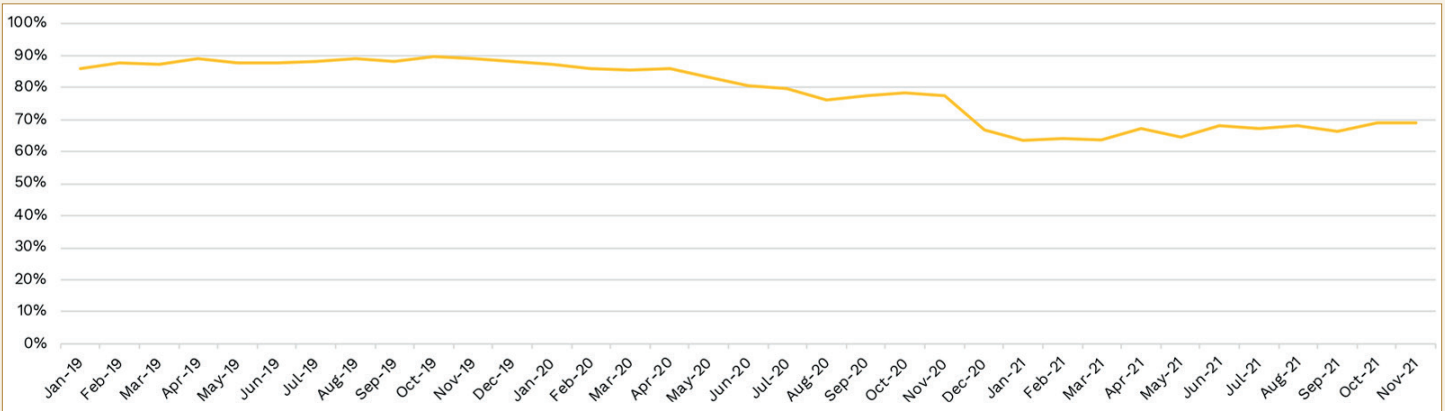
## FELONY FILING RATES



Public safety is the overriding priority of the office as shown by the almost identical rate in which felony cases were filed in Los Angeles County over the past three years. The office filed felony charges against 32,114 people between Jan. 1, 2021, and Nov. 30, 2021. They represent 51% of all the individuals whose cases were presented by law enforcement agencies to the office for criminal charge filing consideration. By comparison, in 2019, the last full year before the pandemic, the felony filing rate was 56%. Filings decreased when the pandemic began in March 2020.

## MISDEMEANOR FILING RATES

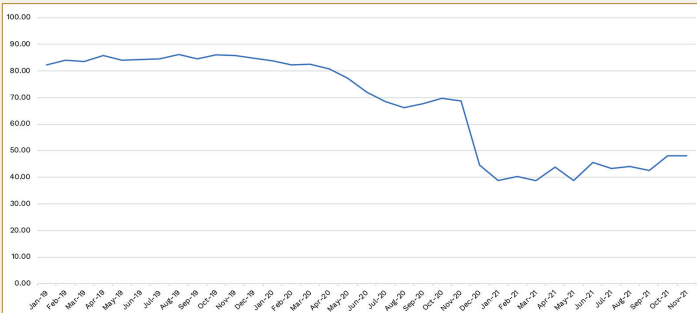
(Except for Addiction-Related Misdemeanors\*)



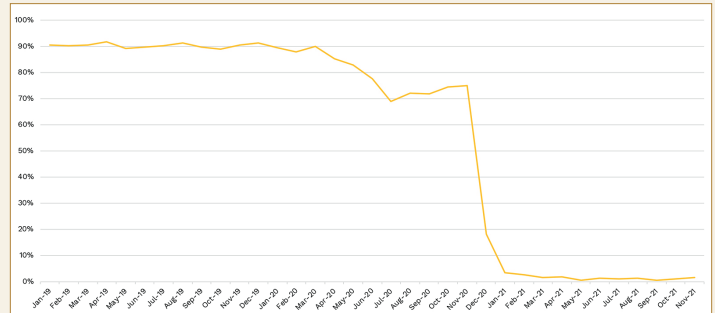
Despite a drop in the overall number of misdemeanor cases filed in 2021, the filing rate for misdemeanor crimes not associated with addiction also has remained consistent over the past three years. The office filed misdemeanor charges against 34,496 people between Jan. 1, 2021, and Nov. 30, 2021, in the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County and in 78 of the county's 88 cities.

The office no longer prosecutes certain misdemeanor crimes, such as public intoxication, simple possession of narcotics for personal use and possession of drug paraphernalia. Instead, the office seeks to address the root causes of these crimes through treatment in an effort to reduce future criminal behavior.

### Total Misdemeanor Filing Rates



### Addiction-Related Misdemeanor Filing Rates



\* Figures do not include filings of Health & Safety Code 11377 (possession of methamphetamine and other narcotics), 11364 (possession of drug paraphernalia), 11350 (possession of a controlled substance), 11550 (under the influence of a controlled substance) and Penal Code 647(f) (public intoxication).

# COMMUNITY VIOLENCE REDUCTION

## A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO STOPPING CRIME, ADVANCING PUBLIC SAFETY

Seeking to break the cycle of violence that plagues some neighborhoods, the District Attorney's Office adopted a collaborative strategy to strike at the causes of criminal behavior.

The newly created Community Violence Reduction Division is responsible for investigating and prosecuting the most troubling instances of street violence.

The division's deputy district attorneys' and investigators' roles go beyond a reactive approach to crime. The focus is to prevent crime by working proactively with police, community organizations, violence interrupters and other county agencies that aid crime victims and prevent violence. The program's approach acknowledges that violence is an issue that must be addressed holistically and that arresting and prosecuting criminal behavior alone cannot stop it.

The division, in collaboration with the Los Angeles Police Department, embeds experienced deputy district attorneys within four LAPD divisions: the 77th, Foothill, Mission and Newton. There are plans to expand the program to other parts of the county.

Additionally, the office launched the Community Violence Prosecution Coordinator Program that serves the county's branch courts and central courts in downtown Los Angeles.

Deputy district attorneys assigned to the program evaluate, file and try violent crimes not handled by the Community Violence Reduction Division. They also mentor and train less experienced deputy district attorneys who have expressed interest in prosecuting these types of cases.



*District Attorney George Gascón, Los Angeles Police Chief Michel Moore and community leaders announced plans to reduce violence in communities.*

## SIGNIFICANT CASES

Public safety is the top priority of the District Attorney's Office. The office assists victims and holds people accountable for criminal behavior regardless of their wealth or stature in the community.

**PEOPLE V. DURST:** A jury convicted real estate heir Robert Durst of murder in the 2000 shooting death of Susan Berman at her Benedict Canyon home. A judge sentenced Durst to life in prison.

**PEOPLE V. WEINSTEIN:** Film producer Harvey Weinstein, once one of the most powerful men in entertainment, was indicted on charges that he sexually assaulted five women in incidents that span nearly a decade.

**PEOPLE V. HYATT:** A grand jury indicted the adult film actor known as Ron Jeremy (actual name Ron Jeremy Hyatt) on more than 30 sexual assault counts involving 21 victims dating back more than two decades.

**PEOPLE V. CUNNINGHAM:** Former Catholic priest Christopher John Cunningham was charged with sexually assaulting four boys at two different parishes – in Palmdale and Redondo Beach – dating back more than two decades.

# TRANSFORMING SERVICES FOR CRIME SURVIVORS



*In March, Crime Victims Advisory Board members were sworn in.*

The District Attorney's Office is transforming the way the Bureau of Victim Services provides trauma-informed assistance to crime victims on their journey to becoming survivors.

In 2021, the office served roughly 20,000 crime victims.

The office established the first-ever Crime Victims Advisory Board. The nine-person board, comprised of crime survivors and community members, has conducted town hall discussions to gather community input.

In November, a roundtable was held with crime survivors to hear what services and resources would better serve them.



To better inform victims and guide them to services, the office updated its website <https://da.lacounty.gov>. Efforts to promote services, such as crisis intervention, emergency assistance and counseling referrals, were bolstered through the office's social media channels.

Steps also were taken to increase resources to victims and expertise in the office's ranks.

The Board of Supervisors authorized a position for an expert in the field of trauma-informed care to lead the Bureau of Victim Services. A nationwide campaign is underway to find a qualified expert to fill that role. Additionally, the Board authorized the filling of vacant victim services representative positions. The office is actively seeking to fill those vacancies.

# **NEW APPROACH**

The District Attorney's Office instituted a series of criminal justice reforms rooted in science and data that are enhancing public safety, increasing equity and expanding trauma-informed services for victims of crime. These policies directly address systemic issues such as mass incarceration and racial inequity while saving California taxpayers millions of dollars annually.

## **RESENTENCING**

A Resentencing Unit was established. In July, the unit initiated filing motions to resentence individuals over 50 years old who had served about 20 years of their life sentence for a nonserious felony.

More than 180 cases have either been reviewed or are pending review. Of those, 81 cases were approved for filing a request for resentencing or are pending a final filing decision. The remaining 99 cases reviewed were rejected for resentencing due to public safety concerns, ineligibility or other factors such as the granting of parole or clemency. Additionally, 13 individuals who prison officials deemed to have displayed exceptional conduct while in custody also were resentenced.

The office is slated to receive \$2.2 million as part of the state's Resentencing Pilot Program. The funds will be used to hire additional staff to review the cases of incarcerated individuals whose sentences were unjust, excessive or are no longer in the interest of justice based on post-conviction factors such as a record of rehabilitation.

Research shows that lengthy prison sentences are ineffective, costly and cause disproportionate harm to people of color and marginalized communities.

## **DEATH PENALTY**

Death sentences are no longer sought in Los Angeles County. Post-conviction death penalty cases are currently being reviewed to determine if there is a meritorious legal reason to vacate the death sentence or resentence the individuals in the interest of justice.

Thus far, five people, including four with cognitive or intellectual disabilities, were resentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole, removing them from California's death row.

The office will not seek execution dates for people sentenced to death.

## **SENTENCING ENHANCEMENTS**

Science and data show that longer sentences, attributed to sentencing enhancements, do not benefit public safety. Rather, increased sentences undermine rehabilitation, exacerbate racial inequities in our legal system and decimate families and communities. Nearly all sentencing enhancements which have contributed to excessive and unjust sentences were eliminated.

The reduction equals 18,000 years of prison-time exposure, which contributed to mass incarceration. It also is estimated to have saved California taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars.

## **CASH BAIL**

Cash bail is no longer sought for individuals who pose no danger to the community in accordance with California law. Persons who are charged with misdemeanors, nonserious or nonviolent felony offenses will not be considered for cash bail. Cash bail creates a two-tiered system of justice in which those with financial resources can remain free, while those who lack such resources remain jailed.

# IMPROVING TRANSPARENCY, HOLDING LAW ENFORCEMENT ACCOUNTABLE



*District Attorney George Gascón and Long Beach Police Chief Robert Luna announced that a school safety officer was charged with murder.*

To restore the public's faith in the criminal justice system, the District Attorney's Office has taken bold steps to improve transparency and hold accountable law enforcement officers who violate the law.

District Attorney George Gascón sent letters to all police chiefs in Los Angeles County requesting information about officers who have been disciplined for misconduct such as dishonesty, unreasonable force and family violence.

The information helps ensure deputy district attorneys comply with their obligation to disclose pertinent information to defense attorneys. The withholding of such information can lead to criminal convictions being overturned and sanctions against prosecutors.

This year, the Justice System Integrity Division, which prosecutes law enforcement officer misconduct, filed 17 cases involving 21 officers from seven departments, including:

- **A Long Beach school safety officer charged with murder for the fatal shooting of an 18-year-old woman**

- **A Torrance police officer charged with assault under the color of authority in connection with the on-duty non-fatal shooting of a man**
- **A pair of former Torrance police officers charged with conspiracy for vandalizing a vehicle by spray-painting it with a swastika**
- **A Baldwin Park police officer charged with assault of a 16-year-old boy under the color of authority**
- **Two Los Angeles County sheriff's deputies charged for filing a false report under penalty of perjury**
- **Two Los Angeles County sheriff's detectives indicted for perjury in connection with a search warrant**
- **A Los Angeles County sheriff's deputy charged with altering evidence in an alleged assault incident**

A special prosecutor was hired to review past incidents of police use of force, and an independent team was formed to re-examine fatal use-of-force incidents by law enforcement officers.



# BRINGING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE TO YOUTH

The District Attorney's Office, focused on youth restorative justice, instituted policies that treat children as children.

Research shows that incarcerating children does not enhance public safety but significantly increases their likelihood of committing future offenses. Incarcerating children decreases the likelihood that they'll complete high school and increases the probability that they will be incarcerated as adults.

The new policy led to the office withdrawing 77 pending motions to transfer minors to adult court and recalling 25 cases so that youths who had been prosecuted as adults could be resentenced as juveniles. Approximately 100 new cases involving children no longer qualified for transfer to adult court.

The office implemented a victim-centered pre-filing diversion program for minors under the age of 18. Those eligible for the Restorative Enhanced Diversion for Youth

(REDY) may avoid criminal charges by participating in individually tailored programs to address underlying issues that contribute to criminal behavior, such as mental health needs and substance abuse. REDY allows for youth to participate in restorative justice by meeting with their crime victims.

**OPINION**

## Lawmakers Cannot Ignore the Victimization of Children in the Justice System | Opinion

**J. DOUGLAS OVERBEY AND GEORGE GASCÓN**, PROSECUTORS  
ON 11/4/21 AT 8:00 AM EDT



In addition, District Attorney George Gascón is driving youth justice reforms at both the state and national levels.

With Assembly Member Miguel Santiago (D-Los Angeles), he introduced state legislation that would prohibit strike offenses committed by minors from later being used against them in adult proceedings.

The District Attorney also joined with J. Douglas Overbey, a former United States Attorney in Tennessee under the Trump administration, in writing an opinion article in Newsweek urging Congress to prioritize reforming how the legal system treats children.

# REVERSING DRUG LAW INEQUITIES

As part of the ongoing effort to reverse the injustices of drug laws, nearly 60,000 cannabis convictions were identified by the District Attorney's Office for dismissal.

The action brings the possibility of a better future for thousands of people who were disenfranchised because of convictions on their records. They now have a clearer path to find jobs, housing and other services.

## DISTRICT ATTORNEY GEORGE GASCÓN ON DISMISSING AND SEALING NEARLY 60,000 CANNABIS CONVICTIONS:

*"Dismissing these convictions means the possibility of a better future to thousands of disenfranchised people who are receiving this long-needed relief. It clears the path for them to find jobs, housing and other services that previously were denied to them because of unjust cannabis laws."*

Although not required by law, the office reviewed court records and uncovered nearly 60,000 felony and misdemeanor cases dating back more than three decades that are eligible for dismissal. Earlier dismissals were based only on California Department of Justice data.

Individuals' records will be sealed so past convictions do not harm their immigration status, their educational opportunities or their ability to find work.

# OFFICIALS, OTHERS CHARGED IN CORRUPTION SCHEMES

Twenty-one people were charged with public corruption in 2021 in cases involving the cities of Industry, Maywood and Compton. The cases are being prosecuted by the Public Integrity Division, which works to ensure clean government.

Notable cases this year include:

- **A former mayor of Maywood and 10 others charged in a pay-to-play scheme involving solicited bribes, embezzlement and misused public funds**
- **A Compton councilmember and five others charged for obtaining fraudulent votes in a June runoff that ultimately was decided by one vote**

- **A former city manager for the City of Industry, a former state assembly member and two other men charged with embezzling millions of dollars from what was supposed to be a solar farm project for the municipality**

In another case, the former mayor of Palmdale pleaded guilty to lying about income he illegally received from two consultants.

A Los Angeles County contract worker was charged in connection with the theft of hundreds of blank vaccine record cards from a COVID-19 vaccination center.

# MULTIFACETED APPROACH TO STOPPING HATE

Using a comprehensive approach, the District Attorney's Office works to stop criminal acts that target people because of their race, religion, ethnicity, gender or sexual preference.

The office received a \$200,000 federal grant to start a two-year, post-conviction pilot project to curtail hate crimes and xenophobia.

The Reconciliation Education and Counseling Crimes of Hate (REACCH) Program provides people on probation for committing a hate crime with counseling, anti-bias education and victim reconciliation in a controlled setting. The root cause of the bias is examined and addressed. Then the participants do community service with the targeted victim community.

To prevent these crimes from happening in the first place, the office works with community-based organizations and nonprofits, raising awareness and resilience to hate crimes throughout the county.

Cases filed by the Hate Crimes Unit this year include:

- **Two men accused of assaulting people outside a sushi restaurant because of their religion**
- **A man accused of shouting racial slurs during an assault and attempted robbery of a Korean woman in Santa Monica**



*District Attorney George Gascón and county leaders announced a rise in reports of hate crimes.*

# PROTECTING CONSUMERS FROM HARMFUL BUSINESS PRACTICES

More than \$12 million in penalties, costs and restitution was paid by six companies accused of engaging in harmful business practices that affected hundreds of consumers.

The office:

- **Entered a \$3.5 million settlement with Synchrony Bank for making frequent or harassing phone calls to people who owed money**
- **Secured close to \$3 million in judgments against online subscription websites Match.com, Home Chef and Classmates.com for automatically renewing users' subscriptions – and charging them – without their express consent**
- **Settled a lawsuit for \$950,000 against Yeezy Apparel LLC for making false or misleading statements regarding how quickly they can ship products**
- **Obtained an \$850,000 judgment against online automobile dealer Carvana LLC for selling and delivering vehicles without the required licenses**

None of the companies admitted wrongdoing but pledged to follow consumer laws going forward.

At the office's request, the Board of Supervisors approved doubling the size of the Consumer Protection Division to 12 deputy district attorneys, which will increase prosecutions against slumlords, nursing homes, businesses that engage in wage theft and companies that persistently imperil worker safety.

The District Attorney's Office entered an agreement with the California Labor Commission that allows the office to prosecute employers locally that deprive workers of their full wages and benefits, a practice known as "wage theft."

A lawsuit also was filed against Handy Technologies, Inc., which runs a website that offers cleaning and handyperson services, for treating employees as independent contractors and thereby denying them benefits.

Automobile manufacturers were asked to explore creative solutions to stem the rise in automobile catalytic converter thefts. The devices are easy to steal quickly and contain highly valuable metals. The lack of unique identifiers makes it nearly impossible to prove in court that a particular catalytic converter was stolen.

## STOPPING FRAUD THAT TARGETS IMMIGRANTS

The District Attorney's Office attacked immigration fraud on two fronts by prosecuting those who exploit immigrant communities and educating the public on how to avoid becoming a victim.

Deputy district attorneys in the Notario Fraud Unit filed charges against:

- **Three relatives accused of scamming 73 victims by unlawfully providing legal services for residency or work permits**
- **A man accused of deceiving three victims by posing as a lawyer to assist in child custody cases**

Prosecutors also settled a sprawling immigration fraud case in which four defendants agreed to pay \$1.6 million in restitution to 35 victims. The allegations included defrauding Chinese nationals who were seeking immigration services.

To prevent future victimization, District Attorney George



Gascón issued a warning about immigration scams in a video public service announcement (pictured).

In the message, the District Attorney cautions that fake immigration consultants or notarios lure in victims with promises to help them get work permits, citizenship or other immigration services. He also offers tips to avoid becoming a victim.

The video was released in July in English and Spanish.

# ENSURING PUBLIC SAFETY THROUGH CENTRALIZED FILING

A centralized criminal charge evaluation system was launched to ensure greater consistency and fairness countywide in the filing of charges.

Consistency in the initial case evaluation and filing is essential to achieving equal justice countywide. Centralizing the decision-making ensures that the same conduct leads to similar charges regardless of where a crime occurs in Los Angeles County.

The first phase of the centralized charge evaluation system launched on Nov. 1 in downtown Los Angeles, East Los Angeles, Van Nuys and Antelope Valley courts. It will be expanded throughout the county by March 2022.

Cases submitted for evaluation to specialized units, such as the Family Violence and Community Violence Reduction divisions, will continue to be reviewed for filing consideration by the same deputy district attorneys who handle all aspects of the case from filing to disposition.

Centralized filing metrics will be developed, and studies will be conducted to measure progress.

## DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEYS READY TO SERVE



*In May, District Attorney George Gascón swore in a class of seven deputy district attorneys who successfully completed training and a one-year probationary period.*

# PARTNERING WITH COMMUNITIES TO ENHANCE PUBLIC SAFETY



*District Attorney's Office employees assisted the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank.*



*Family Violence Division employees led a clothing and essentials drive for a women's shelter.*



*District Attorney's Office staff participated in a deaf awareness outreach event.*



*District Attorney George Gascón joined Supervisor Holly Mitchell (top row, center) and advocates in a domestic violence awareness discussion.*

The District Attorney's Office bolstered its efforts to engage with the people of Los Angeles County.

This included the creation of several advisory boards to help the office improve services to the LGBTQ, African American and Asian American and Pacific Islander communities and advance public safety.

The office undertook an effort to improve transparency by working to create an open data portal that will provide the public with meaningful metrics and show how the office's practices are driven by data.

Using virtual platforms, volunteers with the office's law-related educational program, Project LEAD, reached 1,300 fifth-graders in 31 schools in the 2020-21 school year.

Dozens of office employees took part in the Food From the Bar campaign to benefit the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank, helping create thousands of meal kits for disadvantaged families. Office employees also donated \$7,500 to the food bank.

Other events included:

- **Fundraising and essential item drives for domestic violence shelters by Victim Impact Program units and the Family Violence Division**
- **A virtual discussion with District Attorney George Gascón and Supervisor Holly Mitchell about providing domestic violence victims with a safe environment to seek help and receive trauma-informed services**
- **Outreach to the deaf community to learn about their interactions with the legal system**

# BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

## INVESTIGATORS UTILIZE DATA TO KEEP PUBLIC SAFE

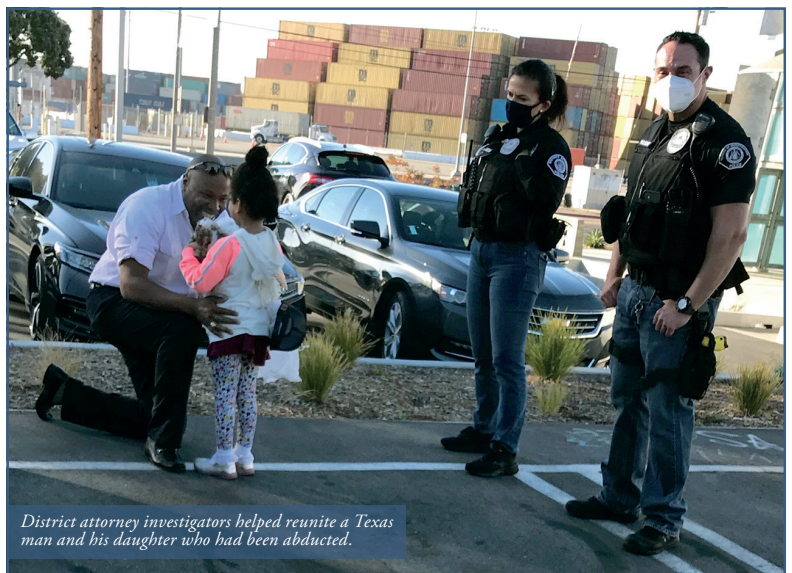


The Bureau of Investigation launched the Crime Strategies Unit to improve transparency and address chronic crime through strategic analysis based on data science.

The unit assists in the analysis of crime data and is working to create a publicly accessible data dashboard that will help assess prosecutorial decision-making and policies.

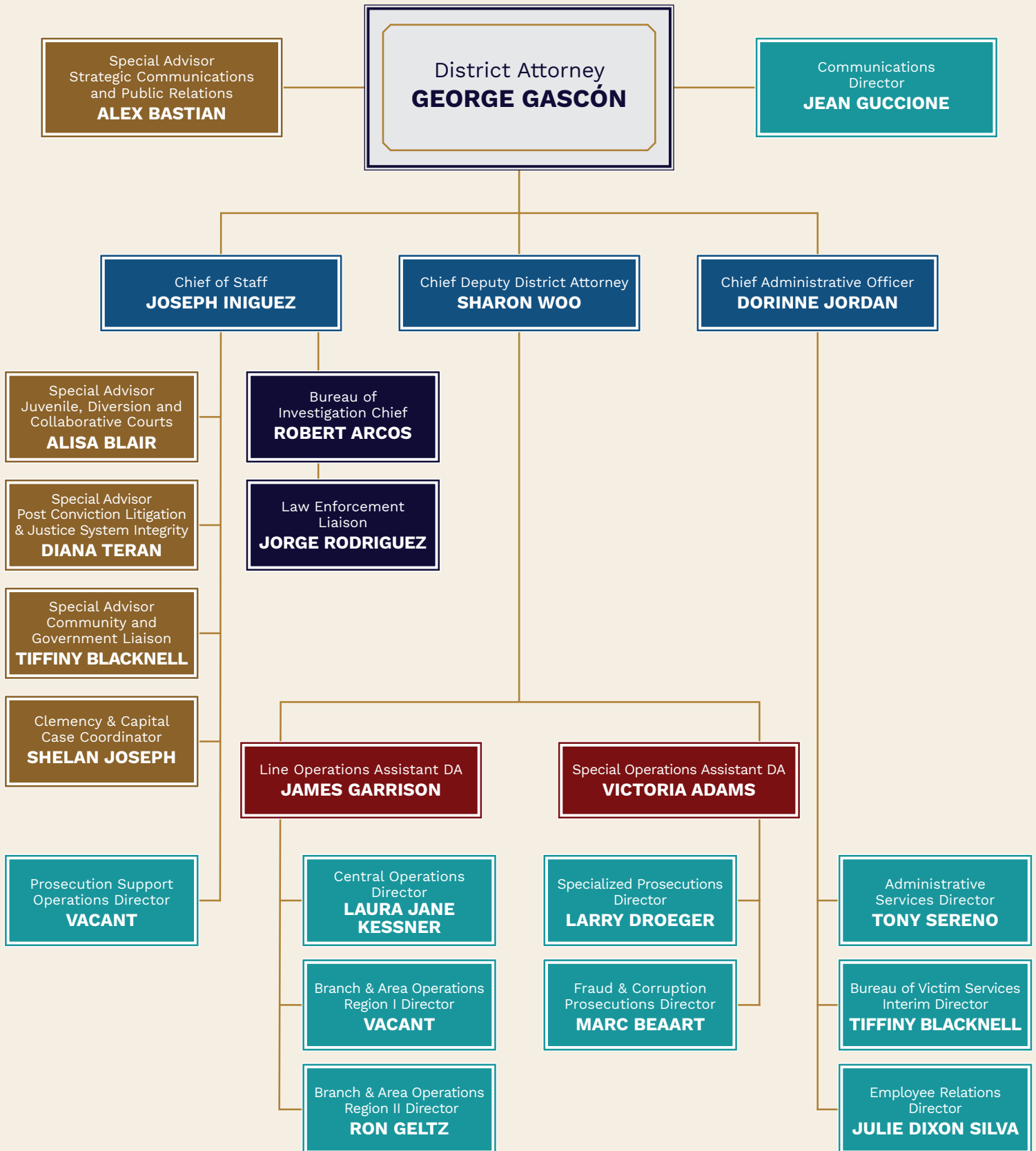
District attorney investigators also conduct unique, sensitive and complex criminal investigations, including recovering children who have been abducted by a relative.

Child Abduction Unit investigators took part in nine child recovery operations, including reuniting a Texas man with his 7-year-old daughter. The girl had been abducted by her mother. The father hadn't seen the girl for three years before the reunion in April.



In November, district attorney investigators who served in the military were honored with the unveiling of a perpetual commemorative plaque that is housed in Bureau of Investigation headquarters in the Hall of Justice.

# LOS ANGELES COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE MANAGEMENT STAFF





**For all other inquiries:**

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