

OFFICE OF THE  
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COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

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**District Attorney's Real Estate Fraud Prosecution Program  
Fiscal Year 2022 - 2023 Annual Report**

**Cases**

- *People v. Pauline Macareno*

This case is continuing from the prior fiscal year. This case involves a 96-year-old victim who was persuaded to take out a short-term, high-interest loan that was secured by her Montecito home. Following an extensive investigation by Investigators from the District Attorney's Bureau of Investigations, the District Attorney's Office filed an 11-count complaint against Macareno alleging elder abuse, forgery, identity theft, filing forged documents, and alleging special allegations of excessive loss. Shortly before Macareno was arrested on the District Attorney's complaint, the 96-year-old victim was found murdered in her home. Macareno has pled not guilty to the charges.

Upon further investigation this fiscal year, the District Attorney's Bureau of Investigations located additional assets for the payment of restitution. The District Attorney's Office filed a motion to freeze Macareno's assets pending the outcome of the prosecution for the payment of restitution. Macareno was held to answer on all charges and is pending trial.

- *People v. Adam Michael Pirozzi*

This case is continuing from the prior fiscal year. The District Attorney's Real Estate Fraud (REF) Unit investigated allegations against local real estate broker Adam Michael Pirozzi. The investigation culminated with Pirozzi being charged with six felony counts including embezzlement, elder abuse and money laundering. Special allegations alleging excessive taking were also filed. The District Attorney's Office filed a motion to freeze Pirozzi's assets pending the outcome of the prosecution for the payment of restitution. The felony complaint alleges that the defendant embezzled nearly \$700,000 from his former clients. Pirozzi has pled not guilty to the charges.

District Attorney Investigators continued the investigation in the case. As a result of the continuing investigation, the District Attorney's Office filed an amended complaint alleging additional embezzlement of approximately \$500,000 from a different business. Additionally, The District Attorney's Office has frozen over \$1 million for payment of victim restitution. The case is pending a preliminary hearing.

- *People v. Katherine Anne Robinson*

This case is continuing from the prior fiscal year. This case involves an elderly disabled victim who owned a mobile home in the City of Santa Barbara. The District Attorney's Bureau of Investigations received a complaint that the defendant was attempting to file a

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suspicious grant deed to the victim’s mobile home. Following an investigation, the District Attorney’s Office filed a five-count complaint against Robinson alleging elder abuse and filing forged documents. This fiscal year, Robinson pled guilty to forgery related to grant deed, thus protecting the victim’s mobile home.

- *People v. Mishelle Rae Cooper*

This case involves an elderly victim who owns home in the City of Santa Barbara. The Santa Barbara Police Department received a complaint that the defendant fraudulently took funds from the victim’s reverse mortgage. Following an investigation, the District Attorney’s Office filed a 16-count complaint against Cooper alleging elder abuse, false imposition, identity theft, and money laundering. Cooper pled guilty to forgery related to grant deed, thus protecting the victim’s mobile home.

**Statistics**

<b>District Attorney's Real Estate Fraud Prosecution Program</b>					
	<b>FY 18-19</b>	<b>FY 19-20</b>	<b>FY 20-21</b>	<b>FY 21-22</b>	<b>FY 22-23</b>
<b>Referrals</b>	13	12	9	28	12
<b>Investigations</b>	13	12	9	14	10
<b>Cases Filed</b>	0	0	0	3	2
<b>Convictions</b>	1	5	0	0	1

**Highlights**

- The District Attorney’s REF Unit spent a significant amount of time at the County Clerk-Recorder-Assessor’s Office during Fiscal Year 2022-2023. Six years ago, a protocol was implemented wherein the District Attorney’s REF Investigator would make personal contact with individuals attempting to record false documents in order to stop a foreclosure. The REF Investigator would educate these individuals on the laws that apply to such transactions, and warn them of the consequences associated with attempting illegal recordings. These efforts continue to result in a significant decrease in the number of fraud referrals as compared to prior fiscal years.
- The Unit continues to use innovative strategies such as asset seizures to secure justice for victims in Santa Barbara County. The District Attorney’s REF Unit also extends outreach to local agencies to assist with training on real estate fraud-related issues.

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