



San Diego City Attorney Mara W. Elliott



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City Attorney Cracks Down on Illegal Elder Care Facilities

Elder/dependent victims get relocation benefits and medical care

San Diego City Attorney Mara W. Elliott announced today misdemeanor criminal charges against the owners and operators of two illegal care facilities where elderly and dependent residents were living in deplorable conditions. The victims range from 57 to 84 years old.

“We entrust elder care facilities with the safety and well-being of some of our community’s most vulnerable residents,” said City Attorney Mara W. Elliott. **“When unscrupulous landlords and operators set up substandard, unlicensed care facilities, they jeopardize the precious lives of those who depend on them and violate our most basic values of compassion and care.”**

The charges against Petra Garcia Navarro and Silvina Sandoval Torres concern a six-bedroom unlicensed residential care facility at 3505 Sparling Street in Redwood Village. Petra Navarro is the operator and Torres is the owner of the facility, which operated under the name “Angel House” and “Hogar Dulce Hogar, LLC,” or “Home Sweet Home.” The charges against Jaquelinne Aguirre Navarro and Martha Alicia Bragg concern a substandard facility at 935 Kostner Drive in Otay Mesa West. Jaquelinne Navarro is the operator and Bragg is the owner.

In June 2018, inspectors from the City’s Code Enforcement Division (CED) inspected the Sparling Street facility, where 11 elderly and dependent residents lived. CED inspectors found:

- extensive infestations of mice, scabies, and roaches,
- a lack of egress,
- no telephone on the premises for residents to report medical emergencies,
- unsafe electrical fixtures,
- unpermitted plumbing, and
- poor sanitation including feces in the community shower and the odor of urine in the house.

In addition, the victims were barred from the kitchen, depriving them of access to food and water.

Petra Navarro and Torres are charged with operating an unlicensed residential care treatment facility. Petra Navarro has been charged with willful cruelty to nine elderly residents and two dependent adults residing at Sparling. She and Silvina Torres are charged with more than a dozen other Health and Safety and City Municipal Code violations.

On August 2, the City Code Enforcement Division posted a Notice at the Sparling Street facility ordering Petra Navarro and Torres to vacate the building, pay relocation benefits to the 11 residents, and make repairs. They did not comply.

On August 7, 2018, City Attorney Investigators discovered all of the victims were gone from Sparling. Investigators found seven of the victims at a facility on Kostner Drive, the home of Petra Navarro's daughter, Jaquelinne Navarro. The elderly residents had been reportedly transported in the back of a pick-up truck. An inspection of the Kostner Drive location revealed similar Health and Safety and City Municipal Code violations to those on Sparling Street.

Jaquelinne Navarro and Bragg are charged with a host of Health and Safety and City Municipal Code violations. Petra and Jaquelinne Navarro are also charged with willful cruelty to the seven victims at Kostner Drive. One elderly victim was being housed in a garage that lacked ventilation. Another was found in a tent on the side of the house. All suffered from heat exposure. Most of them were transported to local hospitals for medical treatment and evaluation. All seven have been removed from the Kostner Drive facility.

The City Attorney's Office has secured \$26,620, or \$2,420 per victim, from City funds. The money can be used for relocation and residential expenses. The City Attorney's [Nuisance Abatement Unit](#) will seek to recover those costs from Petra Navarro and Silvina Torres at an administrative hearing set for November 28, 2018. For the victims' safety and privacy, the City Attorney's Office is not disclosing the victims' current locations.

The City Attorney's Office is committed to protecting elder residents. Elder abuse victims often live in silent desperation, unwilling to seek assistance because they believe their cries for help will go unanswered. Many remain silent because they fear retaliation from their abusers, are embarrassed that they have fallen victim to predators, or because they fear becoming homeless. Others fear that no one cares, that no one will believe them, and that their allegations will be attributed to old age.

In the context of residential care facilities, shady operators may make a promise or enter into an oral contract with an elder in exchange for money. They may withhold food, water, medication, access to a telephone, or general housing comforts. Alternatively, unlicensed operators may illegally provide medical care and general care without a license. In all cases, the elders are living nameless lives and are forgotten in the shadows.

Chief Deputy City Attorney Nicole Crosby, head of the [Domestic Violence and Sex Crimes Unit](#) has taken the lead on this case, working with detectives from the San Diego Police Department to investigate the criminal elder abuse charges. In coming months, the City Attorney's Office will be spearheading an Unsafe Facility Task Force, seeking a regional approach to crack down on substandard, unlicensed elder and dependent care facilities.

To report elder abuse and adult dependent care emergencies, dial 911. For non-emergencies, contact the [San Diego Police Department](#) or another local law enforcement agency. Community members may report code, health and safety, and environmental violations to the City's [Code Enforcement Division](#) at 619-236-5500, or the City Attorney's [Nuisance Abatement Unit](#) at 619-533-5655.

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