



Your Safe Place Brought Domestic Violence Services Together 20 Years Ago

By City Attorney Mara W. Elliott

Domestic violence is one of the most terrifying crimes because it rips at the fabric of our families. Many victims are in fear for their children as much or more than themselves.

Twenty years ago, victims of domestic violence had to navigate a web of agencies that had services designed to help them. However, these agencies offered no single place to provide all the help they might need.

That's when something remarkable happened. A few dedicated San Diegans -- including Casey Gwinn, one of my predecessors as City Attorney -- recognized how the fragmented system was delaying or even denying the healing that survivors and their families desperately needed. So, they created the world's first-ever Family Justice Center, now known as Your Safe Place.

Victims of domestic violence in the City of San Diego could now come to one location to talk to an advocate, get a restraining order, plan for their safety, talk to a police officer, meet with a prosecutor, receive medical assistance, counsel with a chaplain, get help with transportation, and obtain nutrition and pregnancy services counseling.

The success of San Diego's Family Justice Center quickly received recognition at the highest levels.

Then-President George W. Bush was so impressed with the success of the San Diego FJC in its first year in operation that in October 2003 the Department of Justice allocated more than \$20 million in grants to establish 15 FJCs in the United States.

Your Safe Place has only grown in the years since by focusing on providing supportive services in a judgment-free manner that empowers clients to become survivors and move forward with their lives.

YSP now works with more than 200 professionals and dozens of community organizations offering services that include counseling, forensic medical examinations, restraining orders, housing support and financial security, immigration services, and parenting assistance.

Recognizing the extreme risk posed by abusers with guns, Your Safe Place also protects clients by obtaining Gun Violence Restraining Orders to remove firearms from dangerous situations before a tragedy occurs.

Sadly, the number of domestic violence incidents remains tragically high. Every hour in America almost 1,200 people report being physically abused by a domestic power. It's a difficult statistic to even process. Almost 1,200 people every hour of every day.

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Your Safe Place helps to hold these offenders accountable for their actions and offers a harbor for those victims -- a literal safe place where they can come to heal and move forward with their lives.

Over the past two decades, the Family Justice Center movement has spread far and wide. There are now more than 100 Family Justice Centers across the United States as well as centers in more than 20 countries around the world.

Family Justice Centers, like Your Safe Place, have been identified as a "best practice" in helping domestic violence victims and their children.

As we celebrate 20 years of providing assistance, we hope you can help as well. Your Safe Place holds an annual Halloween drive to help children who have been affected by violence in their homes. These children may not have access to costumes, candy, and Halloween crafts.

Through Oct. 7, you can help out by donating costumes, masks, Halloween crafts, small toys, candy, and \$10 gift cards in drop-off boxes at Your Safe Place, 1122 Broadway, Suite 200, and in the lobby of my Office in Civic Center Plaza.

If you want to learn more about all of YSP's services, visit the [Your Safe Place website](#).

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