



COUNTY OF YOLO
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: August 3, 2022

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**Yolo County District Attorney Continues to Support
Internal Conviction & Sentence Review Program**

(Woodland, CA) – August 3, 2022 – The Yolo County District Attorney’s Office continues to support a Conviction & Sentencing Review Unit (<https://yoloda.org/the-das-office/conviction-sentence-review-unit/>). The focus of this Unit is to review post-conviction assertions of innocence, to clear records of individuals wrongly accused of crimes, and to recall and modify state prison sentences to ensure a just result. The Unit, initially called the Conviction Integrity Unit, was first launched in Yolo County in 2014. At that time, Yolo DA was one of the first prosecutor’s offices in California to implement such a program.

This Unit reviews and investigates claims of innocence raised after a criminal conviction involving homicides, sex offenses and violent crimes. The Unit may examine claims of innocence in other types of cases if a significant prison commitment or collateral consequence indicates that an examination of the case is warranted. In addition, the Unit is responsible for ensuring that any claim of Prosecutorial Misconduct made during the pendency of any criminal matter is thoroughly investigated and litigated prior to the completion of that pending criminal matter.

The Unit expanded in 2019, as a result of Governor Gavin Newsom signing into law AB 2942, first-in-the-nation legislation which allows District Attorneys the ability to re-evaluate sentences of individuals serving time in state prison. Yolo DA has developed a partnership with Hilary Blout, who drafted this new law, and is the founder and Executive Director of the non-profit “For the People” (<https://www.fortheppl.org/hillary-blout>). At the DA’s request, and in coordination with the Yolo County Public Defender, King Hall Professor Jack Chin initiated a sentencing clinic course at King Hall. In this clinic, students learn about basic sentencing law and review files of inmates who are in state prison as a result of Yolo County convictions. Students, under the direction of Professor Chin, assess eligible individuals and make recommendations to the District Attorney’s office as to which inmates should be considered for a reduced sentence. The Public Defender’s Office is also very involved in this process in gathering information on prospective candidates. After a lengthy review of these cases, and working the King Hall students and the Public Defender’s Office, if the DA determines that the length of the sentence no longer serves the interests of justice, the DA requests resentencing for that person. To date, this law has been used to reduce the sentences of more than a dozen individuals sentenced to state prison from Yolo County.

In 2021, the Unit was renamed the Conviction and Sentence Review Unit to reflect the new work, as a result of AB 2942. The Unit is staffed by both Assistant Chiefs in the Criminal Division.

People convicted of crimes, or any other members of the community who believe that there has been a wrongful conviction or that a prison sentence no longer serves the interests of justice, may submit their requests in writing to the Yolo County District Attorney's Office. The claim does not need to be in any format or on a claim form, but the request must raise a meaningful claim of "actual innocence." For sentencing review, the claim must present facts supporting the request for a reduction in a state prison sentence that no longer serves the interests of justice. Individuals may also contact the Yolo County Public Defenders "Record Mitigation and Community Reintegration Unit" at <https://www.yolocounty.org/government/general-government-departments/law-justice/public-defender/record-mitigation-and-community-reintegration-clinic> .

In continuing to support the program, District Attorney Jeff Reisig stated: "A prosecutor's role is to ensure that our system achieves justice which includes not only convicting and sentencing the guilty appropriately, but also guaranteeing the protection of the innocent. The Conviction & Sentencing Review Unit helps us to attain both of these goals."

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