

San Diego Shelter for Asylum-Seeking Families

Background

On October 25, 2018, Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) ended a program known as “Safe Release,” which helped children and families requesting asylum at the U.S.-México border connect with family members residing in the United States. Under “Safe Release”, ICE supported asylum seeking families by ensuring they had travel plans in place prior to their release.

By October 26, 2018, ICE began implementing a “Quick Release Procedure” which gives families no time to make plans or



A mother and her three young children arriving at the San Diego Rapid Response Network’s migrant shelter

book travel before their release. Under this new expedited procedure, after being screened to ensure they pose no security threat, asylum-seeking families are quickly released in San Diego - or returned to Mexico under the Migrant Protection Protocols - on their own recognizance with orders to appear at an ICE hearing after reaching their destination city. Most migrants released in San Diego seek to reunite with relatives in cities outside of California – often a multi-day bus trip away.

With an average of 10-15 family units (20-30 parents and young children) being released each day, this new federal policy created a significant challenge for state and local government and non-governmental organizations in San Diego.

Until early November 2018, ICE dropped asylum seeking families, coming primarily from Central America, near the San Diego Greyhound station without resources – and without coordinating with local support organizations. To meet the needs of these vulnerable children and families, the San Diego Rapid Response Network (SDRRN) quickly mobilized to set up a temporary shelter and ensure families had access to food, medical care, legal services and transportation. The SDRRN is comprised of more than forty social service and advocacy organizations, many with extensive experience in direct service provision.

By mid-November 2018 ICE began working in coordination with the SDRRN and since then has been dropping off migrant families at the migrant shelter operated by Jewish Family Service (JFS) each afternoon.



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Shelter Operation

Since late October 2018, the SDRRN's shelter for asylum-seeking families has temporarily housed and provided supportive services to more than 17,800 people. Operated by JFS, shelter staff and volunteers attend to basic needs – including nutrition, healthcare, clothing, and hygiene – and provide case management, legal services, and travel coordination for families.

After addressing urgent needs, typically within 12 to 48 hours, staff provide transportation assistance to ensure families can safely reunite with loved ones in cities across the U.S. More than 95% of families at the shelter leave San Diego for other destinations.

Healthcare

Many families arrive in poor health with children and parents suffering from the flu, upper respiratory infections, dehydration, injuries sustained while traveling, scabies, and/or lice. UC San Diego Health Systems provides preliminary medical screening and assessment for all shelter guests and meets their basic medical needs for the duration of their stay at the shelter.

Long Term Shelter Space

In March 2019 the shelter moved to its sixth location since the operation began just four months earlier. The shelter building is owned by the County of San Diego and is being leased to JFS for \$1 from March - December 2019. The SDRRN has been working with City, County and State officials to secure resources to support a permanent shelter facility that can serve migrant families arriving in San Diego after 2019. Without a new space, it will be very difficult to sustain this operation.

“Migrant Protection Protocols or Remain in Mexico”

The Migrant Protection Protocols (“MPP”) commonly referred to as Remain in Mexico have been in place in the San Diego Border Region since January 2019. Individuals and families enrolled into MPP are required to remain in Mexico through the duration of their immigration legal proceedings taking place in the U.S. More than 6,000 people requesting asylum in the U.S. have been returned to Tijuana under the Migrant Protection Protocols where they must remain during the lengthy asylum process. JFS, on behalf of SDRRN, has launched a legal services hotline for these asylum seekers, and our attorneys have been able to represent some of them in court.



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In early 2019, the Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”) increased the number of families enrolled into MPP which has directly impacted the population served at the shelter. **100%** of the MPP cases JFS has represented so far have been granted entry into the US to continue their legal proceedings with access to counsel and other resources.

To learn more about MPP, please review DHS’s MPP policy at [DHS’s MPP policy](#) or a visual preview of how the [JFS legal team is proving legal representation to individuals and families impacted by MPP](#).

Financial Contributions

You can bring targeted legal services and support to asylum-seeking families who are searching for a better life in the United States.

To make a gift, please visit jfssd.org/donate or contact JFS Chief Philanthropy Officer, Shana Hazan, at (858) 637-3281 or shanah@jfssd.org. Checks can be mailed to:

San Diego Migrant Shelter for Asylum-seeking Families
Jewish Family Service of San Diego - Joan & Irwin Jacobs Campus
8804 Balboa Avenue
San Diego, CA 92123

Clothing and In-Kind Donations

The needs of the shelter population are always shifting, and we are very fortunate to have a steady stream of items coming in. To most effectively meet the needs of our shelter guests, we request all in-kind donations be made through our Amazon Wish List (<http://bit.ly/MigrantShelterList>). Should you wish to provide any items not on the Amazon Wish List, please email shelterdonations@jfssd.org to confirm the items that are most needed at this time.

Volunteer at the Shelter

To sign up to volunteer at the shelter, please email our Volunteer Coordinator Team at sheltermvolunteer@jfssd.org.