



San Diego City Attorney
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 21, 2024

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San Diego Leaders Celebrate New Shelter Option for Families Fleeing Violence

Casa Mariposa opens with broad support from State, County, and City partners.

On June 21, 2024, City Attorney Mara W. Elliott celebrated the arrival of a new shelter option for women and children who are fleeing domestic violence. The Casa Mariposa Domestic Violence Shelter will offer survivors the services they need to get their lives back on track and ensure they do not fall into homelessness when they leave their abusers. Both the City of San Diego's Your Safe Place, and the County's One Safe Place Family Justice Centers will make referrals to Casa Mariposa, operated by SBCS (formerly South Bay Community Services).

Safe, secure, confidential, and family-friendly, Casa Mariposa features more than forty separate units, each with its own bathroom, closet, and space for multiple family members. It offers shared kitchens, communal spaces, laundry facilities, outdoor patios, and gardens.

Casa Mariposa employs 24-hour staff and offers on-site security protections, including electronic gates and cameras. The exact address is not being made public to avoid danger to residents. San Diego City Attorney Mara W. Elliott, who operates the City's Family Justice Center, Your Safe Place, says the new shelter fills a critical service gap, one that forces victims to choose between living with abuse or being unsheltered.

“Today marks the fulfillment of a dream many of us have shared for a long time,” said City Attorney Elliott, who organized the purchase and funding of the new facility. **“We already provide domestic violence survivors with the services they need to regain their independence and reclaim their lives. At Your Safe Place, they have access to legal aid, counseling, medical exams, restraining orders, financial training, clothing, and food vouchers - everything except a place to sleep - the most basic need for any human being. That all changes today.”**

An early supporter and funder of the project, Senate President Pro Tempore Emeritus Toni G. Atkins said, “Casa Mariposa will allow women and children to live without fear. The crime of domestic violence often takes place out of sight, so it is up to all of us to shine a light on this epidemic and do

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something about it,” said Senator Atkins. “By allowing women and children to restart their lives and live without fear, we can break the cycle of violence and make California a better place for everyone to live. Having a safe place to heal with the support of wrap-around services is an important step towards improving outcomes for families experiencing domestic violence in our community. Casa Mariposa is setting a new benchmark for what it means to help survivors end the cycle of violence. I am proud to have played a small part in making this important project a reality.”

The largest portion of funding for Casa Mariposa came through the County of San Diego, under a unique collaboration between multiple levels of government. “As an emergency department physician, I treated many victims of domestic violence and worried about their future once they left the safety of the hospital,” said Dr. Eric McDonald, interim director of the County Health and Human Services Agency. “This significant investment by the Board of Supervisors in Casa Mariposa will provide survivors with a safe place to go, and one that will reduce the chances they will suffer additional harm.”

San Diego District Attorney Summer Stephan, who leads the County’s Family Justice Center, One Safe Place, played a key role in generating support for the new shelter. She noted that existing shelters for domestic violence victims are often at capacity, and emergency solutions like hotel vouchers are extremely limited. “This new housing resource is transformational to the safety of domestic violence victims and their children. With 164 bed capacity, Casa Mariposa essentially adds 75 percent more capacity to serve domestic violence victims. No victim should choose between living with violence or becoming homeless,” said District Attorney Stephan. “This is the best example of the City, County, and State coming together to keep our most vulnerable safe.”

Since its soft launch in April 2024, Casa Mariposa has already served 32 families, totaling 89 individuals. Services include intensive case management, individual and support group counseling, court accompaniment, emergency support (food, clothing, transportation), childcare, mobile health clinic, legal support, parenting support, and referrals to internal and external programs including SBCS therapeutic preschool, “Mi Escuelita.”

“Our SBCS team of experienced treatment and case managers brings individualized support and care to help survivors put the pieces of their life back together with safety and dignity,” said SBCS President and CEO Kathryn Lembo. “We have been providing trauma-informed assistance to the San Diego community for more than fifty years and are honored to lead operations for Casa Mariposa.” The agency was chosen by the City of San Diego to lead the work at Casa Mariposa due to its deep community roots and commitment to recovery.

A large percentage of unsheltered women were victims of domestic violence - physical, psychological, and sexual abuse - before becoming homeless. If you or someone you know is a victim of domestic violence, visit <https://www.sandiego.gov/yoursafeplace> or go to <https://onesafeplacenorth.org/> for help.

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