



2100 Sawtelle, Suite 204, Los Angeles, CA 90025 • (818) 230-5156
www.disabilityandabuse.org • nora-baladerian@verizon.net

June 9, 2014

Hon. Jackie Lacey
District Attorney
Los Angeles County
210 W. Temple Street, Suite 18000
Los Angeles, CA 90012-3210

Re: Request for meeting

Dear Ms. Lacey:

I am delighted to be your keynote speaker on June 26th at the Elder Abuse Conference. Although the conference is specifically geared for those working with the very serious problem of elder abuse, I have been asked to address the audience on issues involving crime victims who have disabilities, and in particular, developmental disabilities.

As you may know, I conduct 2 and 3 day trainings on this topic for law enforcement agencies across the country. The keynote at the Elder Abuse Conference is obviously not a training; rather, it is an introduction to an intensive training opportunity that could occur at a future date.

In preparation for my upcoming presentation, our project has been doing some research on your website, to be able to learn about the efforts of your office to effectively and sensitively address the epidemic of crime victimization of this population. What we found was that no mention was made regarding people with intellectual and developmental disabilities or regarding people with disabilities of any kind. There was nothing on your website to indicate that your office considers people with disabilities in the 18-64 year-old category to be a special victim population. There was one brief mention of "dependent adults," which is a term mostly known by those of us in the world of elder and dependent adult abuse, but not the general public.

After my presentation on June 26, our Project would like to meet with you to discuss steps that can be taken by your office to more effectively handle the prosecution of cases involving abuse of people with developmental and intellectual disabilities. Abuse of people with disabilities occurs at a rate that is 3 to 4 times higher than the population at large. The effects of abuse can be devastating to the victim and can sometimes last a lifetime.

Two years ago, the Disability and Abuse Project conducted the largest national survey on abuse and disability. More than 7,000 people, including more than 1,000 in California, responded. We decided to focus the first report on the responses of victims and their families. We are enclosing that report – *Abuse of People with Disabilities: Victims and Their Families Speak Out* – so that you can personally review it and also share it with your top staff members. We can all learn from what the victims have to say and, as a result, design better responses to reports of abuse. Unfortunately, the survey results teach us that too many incidents of abuse are not reported, and when they are, they are often not investigated properly by law enforcement and are often not prosecuted effectively by District Attorneys. We would like to discuss these problems with you.

Now that you are midway into your second year in office, it is an appropriate time to give specific attention to the issue of disability and abuse – in its own right and not as a footnote to elder abuse. This vulnerable population of victims needs your attention as the chief prosecutor of the largest county in California.

Disability and Abuse Project

Letter to District Attorney

Page Two

Focusing on this population for 90 minutes at an annual Elder Abuse Conference is laudable, but not sufficient. The opportunity for your office to create and become known as a "vigorous prosecution" entity for crime victims with disabilities is one we want to help you build.

We would like to discuss with you and your staff many areas of your office that can be improved and become a model within the state: website content, brochures, educational and training materials, seminars for staff members, ADA accommodation protocols, and victim-witness services, among others.

We look forward to meeting with you in the near future to discuss specific actions that can be taken by the District Attorney's Office to ensure equal justice to victims with developmental disabilities, and to make this work widely known within the County and indeed throughout the State.

Very truly yours,



Nora J. Baladerian, Ph.D.
Executive Director
(310) 473-6768