About this Plan

The Marjaree Mason Center has been effective in charting a course and achieving its goals over the past 35 years. Much has been accomplished in serving victims of violence and in building greater community awareness and support. This strategic plan is aimed at building on this success and charting a course to continue to strengthen the ability of the Center to be financially strong and programmatically responsive to the needs of its clients. It is also an opportunity to begin to position the Center to expand its reach and impact beyond Fresno County as a leader in domestic violence services and prevention.

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The Marjaree Mason Center was founded in 1979, by the YWCA, after the death of Marjaree Mason. For the past thirty-five years, the Center has operated the only domestic violence shelter in Fresno County. In 1996 the Center became an independent non-profit. With the support of the community and strong leadership, the Center has become one the largest domestic violence agencies in California, providing a vital community service for those who are impacted by domestic violence in Fresno County and beyond.

Over the years, the Center has grown to provide a wide range of services to meet the complex needs of victims of abuse. These services are provided largely at no cost to domestic violence survivors. Services include: Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, Counseling, Legal Assistance, Support Groups, Domestic Violence Education, 24-Hour Hotline & Crisis Intake, Therapy, Safety Planning, Victim Advocacy, Human Trafficking Services and Children's Services. The Shelter Program has grown to include three safe houses in Fresno, Reedley and Clovis that provide emergency shelter to victims of domestic violence and their children.

In the effort to become a community free of domestic violence, the Marjaree Mason Center also provides services to those who have committed acts of domestic violence to help prevent them from committing violent acts again and to encourage positive parenting and strong families. These services include a 52-week Batterer’s Intervention Program, anger management classes, and Parenting programs.

The Marjaree Mason Center also focuses on building community awareness and knowledge about domestic violence in an effort to prevent the cycle of violence. The kNOw MORE Program operates in Fresno County school districts trains and educates teens to be peer educators on dating violence. The program operates in 10 Fresno County high schools and reaches more than 15,000 Fresno County youth a year. The Marjaree Mason Center also provides hundreds of community trainings and presentations about what to do if you suspect someone may be a victim of domestic violence.
In 1978 Marjaree Mason was finishing her degree in business administration at Fresno State, working at the National Economic Development Association, and actively giving back to the community and her church. She was a beautiful and vibrant woman with a seemingly bright future ahead of her.

Tragically, Marjaree’s life was cut short when she was kidnapped, raped and murdered by Robert Tillman, her ex-boyfriend and a sheriff’s deputy. She was 36 years old.

Despite seeking help from medical professionals and law enforcement, Marjaree could not escape from her abuser. The Marjaree Mason Center was founded the year after her death to offer safety and support services to those experiencing domestic violence in Fresno County. The Center operates the county’s only domestic violence shelters. In nearly 40 years of service, the Marjaree Mason Center has provided security and hope to thousands of survivors and continues to work towards a community free of domestic violence.

Marjaree left a legacy of hope and of service to our community. In our work we will continue to honor her memory and her legacy in our stewardship of the Marjaree Mason Center.

–THE MARJAREE MASON CENTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS
The Marjaree Mason Center has a strong history in the community. Since it was founded in 1979, it has grown into a large non-profit, with an operating budget of more than $4.3 million. This enables the agency to provide over 21,000 nights of shelter per year and to operate an array of services that can comprehensively serve clients. The ability to secure this level of funding and to maintain the financial stability of the organization, speaks to the reputation of the Center, and the leadership of the staff and board. The Center has been able to establish relationships and partnerships in the community that fuel this success. For example, working with cities to secure facilities at no cost, securing funding through the Emergency Housing Assistance Funds or Housing and Urban Development, to hosting 800-person fundraising events or securing private donations and in-kind support.

Partnerships have been central to expanding services and reach. These partnerships have extended to having more than 30 Memorandum’s of Understanding (MOUs) with community agencies including a rare partnership with law enforcement to station victim advocates in the Fresno Police Department.

The Marjaree Mason Center has stayed true to its core purpose and has strategically sought opportunities that have ensured that they remain a constant presence in the community. who may be undocumented, face the additional fears and challenges that prevent them from reaching out for help.

Every person who experiences domestic violence has their own challenges, but the challenges that so many individuals and families face in Fresno County contribute to the prevalence of domestic violence in the county and increases the need for services. This has only grown in tough economic times.

At the same time that demand for services including housing, advocacy, legal representation and financial assistance has increased, there are less funds available from the government to meet these needs. For example, in Fresno County and across the nation, many of the survivors of abuse are able to get temporary, emergency shelter and services, but the supply of transitional and permanent housing is not sufficient to meet demand.
The Marjaree Mason Center has strived to comprehensively address the complex issues that lead to, and result from, domestic violence. There are many factors that make this difficult. The prevalence of the problem is high. In Fresno County there are between 6,600 and 9,000 domestic violence calls annually. The Marjaree Mason Center alone was able to serve nearly 6,000 clients across their many programs in fiscal year 2012–13, including over 21,000 nights of shelter. Despite these impressive numbers, there is still unmet need in Fresno County.

Although domestic violence occurs across income brackets, it is most frequently reported by the poor who more often rely on the police for dispute resolution. There are many factors that are thought to contribute to domestic violence and it is known that substance abuse, poverty, unemployment, and a poor education are all risk factors for domestic violence. Many victims of abuse in Fresno County experience at least one, if not all, of these challenges. Fresno County has the highest rate of poverty in the state with 27% of all residents living in poverty. Substance abuse, and in particular methamphetamine use, is also a problem in the county.

Twenty-eight percent of Fresno County residents have not completed high school. For mothers of young children, this number jumps to 58%. Unfortunately for victims with children, the cycle often continues. The toxic stress that exposure to violence produces in children can permanently alter the architecture of the brain and can be a prelude to life-long problems with learning, behavior and physical health (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child).

Fresno County is the number-one, agriculture producing county in the nation, employing high numbers of immigrant farm workers who tend to have higher levels of poverty, language barriers and less education. Immigrant survivors, particularly those who may be undocumented, face the additional fears and challenges that prevent them from reaching out for help.

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Our Strategic Plan
THE PLANNING PROCESS

In January 2014, the Marjaree Mason Center began a strategic planning process to design a three-year roadmap for the organization. The Board formed a Strategic Planning Committee comprised of select board members and staff. The planning process was designed to include opportunities for feedback from direct service staff, agency volunteers and MMC community partners to engage the Planning Committee in a thoughtful process to identify the priorities for the Center over the next three years.

The Marjaree Mason Center staff team compiled key information that helped to inform the process including historical programmatic and fiscal information for the agency and gathered statistical information on state and national trends in domestic violence.

The Strategic Planning Committee participated in five planning meetings between February and April 2014. These meetings were designed to review information gathered during the process and to develop the key components of the plan including an updated vision, mission, guiding principles, goals, objectives and the strategic approach for accomplishing these goals.

Staff feedback was gathered through a planning session with managers and an anonymous staff survey that was distributed to all staff. Forty-seven staff completed the survey, which focused on eliciting staff feedback and input on the strengths of the organization, where there is room for improvement or growth, and how satisfied they are working at the Center.

Given that the Center is highly dependent on community partners, interviews were set up with representatives from a range of community organizations including housing, social service, education, law enforcement, and city representatives. There were 21 interviews conducted by Marjaree Mason staff members and VIVA Strategy + Communications to gain insight from these stakeholders on their views of the accomplishments, priorities and areas for improvement and partnership opportunities.

Results of this process framed the priorities and direction for the agency in the coming 3 years. These include strengthening the organization and its ability to better serve clients, increasing awareness in the community, engaging in strategic partnerships and enhancing the financial health and stability of the Center.
Vision

A community free of domestic violence.

Mission

To support and empower adults and their children affected by domestic violence, while striving to prevent and end the cycle of abuse through education and advocacy.

Guiding Principles

RESPECT.
We treat our clients, our board, our staff and our partners with the utmost respect.

CUSTOMER-FOCUSED.
We build upon the strengths of all our clients, helping them to address their problems and challenges.

RESULTS-FOCUSED.
Our organization is data-driven and holds itself accountable for achieving results. We use data to set goals for performance and measure our success.

BUSINESS TRANSPARENCY.
We believe in being open with the community about operations including our leadership, our financial status and how we are impacting the community.

SUSTAINABILITY.
We prioritize resources and partnerships that will build a sustainable continuum of support for victims of abuse and their children.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT.
Our organization believes in continuously learning from its practice as well as advances in the field that are then applied to improve the quality of our services and the increase of our impact.

PARTNERSHIP-BASED COLLABORATIVE.
We know that we cannot achieve our mission without working in partnership. We actively seek partners who can help us to meet the comprehensive needs of our clients.

Long-Term Goals

1. The Marjaree Mason Center is a high-impact and effective leader in the field of domestic violence.

2. The entire community understands domestic violence and knows and values the roles Marjaree Mason Center plays in addressing it.

3. The Marjaree Mason Center is financially stable and able to execute its mission successfully over the long term.

ESTABLISHING THE FUTURE

Vision

Mission

Guiding Principles

Long-Term Goals

1. The Marjaree Mason Center is a high-impact and effective leader in the field of domestic violence.

2. The entire community understands domestic violence and knows and values the roles Marjaree Mason Center plays in addressing it.

3. The Marjaree Mason Center is financially stable and able to execute its mission successfully over the long term.
The Marjaree Mason Center’s 2014–2017 Strategic Plan sets forth an ambitious direction for the agency – one that envisions the Marjaree Mason Center as a leader in the field of domestic violence, and a locally-based model for other communities seeking to prevent domestic violence and end its cycle for those community members who have fallen victim to it.

This bold vision sees the Marjaree Mason Center as a learning organization that, as described in the seminal work, “Good to Great’ by Jim Collins, “…delivers superior performance and makes a distinctive impact over time.” Translating this to its area of focus, domestic violence, means that Marjaree Mason will not settle for simply seeing that the clients it serves are safe within its walls, but also, that they have the tools, resources, and capacities necessary to assure that they will never again be victimized, ending the cycle of violence in their families (‘superior performance’).

Furthermore, the Marjaree Mason Center commits to assuring that the entire community is aware and knowledgeable about the issue of domestic violence and the resources available to address it, to the extent that the community plays an active part in the protection of its victims, and in its prevention (‘distinctive impact over time’).
Marjaree Mason Center’s emergency shelter is a Safe House for women and children to live temporarily when they cannot live in their previous residence because they are escaping from a domestic violence environment. MMC currently has 110 beds available for emergency clients.

Transitional housing is designed to provide a safe place for female survivors of domestic violence and their children to live while they gain independent living skills, with the help of MMC staff and programs, and other community services. MMC has 24 transitional beds in its downtown Fresno Safe House, 18 beds in its Reedley Safe House, and 26 beds in the newest Safe House in Clovis. Aftercare refers to the assistance and resource linkages provided to clients of MMC upon leaving one of the shelters. Our counseling, case management, crisis intervention and advocacy services empower domestic violence victims and their children to stay in permanent housing and stay out of future abusive relationships.
Empowerment and Education/Advocacy

Our dedicated team of professionals does everything possible to move clients from victims to survivors and equip them for lives free from domestic violence. It is our policy to treat each client as an individual with his or her own unique set of needs. We are passionate about providing personalized, high-quality services that meets those needs while helping to transform the lives of domestic violence victims. MMC alerts the public to the facts of domestic violence and educates the public on how to recognize domestic violence and what to do about it; on teen dating violence; and on the impact of family violence on children.

Networking and Alignment

MMC partners with corporations, foundations, governmental and other nonprofit agencies, and individuals to design and fund innovative programs to eliminate domestic violence and to foster development of safe alternatives within our local community. MMC aligns itself with providers to yield the comprehensive network of services and supports that its clients need to fully and permanently escape the threat of domestic violence in their lives.
ORGANIZATIONAL QUALITY AND IMPACT

Rationale

The ultimate value of any organization comes down to the “impact” it makes in its mission, and in the case of the Marjaree Mason Center, this translates to the difference it makes in its clients’ present and future lives and the extent to which it decreases the occurrence of domestic violence in the community overall.

It follows that the level of impact in these areas are directly related to the level of “quality” that the agency employs as it goes about its business. High quality interventions, implemented in a high quality way by high quality staff, supported by a high quality and efficient infrastructure represents the critical chain upon which the success of the organization rests.

For that reason, the majority of goals established within this strategic plan are focused in the area of Organizational Quality and Impact.

Expected Results

Marjaree Mason Center clients receive the comprehensive services needed to assure that they are self-sufficient and permanently free from domestic violence.

The policies, procedures and practices of the Marjaree Mason Center assure constant communication, coordination, teamwork, and shared accountability for measurable results for its clients.

Marjaree Mason Center’s employees find professional fulfillment in their work at the Center and a sense of collegiality and shared purpose with their fellow employees.

Goals 1, 2, 3, & 4
COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

Rationale
The issue of domestic violence is multi-layered and complex, and would confound the ability of any one single agency to address, regardless of the size of its budget. This is particularly true for the Marjaree Mason Center, which aspires to not only provide high quality and impactful services for its clients, but also to impact domestic violence throughout the community.

This ambitious goal requires that the Marjaree Mason Center join forces with others in the community to provide the comprehensive network of services and supports that its clients need to fully and permanently escape the threat of domestic violence in their lives. It also requires that the entire community is also enlisted in this cause, to such an extent that domestic violence is not tolerated and that friends, families, and neighbors are attuned and prepared to intervene when it touches any of their fellow citizens.

Expected Results
The Marjaree Mason Center has established functional partnerships with external entities that effectively meet the comprehensive needs of its clients.

Any person in the community, who is victimized by, or at risk of, domestic violence, can access Marjaree Mason Center services quickly and easily.

The entire community is knowledgeable about domestic violence and its effects and the Marjaree Mason Center’s role and effectiveness, in ways that foster greater financial and programmatic support for its mission.

FINANCIAL HEALTH AND STABILITY

Rationale
It would be impossible for the Marjaree Mason Center to achieve any of the organizational or community goals above if it did not have the financial means to do so. But simply having the financial means to keep operating and employing staff will not guarantee the Center’s success nor longevity.

For that reason it is critical that the agency not only attract revenue needed to maintain operations, but do so in a financially ‘healthy’ way. Relying heavily on specific funding sources, particularly government, place the agency and its mission at the whim of changing Federal or State policies and guidelines, breeding uncertainty. Also, short-term funding cycles and tight revenue and expenditure ratios threaten to force the agency to constantly ‘chase money,’ risking using revenue streams that deflect it from its core mission, or compromise the cohesion necessary to be most effective.

It is therefore critical that the agency develop a thoughtful and strategic long-term financial plan, and the metrics and financial analysis system that will support the agency becoming a stable and effective leader.

Expected Results
The Marjaree Mason Center has the financial and programmatic resources to conduct domestic violence prevention community education and to respond to the needs of domestic violence clients.

Goal 7

Goals 5 & 6
GOAL 1

ORGANIZATIONAL QUALITY AND IMPACT
Provide evidence-based services that effectively meet the comprehensive needs of clients necessary for them to achieve permanent safety and self-sufficiency free of domestic violence.

Interim Objectives/Indicators:
- Improved staff knowledge regarding domestic violence and best practices
- Evidence-based model(s) for serving target population have been adopted
- Staff have been trained on evidence-based models
- Client outcomes improve on measures identified in evaluation plan

Review and adopt best practice models of domestic violence assistance programs.

Collaborate with other community-based organizations implementing quality interventions needed to meet service gaps.
GOAL 2

ORGANIZATIONAL QUALITY AND IMPACT
Create integrated alignment throughout the agency with its mission, goals and strategies.

Interim Objectives/Indicators:
• Increase in staff familiarity with strategic plan, program model(s) and all Marjaree Mason Center programs
• Build effective internal communications and coordination protocols.
• Increase staff familiarity with strategic plan/implementation plan and programs agency-wide.
Assess and update agency technological infrastructure.

Establish a professional development plan.

Interim Objectives/Indicators:
- All Marjaree Mason Center locations have access to main server
- Telephone system updated
- Core and specialty competencies codified
- Training plan with timeline established
 Align leadership team around a common vision and required behaviors.

 Manage drivers of culture and encourage management to lead by example.

 Communicate and celebrate results internally and externally.

 Establish a system for valuing creative thinking that fosters staff’s development of unique solutions and new ideas.

 Interim Objectives/Indicators:
 • Increased employee satisfaction on survey
 • Decrease in staff stress level
 • Staff are confident of leadership, management, and direction of agency
GOAL 5

COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND EDUCATION
Maintain existing and establish additional new strategic partnerships with external agencies critical to the successful accomplishment of the Marjaree Mason Center’s mission.

Interim Objectives/Indicators:
- Core partnerships critical to achieving client outcomes are identified
- Signed agreements with core partners executed

Establish alliances with additional organizations that are beyond Marjaree Mason Center’s competencies.

Increase personnel’s ability to influence partner agencies decision-making regarding Marjaree Mason Center’s work.
GOAL 6

COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND EDUCATION
Possess an informed community regarding the effects of domestic violence and the Marjaree Mason Center’s role.

Inform the community about domestic violence and Marjaree Mason Center services.

Establish a marketing and communications department.

Engage and develop the Board of Directors and Staff as agency evangelists.

Interim Objectives/Indicators:
• Communication Plan is implemented and staff and board embrace the plan
• Increase in youth knowledge and awareness of domestic violence
• Increase in community knowledge and awareness of domestic violence
• Increased financial and other support received from donors in the community
GOAL 7

FINANCIAL HEALTH AND STABILITY
Develop and execute a long-term financial plan that supports the Marjaree Mason Center’s ability to meet its mission successfully.

Create a monitoring unit to maintain good business standards.

Interim Objectives/Indicators:
• The Marjaree Mason Center has the financial and programmatic resources to conduct domestic violence prevention community education and to respond to the needs of domestic violence clients.
Conclusion and Next Steps

The Marjaree Mason Center 2014–2017 Strategic Plan sets forward an ambitious plan to address a problem of domestic violence in Fresno County. The success will depend on staff, the board and the community coming together to achieve the targeted goals in the coming years and ideally to achieve the vision of a community free of domestic violence.

LONG TERM GOALS

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PARTNERING AGENCIES

LAW ENFORCEMENT
Build on the relationships with the Fresno, Clovis Police Departments, Sheriff’s Office and District Attorney’s Office, to help connect victims to the Center and to coordinate on cases.

SCHOOLS
Increase the opportunities to reach young people to prevent teen dating violence and to help support the children of domestic violence victims by building on the partnership with local school districts, colleges, and universities.

THE FRESNO HOUSING AUTHORITY
Increase awareness of domestic violence resources, to support prevention and to increase the availability of housing options for domestic violence survivors and their children.

FRESNO COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Increase coordination between those helping domestic violence clients and those focused on children who have been abused.

FIRST 5 FRESNO COUNTY
Connect with organizations serving children to prevent the cycle of abuse and to increase support to children of victims of domestic violence.
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District Attorney - Elect

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^PAST BOARD MEMBER
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Director of Finance

Rae Pardini
Director of Development and Communications

Lucianna Ventresca
Associate Director
To support and empower adults and their children affected by domestic violence, while striving to prevent and end the cycle of abuse through education and advocacy.

1600 M. Street
Fresno, CA 93721
559-237-4706