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## **Monterey County District Attorney's: A Technology-Based Policy & Procedure Manual**

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Monterey County District Attorney's: A Technology-Based Policy & Procedure Manual

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### **Abstract**

The primary goal of this project is to provide future volunteers and interns with assistance and resources for assigned cases they may work on. The District Attorney's office is a fast paced and very detail-oriented office, this may feel overwhelming to some interns and volunteers, so this project will help ease this. Even though there is an orientation process, a discussion on the policy and procedures that must be followed, and conversations with a supervisor or mentor on responsibilities and duties, this will still be a great for an understanding of the office. With this capstone project the intern should feel more comfortable and independent if they ever need help on a task. This is not a replacement for questions or concerns they might have about how a task should be done

**Keywords:** Monterey County, interns, volunteers, district attorney, capstone project

### **Agency Description**

The District Attorney represents the People of the State of California in all criminal prosecutions in Monterey County. Monterey county has a population of about 435,000 and the District Attorney represents all of them. This office is divided into three major divisions the Consumer & Environmental Affairs, the Criminal Prosecution and Victim/ Witness unit. The Consumer & Environmental Affairs (MCDA) “investigates and prosecutes cases involving fraudulent, deceptive and illegal business activity that victimizes Monterey County residents and law-abiding businesses, threatens public safety, or endangers the local environment and natural resources” (County of Monterey, n.d, pp). Some examples of fraud cases that have been seen are insurance fraud, real estate fraud, tax fraud, charity fraud, fraud at non-profits, and rental fraud. People who become victims to these types of fraud have the right to file a complaint and the MCDA can investigate to see what the issue is. not only victims can come in, email, or call for help if they have even a suspicion it is ok for them to file a complaint. In our office Attorney’s and investigators collaborate to investigate and inform themselves of a complaint that has been submitted.

The Monterey District Attorney’s mission statement is, “to promote justice, ensure that the rights of victims are upheld by treating them with dignity, respect and compassion, and aggressively and fairly prosecuting those who violate the law” (Monterey County District Attorney’s Office, nd). With this in mind our office collaborates with outside agencies when cases involve victims in multiple counties. We have strong partnerships with the police force and sheriffs in the Tri-County area, FBI, and other DA offices. The Monterey District Attorney has three offices in the county located in Monterey, Salinas, and King City.

## **Problem Description**

There are many social problems that are dealt with at the District Attorney's Office. A "macro-level" social problem is that the crime rate is increasing and resources to prevent and resolve the problems in Monterey County are limited. A "micro-level" social problem would be the lack of resources and staff members at the Monterey Office since this office does more civil crime cases. The macro-social problem that affects Monterey County is that these crimes are affecting the community however there are little resources to help prevent this. The micro-level impacts the agency because of the lack of efficiency due to the nature of the cases and how time-consuming they can be.

Fraud is a very common occurrence in Monterey County. Every tax season is when tax fraud is most likely being committed due to many looking for a low price in tax preparation. Many people go to "tax preparers" that are not certified or even in that career field. This is where the County in collaboration with other agencies provide their community members with the resources that help tax preparers find reliable businesses. During a semester, the interns assisted an attorney and investigator resolve many tax fraud cases that have been ongoing for several months.

## **Project Description and Justification**

### **Project Description**

Since the current procedures for interns does not seem like it is yielding the necessary results because it is out of date and very broad, something new was created that will help the interns with daily tasks to complicated cases. This program is designed to help all future interns and volunteers that may come to the Monterey office. The Monterey office is composed of five Investigators and six Attorneys. There were two interns that worked on this capstone project

dividing up the work, one focusing on investigator needs and the other on the Attorney's needs. Even though Attorneys and Investigators collaborate when they work on cases there is individual work that needs to be done. An example of this is that the investigators go through the evidence and catalog it while the Attorneys work on the case notes and the legal procedures for that case.

There is a database dedicated to interns specifically in the Monterey office where all electronic information stored there can be accessed by any intern. The project was saved there for easy access by any intern. Items that are stored there are videos on how to format different electronic files, steps to bates stamping multiple pdfs, and how to switch file formatting. One thing that was added is a how to documents with steps and FAQs that were added by this latest group of interns.

The primary goal for this project is to provide future volunteers and interns with assistance and resources for assigned cases they may work on. The District Attorney's office is a fast paced and very detail-oriented office, this may feel overwhelming to some interns and volunteers, so this project will help ease this. Even though there is an orientation process, a discussion on the policy and procedures that must be followed, and conversations with a supervisor or mentor on responsibilities and duties, this will still be a great for an understanding of the office. Since it is a very professional office that can be complex since it deals with sensitive information and some of the legal aspects can be overwhelming. Interns felt this when starting out but one thing that was done for this is that they were open to learn and ask questions. Everyone in this office was willing to help you learn and understand what was going on or what a case meant legally or the procedures that had to be done.

Since this may be a very demanding internship this capstone project will be designed to make the transition of becoming an intern or volunteer at the office easier. During the interview

process till about the end of the first two weeks of being at the office an intern can be told a lot of information and it could become quite confusing since some things require multiple steps to be completed. Therefore, this project will have instructional aides and how-to videos if they ever have a question about how to complete a task and there might not be anyone around.

With this capstone project the intern should feel more comfortable and independent if they ever need help on a task. However, this is not a replacement for questions or concerns they might have about how a task should be done

The agency benefited from this capstone because of the of the interns will be more efficient on the cases they may work on. This office is very dependent on collaboration sometime the whole office will dedicate itself to one case if necessary. With this program the interns will be better able to support all staff on any case they may need. For example, evidence needs to be cataloged and documents need to be scanned, labeled and organized before an Attorney can begin to look at the case as a whole. This is where the interns will have that knowledge of what and how to do these things. This also provides the interns with the information necessary to complete tasks if a mentor or the lead of the case is not around to assist for whatever reason. This is benefitting the interns the most, but with more efficient interns the faster cases are reviewed, and the agency gets to complete them. Just the proper information is needed to be able to achieve this program.

### **Project Implementation**

The method that was used to implement this project is by using incoming interns from the CHHS program. The most recent interns form the 2018 fall semester were our pilots by letting us know what they would have liked to see when they first started out at the office. Also help from

their mentor will be needed to make this program run efficiently since we can only provide the resources and not force interns to look at it.

### **Participants/ Resources**

The people that participated in the project included all staff members of the Monterey office and current interns that are placed there. The staff is very diverse in the way they like things done so input was needed from all of them to maximize the usefulness of this project. The role and responsibilities in carrying out the project will be to focus on the Attorneys and their needs. There are six Attorneys in the Monterey office, these are the staff members were focused on and gathered all the information possible from them. The agency mentor had the most influence over the project since he oversaw the interns and assigned the projects or cases to the interns.

Interns organized a meeting with all the Attorneys and got insight of what they expect from interns and volunteers and how they like their cases handled. After that there was individual consultations to assure, they each said what they are looking for. Access to the database was necessary to implement project since using old case material will provide a better example. Since it is mostly electronic, they do have access to computers in the office for the confidential material and we can use the CSUMB library computers to do screen recordings of the potential tasks.

### **Assessment Plan**

#### **Expected Outcomes**

The expected outcomes of this is to be able to make the training and the intern experience better. Since this internship requires being able to format and understand many



things in many ways. This program is to be used as a guide or a base for the interns to grow and be able to be more efficient.

The second outcome desired to achieve is that the program be added too or changed if new technology comes along, new formatting, or an even more efficient way of being able to do the work. This should grow and be updated over time since it is going to be new there will be things that should change.

### **Assessment Prosses**

What is expected of this program is to allow a better integration of interns into the work environment of the office. There are some components when creating documents or arranging the electronic library that need to be taken whether that be starting a new case or jumping into one. With the interns feeling more confident and comfortable it is expected that they can work more efficiently and be able to provide more quantity of work with the high-quality standards.

### **Findings and Results of Assessment Process**

So, the project has not been fully implemented since it is a work while you do kind of program. While creating it was presented to a few of the interns for some feedback as well as how they like it. During this process we also showed it to past interns and they like the program since they agreed if that was available to them when they were interning it would've made their experience much better. This program is also meant to be an interactive program since somethings are very set but other things can be changed since there are many ways of doing things especially when dealing with spreadsheets. The way this program was designed is to be A base for information there are things that are sad as in procedures, but it's meant to be updated meant to be added to throughout its existence. The creation wasn't as difficult as getting feedback from fellow interns and past interns. Since in turn out at the agency was one of the

main concerns and main points of this program we had to go back and collect this information on why it did not work out at the agency for the interns.

### **Recommendations**

This project is helping and will help out interns improve their skills with future cases or work that they might do at the agency. Future interns will be able to work more independently with support of the mentor. This addresses the micro problem of limited resources for paper-intensive cases or cases that require a big database of information. This project should be updated as technology does and if better ways of doing any of the procedures or increasing efficiency of how to work a program. Advice that should be given is that this is a learning tool so any contribution made by anyone in the agency would be appreciated. If someone works on this particular type of project advice to them would be ask past, current, and future staff and interns for their input. There is a reason why someone is at the agency or why they left.

Cases are always coming into the agency depending on the type of severity some might take priority but if not, is a case are handled in order. Since these cases can be very paper-intensive most of the Investigators and Attorneys would do most of the work as in preparing, scanning, and creating these databases of information. This whole process takes a long time that could be spent on more investigations or preparing for court if it's a big case.

### **Conclusion**

The capstone project includes a lot of collaboration which help improve the professional communication skill that is needed. Overall this capstone project was very informative because we have to figure out the basics of the organization, we had to help them find out what they

really wanted. In the beginning there was an idea for this project there was just trying to be out how to go about it. This agency helped with being able to understand how to work in the collaborative setting with very strong personalities with people that are great in their field. Since this was a very information sensitive agency that made you double think of what you were doing outside of the internship because you are still representing them. My advice for future interns is to get an internship that you enjoy and respect the policies and procedures. Interact with the staff members because there are some great people that you can interact with.

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